

Abstract booklet 2017



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bacp

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The University of Chester



**University of
Chester**

Contents

Pre-conference workshop and keynote presentations

Programme number	Presentation title	Style of presentation	Page
	Professor Clara E Hill PhD 'Working with Meaning in Life in Psychotherapy'	Pre-conference workshop	12
1	Professor Clara E Hill PhD 'Therapists Self-Disclosure and Immediacy'	Keynote presentation	13
38	Professor Stephen Joseph 'Are we measuring what matters in counselling and psychotherapy research?'	Keynote presentation	14

The following abstracts are ordered by type of presentation and then alphabetically by first author surname.

Friday posters

F1	Remi Arnold An exploration of the experiences of person centred counsellors working with refugees diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.	Poster	16
F2	Helene Baker How do the therapist's own relationship struggles contribute to the therapeutic work with clients?	Poster	17
F3	Emma Broglia Supplementing counselling with guided use of a well-being app for university students experiencing anxiety or depression: preliminary findings from a feasibility trial.	Poster	18
F4	Chryssa Chalkia A pilot study on therapist's experience of client-initiated termination in long-term therapy.	Poster	19
F5	Lois de Cruz Giving voice through reflexivity: women's experience of miscarriage many years after the event.	Poster	20
F6	Enechojo G Egbe-Okpenge Motivation and performance of guidance counsellors in post-primary schools in Makurdi, Benue State	Poster	21

F7	Julia Gorle Investigating Emotional Contagion in Counsellors	Poster	22
F8	Ella Haselden Ways in which women who have experienced a miscarriage acknowledge the life and death of their unborn child.	Poster	23
F9	John Hills Case study research into psychotherapies for people who present with physical symptoms, 2012-2016: a literature review	Poster	24
F10	Anne Moorhead Teachers have a role in supporting counselling provision within Schools: online quantitative survey.	Poster	25

Saturday posters

S1	Claudia Nielsen Exploring dark corners: therapists views of life after death	Poster	26
S2	Chisom Nwankwo, Heather Drobinska Counsellors' experiences of working with clients diagnosed with a mental health disorder who bring religion/spirituality into the therapeutic space	Poster	27
S3	Jeremy O'Sullivan Seating dynamics in person-centred counselling: chair distance, chair angle and chair type.	Poster	28
S4	Jeannette Roddy Building a competency framework for domestic abuse counselling practice.	Poster	29
S11	Emma Sanchez Paths to uncharted territories of learning: the process of a first-person cooperative inquiry in developing trainees' self-understanding	Poster	30
S5	Denise Sherwood, Mudimo Okondo In the experience of practitioners in the field, is the person-centred approach helpful when working with clients who experience anxiety and paranoid schizophrenia?	Poster	31
S6	M Ann Shillingford Exploring school counsellors' leadership engagement with parents of colour on STEM education and career choice	Poster	32

S7	Milena Sobesto A psychotherapeutic exploration of the impact of working on multidisciplinary teams (MDT) in psycho-oncology	Poster	33
S8	Ulrike Speers Applied counselling approaches within the Chinese community: a review of studies using a systematic approach	Poster	34
S9	Shamini Sriskandrajah Someday this pain will be useful to you: from recovering from an eating disorder to becoming a therapist	Poster	35
S10	Emma Taylor 'Coming Home': an exploration of the impact on searching for birth origins on an adult adoptee's existential state of being	Poster	36

Papers

32	Lucy Arnot An exploratory study of perceptions and experiences of counselling among Scottish Gypsy/Traveller women	Paper	38
33	Shane Barratt Towards addressing problematic transitions encountered by professional footballers in sports retirement	Paper	39
27	Tanya Beetham Understanding children's experiences of a domestic violence group intervention: a narrative inquiry	Paper	40
52	Jay Beichman How therapists make sense of pluralistic approaches to therapy: a qualitative interview study	Paper	41
55	Anne Bentley, Dawn Hastings Healing the self by growing the social: reaching out to enhance the wellbeing of international students	Paper	42
63	Angela Blanchard 'See through the crack in my world': using auto-ethnography to bridge research, practice and personal development	Paper	43

36	Christine Bonsmann A qualitative exploration of clients' dissatisfaction leading to the premature termination of counselling and psychotherapy	Paper	44
44	Sass Boucher 'Looking through a lens of terribleness': a thematic analysis of the experience of practitioners working in the field of domestic violence	Paper	45
35	Jeanne Broadbent Reflections on the impact of traumatic bereavement on therapists' professional development and practice	Paper	46
67	Evi Chryssafidou, Biljana van Rijn Evaluation of avatar-based counselling for young people	Paper	47
41	Anna Constantine Therapists' reflections on the topic of sex and sexuality within counselling and psychotherapy training and practice	Paper	48
57	Elizabeth Crunk et al Caring as coping: the role of altruism in bereavement outcomes of a diverse sample of grievors	Paper	49
66	Anne Dodd Mind the gap: an exploration of knowledge transfer of complicated grief (CG) research among mental health professionals	Paper	50
13	Lesley Dougan I am more than my face: a study into the experiences of therapists with a visible facial difference in training and practice	Paper	51
22	Rami Doyle Bridging the gap between the autistic, the therapist and the theoretical perspective, an intersubjective awareness	Paper	52
15	Cemil Egeli How might an individual experience the impact of a mixed cultural heritage?	Paper	53
11	Robert Elliott Client outcomes for key client problem presentations in a practice-based research protocol	Paper	54

17	Stephen Paul Ferris A heuristic inquiry into the experience of loneliness: access to greater self-knowledge as well as reflective-practice	Paper	55
46	Doreen Fleet A multiple case-study using sand-tray in short-term therapy from a pluralistic perspective	Paper	56
20	Emma Fleming An investigation into the service user experience at the Veterans Outreach Service	Paper	57
56	Lavlet Forde Supporting students with mental health disorders in college	Paper	58
4	Anna Louise Fry 'We're here, we're queer, we don't drink beer': The intersections of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, religiosity and non-heterosexual British South Asian women and the implications for mental health care	Paper	59
8	Tracey Fuller The trust is the work: exploring how school counsellors maintain alliances with young people when sharing information because of safeguarding concerns. A phronetic case study	Paper	60
37	Suzy Hansford How does the meaning we make from language impact on the establishing and maintaining of the therapeutic relationship?	Paper	61
5	Jacqueline Hayes Experiences of continued presence: on the practical consequences of 'hallucinations' in bereavement	Paper	62
65	Trish Hobman The meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors: a relational narrative	Paper	63
49	Jane Hunt An exploration of how trainee counsellors who are practising believers of a world religion experience undertaking counsellor training	Paper	64
3	Charlie Jackson Counselling professionals' awareness and understanding of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): implications for training and research	Paper	65

62	Charlie Jackson Counselling for young people and young adults in the voluntary and community sector	Paper	66
21	Gillie Jenkinson What helps former cult members recover from an abusive cult experience?	Paper	67
25	David Kaplan The development of a consensus licensure title and scope of practice in the United States	Paper	68
9	Viki Kelchner An investigation of school-based mental health counselling services with children in low socioeconomic schools	Paper	69
53	Richard Mason How might working in IAPT affect the professional development of counsellors? An analytical auto-ethnographic study	Paper	70
51	Aisling McMahon From ' <i>an absurd idea</i> ' to ' <i>exceptional learning</i> ': attitudes regarding recording client sessions during psychotherapy training	Paper	71
19	Lynn McVey Imagining the real: using reverie in therapy and research	Paper	72
45	Laura Monk The importance of reflective practice when working with abused women at risk of, or experiencing, mother-child separation	Paper	73
47	Tomonori Motoyama, David Murphy A comparative study of the person-centred experiential approach in Japan and England	Paper	74
48	Jayna Mumbauer et al Bibliotherapy as an adjunct service to Counselling families: a qualitative approach	Paper	75
54	Reg O'Brien Exploration of how CfD trainees, trainers and supervisors perceive competence and a competence-framework in relation to CfD: implications for practice and training	Paper	76
50	Jean S Penman Sex and other medically unexplained symptoms: developing an integrative conceptual platform to support psychotherapeutic interventions	Paper	77

39	Sophie Preston 'Just sort of accept me for who I am as a person' an investigation of UK-based Transgender clients' experiences of counselling, an IPA study	Paper	78
29	Jo Pybis The comparative effectiveness and efficiency of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and counselling in the treatment of depression	Paper	79
14	Mahwish Qamar Same hate, different enemy: psychodynamic inquiry into psychotherapists' experience of Islamophobia in the consulting room	Paper	80
43	Joanna Quinlan Independent validation of the Pain Management Plan: benefits of self-management within a counselling setting	Paper	81
2	Louise Rolland, Beverley Costa Being multilingual in psychotherapy: an applied linguistic view	Paper	82
12	Faith Ruofan Liao Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the Mandarin-Chinese version of Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory	Paper	83
64	Yvette Saliba et al Once upon a time: The results of utilizing bibliotherapy in session with children	Paper	84
18	Paula Seth The psychotherapist's lived-experience of wonder	Paper	85
6	Philippa Skinner 'Bear one another's burdens': an examination of the experiences of parents bereaved of a child through drug use, who volunteer to support other parents bereaved in a similar way	Paper	86
10	Susan Stephen The Strathclyde Inventory: measuring congruence as an outcome of therapy	Paper	87
7	Colleen Swinden How bereavement counsellors experience returning to therapeutic work after the death of their parent	Paper	88

24	Ladislav Timulak Developing a model of working with worry in emotion-focused therapy: a discovery-phase task analytic study	Paper	89
23	Wendy Traynor Person-centred experiential psychotherapy and pre-therapy for adult clients who hear voices or have other unusual experiences	Paper	90
31	Alison Trott Social class and the therapeutic relationship: the perspective of therapists as clients	Paper	91
68	Biljana van Rijn, Evi Chryssafidou Avatar-based counselling for young people. Case study 'Richard'	Paper	92
30	Katy Wakelin How effective is Gestalt psychotherapy?	Paper	93

Methodological Innovation Papers

40	Chrysostomos Athanasiadis The value of qualitative research online: men's accounts of depression	Methodological Innovation Paper	95
28	Jeannette Roddy Reflections on recruiting a 'hard-to-reach' counselling client group	Methodological Innovation Paper	96
42	Megan Rose Stafford Developing ETHOS: a randomised controlled trial of school-based, humanistic counselling with young people	Methodological Innovation Paper	97

Workshops

16	Sarah Cantwell, Jacqueline Hayes Integrating conversation analytic findings about therapy sessions into therapeutic skills training and development	Workshop	99
59	Linda Dubrow-Marshall, Rod Dubrow-Marshall Reflexive auto-ethnography: a means to self-care for practitioners	Workshop	100
34	Darcy Haag-Granello, Paul Granello Professional counsellor identity evolution: researching counsellor knowledge, attitudes and skills	Workshop	101

58	Jacqueline Hayes Essential research findings in child and adolescent therapy: what leads to change? A look at key findings and implications for practice	Workshop	102
26	Rita Mintz A view from inside the ethics committee: ethical complexities and tensions in conducting qualitative research	Workshop	103

Symposium

	Emma Tickle Counselling for Depression. How did we get here- where are we going?	Symposium Overview	105
60	Emma Tickle, Sue Price What factors predict successful attainment of Counselling for Depression (CfD) qualification? Extended analysis of the 2015 paper	Symposium Paper 1	106
61	Gillian Proctor Counselling for Depression: a response to counselling education in the 21st century Ethical conflicts between a counselling approach operating within a medicalised bureaucratic health service	Symposium Paper 2	107

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**PRE-CONFERENCE
WORKSHOP
AND
KEYNOTE
PRESENTATIONS**

Pre-Conference Workshop

Professor Clara E Hill PhD

Professional Role: Professor of Psychology

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Keywords: meaning in life,

‘Working with Meaning in Life in Psychotherapy’

To provide an overview of meaning in life, describe measures that we have developed to assess meaning in life, review some of the literature on meaning in life in psychotherapy, and then describe an approach for working with meaning in life in psychotherapy. Some exercises will be used to promote self-awareness and help therapists become aware of their attitudes toward working with meaning in life.

Although meaning in life is not typically an explicit focus in psychotherapy, it underlies many concerns. Thus, it is good for therapists to be aware of and knowledgeable about how to work with meaning in life.

Friday Keynote Presenter

Professor Clara E Hill PhD

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Keywords: Therapist skills, therapist self-disclosure, therapist immediacy, therapy process, evaluation of therapy

Therapist Self-Disclosure and Immediacy

Aim/Purpose:

To provide an overview of the definitions of therapist self-disclosure and immediacy, to review the theoretical literature about these constructs, and to describe a qualitative meta-analysis of the consequences of therapist self-disclosure and immediacy.

Design/Methodology:

A qualitative meta-analysis of the 28 studies that provide data about the consequences of therapist self-disclosure and immediacy within naturally-occurring psychotherapy.

Results/Findings:

The consequences of therapist self-disclosure and immediacy are predominantly positive.

Research Limitations:

The limitations of various methods for studying therapist self-disclosure and immediacy will be described. For example, I will review the limitations of using correlational data of the judged amount of these interventions within sessions in relation to session and treatment outcome as evidence of consequences, and will instead advocate for the use of qualitative analyses of case studies to determine consequences.

Conclusions/Implications:

Therapists are justified in using self-disclosures and immediacy in psychotherapy but need to be responsive to the needs of specific clients, observant of the effects of these interventions, and willing to process the interventions with clients.

Saturday Keynote Speaker

Professor Stephen Joseph

Professional Role: Professor in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham

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‘Are we measuring what matters in counselling and psychotherapy research?’

Aim/Purpose:

As we have seen in recent years, without evidence of effectiveness, counselling and psychotherapy practices are under threat. Research to develop the evidence base is therefore increasingly important. One important issue for such research is the choice of measurement tools with which to assess outcome. Traditionally, outcome measures have been chosen that are derived from medical model conceptions of distress. In recent years, however, there has been much criticism of the use of psychiatric diagnosis and the medical model, with calls to avoid psychiatric language and replace it with psychological conceptions instead. This presents an opportunity for researchers to use measurement tools that are theoretically consistent with the approach to therapy that is being assessed. For many therapists, it is the promotion of human potentiality and personal-growth that is more in keeping with their practice, than the alleviation of distress and dysfunction.

Design/Methodology:

Following an overview of the literature on measurement tools in well-being, this presentation will describe a trajectory of psychometric research conducted by the author over the past twenty years into the measurement of positive changes following adversity, happiness and positive functioning, and authenticity.

Results/Findings:

A number of conceptualisations of well-being exist. Reliable and valid measurement tools exist that can be used to provide theoretically compatible assessments with those therapies that are concerned with potentiality and personal growth.

Conclusions/Implications:

In the context of mental healthcare provision it is important to engage with demands from funders and providers to empirically demonstrate therapeutic outcomes. It is recommended that researchers begin to introduce theoretically consistent outcome measurement. The presentation will conclude by discussing how constructs of well-being can provide researchers in counselling and psychotherapy with more theoretically consistent tools to shape the type of evidence that informs the future of counselling and psychotherapy. The implications for the counselling and psychotherapy evidence base will be considered: first, that we need to be mindful of the implicit assumptions underpinning research; and second, that we need to accommodate ideas of theoretically consistent measurement into the design of future research studies.

POSTERS

Presenter: Remi Arnold

Other Authors: Clare Cox, Dai Edwards, Sherife Hussein, Dahlia Siam, Rachel Wilmot

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: Client-led, PTSD, refugees, culture, interpreters

An exploration of the experiences of person centred counsellors working with refugees diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder

Aim/Purpose:

The recent suffering of refugees fleeing into Europe prompted us to explore if the counselling model we are training in - the person-centred approach (PCA) - could offer beneficial psychological/emotional support to such vast numbers of traumatised persons; specifically those refugees diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Design/Methodology:

Four semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews were conducted with counsellors working in the field with refugees. These interviews were then transcribed and thematically analysed. This process was informed by the Duquesne method of empirical phenomenology (McLeod, 2001). Thematic analysis allowed us to identify common themes/threads and highlight anomalies inherent in our data; resulting in detailed and descriptive findings. We adhered to the BACP Ethical Guidelines for Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy (Bond, 2004).

Results/Findings:

It appears the relationship and empathic psychological/felt contact between counsellor and client is paramount to a successfully therapeutic outcome when working with this client group. It also appears such a relationship is greatly enhanced by the counsellors' extension of the 3 core conditions and the counsellors' *quality of presence* (Mearns, 2003) can often transcend the barriers that language differences and the employment of an interpreter introduce into the therapeutic alliance. However, language and cultural differences and especially the introduction of an interpreter can interfere with the clients' ability to trust within the therapeutic process and can adversely affect his/her sense of safety

Research Limitations:

This was a small study, limited by time and resources and as the qualitative research method used focuses on the phenomenological and subjective experiences of the respondents our findings cannot necessarily be generalised to other counsellors in other settings (McLeod, 2001). Additionally our results are possibly prone to the influence of our (the researchers) personal biases and idiosyncrasies.

Conclusions/Implications:

It appears the PCA has favourable qualities when working with refugees diagnosed with PTSD. However, counsellors may need to consider how to minimise the barriers that language differences, and especially the use of an interpreter, impose on the therapeutic alliance. Consideration to specifically training interpreters to work alongside counsellors may be an effective option to support the therapeutic process and enhance the possibility of successful outcomes for clients in this group.

Presenter: Helene Baker

Professional Role: Counsellor/Supervisor/Tutor

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: Reflective, inquiry, heuristic, therapeutic, relationship

How do the therapist's own relationship struggles contribute to the therapeutic work with clients?

Aim/Purpose:

The literature supports the view that the therapeutic relationship in couple counselling necessarily involves the self of the therapist. A gap in the literature seems to exist in relation to the implications for relational work of changing self of the therapist. The purpose of this reflective inquiry was to look into the contribution made to therapeutic work by the therapist's own relationship challenges.

Design/Methodology:

An auto-ethnographic inquiry based on action research principles was employed, with the aim of enhancing client practice. The inquiry followed the heuristic model described by Moustakas (Etherington, 2004). Material was developed and processed through journal-writing, reading, workshops, peer discussions, supervision, therapy, creative exploration and meditation. Ethics were attended to throughout, through supervision and therapy. Identities have been protected when referring to examples of practice, and consent received for their inclusion.

Results/Findings:

Through the inquiry, themes emerged leading to awareness and change in the inquirer's relationships with clients and others and exposing a 'living contradiction' (McNiff, 2002) in her practice. These themes involved the inquirer's relationship to: external authority and a 'critical eye'; 'knowing' and 'getting it right'; and experiences of 'looking for the right path' to follow. As a result of exploring these emergent themes, the inquirer developed: valuing of her own experience and self-knowing in relationships with clients; willingness to risk fallibility and recognise its value; increased trust in self in relation to practice. A final over-arching finding was that the inquiry process supported the inquirer in starting to trust areas of 'lost-ness' and 'not-knowing'. The inquiry itself effected transformation of a 'critical eye' to a benevolent one.

Research Limitations:

At the same time as conducting the inquiry, the researcher was learning research methodology. The research was time-limited. The inquiry was centred in the field of the inquirer's own practice, supported by journal-writing, supervision and endorsed by peer feedback and feedback from others.

Conclusions/Implications:

The therapist's reflective inquiry into their own process can significantly enhance therapeutic work with clients.

Presenter: Emma Broglia

Other Authors: Michael Barkham & Abigail Millings

Professional Role: PhD student

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: Student, counselling, apps, anxiety, depression

Supplementing counselling with guided use of a well-being app for university students experiencing anxiety or depression: preliminary findings from a feasibility trial

Aim/Purpose:

University counselling services face a unique challenge to offer short-term therapeutic support to students presenting with complex mental health needs, and in a setting which suits the academic timetable. The recent availability of mobile phone applications (apps) offer an opportunity to supplement face-to-face therapy and have the potential to reach a wider audience, maintain engagement between therapy sessions, and enhance therapeutic outcomes. The present study aimed to explore the feasibility of supplementing counselling with guided use of a well-being app.

Design/Methodology:

Forty university students experiencing anxiety or depression were recruited to either: 1) counselling; or 2) counselling supplemented with guided use of an app. The usage, acceptability, feasibility, and potential implications of the intervention will be assessed through counselling session recordings, interviews with students, and a focus group with therapists. Preliminary results from the therapist focus group will be discussed.

Results/Findings:

Five therapists participated in a focus group discussing their experiences of supplementing counselling with a well-being app. Thematic analysis identified two prominent themes - feasibility and facilitation. The feasibility theme contained sub-themes which refer to the acceptability and implementation of the intervention. With successful implementation, therapists described using the app as a short-term practical solution to facilitate the therapeutic process, however, analysis also identified sub-themes that could interfere with the acceptance and implementation of the intervention.

Research Limitations:

The current study aimed to address various feasibility metrics to inform the design of a fully powered trial and therefore preliminary findings should be taken with caution and cannot determine effectiveness.

Conclusions/Implications:

These results inform the training needs and knowledge base for university counselling services that are interested in being more research active, or are considering to offer well-being apps to students. Our findings highlight factors which interfere with the acceptance and implementation of a new intervention involving well-being apps. With successful implementation, our findings also show potential to facilitate the therapeutic process by using well-being apps to promote student self-awareness and responsibility of mental health.

Presenter: Chryssa Chalkia

Professional role: Integrative Psychotherapist and Counsellor

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: psychotherapy, 'premature' termination/ending, client-initiated ending, therapist's experiences, Strauss and Corbin grounded theory

A pilot study on therapist's experience of client-initiated termination in long-term therapy

Aim/Purpose:

To explore therapists' perspectives of prematurely ending therapy.

Design/Methodology:

This study was developed by conducting a literature review to explore key themes in the field. This was followed by using qualitative semi-structured interviews to collect data and then apply Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded methodology. Purposive sampling was used to select four participants who were accredited psychotherapists and had experienced a client-initiated 'premature' ending in long term therapy.

Results/Findings:

The findings varied across cases, but suggest that therapists' exposure to client-initiated endings is understood as an intense and complex experience; encompassing challenging feelings, but leading to a rewarding and transformational process. Data analysis identified various factors that can hinder the therapeutic process of client-initiated endings as well as factors that were essential for therapists to feel supported throughout the process. This informed a tentative, grounded theory process model of therapist's personal and professional journey. Findings within the context of the existing literature, the implications for therapy and research are also discussed followed by a reflexive exploration on how this research was conducted.

Research Limitations:

Bracketing my own subjectivity and biases was aided by keeping memos and a reflexive journal. A small number of therapists were sampled (four to ensure the data was manageable). As a result, it did not reach theoretical saturation which reduced the generalisability of the findings.

Conclusions/Implications:

The study findings are in line with current literature that client's unilateral decision to end therapy can have a significant impact on therapist's professional confidence and challenge them to facilitate the ending that supports the clients. This study provides additional insight that shows how premature endings can be a 'restorative' experience and what support therapists need to achieve that.

Presenter: Dr Lois de Cruz

Professional Role: Lecturer in Counselling Psychology

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Abstract: Poster

Keywords: miscarriage, reflexivity, reflexive interviews, interpretative phenomenological analysis, counselling

Giving voice through reflexivity: women's experience of miscarriage many years after the event.

Aim/Purpose:

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how the author used reflexivity in a variety of creative ways, in her recent PhD research on women's experience of miscarriage many decades after the event.

Design methodology:

In this research, five women who had experienced miscarriage between 14 and 28 years ago took part in unstructured in-depth interviews. As well as undertaking an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al, 2009) on the transcripts, the author reframed her data in poetic form keeping as close as possible to the participant's original experience. This method allowed her to present her participants' perceptions of their experience of miscarriage in a way that was both intimate and redolent for the reader. Additionally, in order to explore both her epistemological and personal reflexivity (Willig, 2013), the author took part in three reflexive interviews at transitional points in the research. She also kept a reflexive journal (Tufford & Newman, 2012) and engaged in a variety of creative writing.

Results/Findings:

In this paper, the author's focus is on the four themes that emerged from a thematic analysis of her first reflexive interview: *Time-travelling*, *Creative Forces*, *Wind-egg* and *Shadow Child*. She will use these themes, extracts from her journal and her creative writing to explore reflexively her stance as a researcher and as a women who has experienced miscarriage. She will also perform her poetic representation of the overall findings from her research.

Research limitations:

A major challenge of committing to in depth reflexivity is that there is no clear method for how reflexivity should be approached. It is dependent on the researcher's commitment and self-awareness. Furthermore, too much inward gazing could be perceived as self-indulgent.

Conclusions/Implications:

This research demonstrates that although miscarriage is a common occurrence, there is very little qualitative research into the long term psychological impact of miscarriage and it is a neglected area in the counselling literature. This creative and reflexive research, aims to increase awareness of the long term psychological effects of miscarriage and to give a voice to women who miscarry. Hopefully, this will lead to a more compassionate understanding of miscarriage by health professional counsellors and society in general.

Presenter: Enechojo G Egbe-Okpenge PhD

Professional Role: Associate Professor of Guidance & Counselling, Director, Centre for Counselling & Human Development, Lecturer in Counselling

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: motivation, performance, guidance counsellors, post-primary schools, Benue State

Motivation and performance of guidance counsellors in post-primary schools in Makurdi, Benue State

Aim/Purpose:

The purpose of this research was to investigate what can be done to enhance the motivation of guidance counsellors and increase their performance in the post-primary schools

Design/Methodology:

The survey type of research design was used. Motivation and performance of Guidance Counsellors Instrument (MPGCI) made up of 15 items developed by the researcher was used for data collection. Data were collected from one hundred guidance counsellors and career masters. The Chi-Square test was employed to analyse the data collected.

Results/Findings:

The findings reveal that the environment in which counselling takes place in the post-primary schools is very important for effective guidance and counselling. The privilege and opportunity to carry out the professional duties of a counsellor motivates a counsellor. The provision of funds for the counselling unit, allotment of time for counselling on the school time-table and being made a full-time, that is, without teaching load or other administrative duties enhances the performance of the guidance counsellor.

Research Limitations:

The research was restricted to only one state and city of that state, so the research is limited in its generalisability.

Conclusions/Implications:

Based on the research conducted it is concluded that: the environment in which counselling takes place in the post-primary schools is very important for effective guidance and counselling. Also the privilege and opportunity to carry out the professional duties of a counsellor motivates a counsellor. Therefore, all stakeholders in education should do all within their position to ensure counsellors are well motivated.

The professional ethics of the guidance counsellor includes confidentiality, so it is important that the environment, that is, the office provided for counselling ensures that there is confidentiality. Guidance and counselling in post-primary schools is at the critical stage of psychosocial personality development which needs the full attention of a full-time school counsellor. The roles of a guidance counsellor and those of class/form teachers are different, so being a class teacher and equally a guidance counsellor won't be very helpful to the counsellee at this level of education and stage of personality and career development.

Presenter: Julia Gorle

Other Authors: Dr Astrid Schepman, Professor William West & Dr Paul Rodway

Professional Role: Counsellor, PhD Student of Psychology

Institution: University of Chester

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ABSTRACT: poster

Keywords: Emotional contagion, counsellors, clients, empathy, mixed methods

Investigating Emotional Contagion in Counsellors

Aim/Purpose:

Emotional contagion theory (Hatfield, Rapson & Cacioppo, 1994) proposes that people 'catch' the emotions of others through subconscious, automatic mimicry and feedback processes which lead to a convergence of emotions. The study aimed to test if emotional contagion occurred in counsellors and psychology students after viewing video clips of emotion, and to identify differences in contagion levels both between participant groups, and the context of the emotion portrayed.

Design/Methodology:

Purposive sampling was used to recruit eleven psychology students and eleven qualified counsellors for voluntary participation in this mixed methods study which was partly online and partly interview based. Using a self-report emotion rating scale, participants' responses to twelve video clips of portrayed anger and/or sadness both in a counselling and non-counselling context were measured. Participants were subsequently interviewed to obtain subjective accounts of their emotional experience in relation to one of the clips. Rating scale responses were using SPSS and transcripts of interviews subject to thematic analysis.

Results/Findings:

Ten out of eleven counsellors reported experiencing at least one of the emotions portrayed by the clip which depicted anger and sadness and all ten expressed having a physical manifestation of that emotion. Anger (incorporating frustration) was experienced more frequently than sadness by counsellors in response to the clip. Nine counsellors suggested that their experience in the study was similar to their counselling practice.

Nine out of eleven psychology students expressed that they experienced at least one emotion in response to the clip which portrayed anger and sadness. Sadness was reported more frequently than anger by psychology student participants in response to the clip. Quantitative data will be reported at the Conference.

Research Limitations:

Limitations include sample size and some of the video clips used were acted and as such may have influenced the results.

Conclusions/ Implications:

Emotional contagion for anger and sadness occurred and physical manifestations of emotion were present for all counsellors who reported an emotional experience at interview. Further studies hope to investigate the impact of emotional contagion for counsellors.

Presenter: Ella Haselden

Professional role: MA in Clinical Counselling

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: miscarriage, acknowledgements, disenfranchisement, identities, connections

Ways in which women who have experienced a miscarriage acknowledge the life and death of their unborn child

Aim/purpose:

Early miscarriages can be overlooked as a significant societal loss. Traditional ways of marking the event might be withheld. Subsequently, many women create personal rituals, ceremonies, or use symbols etc., to acknowledge or mark the event. This research aims to explore 'acknowledgements' made by women who experienced a first trimester miscarriage, the significance and meanings these hold and therapeutic outcome.

Design/Methodology:

This qualitative research explores the lived experience of five women, aged 42 - 58, who experienced an early miscarriage and made acknowledgements between 1 week to 15 years later, selected via counselling agencies and online counselling forums. Data collected through semi-structured interviews was using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Results/Findings:

3 superordinate themes emerged (below), incorporating 19 subordinate themes. A process: pregnancy hopes and dreams were interrupted by early miscarriage. 'Blocking it out' and 'making it real' preceded a 'need' to honour the baby through acknowledgements.

Acknowledgements made: choosing a name; writing letters; cycling challenge; flower bombing; prayer; memory box; material objects and symbolism. Outcome of acknowledgements: Identities were established; connections were made with others and a continued connection to baby, through afterlife beliefs, nature and creation of memories; loss was incorporated into a narrative; feelings of peace and comfort were experienced.

Research Limitations:

There are few studies on the area of 'acknowledgements'. Findings echo current literature and research around this subject. Given a longer timescale and using a larger sample the age group may be broadened, which might lead to differences in findings and produce generalisable results. Researcher subjectivity was managed through 'bracketing', continual personal reflection and academic supervision.

Conclusions/Implications:

Acknowledgements which hold significance and meaning could be beneficial because they:

- Enable connections to others
- Validate the loss, establish identities and help make meaning
- Enable the formation and articulation of narratives
- Facilitate hope of reunion in the hereafter
- Create a tangible presence of the personhood of the loss
- Form memories through their performance

The research increases awareness of the possible impact of early miscarriage and the role of acknowledgements in helping women find peace and comfort.

Presenter: John Hills

Other Authors: Dr Jane Cahill, Dr John Lees, Prof Dawn Freshwater

Professional Role: Postgraduate researcher

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: Medically unexplained symptoms, physical symptoms, psychotherapy, literature review, case study

Case study research into psychotherapies for people who present with physical symptoms, 2012-2016: a literature review

Aim/Purpose:

The Royal College of Psychiatrists defines medically unexplained symptoms (MUS) as ‘persistent bodily complaints for which adequate examination does not reveal sufficient explanatory structural or other specified pathology’ (2011). MUS include fatigue, digestive difficulties, dizziness, nausea, numbness or pain. Typically in the subtext of the term is the suggestion that the symptoms may be linked to the person’s cognitive, emotional or relational experience. Mental health services refer to evidence based reviews featuring a range of psychoeducation approaches however treatments are still very much in their infancy (Mobini, 2015). This review analyses case study research published in the five years 2012-2016 seeking to discover what was facilitative (i.e. what worked), and what change looked like.

Design/Methodology:

A search was performed using the PsycINFO database for key words relating to physical symptoms, limited to the specified years and that the articles would be in the English language. Included articles described in depth therapeutic work and client responses but articles were excluded if the client had more serious illnesses (e.g. terminal cancer), or client had suffered brain injury (incl. stroke). This produced 27 studies. A thematic analysis was conducted on the texts.

Results/Findings:

Emergent themes included:

- Difficulty connecting with and verbalising feelings, in some cases paralleled by difficulties establishing the therapeutic relationship.
- Attachment styles and the roles of significant others.
- Using projective approaches such as creativity or visualisation to work through dissociated material
- Cognitive behavioural approaches such as addressing beliefs about health and personal efficacy, and coping behaviours.

Research Limitations:

Case studies can be charged with lacking generalisability due to unique contexts and the lack of systematic comparison amongst a large sample group. However contextualised descriptions of interventions and client responses described in this review will be relatable to practitioners, e.g. this reminds me of my work with X and that approach might be useful, supporting generalisability (McLeod, 2010).

Conclusions/Implications:

When people present in counselling and psychotherapies with physical symptoms, treatment strategies are diverse, but there are examples of successful treatments and recoveries across the modalities.

Presenter: Anne Moorhead

Other Authors: Susan Hunter, Jane Simms, Diane Hazlett

Professional Role: Lecturer

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: psychological, supporting pupils, teachers, school, counsellors

Teachers have a role in supporting counselling provision within schools: online quantitative survey

Aim/Purpose:

Teachers are in a unique position as they are in contact with young people within schools. Although counselling is offered in or through schools, the mental health issues among pupils are increasing. The aim of this study was to investigate the role of school teachers in psychologically and emotionally supporting pupils (11-18 years).

Design/Methodology:

The research design was an online survey (mainly quantitative), which the questionnaire was designed from our previous research interviewing teachers (n=19). Following a pilot, principals in all secondary and grammar schools throughout Northern Ireland were invited to ask their teachers to participate in this survey. Data was analysed using SPSS version 22 by frequencies, Mann Whitney and Pearson correlations.

Results/Findings:

In total, 402 teachers completed this survey, of which 74% were female and 26% were male, aged between 20-60+ years. Majority of teachers (98%) reported that they have a role in psychologically and emotionally supporting pupils but stated they are not adequately trained (86%). They reported that this role should consist of: awareness of psychological and emotional issues (98%), recognise signs and symptoms of pupils' psychological and emotional issues (97%), identify abnormal/uncharacteristic behaviour (97%), provide information on available sources of support (96%), and support pupils in accessing services (89%). Schools access counselling services (92%), which pupils engage with (79%) and have a positive impact (79%), however these services do not meet the current demand (60%). There were numerous significant differences, especially among the Education Boards and years of experience of the teachers ($P < 0.05$).

Research Limitations:

Although this sample of teachers was from Northern Ireland, results are relevant for other regions of the UK. This research focused solely on the teachers' viewpoint, however the addition of counsellors' perspectives would give further insight to this collaborative relationship.

Conclusions/Implications:

This research clearly found that teachers have a role in psychologically and emotionally supporting pupils. This indicates that there is a need for both teachers and counsellors to provide a collaborative integrated approach in earlier intervention to pupils in real time. This suggests that Counsellors have an important role in collaborating with teachers in psychologically and emotionally supporting pupils.

Presenter: Claudia Nielsen

Professional Role: PhD student

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: psychotherapy, consciousness , death, afterlife, death anxiety

Exploring dark corners: therapists views of life after death

Aim/Purpose:

Despite death being part of our lives, and our certain future, it is a subject not easily talked about. There are two perspectives on the subject: the extinguishing of consciousness following the death of the physical body or its survival. Existing research deals primarily with death in terms of what happens up to the event. Little exists to explore how people think or feel about what may happen after death and how this informs the way they see themselves and their lives. This research explores therapists' views of what happens after death, and how their beliefs impact on their work with clients.

Design/Methodology:

This poster presents emerging findings from my doctoral study, in which a mixed-methods approach employs an online survey and semi-structured in-depth individual interviews to gather data. The survey respondents are therapists recruited through professional websites. The interviewees are qualified therapists who declared themselves as spiritual. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews will be thematically analysed to identify patterns of meaning across the set.

Results/Findings:

The survey (n=77) so far, shows that in reply to the question - do you believe in life after death - 47% of respondents said 'yes', 22% 'don't know' and 31% 'no'. The semi-structured interviews so far conducted (7), show that the subject of death is mainly absent from the work with clients, which raises questions about why this should be so.

Research Limitations:

Research has shown that contemplation of own death causes anxiety therefore it is possible that only those therapists who have explored their feelings regarding their own death, have come forward to participate in this research

Conclusions/Implications:

This study is work in progress but so far it shows that many respondents feel that their beliefs have an impact on how they live their lives and on how they work with clients. The outcomes of this study will be important in opening up this key but neglected subject for discussion and to consider how therapists can be supported to feel more confident in dealing with issues of post death existence in their work with clients' death anxiety.

Presenters: Chisom Nwankwo, Heather Drobinska

Other Authors: Riana Lewis, Hannah Commodore

Professional Role: Higher Professional Diploma, 2nd Year Students

Institution/Affiliation: Lewisham Counselling and Counsellor Training Association (LC&CTA)

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: religion/spirituality, thematic analysis, mental health, impact

Counsellors' experiences of working with clients diagnosed with a mental health disorder who bring religion/spirituality into the therapeutic space

Aim/Purpose:

To investigate and explore the experiences of counsellors working with clients diagnosed with mental health disorders and the impact religion/spirituality may or may not have on the therapeutic process.

Design/Methodology:

We interviewed four counsellors extending various modalities, with experiences of working with clients diagnosed with a mental health disorder as per Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders criteria (DSM-V, 2013). Interviews were semi-structured and audio taped, then transcribed. Thematic analysis informed by the principals of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) was used to analyse the data identifying common themes and highlighting anomalies. Such methodology allowed us to descriptively detail participants' subjective and phenomenological experiences of working with this client group. We followed the BACP Ethical Guidelines for Researching Counselling and Psychotherapy (Bond, 2004).

Results/Findings:

Our findings indicate that clients' spirituality and/or religious beliefs brought by the client into the therapeutic space can be an aid to the counselling process and religious texts appear helpful to some clients in relation to their personal understanding of psychosis and mental illness. Spirituality and religion can be reassuring/helpful to such clients. This appears especially true if a client is in recovery from an addictive illness. Conversely, clients' spiritual/religious viewpoints/values can hinder the therapeutic process on an existential level; some clients can *spiritualise everything* in terms of Godly or demonic processes at work in their lives; in turn this can block a clients progress toward making positive day-to-day life enhancing changes and/or their acceptance of diagnosis.

Research Limitations:

Our findings arise from a small respondent sample of counsellors, therefore our results may be unique to the relatively few counsellors who were included in our study. The qualitative method we used may mean our findings are of limited generalisability to a wider population of counsellors in other settings (J. McLeod, 2003).

Conclusions/Implications:

Our findings indicate that it may be important for counsellors to be aware that clients who are in recovery from an addictive illness highly benefit from having and/or developing spiritual beliefs, a similar to the conclusion drawn by Williams (2008). It seems clients who *spiritualise everything* are best supported by counsellors who help such clients to find spiritual/religious meaning in any mental health diagnosis and/or treatment.

Presenter: Jeremy O'Sullivan

Professional Role: Trainee/Student Counsellor
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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: seating, distance, angle, type, person-centred

Seating dynamics in person-centred counselling: chair distance, chair angle and chair type

Aim/Purpose:

Seating is a supportive and often not fully considered or appreciated aspect of the counselling process and environment. There are a limited number of investigations into seating dynamics in counselling in the literature. This research explores counsellor and client seating dynamics and preferences among person-centred diploma course students.

Design/Methodology:

A questionnaire was used to query students on the 3 dynamics, using 12 *distance* images, 5 *angle* images, and 9 *type* images. Overall importance of these dynamics for the participants was also queried using a numeric rating scale. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire from both counsellor and client perspectives.

Results/Findings:

Data from the respondents (n=20) were entered into an Excel file and double-checked. Data review was performed reporting highest preferences for the 3 dynamics and overall importance results. 3 - 3.5ft distance range was most preferred for both roles, with clients having a broader range in favour of further distance. Face to face chair orientation was most preferred by both roles, with slight angle being second favourite. Counsellor chair type preference was more for uprightness/support, and client chair preference was more for comfort. Overall importance of the 3 dynamics was rated as 77.1% (out of 100%) for the counsellor role and 79.3% (out of 100%) for the client role. Distance was the most important dynamic for both roles. Approximately 60/75% of clients felt they could not adjust their chair position.

Research Limitations:

This was a small-scale questionnaire study among trainee/student counsellors. Further larger and more controlled research including qualified and experienced counsellors of various therapeutic approaches is expected to yield truer results. Room environmental factors such as tables/furniture/room size, which can impact on seating dynamics, was not included in the current research.

Conclusions/Implications:

This research provides insight and raises awareness into seating dynamics in counselling, in particular potential differences between counsellor and client preferences. This has implications in practice regarding ensuring clients feel at ease to sit in whichever position they prefer, and that seating dynamics are held in awareness by the counsellor as contributing to successful counselling.

Presenter: Jeannette Roddy
Other Author: Lynne Gabriel

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: domestic abuse, competency framework, knowledge, characteristics, counselling skills

Building a competency framework for domestic abuse counselling practice

Aim/Purpose:

Previous research had been successfully undertaken with clients who had received counselling after experiencing domestic abuse. The data obtained from interviews with 14 women and 6 men was using grounded theory to develop a model of preferred counselling practice from a client perspective. The client view showed clear preferences for aspects of practice related to knowledge and skills previously highlighted in practitioner research and also identified valued counsellor characteristics which practitioners may be unable to see in themselves. This provided the opportunity to generate a competency profile for a domestic abuse counsellor, which could be used for training, recruitment and personal development.

Design/Methodology:

The initial framework was constructed by listing the characteristics of valued counsellors identified by participants in the initial research project. These characteristics were then compared with existing competency frameworks used in Counselling for Depression and Counselling for Young People. Finally, a review of the issues which may emerge when working with domestic violence more generally (but not necessarily experienced by the participants) was conducted, to ensure the framework was more widely applicable in terms of knowledge and skills.

Results/Findings:

The competencies for counsellors working in this area are demanding and require high standards of practice together with substantial knowledge of the issues, challenges and presentation of domestic abuse. Personal counsellor characteristics indicated that empathy, congruence and acceptance were vital, whilst the ability to hold hope for the client, respond appropriately to any disclosures and show compassion were also valued. The ability to support clients within the context of an organisation as well as their own specific situation was also noted.

Research Limitations:

The framework is still in the early stages of development and is currently undergoing review and assessment with a wider group of practitioners. Further refinement and development is required.

Conclusions/Implications:

The developed framework provides a tool highlighting the knowledge, skills, organisational awareness and personal characteristics required for working with survivors of domestic abuse. This framework could be used to identify potential training, personal development or experiential gaps for counselling practitioners.

Presenter: Emma Sanchez

Professional Role: Trainee (at time of research)

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Keywords: not-knowing, systemic training, reflective practice

Paths to uncharted territories of learning: the process of a first-person cooperative inquiry in developing trainees' self-understanding

Aim/Purpose:

This poster presents a reflective analysis of the author's learning through the process of a first-person cooperative inquiry (FPCI). The purpose of the FPCI was to develop the author's understanding of the 'not-knowing' stance (Anderson and Goolishian, 1992).

Design/Methodology:

The FPCI represented an integration of two 'forms' of action research; wherein one form (first-person) is held *within* the other form (cooperative). Accordingly, while the author was positioned as the lead researcher (come subject) of her own first-person inquiry, she was accompanied by peers who were simultaneously conducting their own first-person inquiries.

The FPCI was structured as a four-stage process of 'planning', 'acting/observing', 'developing', and 'reflecting/revising'; which was repeated over three cycles. Primarily drawn from simulated practice and collected through reflective journals, data was according to auto-ethnographic principles. Within this process, the author sought to step beyond the threshold of propositional knowledge and, instead, embrace other ways of knowing. This integration of knowledges served to enhance the validity of the FPCI, by prompting the author to question the extent to which she privileged (or denied) one knowledge over another.

Results/Findings:

The author's learning was as in-depth as it was broad. To summarise, she describes three 'new' learnings: firstly, certainty is an unhelpful myth (e.g. we limit our capability to learn if we assume that certainty is achievable), secondly, sharing the lead is necessary (e.g. both the therapist and the client 'lead' the therapeutic conversation; albeit in different ways and for different reasons) and, thirdly, we cannot deny our knowledges and nor should we want to (e.g. we are influenced by our preconceptions and, therefore, it is important that we do not overlook these).

Research Limitations:

Efforts were made to critically examine and 'expose' biases, yet the author acknowledges that subjectivity is a necessary component of action research.

Conclusions/Implications:

The author proposes that the process of a FPCI can facilitate powerful self- and relational-learning for trainees, whilst also promoting a culture of 'action and reflection' which (in her experience) becomes embedded within trainees' post-qualified practice.

Presenters: Denise Sherwood, Mudimo Okondo

Other Authors: Darren Neal, Amanda Renz, Adele Stapylton-Smith

Professional Role: Higher Professional Diploma, 2nd Year Students

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: schizophrenia, anxiety, person-centred, thematic

In the experience of practitioners in the field, is the person-centred approach helpful when working with clients who experience anxiety and paranoid schizophrenia?

Aim/Purpose:

To investigate, explore and describe whether the person centred approach is perceived as a helpful therapy when working with clients who have been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and/or anxiety.

Design/Methodology:

We interviewed six person-centred practitioners in the field, working with clients diagnosed with schizophrenia/anxiety; interviews were semi-structured and audio-taped. Thematic analysis informed by the principals of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) was used to analyse the data. We followed the BACP Ethical Guidelines for Researching Counselling and Psychotherapy (Bond, 2004).

Results/Findings:

In our respondents' experience, PCA appears to be helpful when working with this client group and long-term therapeutic alliances seem to be the norm. It further indicated that some clients in this group make positive changes in their lives and the approach appeared to assist clients in maintaining their organismic sense of self within their own frame of reference. Some concerns exist in relation to clients' ability to relationally connect with other people in the community once therapy ceased. Conversely our results also indicate that on occasion therapists were unable to establish psychological/relational contact with some clients as such clients did not respond well to PCA interventions.

Research Limitations:

This was localised research thus our findings are based on a small respondent sample, which may be unique to the relatively few practitioners who were included in our study; thus our findings have limited generalisability (J. McLeod, 2003).

Conclusions/Implications:

According to respondents' subjective experiences, our findings suggest that PCA counsellors need to be aware that working with this client group often leads to long-term alliances, which appear to assist such clients in managing their lives with greater positivity. The PCA practitioner may need to occasionally employ directive techniques when working with this client group. It is noteworthy to mention that our conclusions are similar to those drawn by James and McQueen (2016).

Presenter: M Ann Shillingford

Other Author: S. Kent Butler

Professional Role: Associate Professor

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: STEM, parents, counsellors, careers, phenomenology

Exploring school counsellors leadership engagement with parents of colour on STEM education and career choice

Aim/Purpose:

The expectation within the United States is that the lack of professionals educated and trained in STEM professions will fall short (Carnevale, Smith, & Melton, 2011). STEM represents professions and jobs that highlight innovation and are framed on knowledge and skills related to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Although several programs have been developed across the U.S. to address the underrepresentation of people of colour in STEM, the numbers remain problematic. With the understanding that parents play a significant role in children's career choice, this study sought to explore parent's knowledge, understanding, and influence related to STEM fields as well as to investigate school counsellor's role in supporting parents through this process.

Design/Methodology:

A qualitative approach was used through a phenomenological lens to conduct this study. The following research questions guided the study: (a) What are the perceptions of parents of colour towards STEM and (b) What is the leading role of school counsellors in contributing to the knowledge of parents of colour towards STEM?

Results/Findings:

Based on the results of the study, it appears that parents of colour have basic knowledge of STEM professions and recognize the significance in financial and occupational stability that is involved. School counsellors, although recipients of limited training on STEM, have good working knowledge of these professions. However, limitations in time, access to students, and needed resources have hindered their ability to fully engage and support parents.

Research Limitations:

Limitations include small sample size, interviews being conducted via telephone so that researcher was not able to capture the nonverbal expressions of participants, and that participants (parents and counsellors) were limited to two States within the U.S.

Conclusions/Implications:

To address the STEM crisis, systemic change is needed so that school counsellors can effectively meet the changing needs of our diverse communities. However, school counsellors also need to advocate for their appropriate roles. Upholding leadership practices that advances the welfare of children is most assuredly needed.

Presenter: Milena Sobesto

Professional Role: Psychotherapist

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: psychotherapy, psycho-oncology, multidisciplinary teams, object relations, psychodynamics

A psychotherapeutic exploration of the impact of working on multidisciplinary teams (MDT) in psycho-oncology

Aim/Purpose:

To critically evaluate from the psychotherapeutic perspective the impact of working with cancer patients on individual professions. It aims at uncovering aspects of working with vulnerability and unconscious processes involved in the care for cancer patients.

Design/Methodology:

The research method included thematic analysis. The study involved five semi-structured interviews and the participants were invited by email to take part in the study.

Results/Findings:

Focusing on the experiences that were given by the participants around the phenomenon of working with 'dying', three key themes were uncovered; managing vulnerability, personal experiences (countertransference) and compromised communication. These themes discussed underlined dynamics that are present in the work within psycho-oncology including death and performance anxiety. The research has described the unconscious and projective identifications that are an indication of the difficulty of working in psycho-oncology. It also looked at the notion of communication within the MDTs showing that the grouping can carry certain dynamics that impacts professionals, their well-being, care effectiveness, and overall functioning of the team. The finding suggested more awareness of the psychological difficulty that working within psycho-oncology carries.

Research Limitations:

This study suggested that psychotherapists are not seen on MDT's in psycho-oncology. It would be of benefit to further explore why psychotherapists do not seek to work in the psycho-oncology field.

Conclusions/Implications:

The study demonstrated a psychotherapeutic input through the interpretations of dynamics, which were generated from the participant's experiences. The findings underlined and brought to light the hardship of coping with the work and indicated how professionals tend to deny their real feelings. This rejection of the impact and the failure to admit to their own suffering was a product of countertransferential reactions that individuals presented with, which also comes from own vulnerability towards the subject (Dartington, 2010). It was useful to see and contemplate on the danger of these uncovered countertransference issues, which can lead to compassion fatigue or even burnout (Berzoff and Kita, 2010). In the end it was concluded that psychotherapy can contribute to effective functioning of MDTs in psycho-oncology as it offers understanding of the impact the work has on the professionals.

Presenter: Ulrike Speers

Other Authors: Dr Anne Moorhead and Dr Maggie Long

Professional Role: Counsellor, PhD student

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: counselling, Chinese community, literature review

Applied counselling approaches within the Chinese community: a review of studies using a systematic approach

Aim/Purpose:

Despite the existence of multi-cultural counselling theories, the uptake of counselling is low among the Chinese community. The aim was to review literature using a systematic approach, explore applied counselling approaches and the impact of counselling within the Chinese community.

Design/Methodology:

A literature review using a systematic approach, searching 14 databases, using key terms 'Chinese' AND 'Counselling' OR 'Counselling' OR 'Therapy' OR 'Psychotherapy' AND 'Mental health' OR 'Emotional Well-being' AND 'Help-seeking' OR 'Seeking help' was undertaken. PRISMA guidelines were followed and inclusion/exclusion criteria applied. Of the 89 studies found, 29 had a primary focus on counselling and these included a wide range of study designs, for example, cross-sectional, experimental, exploratory or ethnographic designs.

Results/Findings:

Of the 29 studies referring to counselling theories only 12 were conducted among the overseas Chinese community (in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the USA, with only one conducted in the UK). The remaining 17 studies included counselling methods in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan and showed a greater variety of applied counselling approaches as the counselling issues explored varied more. Of the 29 studies examined, cognitive behaviour therapy was the most common approach but integrative, multicultural, family and person-centred approaches were also identified. Counselling issues presented included anxiety, bereavement, depression, domestic abuse, family and relationship issues.

Research Limitations:

The review focused solely on existing published research in English. Although quantitative studies and qualitative studies were evenly distributed most qualitative studies had only one or two participants.

Conclusions/Implications: The low number of studies indicate that research into counselling among the Chinese community is scarce, particularly in the UK. The findings also showed a need for qualitative research with a wider range of participants among the Chinese community. Most of the 12 studies referring to the Chinese community dealt with counselling issues of depression or anxiety, with cognitive behaviour therapy the preferred counselling approach. More research is needed to examine how different counselling approaches could be applied within a Chinese community setting.

Presenter: Shamini Sriskandarajah

Professional Role: Therapist

Institution/Affiliation: University of Greenwich, MSc in Therapeutic Counselling

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: auto-ethnography, anorexia, eating disorders, recovery, wounded healer

Someday this pain will be useful to you: from recovering from an eating disorder to becoming a therapist

Aim/Purpose:

There's research on severe and enduring eating disorders, early recovery, and 'wounded healers', but less on enduring eating disorders, long-term recovery, and therapists who had eating disorders. This research aimed to see if there are connections between therapists' journeys (from recovery to therapist) and the implications for their work now and if recovery from anorexia opens up the possibility for greater reflectiveness.

Design/Methodology:

Auto-ethnographic research, using a free-association narrative approach was employed. Also, conversations with colleagues and participants. Three participants were recruited via Beat. The criteria were: counsellor/therapist in at least the second year of training, recovered from anorexia/bulimia for at least three years. Semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Auto-ethnography included 'morning pages' and an evening journal which included drawing. Art psychotherapy was undertaken throughout. Researcher recorded themes every few weeks. Themes which unexpectedly came up would be further explored with others.

Results/Findings:

All participants are white women and qualified therapists. The researcher is a British-Asian third-year counselling student; all are 30-50 years old. The over-arching themes were the loss of anorexia; difficulties transitioning from girlhood to womanhood; identity as a therapist and recovered anorexic. An unexpected finding was disenfranchised grief (for the loss of anorexia).

Research limitations:

Personal experiences and self-disclosure of the researcher mean the findings are valid, but not reliable - another researcher without similar experiences might get different responses. Findings are generalisable. Research is aimed at 'wounded healers' and professionals who work with recovery, to foster a community of understanding. However, the research is subjective and narrative-focused. There were no male participants, nor anyone who identified as gay or bisexual.

Conclusions/Implications:

Recovery needs to be approached patiently as a journey which is not necessarily linear. A strong therapeutic relationship can create a safe space of acceptance that is vital for recovery. There needs to be a safe framework for therapists who wish to share their own recovery experiences.

Presenter: Emma Taylor

Professional Role: Counsellor (Wired) and solicitor

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ABSTRACT: Poster

Keywords: Adoptees, identity, authenticity, grief

'Coming home': an exploration of the impact on searching for birth origins on an adult adoptee's existential state of being

Aim/Purpose:

Adoption is a lifelong process. Adoptees have to incorporate their adoptive status into their identity throughout their lives. Adoptees struggle with a wide range of psychological issues, such as shame, loss, grief, rejection, and depression (Lifton, (1994); Brodzinsky, (1992)). Research suggests that adoptees who search for birth origins feel better about their adoptive status (Brodzinsky (1992); Carston (2000)), no matter what the outcome of the search. This research looks at whether the search process impacts on adoptees issues, and if so, how it does.

Design/Methodology:

The study was heuristic. The author charted her own search for birth origins by recording her own counselling sessions, keeping a journal and writing poetry. The data was following Moustakas' heuristic process.

Results/Findings:

Four main themes came out of the data, together with two pervasive themes. The adoptee was able to process and re-assimilate themes of roots, identity, anger and authenticity into her sense of self. In doing so, she was able to grieve her losses, and experience spiritual growth. These themes are reflected throughout the literature as issues for adoptees. The search for origins is an existential search for self (Krueger, 1997).

Research Limitations:

The analysis of the data is based on the researcher's own subjective experience of the data, which leads to a risk of researcher bias. It is also difficult to generalise the findings to all adoptees, or to those who search. The research may exclude the different experiences of male adoptees, or adoptees in different age groups.

Conclusions/Implications:

The process of searching allows the adoptee to resolve feelings of disconnection and isolation, and to create a more coherent sense of identity. It allows them to openly grieve and acknowledge their adoption losses. The research outlines the underlying issues that adoptees may bring to counselling. In approaching therapy from an existential perspective, it is hoped that this will allow adoptees to work towards a resolution of these issues.

PAPERS

Presenter: Lucy Arnot

Other Author: Mhairi Thurston

Professional Role: MSc Counselling student

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: gypsy/travellers, barriers, minority ethnic, cultural competency, interpretative phenomenological analysis

An exploratory study of perceptions and experiences of counselling among Scottish gypsy/traveller women

Aim/Purpose:

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of counselling among Scottish gypsy/traveller women. In doing so, the study aimed to identify some of the barriers to counselling for gypsy/travellers and consider how services can respond to this.

Much has been written about the health of gypsy/travellers and access to services. However, there appears to be no research specifically addressing access to counselling or gypsy/travellers' experiences of therapy. This study addresses this research gap by employing a qualitative approach to explore the perspectives and experiences of female gypsy/travellers.

Design/Methodology:

The study adopted an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, drawing on semi-structured interviews with six gypsy/traveller women with self-reported poor mental health.

All participants were aged in their 40s/50s and living in central Scotland, and were identified through the researcher's role working with a charity supporting minority ethnic carers.

An idiographic approach was taken towards data analysis, identifying emerging themes and patterns across the interviews.

Results/Findings:

Analysis of the interviews revealed an overarching theme of 'holding back'. Participants anticipated prejudice in the counselling room and reported withholding their Gypsy/Traveller identity from counsellors. Participants also reported a fear of counselling opening up painful feelings and had found ways of '*just getting on*' with their difficulties.

Research Limitations:

As an IPA study, the sample size was small, making it difficult to generalise the findings to all Scottish gypsy/traveller women. However, this provided rich data capturing the lived experiences of participants.

The dual role of researcher and charity worker also posed some challenges to researcher subjectivity. However, this is also considered an asset to the research, particularly in terms of access to participants and counteracting the 'research fatigue' that exists in the community.

Conclusions/Implications:

This study helps counsellors and psychotherapists to understand the experiences of female gypsy/travellers and to reflect on how their practice can be more accessible to the community and, ultimately, more culturally competent.

Presenter: Shane Barrett

Professional Role: Ex Professional Footballer

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Sports, transitions, retirement, counselling, supports

Towards addressing problematic transitions encountered by professional footballers in sports retirement

Aim/Purpose:

The aim of this study was to address and highlight the issues relating to transitions from professional football. Retirement from professional sports can be a disconcerting period in the life of a footballer, presenting significant obstacles in transitioning to a life beyond sport and into a second career. Therefore, the study aims to what provisions might be put in place before, during and after retirement.

Design/Methodology:

Given the nature of this study and my in-depth understanding of the subject from a personal perspective, it was considered appropriate to use qualitative research methods. Purposive sampling within a qualitative research framework which focused on one-to-one interviews was used to engage eight male ex-professional footballers in the research over a six month time frame. A total of 15 questions were developed and participants were engaged in a semi-structured interview process which typically lasted one hour.

Results/Findings:

The results of the analysis highlighted that participants had an unrealistic expectation as to the longevity of their sporting career having given no consideration to how their lives might be structured upon retirement which was either forced (due to injury) or voluntary. This was coupled with a misunderstanding surrounding the meaning of retirement and raised the issue as to whether retirement from professional sports can ever be deemed to be voluntary. The implications suggested are that negative transitions might be attributed to a retirement which lacks the development of alternative pathways which should run simultaneously with the professional sports career.

Research Limitations:

The limitations of the research are the relatively short timeframe of six months and the small sample of participants.

Conclusions/Implications:

Professional supports such as psychotherapy, counselling and career guidance are required at the earliest possible stages of a player's career. The participants of this study recognised the value of counselling but interestingly did not believe it applied to them. They were largely unaware of the benefits such counselling could provide both during and at the end of their professional careers. As the reorganisation of identity emerged as a key issue from the research I believe concurrent counselling services are necessary in order to facilitate a smoother transition through retirement.

Presenter: Tanya Beetham

Other Authors: Dr Lynne Gabriel, Dr Hazel James

Professional Role: Graduate Teaching Assistant in Psychology, PhD student, Child and Young Person's Therapist

Institution/Affiliation: University of Northampton

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: children, young people, domestic violence, group intervention, narrative

Understanding children's experiences of a domestic violence group intervention: a narrative inquiry

Aim/Purpose:

Domestic violence (DV) is one of the most common safeguarding concerns children and young people report, yet little is known about the effectiveness of interventions, or children's experiences of interventions. Children who experience DV have typically been framed as 'damaged' and viewed as passive witnesses. In this study, children are viewed as social actors who interact within the world as active agents. This study aims to explore children's experiences of a DV group intervention. It aims to centralise children's voices and contribute to the development of children's DV services.

Design/Methodology:

The present study uses narrative inquiry and creative methods. Semi-structured interviews took place with four children aged between 7 and 10. The dilemma of emphasising developmental stages of child participants is that researchers may reproduce unhelpful assumptions about children's lack of competency. However, in order to accommodate children's individual needs and methods of communication, multiple creative tools and toys were available for children to use during interviews.

Results/Findings:

Findings indicate that issues of children's agency, choice and intersecting identities might be relevant to not only how children experience DV but also how they experience recovery. Children's experiences are situated in a psychosocial context focusing on potential problems arising from the medicalisation and individualisation of children's experiences. Findings highlight the experiential and relational aspect of spaces that can enable children to form relationships and construct identities that are not restricted by their experiences of DV or constructs of childhood.

Research Limitations:

Ethical and methodological complexities include the politics and ethics of representation, and issues of relational and contextual power in and beyond the research field. The use of self-reflexivity and transparency enabled the researcher to embrace and navigate these complexities. Limitations include restricted time and access to participants. Narrative research considers individual contexts, histories and stories, therefore it cannot be assumed that the stories of the children in this study can be generalised.

Conclusions/Implications:

It is suggested that services should consider children's psychosocial contexts and issues of power, agency and choice when designing and delivering interventions. Further research should explore children's contextual and relational use of space in DV interventions.

Presenter: Jay Beichman

Professional Role: Counsellor/Therapist

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: pluralistic therapy, identity, therapeutic approach, therapy debates, therapist experience

How therapists make sense of pluralistic approaches to therapy: a qualitative interview study

Aim/Purpose:

The study explores how therapists themselves make sense of pluralistic approaches to therapy. Interview data was used to develop a contextual understanding of pluralism within the therapy professions.

Design/Methodology:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with therapists who identified with different approaches via opportunity sampling. 12 therapists were interviewed. Four participants were male and eight were female. Their ages ranged from 29 to 74 and post-qualification experience varied from 1 to 28 years. The overarching question was: 'How do you make sense of pluralistic approaches to counselling and psychotherapy?' with sub-questions exploring the therapists' experiences and practices in relation to the main question.

Results/Findings:

Seven themes were identified. Three themes ('Identity and Approach', 'The Flexibility-Rigidity Continuum', and 'It's the Relationship') were interpreted as belonging to 'contentious issues' that fed into a central theme 'Debates about Pluralism and Therapy'. These debates, in turn, lead to three additional themes interpreted as 'diplomatic attempts at resolution' ('The Practice of Metacommunication', 'Uncertainty and Understanding', and 'Common Factors'). Some interviewees are comfortable with pluralism: 'I can bring in behaviourism, I can bring in humanistic stuff, I can bring in cognitive stuff' (participant 4) whereas others are less comfortable: 'I suppose my struggle is around when it's almost like 'Well, I offer person-centred counselling but I'll throw CBT in' and it's like 'Okay, well how does that work? How can that be possible if there is a real understanding and commitment to the person-centred approach?'' (participant 9)

Research Limitations:

Only three therapists from psychodynamic and CBT approaches were interviewed. Further research might focus on how CBT and psychodynamic practitioners in particular make sense of pluralism in relation to their practices. The aim of the analysis was to understand the interviewees' own subjective positions ('personal knowledge'). In terms of managing researcher subjectivity I bracketed off my assumptions, applying a phenomenological approach, and maintained a reflexive diary.

Conclusions/Implications:

The interviews allowed for the identification and interpretation of themes which could form the basis for further research. How this sample of therapists makes sense of pluralism in relation to their own practice and the contexts in which they practice could be of use to practitioners, providers, and clients in better understanding the implications of pluralistic practices and perspectives.

Presenter: Anne Bentley, Dawn Hastings

Other Author: Michelle Virgo

Professional Role: Student Counselling & Personal Development Service Manager

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: International students, counselling, wellbeing, social, stigma

Healing the self by growing the social: reaching out to enhance the wellbeing of international students

Aim/Purpose:

In 2013/14, 7.7% of international students sought counselling at Plymouth University. In 2014/15 this fell to 2.8%. This decrease was concerning as International students form approximately 10% of the student population. The research sought to explore the wellbeing and counselling needs of international students at Plymouth to develop future services.

Design/Methodology:

International students received an online questionnaire about their wellbeing and inviting them to join a focus group. 1 of the 103 respondents volunteered for a focus group. The researchers approached staff working with international students via the Business School (PBS) and Plymouth University International College (PUIC), resulting in a further 20 students volunteering. 1 focus group was held at PBS and 3 focus groups were held after lectures at PUIC.

A project group of 6 International students and 3 home students met over 4 weeks to reflect upon the findings of the focus groups, create a mini 'home-international' student community and suggest wellbeing interventions. Project group participants were interviewed and transcripts of the focus and project group interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke & Rance, 2015).

Results/Findings:

Focus group participants described abating distress through social activities rather than through dialogue. Many expressed a belief in self-reliance, reported low awareness of counselling, and associated it with being 'not normal' or mentally unwell.

Project group participants expressed empathy with each other's experiences and formed relational bonds. The project group was a space for dialogic relating that developed participants' understanding of counselling's utility.

Research Limitations:

The focus and project group sample was small and the results may not have been generalisable. Project group home students had previous experience of international cultures.

Conclusions/Implications:

The emotional challenges faced by international students are possibly better met initially with social and environmental responses. Socially oriented, relationship-based activities/projects provided by PU counselling service may act as an educative means of de-stigmatising counselling and may themselves be a therapeutic experience.

Presenter: Angela Blanchard

Professional Role: PhD candidate, School of Psychology, Keele University/Person-centred counsellor in private practice/Voluntary bereavement counsellor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: childhood emotional neglect, auto-ethnography, personal research methods, reflexivity

‘See through the crack in my world’: using auto-ethnography to bridge research, practice and personal development

Aim/Purpose:

Working therapeutically with neglected children is challenging (Music, 2009). In counselling practice we may also encounter the phenomenon of childhood emotional neglect in adult clients, yet emotional neglect remains under-researched (Stoltenborgh et al, 2012). As a researcher, I aim to bridge the gap between objective research and the popular autobiographical genre; as a person-centred counsellor, deeper self-knowledge acquired through reflexive personal research enhances my practice.

Design/Methodology:

Auto-ethnography combines elements of autobiography and ethnography (Reed-Danahay, 1997), and entails a high degree of reflexivity (Grant, Short & Turner, 2013). It privileges the participants’ individual stories and embraces their subjective realities, an approach which sits well with person-centred counselling. Participants are 12 university graduates (5 male, 7 female, including myself) and are all adult volunteers who identified themselves as having experienced childhood emotional neglect; these were the only criteria for inclusion. Data collection comprises unstructured individual interviews, not unlike counselling encounters. Thematic analysis of interview content has been completed for nine interviews.

Results/Findings:

The major themes are ‘lack of love’, ‘loss and lack’, ‘childhood emotional neglect internalised’, ‘lasting impact of childhood experiences’, ‘intergenerational aspects’, ‘justifying, explaining and hypothesizing,’ and ‘internal wisdom/actualizing tendency’.

Research Limitations:

The aim of this study is to describe the phenomenon in nuanced detail; no claim of generalisability can be made. It will add to the definition and offer insight and understanding, but no ‘proof’ or certainty. The researcher’s subjective experience of this phenomenon is used to make sense of it and explore implications for practice, making it a strength rather than a limitation (Price, 1999). This subjective bias is mitigated by reflexivity; a continual process of exploring what I have done, why I have done it.

Conclusions/Implications:

Particular challenges for the emotionally neglected adult in counselling may be:

- seeing self as a person of worth
- recognising long-denied needs
- overcoming the shame of accepting help

Aspects of person-centred counselling, specifically: noticing, validating, and attuning to the client like an ‘ideal mother,’ may facilitate repair through the relationship (McMillan & McLeod, 2006).

Presenter: Christine Bonsmann

Other Authors: Professor Peter Gubi & Dr Andrew Reeves

Professional Role: Counsellor

Institution/Affiliation: Private Practice

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: dissatisfaction, premature termination, clients' experiences, online qualitative survey, IPA

A qualitative exploration of clients' dissatisfaction leading to the premature termination of counselling and psychotherapy

Aim/Purpose:

Rates of premature termination remain high despite much research into possible predictors of this phenomenon (Swift & Greenberg, 2015). From practitioners' perspectives, little is known about indicators of dissatisfaction and clients' preferences during this unplanned ending. The research question is 'what is the experience of clients who prematurely terminate therapy when dissatisfied?'

Design/Methodology:

The study was conducted in two stages. The purposeful sample included qualified therapists who, as clients, prematurely terminated therapy. Stage one used an online qualitative survey to gain an overview of participants' experiences of premature termination, and the 40 usable responses were inductively analysed using thematic analysis. The survey was used to recruit participants for stage two where six semi-structured interviews were carried out with participants who had prematurely terminated therapy for reasons of dissatisfaction. The interview data were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Results/Findings:

The survey sample was predominately female (nearly 80%), and 50 years old or younger (88%). The interview sample comprised 5 females and 1 male. The survey findings indicated a failure by some therapists to act in a relational way when clients prematurely terminated therapy, and clients' needs at this stage were identified. The interview findings illuminated how the alliance failed to develop in experiences of dissatisfaction, and identified how clients performed rather than engaged in therapy. Clients' processes maintaining this performance were identified.

Research Limitations:

The small sample size, online recruitment, and the use of therapist participants means that the findings have limited generalisability. The constructivist nature of the study means that another researcher may offer different interpretations.

Conclusions/Implications:

Understanding clients' experiences of dissatisfaction may enable practitioners to recognise the presence of dissatisfaction, and adapt therapy, if appropriate. Possible indicators of dissatisfaction are offered, as are ways to manage premature termination if it occurs. The study concludes that therapists' management of how therapy ends is important, regardless of how it ends.

Presenter: Sass Boucher

Professional Role: Counsellor and Psychotherapist

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: domestic violence, practitioners, self-care, supervision, fatigue

'Looking through a lens of terribleness': a thematic analysis of the experience of practitioners working in the field of domestic violence

Aim/Purpose:

Counsellors, social workers and specialist domestic Violence practitioners all work with clients who have experienced domestic violence. This study explores how listening to clients who have experienced fear, terror, physical violence and emotional abuse may impact on them. Work based stress is identified in literature, alongside concepts such as compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, secondary trauma and burnout as ways in which practitioners may be affected by their work.

Design/Methodology:

This qualitative thematic analysis, spans three professions. Social workers in a child protection setting, specialist domestic violence practitioners in a specialist domestic violence agency and counsellors practicing in a specialist domestic violence setting. The sampling for six participants, two from each profession, was purposive, recruited through existing professional and academic networks.

Results/Findings:

Five themes developed through analysis:

1. The 'brutality of domestic violence' encapsulates the reality for practitioners, revealing explicitly painful descriptions of client's traumatic stories that practitioners are exposed to.
2. 'Support - the good and the bad,' explored the participant's feelings around supervision and other organisational support.
3. 'The weight of responsibility' highlights participant's heavy feelings of responsibility towards their role and client group.
4. 'The impact on practitioners' exposes professional experiences of burnout, stress and exhaustion, alongside deep personal reflection on their values and views of the world.
5. 'Training and awareness' explores participant's feelings of being unprepared for the extent of domestic abuse in their client group, and the potential for it to impact on them.

Research Limitations:

Limitations include a small sample of participants. The small scale of the study prevented potentially valuable analysis on the concept and practice of self-care. As a qualitative piece, the role of the researcher is also an important consideration and part of the study.

Conclusions/Implications:

It is hoped this research will support development around effective support for practitioners; reflective supervision for any practitioner providing emotional support is recommended by BACP. This study also aims to create an awareness of the statutory framework for any practitioner working with clients at risk due to domestic abuse and that all participants felt unprepared for this area of work indicating a desire for domestic abuse to be included in professional training.

Presenter: Jeanne Broadbent

Professional Role: Senior Patient and Family Support Practitioner

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: traumatic bereavement, professional development, therapeutic relationship

Reflections on the impact of traumatic bereavement on therapists' professional development and practice

Aim/Purpose:

Comparatively little is known of how a significant personal bereavement influences therapists' professional identity and practice. The main aim of this doctoral study was to explore the impact of traumatic bereavement (e.g. suicide) on the professional self of qualified therapists.

Design/Methodology:

Grounded in a phenomenological-hermeneutic philosophy, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as a particularly relevant theoretical lens through which to address the research question. Purposive sampling was used to recruit a homogenous sample of eight qualified therapists. Data comprised interview transcripts and participants' reflective writing. IPA's idiographic approach facilitated the creation of a detailed and nuanced thematic analysis that privileged participants' voices.

Results/Findings:

Five super-ordinate themes were identified that provided a holistic picture of the unique contextual nature of participants' experience of traumatic bereavement: '*Significance of context*'; '*Confronting a changed reality*'; '*Re-learning the world*'; '*Facing professional challenges*'; and '*Personal and professional reciprocity*'. Findings highlighted the dissonance between the personal and professional selves as participants struggled to maintain their client work whilst actively grieving. Findings further suggested that the experience could be transformative, leading to an enhancement, over time, of participants' clinical practice. Supportive supervision was evidenced as a significant mediating factor in enabling participants to process the impact of their loss on client work.

Research Limitations:

The study met suggested guidelines for ensuring validity and transparency in qualitative research. However, owing to the small sample, results cannot be generalised to the wider therapist population. Further, the researcher acknowledges that the analysis was inevitably influenced by her own 'fore understandings', subjectivity and interpretation.

Conclusions/Implications:

This research demonstrates that the experience of traumatic bereavement can severely disrupt therapists' professional development. It further raises important professional issues including therapists' fitness to practise, self-disclosure, and vulnerability to vicarious traumatisation. Findings highlight the necessity for supportive supervisory relationships in order to ameliorate difficulties bereaved therapists may face in client work. Given the wide range of settings in which therapists practise, is this sufficient?

Presenters: Evi Chryssafidou, Biljana van Rijn

(Please see associated paper on page 92. These two papers will be presented consecutively on the programme)

Other Author: Mick Cooper

Professional Role: Researcher

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Avatar-based counselling, school counselling, counselling for young people

Evaluation of avatar-based counselling for young people

Aim/Purpose:

ProReal is an avatar-based therapeutic tool in which people can create a visual representation of their inner and outer worlds. The study evaluated the acceptability and outcomes of using ProReal with young people in a school counselling setting.

Design/Methodology:

The evaluation adopted a naturalistic, mixed methods design. We collected quantitative outcome data at pre- and post-therapy using the Young Person's CORE, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale, the Self-Criticising and Self-Reassuring Scale, and the Experience of Service Questionnaire. Qualitative data included clients' interviews about their experiences of avatar-based counselling and counsellors' interviews about their experiences of using ProReal in therapy. The evaluation took place in eight schools with students, who were referred for counselling or were already in therapy. After an assessment 54 participants (31 female, 23 male) were recruited in the study. Their mean age was 14.2.

Results/Findings:

Outcome data indicated that avatar-based counselling was associated with significant, small-to-medium reductions in psychological distress, psychological difficulties, and conduct problems; and a small increase in self-compassion. For all clients pre- to post-therapy effect size on the primary outcome measure, the Young Person's CORE, was 0.41. Outcomes, including satisfaction with the intervention, were consistently better for males as compared with females ($n = 38$). The results were more prominent for new clients. Interview data identified a number of helpful features as well as some limitations. ProReal was experienced as most helpful in the development of insight and awareness, and when young people were having difficulties in verbal expression.

Research Limitations:

The sample size was relatively small, there was no control group or follow-up. There were indications of variability in how the intervention was implemented in different schools, and all counsellors were new to the intervention.

Conclusions/Implications:

The outcome evidence suggests that avatar-based counselling, overall, is associated with significant reductions in psychological distress, at a level approximating that of other school-based counselling interventions. Qualitative data suggests that ProReal may be a useful tool in supporting therapeutic work with a range of clients: in particular, boys, and clients who may find verbal expression difficult.

Presenter: Anna Constantine

Professional Role: Counsellor/Psychotherapist, PhD Student

Institution/Affiliation: University of Chester

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Keywords: sex, sexuality, counselling, psychotherapy, training

Therapists' reflections on the topic of sex and sexuality within counselling and psychotherapy training and practice

Aim/Purpose:

Narratives relating to sex and sexuality, expressed explicitly or implicitly, can surface within the therapeutic space. Practitioner training programmes can play a significant role in assisting therapists in training to develop reflective self-awareness and competence to work with these matters. The aim of this study is to highlight therapists' experiences of, and the adequacy of training for, working with the topic of sex and sexuality within counselling and psychotherapy. It is anticipated that the study will be of interest to trainees, practitioners, training providers and the wider therapeutic community.

Design/Methodology:

A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology is employed. Nine therapists who responded to an online call for participants were recruited. Inclusion criteria required participants to be currently practising as a therapist, a member of a professional body, and to have completed their initial training within the last five years. The training approaches of the participants include person-centred and integrative modalities. Individual audio recorded, semi-structured interviews were undertaken and subsequently transcribed. Data were analysed by a thematic approach.

Results/Findings:

The analysis of data yielded six superordinate themes and thirteen subordinate themes. Findings suggest that the topic of sex and sexuality was experienced by participants as elusive within their training environments. Participants felt ill-prepared to work with the topic within their practice and further learning was accessed independent of their core training. An increase in self-awareness gained through training was highlighted by participants. Challenges within therapeutic practice were experienced, including difficulties relating to working with sexual orientation.

Research Limitations:

The research is limited by sample size and potential researcher's bias in interpretation of the data.

Conclusions/Implications (including practice implications):

Participants experienced their training as inadequate in preparing them to work with the topic of sex and sexuality within their practice. Findings raise important questions for training, therefore the development of counselling and psychotherapy training programmes may be influenced by this research on completion of the project.

Presenters: A. Elizabeth Crunk, M.S., NCC; E. H. (Mike) Robinson, III, Ph.D.; Sandra L. Robinson, Ph.D.; Yvette Saliba, M.A.; Jayna Mumbauer, M.A.; Viki Kelchner, Ph.D; Enrique Puig, Ed.D

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: grief, bereavement, altruistic coping, resilience, grief distress

Caring as coping: the role of altruism in bereavement outcomes of a diverse sample of grievers

Aim/Purpose:

Prior research has revealed considerable variation in grief reactions among bereaved individuals, with 10-15% of grievers experiencing complicated grief (Shear et al., 2011) and the remaining proportions responding resiliently (Bonanno et al., 2002). A factor that might distinguish these grief reactions is the particular strategies bereaved individuals employ to cope with their grief. One such strategy that bereaved persons report using to cope is altruistic expression, such as comforting other grievers or volunteering for a cause that was important to their loved one (Meert et al., 2005). Thus, the investigators aimed to answer the following research question: What are the relations between altruistic coping and level of grief distress and resilience following the loss of a loved one through death?

Design/Methodology:

This study utilised a correlational design. Participants ($N = 969$) were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), where they completed an online battery of instruments, including (a) the *Coping Assessment for Bereavement and Loss Experiences* (CABLE; Crunk et al., *in development*), (b) the *Persistent Complex Bereavement Inventory* (Lee, 2015), and (c) the *Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-10* (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Data were analysed using correlational procedures.

Results/Findings:

This study consists of an international sample of grievers. Altruistic coping was positively associated with resilience ($r = .189, p < .001$) but was not significantly associated with level of grief distress ($r = .024, p = .458$). The presenters will also present participants' qualitative responses from open-response items on the CABLE.

Research Limitations:

Limitations include the use of correlational, cross-sectional study design, the unknown reliability of recruitment procedures, and the use of only one subscale for measuring altruistic coping (i.e., the CABLE).

Conclusions/Implications:

Bereaved individuals who engage in altruistic actions to cope with their grief might experience higher levels of resilience following loss. However, altruistic forms of coping might not have significant bearing on the griever's level of bereavement distress. Practitioners can consider assessing their bereaved clients' inclination toward altruistic forms of coping and to incorporate interventions that encourage altruistic actions.

Presenter: Anne Dodd

Other Authors: Associate Professor Suzanne Guerin, Dr Susan Delaney, Dr Philip Dodd

Professional Role: PhD Researcher and Psychotherapist

Institution/Affiliation: University College Dublin

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: complicated grief, thematic analysis, mental health professionals, experts, knowledge transfer

Mind the gap: an exploration of knowledge transfer of complicated grief (CG) research among mental health professionals

Aim/Purpose:

Approximately 7% of bereaved people experience complicated grief (CG) (Kersting et al, 2011). Though there has been increasing attention to CG research in recent years, there is little in the literature about the service providers' response to working with this population. The current qualitative study aimed to address this issue and to gain a better understanding of the nature and content of research on practice, examining knowledge, attitudes, skills and training regarding CG among mental health professionals.

Methodology:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via telephone, Skype or face-to-face with 30 mental health professionals. 10 psychiatrists and 10 counsellors/ psychotherapists were recruited through online databases and 10 psychologists were sampled purposively. Three international CG experts were also interviewed. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results/Findings:

A gap between CG research and clinical practice was identified. The themes identified which contributed to this were the lack of definitional clarity surrounding the concept, the fear of pathologising normal grief and the professionals' personal grief experience and professional orientation. Training inadequacies were also identified and professionals showed an appetite to address this training deficit, with clearly stated preferences for the structure of such training.

Research Limitations:

The psychologists were a self-selected sample and as such may represent professionals who have an interest in the topic and also not all psychiatrists are included in the online directory. This may limit broader generalisability. The issue of researcher subjectivity was managed in so far as possible by independently double-coding a proportion of the transcripts and through the researcher's continual engagement with and input from the supervisory team.

Conclusions/Implications:

Professionals and experts highlight that training in CG is needed. To bridge the gap between research and practice, training initiatives, in addition to expanding knowledge and skills, will need to address professionals' attitudinal issues to CG. Future research might focus on knowledge transfer and exchange, and on strategies to improve the uptake of existing research. Training should not be unidirectional, but allow for the voice of the practitioner to be heard.

Presenter: Lesley Dougan

Professional Role: Counsellor Alder Centre / Private Practice and Professional Doctorate

Student in Counselling and Psychotherapy

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: facial difference/disfigurement, phenomenological, narrative analysis, discrimination, training

I am more than my face: a study into the experiences of therapists with a visible facial difference in training and practice

Aim/Purpose:

Facial disfigurement and visible facial difference is described as: ‘the last bastion of discrimination’ (McGruther, 1997). This research investigated the experiences of therapists who self-define as having a visible facial difference and the implications of that difference both in training and whilst working therapeutically with clients.

Design/ Methodology:

The study recruited 7 qualified therapists as participants. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary methodology. The interviews were completed face to face, by telephone and Skype, recorded using digital recorder and transcribed by the researcher. Narrative analysis was chosen in order to pay attention to, rather than obfuscate the reality of the participants’ experiences.

Results/Findings:

All 7 participants described facing ‘facial prejudice’ and ‘facial discrimination’ during counsellor training. They spoke of how ‘lip-service’ was paid to the issue of difference and diversity and described feeling that both staff and peers were ‘not able to hear’ about their differences, made assumptions and often acted in ways that at best were ill-judged and naïve, and at worst discriminatory and oppressive. In contrast, participants felt that their visible difference could often be advantageous, particularly with certain client groups.

Research Limitations:

Recruiting participants in appearance-related research is often problematic, and my research was no different; only successfully recruiting participants after I reworded my request for participants and ‘owning’ my own visible difference. The research is also limited due to the small number of female only participants. The focus of my research was prompted by my own experiences in counsellor training and in practice. Ongoing support from academic supervisor at each stage of the research process enabled reflexivity and an awareness of any conscious or unconscious bias.

Conclusions/ Implications:

Therapists with a visible facial difference shared the allowances they make to ameliorate the awkwardness felt by others and the implicit and explicit discrimination and oppression they faced during training from both peers and counselling trainers. However, when in practice, they found their visible difference worked as an advantage. The research recommends that appearance related issues including visible facial difference are embedded within in therapist training to ensure that therapists with a visible facial difference are not disadvantaged by the ignorance and indifference of others.

Presenter: Raymi Doyle

Professional Role: Lead Psychotherapist & Autism Consultant at Counselling Rooms Therapy Practice

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Embody, dissociative, autistic, connection, intersubjectivity

Bridging the gap between the autistic, the therapist and the theoretical perspective, an intersubjective awareness

Aim/Purpose:

There is a dearth of knowledge, with extensive legal, moral and financial reasons, to explore psychotherapeutic intervention with regards the mental health of the autistic population. Existing therapeutic models do not always fit the autistic client's needs. This research examined the therapeutic process between therapist and autistic client from expert therapist perspectives in the field of autism.

Design/Methodology:

Data was collected through (n=5) semi-structured interviews from an expert/criterion-based/maximum-variation sample to identify a diverse sample of therapists representing a broad range of therapies. An intersubjective analysis within a Co-Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology was developed and employed so that the researcher could apply prior knowledge of autism as a point of departure, while the analysis remained intersubjectively grounded in the data. A series of reflexive and reflective questions enabled the researcher to embody the intersubjective negotiation process within the analysis. The researcher's prior knowledge of autism sensitised the researcher to the ethical concerns of researching autism.

Results/Findings:

A core category 'self-awareness developing from an intersubjective space that enables experience of, self, other and environment within an existing environment of disconnected systems' evolved, that interpreted aspects of the therapeutic relationship. Results unexpectedly identified a convergence between method and study through a resonance within the theme of intersubjectivity, where intersubjective mechanisms of the method partially mirrored the intersubjective space within a therapeutic relationship with an autistic client.

Research Limitations:

Implications of this study was limited from the sample size, suggesting a need for further exploration inclusive of participants diagnosed with autism so that autistic voices are heard.

Conclusions/Implications:

Findings explore autism as a disconnected self from other and environment, discussed in context of a dissociated self. This was substantiated with recent neurobiological research along with dissociative literature. This evidence along with the theme of intersubjective connection may begin to provide a framework for therapists to understand how they may adjust their individual practice and may transform how psychotherapeutic practice may be provided to autistic clients.

Presenter: Cemil Egeli

Professional Role: Registered member of BACP

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: mixed culture, counselling, auto-ethnography, Turkish, English

How might an individual experience the impact of a mixed cultural heritage?

Aim/Purpose:

This is a study of my experiences as an individual with a mixed cultural Turkish/English heritage. It explores some of the personal issues and dilemmas faced growing up in these two cultures. The census shows that the fastest growing minority group is mixed race (Jivraj, 2012) making the need for this research highly relevant. There are large gaps in multicultural process literature (McLeod, 2009) and much of the literature does not address the complexities of the process for people who occupy multiple positions (Diamond & Gillis 2006). This paper aims to address the gaps and highlight the importance of understanding the mixed cultural experience.

Design/Methodology:

I use auto-ethnography (Ellis, 2004) in which I explore my own lived experience. I employ a variety of approaches to draw my own personal data including; journaling and recorded conversations as well as heuristic and intuitive strategies (Moustakas, 1990). I analysed my data on a thematic basis and processed my data throughout the research and writing using a self-dialogue (McLeod, 2011). The paper reveals the ethical decisions taken during the research.

Results/Findings:

My findings and discussion are presented together on a thematic basis. In keeping with the ethnographic approach it is written in a narrative style and combines this with discussion and theoretical ideas. I draw on a variety of literature and media in reference to my themes. The key themes of my findings are language, appearance, name, circumcision, the military, class, exile and grief.

Research Limitations:

The research is limited to my own cultural experiences. Future research could explore the experiences of more participants using an auto-ethnographic perspective.

Conclusions/Implications:

My findings demonstrate the cultural tensions I have felt over a number of themes. In many of these themes I experienced conflicts with societal assumptions made of me based on my name and appearance. I hope by showing and exploring my experiences I can elicit the empathy and reflection of the receiver of this paper (Bond, 2002). With this awareness counsellors may then be better enabled to help clients who may be experiencing these tensions too.

Presenter: Robert Elliott

Other Authors: Susan Stephen, Lloyd Chen, Katharine Miller-Cole, Adrienne Ayre, Elizabeth Riddell & Victoria Hagman

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: outcome, person-centred psychotherapy, personal questionnaire, client populations

Client outcomes for key client problem presentations in a practice-based research protocol

Aim/Purpose:

The Personal Questionnaire (PQ) is an evidence-based client-generated individualised outcome measure. In it, clients are first asked to list ten problems they want to work on in counselling; thenceforth, before each session they rate the distress they experienced about each problem during the previous week. In the present study, a new method for categorising PQ items (client problem statements) was developed and used to distinguish between different groups of clients.

Design/Methodology:

Using a data set of clients seen in a research clinic by trainee person-centred counsellors, sets of PQ items (consisting of roughly 10 problem statements), were analysed using a new content analysis measure, including (in order of frequency): Self-related, Interpersonal, Emotional Processing, Depression, Stress/Anxiety, Life-functioning, Trauma, and Self-Damaging.

Results/Findings:

Based on analyses of 330 clients, interrater alpha reliabilities ranged between .72 and .95. Next, we devised a method for classifying main client problem presentation based on patterns of multiple PQ items. Pre-post outcomes, including residual gain scores, for these client presentation types were then analysed for a sample of 170 clients who completed 3 or more sessions (mean SMD = 1.07) and for the most common client presentation types, with generally comparable results. The exception was clients presenting with Interpersonal Difficulties, the most common type (n = 102 with 3 or more interpersonal content items and pre-post outcome data), who showed a somewhat smaller mean SMD of .91. PQ effect sizes were also smaller for clients presenting 3 or more trauma-related difficulties. Finally, number of PQ items and several categories predicted whether clients engaged with therapy (completed 3 or more sessions) or not (had 0 - 2 sessions).

Research Limitations:

The PQ is relatively time-consuming to construct, and the content analysis of PQ items requires three raters. At the same time reducing PQ items to categories compromises the individualised purpose of the PQ.

Conclusions/Implications:

Main presenting problem, assessed by the PQ item content, appears to be a promising alternative to standard diagnostic categories for defining client subpopulations for which Person-Centred-Experiential psychotherapy may be effective.

Presenter: Stephen Paul Ferris

Professional Role: PhD Candidate (F/T); Person-centred counsellor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: loneliness, heuristic inquiry, experience, access, reflective practice

A heuristic inquiry into the experience of loneliness: access to greater self-knowledge as well as reflective-practice

Aim/Purpose:

It is already known that loneliness is experienced universally, regardless of one's race, gender, age or cultural background (Rokach & Neto, 2000). Despite the familiarity and grave impact of loneliness, Bohm (2012) argues that it is rarely explicitly addressed in the psychoanalytic literature. The aim of this study is to bridge that 'lonely' gap by critically exploring the primary research question - *What is my experience of loneliness?*

Design/Methodology:

The study utilises a qualitative research method pioneered by Clark Moustakas (1990) called, *Heuristic Inquiry*, which addresses questions of both personal and professional relevance in a reflective, reflexive and holistic way. The data were collected primarily through extended interviews in the form of self-dialogues and bracketing interviews but also included personal documents, reflective writing, research journals and memos, poetry, pictures and artwork. The data were analysed and interpreted using the heuristic processes of *focussing*, *concentrated gazing* and the *internal frame of reference*.

Results/Findings:

In counselling, loneliness is frequently presented as simply an adjunct to anxiety or depression as well as merely a feature of the presenting problem. A major theme that has emerged from this study is to think of loneliness as not only a symptom but, in fact, the very subject that may need to be explored. In this way, the experience of loneliness might then provide access to deeper and embodied knowledge of the self.

Research Limitations:

The power and significance of this study lies in the depth and quality of its exploration of the direct experience of loneliness. Though heuristic inquiry validates the role of the researcher as central to the inquiry, nevertheless, the perspective and biases of the researcher were acknowledged and critically examined throughout the research process.

Conclusions/Implications:

This research strongly supports the fundamental importance of continuous reflective practice as a strong arm both in maintaining professional development and enhancing professional practice. Moreover, its contribution to the broader literature is to emphasise the fundamental importance for counsellors to think about loneliness within their own lives with a view to discovering its personal meaning and inherent value for the individual counsellor.

Presenter: Doreen Fleet

Other Authors: Dr Mani Das Gupta, Dr Amy Burton, Dr Andrew Reeves

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: sand-tray therapy, dual-role, intra-phenomenological shift, inter-phenomenological shift, intera-phenomenological shift

A multiple case-study using sand-tray in short-term therapy from a pluralistic perspective

Aim/Purpose:

Sand-tray is a therapeutic intervention that aids client-therapist interaction through selecting, placing and arranging objects in a tray of sand. While commonly used with children, there is little theoretical understanding of the function of this approach for adults. This study aims to produce a theoretical model of how sand-tray functions as a therapeutic aid for adults in 'short-term pluralistic therapy' (Cooper & McLeod, 2011).

Design/Methodology:

The researcher takes a dual-role of counsellor-researcher in this ongoing grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) multiple case study. Posters and leaflets were distributed to counselling organisations advertising the opportunity to receive sand-tray therapy at no cost and take part in a research study. Following informed consent, six client-participants, with a range of demographic characteristics relating to age, gender and ethnicity, have each completed six hours of sand-tray therapy. This presentation will refer to published work (Fleet et al, 2016) providing a detailed description of how the dual role was managed, evaluating the ethical implications of researching your own clients, including issues of: informed consent; role-fluency; boundaries; level of self-disclosure; avoiding harm to participants; the potential benefits of being a participant in research; and clinical supervision. In addition, the pragmatics of taking a pluralistic approach in sand-tray therapy will be considered, emphasizing collaboration with the client-participant, therapeutic goals, therapeutic tasks and CORE outcome measures.

Results/Findings:

Although the theoretical model is a work in progress, current analysis is pointing to a process of change that enables the client to focus on the central issue in the 'here and now', helping them 'stay with' and explore their pain through three predominant mechanisms: Intra-Phenomenological Shift; Inter-Phenomenological Shift; and Intera-Phenomenological Shift.

Research Limitations:

There is ongoing debate about the ethics and the efficacy of the dual role, with the researcher delivering the therapy. Although some will see this as a limitation, this study illustrates how the depth and detail of the approach contributes to theoretical understanding, in a way other methodologies could not.

Conclusions/Implications:

This paper has relevance for the counselling profession: therapists, who are open to working pluralistically, may draw upon the ideas presented when developing their practice of using sand-tray with adult clients.

Presenter: Emma Fleming

Professional Role: MA Psychotherapy & Counselling student / Counsellor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: veterans, mental health, engagement, service user experience, specialist service

An investigation into the service user experience at the Veterans Outreach Service (VOS)

Aim/Purpose:

Increased numbers of personnel are leaving the UK military and a larger proportion of veterans are facing difficulties, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, mood disorders and alcohol misuse. Veterans' mental health is influenced by a complex interplay of factors from before, during and after service and barriers to help seeking / positive engagement include the influence of Military masculine culture, stigma and the perception of the NHS as unable to understand their unique context. Specialist NHS services were created in 2010, including the veterans outreach service, with which previous evaluation has found high levels of satisfaction and engagement but could not account for why. Research into what facilitates successful veteran engagement is limited and this study aimed to access accounts of the experience of using the VOS, potentially giving insight into this area.

Design/Methodology:

Purposive sampling was implemented to invite past service users to participate and seven semi-structured interviews were carried out. The data were explored using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (as described by Smith et al. 2009) and the impact of this process on the researcher is discussed.

Results/Findings:

Themes emerged in line with previous literature on veterans' mental health trends (such as delays in help seeking and the difficulty adjusting to civilian life) and highlighted the importance of the quality of the relationship with the VOS worker, who created the conditions for Veterans to feel heard, understood, accepted and emotionally contained, often for the first time.

Research Limitations:

The small scale of the study and a sample who had a positive experience of the VOS means caution should be taken when extrapolating the application of the findings. The subjective nature of IPA is acknowledged and further research using a wider sample and a second researcher could address these areas.

Conclusions/Implications:

The process of achieving a positive working relationship with Veterans is explored with reference to wider therapeutic techniques. Recommendations and potential methods of implementation are suggested with the aim of increasing healthcare staff confidence to work with Veterans and to create the conditions to enable access to culturally appropriate support.

Presenter: Lavlet Forde, MA. RP

Professional Role: Counsellor/Registered Psychotherapist

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: mental health, counselling, education, collaboration, innovative

Supporting students with mental health disorders in college

Aim/Purpose:

The focus of this research is on a unique, experiential psycho-educational college based program at George Brown College, located in Toronto, Canada. This specialised mental health program, *For You*, assists individuals who have a mental health disorder and/or an addiction, transition into: post-secondary education, employment, volunteer work and assist individuals to create a more balanced life. The purpose of this study is to recognise and document changes, which may occur for an individual who has participated in this program. The 'For You' program has been integrated into the Transition to Post-Secondary Education program at George Brown College.

Design/Methodology:

The research is based on a qualitative research model incorporating interview sessions and classroom observations. Participants completed a 1-hour interview session. Seven participants participated in the study (5 females and 2 males), participants volunteered to be a part of the study. Participants of this study are individuals who were currently enrolled or had completed the program, and individuals who are diagnosed or self-diagnosed with a mental health disorder. Data analysis was based on a phenomenology model, analysing: meaning, general description of experiences and statements from interviews.

Results/Findings:

The results of the study revealed key themes. Participants of this program were most impacted by: group work, feedback from classmates and instructors, a consistent schedule and being in a safe environment. Being in a safe environment and having a consistent schedule allowed participants to be mentally stimulated, gave them a purpose and allowed participants to apply the skills they had learned from the program to their own lives.

Research Limitations:

The sample size of participants was relatively small with seven participants; it would have been insightful to have more male participants in the study.

Conclusions/Implications:

This study provides counsellors and others in the helping field with insights to consider, or include when designing a support group, psycho-educational program or providing one to one counselling when working with an individual who is diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

Presenter: Anna Louise Fry

Professional Role: PhD Researcher/Counsellor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: lesbian, bisexual, non-heterosexual, British South Asian, women

‘We’re here, we’re queer, we don’t drink beer’: The intersections of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, religiosity and non-heterosexual British South Asian women and the implications for mental health care

Aim/Purpose:

Relatively recently there has been a significant increase in literature on non-heterosexual women and also a significant increase in the study of non-heterosexual identities and the prevalence of mental health difficulties within this minority group. However, the study of British South Asian non-heterosexual women is noticeably absent in the areas of lived experience and mental health and well-being. Therefore, the current research seeks to study how participants understand the experience of being non-heterosexual in the United Kingdom and to explore their mental health and wellbeing.

Design/Methodology:

A mixture of purposive and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants who met the criteria for the study. Using Critical Narrative Analysis, the life-world of self-identified non-heterosexual women is explored in terms of lived experience, mental health and resilience. Their lives produce unique intersections between gender, sexuality, culture, spirituality and ethnicity in an environment of religiously and culturally endorsed homophobia, preventing freedom to explore and express their sexuality openly. The study explores the difficulties faced by participants due to their invisibility and the impact of this on their mental health and well-being. The study further considers how resilience is demonstrated despite multiple stresses and adversity and how individual and community resilience can be understood, established and maintained within this minority group in order to develop and sustain well-being. Minority Stress theory (Meyer, 2003) and Hatzenbuehler’s (2009) Psychological Mediation framework will be applied to the analysis in order to build an understanding of risk and resilience factors.

Results/Findings: Preliminary findings show that minority stress and psychological processes such as rumination may predict negative mental health outcomes. Invisibility and the lack of role models is shown to be significant. However, individual resilience is established and maintained through cultural and community connectedness supported by familial denial.

Research Limitations:

A relatively small number of participants took part in the main study. To my knowledge, this is the first study of its type to be carried out in the United Kingdom; it is envisaged that this ground breaking project will facilitate further research in this area. Subjectivity has been maintained through researcher reflexivity.

Conclusion/Implications:

Preliminary results indicate a complex model of intersecting identities which impact on coping which is further influenced by both community and individual resilience which affects help seeking behaviours and therefore mental health outcomes.

Presenter: Tracey Fuller

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: school counselling, safeguarding, alliances, information-sharing

The trust is the work: exploring how school counsellors maintain alliances with young people when sharing information because of safeguarding concerns. A phronetic case study

Aim/Purpose:

This ESRC funded project explores multiple viewpoints on school counsellor information sharing because of safeguarding concerns. Its central research question explores how to best maintain trust in therapeutic alliances with young people when sharing information because of safeguarding concerns. It uncovers young people's views of school counsellor information sharing processes and the factors that influence practice in this area. Jenkins and Palmer (2012) suggest there is little research about the impact of information sharing on alliances with young people. Further research is vital if counselling is going to be further embedded in schools.

Design/Methodology:

This case study is based at 7 'Place2Be' secondary schools. It is influenced by Flyvbjerg's (2002) re-working of Aristotle's concept of phronesis or 'practical wisdom'. School Counsellors (n=6), School Safeguarding Officers/Teachers (n=2) and young people with counselling experience (n=11) are envisioned as contextual experts. In an iterative process, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with counsellors and teachers who reflected on a fictional information sharing vignette and a video was created using actors to speak the professional's words. Two focus groups of young people responded to the vignette and the video of the adults' views. The professional participants later met as a group to co-reflect on the data. Data were analysed thematically and narratively including a focus on relational and emotional factors.

Results/Findings:

A central theme is counsellor availability formulated both psychologically, for example maintaining empathy and attending to the young person's concerns; and practically. A feature of an 'available' counsellor is their perceived trustworthiness as demonstrated by honest and transparent communication. Counsellor availability is experienced as a participatory process by young people. All participants highlighted the anxiety that accompanies information sharing so that availability is affected by the counsellor's own experience of containment during safeguarding processes.

Research Limitations:

This is a small scale study exploring perceptions of a volunteer sample of counsellors, teachers and young people. It aims to generate contextual qualitative data rather than generalised knowledge.

Conclusions/Implications:

Therapeutic alliances with young people during information sharing are supported by participatory practices and sufficient containment experiences for school counsellors.

Presenter: Suzy Hansford

Professional Role: Tutor in Psychotherapy and Counselling, PhD Student and private practitioner

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: language, relational depth, understanding, therapeutic relationship, communication

How does the meaning we make from language impact on the establishing and maintaining of the therapeutic relationship?

Aim/Purpose:

This PhD research study explores how, as counsellors, we can misunderstand our clients despite a shared language, because of the huge diversity of interpretation of this language. It will inform the ways in which counsellors, psychotherapists and other healthcare workers communicate with clients to make best the interaction. It considers how this misunderstanding can be addressed in the therapy room to promote a meaningful therapeutic relationships.

Design/Methodology:

In order to examine the differing experiences of counsellors with the ways in which they make meaning from language in the therapy room, five experienced counsellors were recruited from the researcher's professional networks. All had been clients either at some point in history or currently. Semi-structured interviews of 90 minutes each were carried out and audio recorded. Following transcription this data were analysed using a thematic analysis, identifying common themes, but also major differences in experiences with clients, and also as clients. The interviews also explored the participants' understanding of their own awareness of mismatch in language. The researcher is a participant in the research, exploring her own experiences of awareness of language difference.

The data were been analysed for experiences, and examined whether different factors, eg, age, gender, non-native speakers, influence the ways in which clients seem to engage with therapy. The analysis methods were determined by a sense of emergence from the data, allowing openness to working with what emerges, as with the therapeutic process. Themes are identified and examined, influenced by a sense of curiosity and instinct.

Results/Findings:

The participants show a difference in how they work with the diversity of interpretations in the therapy room, for example, whether it is seen as a hindrance or a help to the relationship. There has been an interesting dual process in which the participants revealed a different interpretation of the research question. The project has revealed a scientific linguistic bias in the literature, which does not fit with narrative methods of counselling research. The narrative method of the study is intended to mirror the importance of 'story-telling' approaches to counselling research.

Research Limitations:

The size of the sample limits the project to reflect the time available.

Conclusions/Implications:

The project gives insight into barriers to communication. It examines whether these barriers are real or imagined and whether they can be overcome by being open to exploring different interpretations, improving the quality of the therapeutic relationship.

Presenter: Jacqueline Hayes

Other Author: Ivan Leudar

Professional Role: Lecturer in Counselling Psychology

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: experiences of presence, hearing voices, visions, bereavement; interviews

Experiences of continued presence: on the practical consequences of 'hallucinations' in bereavement

Aim/Purpose:

To document the personal consequences of experiences of continued presence in grief, helping to resolve controversies about their significance.

Design/Methodology:

Narrative biographic interviews were carried out with 17 bereaved informants, and ethnomethodology used to identify sources of meaning and functions/consequences of these experiences. Inclusion criteria were: 1. at least one experience of presence since the loved one passed; 2. the bereavement occurred >3 months before the interview. Informants were recruited via adverts asking them to share their experiences of loss.

Results/Findings:

Informants heard voices of the deceased, saw their images, felt their touch, and sometimes felt their presence unspecified in any of the senses. Analysis revealed that such experiences were meaningfully connected to the immediate environments in which they happened but also to the personal histories of the bereaved. The narratives revealed both helpful and destructive potentials of these experiences. In all cases, these consequences relied on the relationship with the deceased.

Research Limitations:

The study cannot make statistical generalisations regarding the phenomenon. Due to the use of an opportunity sampling strategy, more females than males were interviewed. In addition, the study was not longitudinal, and thus could not follow informants over time to track changing meanings and consequences.

Conclusions/Implications:

The authors warn against oversimplification of experiences of continued presence, as significantly contrasting practical consequences commonly occurred within as well as between cases. The findings support the use of talking therapies based on personal meanings to help those distressed by their experiences of presence. The study made the following practitioner recommendations:

1. Practitioners should not assume that such experiences are signs of pathology - most often they are beneficial for the bereaved and have healing consequences.
2. When the experiences are distressing, the problem is likely to concern relationship difficulties with the deceased.
3. Therapists can help clients with distressing experiences of presence by working on the relationship with the deceased.

Presenter: Trish Hobman

Other Authors: Professor Anna Madill, Dr Bonnie Meekums

Professional Role: Senior Lecturer

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: supervision, career-long, relationship, ethics and professionalism

The meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors: a relational narrative

Aim/Purpose:

BACP places emphasis on career-long supervision as an ethical and professional requirement for counsellors. It is considered a means of enhancing practice and of gatekeeping for the profession (e.g., Davies, 2016). However, there is very little research on supervision, particularly that of experienced counsellors. Hence, the question addressed in this paper is 'What is the meaning and impact of supervision for experienced counsellors?'

Design/Methodology:

Eight experienced counsellors were recruited using the first author's professional networks. Post-qualification experience ranged from 4-25+ years. Settings included private practice, education, GP surgeries, and third sector agencies. All are accredited members or members of BACP. Each was interviewed twice by the first author with a three month interval between meetings to facilitate participant reflection. Transcripts were analysed using narrative inquiry (Frank, 1995, 2012; Riessman, 2008).

Results/Findings:

The participants' experiences of supervision could be organised within three, inter-related narrative types: (1) relational; (2) ethical; and (3) career-long supervision. Each narrative involved a tension between positives and negatives. This presentation will focus on the *relational narrative*. Here, participants discussed their supervisory experiences using terminology reminiscent of a therapeutic relationship. Specifically, support and self-care were identified as important functions of supervision. Participants felt that, in a safe supervisory relationship, it was possible to discuss and disclose 'anything and everything.' However, all participants described difficulties, at times, in feeling safe enough to reveal anxieties with regard their practice.

Research Limitations:

The sample is relatively small and all counsellors were of a similar practice orientation hence limiting the generalisability of findings. In keeping with narrative inquiry reflexivity was utilised at all stages of the research.

Conclusions/Implications:

Many models of supervision refer to the importance of a supervisory alliance. In contrast, many experienced counsellors use and value supervision as a therapeutic relationship, but this can be at odds with its gate-keeping and reporting functions. Creating a safe space for disclosure and working-through, arguably, is necessary to allow supervision to fulfil its role in enhancing practice and client protection. This double-bind has yet to be tackled by the profession.

Presenter: Dr Jane Hunt

Professional Role: Senior Lecturer in Counselling

Institution: University of Roehampton

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: religion, faith, trainee counsellors, diversity

An exploration of how trainee counsellors who are practising believers of a world religion experience undertaking counsellor training

Aim/Purpose:

Research indicates that therapists rarely speak about religion on training programmes (Walker et al. 2004; West 2011; Swinton 2014), and that there is little input around religion during training (Marinex & Baker 2000; Chistodoulidi 2011; Hofman & Walach 2011). Research also suggests that therapists can feel ill equipped to work with religious clients (Chistodoulidi 2011; Hofman & Walach 2011); and that trainees would like more training on religion (Hage 2006; Hofman & Walach 2011). However, it is not clear why trainees don't speak about religion during training, or what type of training on religion they would value. To explore these issues, this project investigated how counsellors who are practising believers of a world religion experienced undertaking counsellor training.

Design/Methodology:

This was a qualitative study with a purposeful sample. Participants were recruited via advert and information circulated to BACP accredited programmes. Four participants were selected, all of whom identified as practising Christians. Data were collated via semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Results/Finding:

Participants reported some anxiety talking about their religion during training for fear of negative judgments. As a result, participants either did not talk about their religion or sought to defend it against negative perceptions. Participants reported feeling more comfortable talking to supervisors or therapists about religion when it was relevant to the client work or to personal issues. Participants also reported receiving little training on religion, and wanted more input, particularly on religion and mental health. Participants articulated an overlap between Christian faith and counselling theory and practice, but chose not to disclose their faith to clients.

Research Limitation:

This was a small scale qualitative study and therefore has limited generalisability. All participants were Christian, and participants from other religions may have produced different results.

Conclusion/Implications:

The results highlight the tensions experienced by trainees who are religious, indicating the need for therapeutic training on religion and mental health, and the importance of addressing religion as a matter of inclusion and diversity on training programmes.

Presenter: Charlie Jackson
Other Authors: Martin Bell, Matthew Smith-Lilley

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: female genital mutilation (FGM), counselling, helpful/unhelpful factors, training, counsellors' experience

Counselling professionals' awareness and understanding of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): implications for training and research

Aim/Purpose:

Whilst the physical implications of FGM have been well documented, much less research has looked at the psychological impact of FGM (Mulongo, McAndrew & Martin, 2014). Furthermore, there is little known about the understanding and awareness of FGM amongst counselling professionals. Therefore, the study aimed to explore BACP members' awareness and understanding of FGM, to gauge their training needs and examples of best therapeutic practice when working with survivors.

Design/Methodology:

BACP, in collaboration with representatives from the Department of Health (DH) FGM Prevention Programme, designed an online survey which was distributed to 41,599 BACP members; 2,073 (5.0%) members responded. The survey covered four broad themes: demographics; awareness and understanding of FGM; experience of working therapeutically with survivors and FGM training. Descriptive and inferential analyses were undertaken on quantitative data and thematic content analysis was undertaken on qualitative data.

Results/Findings:

Only a small proportion of respondents (10%) had knowingly worked with survivors of FGM. Overall, respondents lacked confidence in their awareness and understanding of FGM, including their safeguarding duties, although respondents who had knowingly worked with survivors were significantly more confident in their knowledge. Respondents felt that helpful factors when working therapeutically with survivors of FGM included having cultural respect, knowledge and understanding, being non-judgemental/accepting and listening to the client. The most unhelpful factor was having 'a general lack, or assumption of, awareness or understanding'. Less than a quarter of respondents had undertaken any training with regards to FGM, although the vast majority expressed a desire to do so.

Research Limitations:

As the focus was on counselling professionals' perceptions and experiences, it cannot be concluded that these are reflective of FGM survivors' experiences of counselling. In addition, the small number of practitioners who had knowingly worked with survivors - and the low survey response rate in general - limits the generalisability of these findings.

Conclusions/Implications: This research has highlighted the importance of improving signposting to existing training and educational resources around FGM, as well as the need to develop new resources where appropriate. The importance of embedding cultural competency into core practitioner training, not just training specific to FGM, is paramount.

Presenter: Charlie Jackson

Other Authors: Jo Pybis, Barbara Rayment, Mick Cooper

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ABSTRACT: paper

Keywords: young people, young adults, voluntary sector, counselling, outcomes

Counselling for young people and young adults in the voluntary and community sector

Aim/Purpose:

Youth Information, Advice and Counselling Services (YIACS) are community-based voluntary sector services for young people and young adults, typically aged between 11 and 25 years old. The present study aimed to determine the profile of service users, the outcomes of counselling and client satisfaction in YIACS.

Design/Methodology:

A convenience sample of nine YIACS across England were recruited to collect data on demographics, the Current View tool (problem descriptors, complexity factors, contextual problems and education, employment or training difficulties), Young Person's Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (YP-CORE; Twigg et al., 2009) or CORE-10 and the Commission for Health Improvement - Evaluation of Service Questionnaire (CHI-ESQ; Astride-Stirling, 2002). Data were collected from 1,513 young people and young adults who accessed services between July 2014 and July 2016.

Results/Findings:

The majority of clients were female ($n=995$, 65.8%), had an average age of 18.4 years ($SD=3.6$) and received an average of 6.9 sessions. There was a significant difference between CORE-10 scores at first and last session ($t(829)=23.6$, $p<.001$), and a large effect size was observed ($d=0.83$). A statistically significant difference was also observed in YP-CORE data ($t(456)=12.2$, $p<.001$), however, the effect size was smaller ($d=0.58$). Levels of psychological distress at intake were high, with almost three-quarters of clients showing moderate-severe, or greater, levels of distress. A satisfactory proportion of clients showed reliable improvement and clinically significant change on the CORE-10 or YP-CORE.

Research Limitations:

As this was a naturalistic study, there was no comparison control group. However, it will be possible to compare these data with statutory service datasets, such as those from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), to determine any similarities or differences between client groups and outcomes.

Conclusions/Implications:

It is hoped that the production of a large national dataset from community-based voluntary sector counselling services will support improved understanding and decision-making between commissioners and policy makers about client profile, severity of psychological distress and service satisfaction in the voluntary counselling sector.

Presenter: Gillie Jenkinson, PhD

Professional Role: Counsellor & Psychotherapist at Hope Valley Counselling

Institution/Affiliation: Hope Valley Counselling

(Doctoral research conducted at University of Nottingham 2012-16 - Supervisors: Dr Belinda Harris and Dr Peter Gates)

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: former cult members, recovery, brainwashing, Gestalt psychotherapy, grounded theory

What helps former cult members recover from an abusive cult experience?

Aim/Purpose:

This study examined the impact that abusive cults can have on their followers, to ascertain how survivors can be helped. As a former cult member and psychotherapist I have both a personal and professional interest in the post cult recovery process.

Design/Methodology:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 former members. The same question was asked across interviews (see title). The data were analysed applying a constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz).

Results/Findings:

The findings indicate that the thought-reform environment-field (brainwashing) restricts the individual and inhibits the authentic-self, which transmutes from being in the service of the health of the individual, to being in the service of the cult and cult leader. 'Freeing the authentic-self' emerged as the 'basic social process' and objective, in answer to the question, and is achieved through a complex process over time, evidenced to occur over four Phases of Recovery and Growth. These include the need to: leave both physically and psychologically; cognitively understand; feel the pain; and move on to Phase Four - 'I am myself again' and post-traumatic growth.

Research Limitations:

The sample is relatively small, and whilst the data is rich, further verification is required to ascertain if it is generalisable to other types of abusive-cult, not represented, and formers of radicalisation, right wing gangs, and other high demand situations, such as domestic abuse. Researcher positioning and subjectivity was addressed through an autobiographic account of my cult experience and rigorous methodological reflexivity and transparency.

Conclusions/Implications:

This study indicates that counselling former members will be more helpful if counsellors gain an in depth understanding of cult abuse and recognise that specific strategies need to be applied at different Phases of Recovery and Growth.

Presenter: David Kaplan, PhD

Professional Role: Chief Professional Officer

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Delphi method, licensure title, scope of practice, United States

The development of a consensus licensure title and scope of practice in the United States

Aim/Purpose:

To promulgate both a licensure title and scope of practice endorsed by the profession of Counselling in the United States.

Design/Methodology:

A modified Delphi model was utilised to assist delegates from 31 U.S. Counselling organisations reach consensus on a licensure title and scope of practice. Each of the organisations was allotted one delegate for a total of 31 participants.

The Delphi method was developed in the 1940s by the RAND Corporation as a systematic means for gathering expert opinions about complex issues or problems where there are not verifiable, evidenced based solutions and initially was used to provide technical forecasts on such matters as the impact of potential nuclear war on the United States (Dalkey, Rourke, Lewis & Snyder, 1972; Sackman, 1975; Vazquez-Ramos, Leahy & Estrada-Hernandez, 2007). In essence, it provides for 'informed group judgments...that are more reliable than individual judgment' (Adler & Ziglio, 1996, p. 15). Thus the characteristics of the Delphi method for permitting converging consensus was a good fit with the need of 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counselling.

Results/Findings:

The Delphi resulted in the common licensure title *Licensed Professional Counsellor* and a scope of practice that focused on populations served, the purpose of counselling, assessment, supervision, consultation, and limitations. The complete scope of practice will be provided at the presentation.

Research Limitations:

A Delphi assumes that all participants are experts at the chosen task. It is possible that an organizational delegate could have been chosen because of leadership experience rather than the necessary knowledge base for constructing a licensure title and scope of practice.

Conclusions/Implications:

This is the first time that the profession of counselling in the United States has agreed upon one common licensure title and one common scope of practice, advancing unification and standardization.

Presenter: Viki Kelchner

Professional Role: Assistant Professor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: school-based mental health counselling, intervention research, low socioeconomic schools, outcome research

An investigation of school-based mental health counselling services with children in low socioeconomic schools

Aim/Purpose:

The purpose of this investigation was to examine change in student-clients' behavior and emotional problem scores who participated in five counselling sessions as part of a school-based mental health counselling service (SBMHCS) at two low socioeconomic schools. We also compared the student-clients' school attendance to their previous year attendance.

Design/Methodology:

A one-group pretest-posttest design, which included collecting data at two points over a five-week period of time was utilized to examine the impact of the SBMHCS intervention on student-clients. A total of 38 student-clients completed a minimum of five Counselling sessions, including 27 males (71.1%) and 11 females (28.9%) from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.

Results/Findings:

The results identified a multivariate within-subjects effect across time, Wilks' $\lambda = .696$, $F(3, 31) = 4.518$, $p < .01$, and 31% of the variance was accounted for by the intervention (time). Analysis of univariate tests indicated that externalising problems CBCL scores did not exhibit change over time; however, Internalizing Problems CBCL scores (partial $\eta^2 = .27$) and Total Problems CBCL scores (partial $\eta^2 = .17$) exhibited significant change over time. In addition, the number of school days missed decreased from their missed days of school from the previous research (Year 1, $M = 8.6$ days; Year 2, $M = 4.7$ days; partial $\eta^2 = .48$).

Research Limitations:

Limitations of the study included that the investigation occurred in two urban schools in a southeastern state and the lack of a control group in the quasi-experimental design makes it difficult to draw conclusions from the differences in scores over time.

Conclusions/Implications:

Our findings provide implications for SBMHCS as limited research has examined the influence of these intervention on school students in low socioeconomic schools. Our findings provide support for the use of a SBMHCS to improve student-clients internalising and total problems as well as improving their school attendance. Therefore, our results contribute to the outcome-based research relating to school-based mental health counselling inventions.

Presenter: Richard Mason

Professional Role: Counsellor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: counselling, IAPT, professional development, ideology, prejudice

How might working in IAPT affect the professional development of counsellors? An analytical auto-ethnographic study

Aim/Purpose:

Since the implementation of the English Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme in 2008, the provision of counselling and other ideographic approaches to psychological therapy has been reduced to several manualised therapies supported by the NICE guidelines for depression and anxiety. Many counsellors who previously provided psychological therapies in the NHS have subsequently left or retrained in IAPT compliant models of treatment. To date, there is a paucity of research specific to the experiences of counsellors who have worked in IAPT. This study takes an analytical auto-ethnographic approach to the experience of a counsellor working in IAPT over an eight year period as therapist and service manager. It highlights the ideological tensions, certainty and uncertainty of counsellors working in IAPT, and the possible impact on the actualising tendency so important in the personal and professional development of counselling practitioners.

Design/Methodology:

This study is an analytical auto-ethnographic exploration using thematic analysis, with a constant comparative approach. The researcher grounded the study in a personally reflective paper written during doctoral study; supported by 'field notes' written as a reflective column in a quarterly professional journal, and engaging with peer opinion accessed in the published literature base. Treating these documents as naturally occurring data, and applying a distinct commitment to thematic analysis the researcher offers a credible, consistent and triangulated account.

Results/Findings:

Clear themes of ideological resistance, resulting in a sense of professional loss, uncertainty and cessation of professional development preceded acceptance of the IAPT ideology. After which, a sense of being in-group facilitated a sense of gain, certainty and the re-implementation of professional growth.

Research Limitations:

Auto ethnography is a developing methodology, which attracts an 'anything goes' reputation. The researcher's innovative adoption of historical data sets may be considered invalid by traditional research academics. Adoption of an analytic approach seeks to balance such limitations.

Conclusions/Implications:

Counsellors working in IAPT may be prejudiced by their ideographic ideology. Resultant professional uncertainty and a sense of loss could inhibit the actualising tendency. Development of a pluralistic ideology is recommended.

Presenter: Aisling McMahon
Other Author: Kathryn Ledden

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: recording, clients, psychotherapy, training, protocols

From ‘an absurd idea’ to ‘exceptional learning’: attitudes regarding recording client sessions during psychotherapy training

Aim/Purpose:

Audio- or video-recording of client sessions is often used in psychotherapy training, with the goal of developing practitioner skills and ultimately improving services for clients. However, not all psychotherapy training courses require sessions to be recorded, most commonly due to concerns about a negative impact on the therapeutic relationship. The literature in this area is mostly dated, anecdotal, has produced mixed findings, with no published research in an Irish context. This study aimed to add to the literature and inform training practice, asking two main research questions: To what extent do Irish psychotherapists record client sessions during training and what are their experiences/attitudes regarding this practice?

Design/Methodology:

An online survey was distributed to members of the Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy (IAHIP) who subscribe to IAHIP web adverts (30% response rate; $N = 120$). This was a mixed methods (QUAN-QUAL) concurrent exploratory study, with SPSS v.23 and thematic analysis being used to analyse the data.

Results/Findings:

Just under half of these Irish psychotherapists recorded client sessions during their training, this practice being significantly less common amongst those who qualified in the last five years. While a small majority agreed with recording during training, a sizeable one-third disagreed. Those with regular experience of recording were most strongly in favour of the practice. Positive themes regarding recording were: ‘strongly enables learning’, ‘captures reality’, ‘an invaluable opportunity’, and ‘accountability and protection for clients’, while negative themes were: ‘ethical concerns’, ‘distorts/misses reality’, ‘an anxious experience’ and ‘interferes with the therapeutic relationship’

Research Limitations:

This study involved Irish humanistic and integrative psychotherapists so its applicability to psychotherapists from other modalities and other cultures must be considered with caution.

Conclusions/Implications:

Irish psychotherapists had strong yet mixed views about recording, reflecting the power of this practice for enhancing learning and its ethical complexity. There were divergent opinions about recording’s capacity to capture or distort reality and its potential to benefit or harm clients. Although current technology facilitates more accessible and less intrusive recording, just under half of these therapists had recorded sessions during training and this was less common for recent graduates. Recommendations for developing protocols for this practice are made.

Presenter: Lynn McVey

Professional Role: PhD candidate, BACP-registered counsellor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: reverie, empathy, intuition, reflective practice

Imagining the real: using reverie in therapy and research

Aim/Purpose:

Reverie includes ephemeral thoughts, feelings and imagery arising in response to the other (Bion, 1962; Ogden, 1994), which some psychotherapeutic approaches claim can offer rich empathic information. Using reverie is an intrinsically reflective practice, because it involves attending to one's own and the other's experiencing and reflecting on how they relate. Most contemporary reverie research comprises theoretical papers by American psychoanalysts, illustrated with clinical vignettes. There is a gap for UK-based research with a sample of therapists from different modalities. This qualitative study aims to help to bridge that gap, by exploring how therapists experience, use and make sense of reverie.

Design/Methodology:

A sample of 7 qualified, practising therapists working in a range of modalities within broadly relational parameters was selected purposively. They took part in two video-recorded interviews, in the first reflecting on reverie in clinical work and in the second reviewing clips from the first video with the researcher, to deepen understanding of their interaction. The researcher reflected on her own 'live' reverie-experiencing in both interviews and encouraged participants to do likewise. Results were analysed thematically, using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Results/Findings:

The presentation will focus on one superordinate theme from the research: how therapists use reverie to empathise intuitively with or 'imagine the real' (Buber, 1965) of clients' lives. The researcher's own reflective use of reverie to 'imagine the real' of participants' experiences will also be considered, illustrated with stories and video-stills (images are of the researcher only) from the interviews, provided with participants' permission.

Research Limitations:

Owing to its small-scale qualitative nature, results, whilst enlightening, have limited generalisability. A potential limitation of reverie itself is that it can engender solipsism rather than empathy unless it is used tentatively, focused on clients' (and not therapists') concerns.

Conclusions/Implications:

Paying reflective attention to reverie can offer practitioners and researchers access to visceral, heart-felt responses that might otherwise escape attention; responses that can be used sensitively to empathise with clients' or participants' spoken and unspoken meanings.

Presenter: Laura Monk

Professional Role: University Teacher in Counselling

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: reflexivity, mother-child separation, violence

The importance of reflective practice when working with abused women at risk of, or experiencing, mother-child separation

Aim/Purpose:

Women become separated from their children in contexts of violence/abuse in a variety of circumstances, e.g. private and public family courts. No formal provision of counselling exists for the collective population of such mothers and there are no recognised therapeutic recommendations. The research aimed to answer the question of how practitioners can improve their responses to this population.

Design/Methodology:

An Intervention Mapping Approach (IMA) (Bartholomew et al. 2011) was used to plan, develop, implement and evaluate a learning development workshop for professionals. This investigation involved four studies: two with mothers (n=10) and two with a wide range of practitioners (n=52). Mothers were recruited through the charity, MATCH (mothers apart from their children) and participated in a co-auto-ethnography and a nominal group process. Thirty-one practitioners were interviewed during a training needs analysis and a further twenty-one participated in the workshop, which was evaluated using pre- and post-workshop questionnaires and a reflective practice exercise. Recruitment was through opportunity and snowball sampling. Data were analysed deductively using the PRECEED-PROCEED model (Green and Kreuter 2005), which is embedded in the IMA, and inductively using thematic analysis.

Results/Findings:

There were three key findings. Practitioners' responses were: 1) either unhelpful/punitive/harmful and rooted in mother-blaming and motherhood ideology or, 2) helpful/supportive/therapeutic and rooted in person- and/or woman-centred practice, and 3) responses were improved through training that involved reflexivity.

Research Limitations:

Caution should be applied when interpreting the findings as data from the sample of ten mothers and fifty-two practitioners (48 females, 4 males, mean age = 50, *SD* = 12) were retrospective and subjective. Although limited claims for generalisability can be made, recommendations for practice are grounded in the data and underpinned by empirical research using IMA, which is a theory- and evidence-based research method.

Conclusions/Implications:

Findings highlight the need for reflective practice, encouraged through training and supervision. Reflexivity provides a method for practitioners to think about their own attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions, and where these come from, e.g. culture, society, media and theory; and how such factors might affect practice. There are implications for practitioners working with marginalised/stigmatised groups.

Presenters: Tomonori Motoyama & Dr David Murphy

Professional Role: Associate Professor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: person-centred psychotherapy, Japan, England, comparison

A comparative study of the person-centred experiential approach in Japan and England

Aim/Purpose:

The aim of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the 'state of the person-centred experiential (PCE) approach to psychotherapy' in Japan and England.

Design/Methodology:

A number of variables were selected from four previous studies that surveyed the 'state of the approach' published in peer review journals. We identified the common variables in these studies: 1) the availability of training programmes, 2) level of qualification, 3) range of activity of practicing PCE psychotherapists, 4) professional organisations/association membership level, 5) academic research and scholarship output. Inclusion criteria for academic outputs meant publications were focused on psychotherapy, counselling, encounter group, education, administration. Additionally, studies that were part of previous published reviews in journals, books or bibliographic databases were included. We compared the data on each of these variables to provide a descriptive statistical account.

Results/Findings:

The results indicate that PCE-specific training courses are more prevalent in England (N=16) than in Japan (N=0). Training in Japan is concentrated more in the field of clinical psychology and is at the Masters level (N=150). However, the extent of training in PCE that contributes to the Clinical Psychology qualification is a small amount of the overall curriculum. Research and scholarly outputs in English were for 2883 journal articles, 1499 book chapters, 1690 books and 431 other texts. Scholarly outputs in Japanese were 5193 journal articles, 842 book chapters, 241 books and 854 other texts. We intend to conduct further analysis to determine the findings for the professional activity, membership of professional associations.

Research Limitations:

The main limitation is the lack of publicly available data. Course providers do not routinely list the orientation of a course or curriculum details and use the generic term 'humanistic' rather than person-centred. This might suggest there are more courses that offer person-centred training that do not explicitly identify in that way.

Conclusions/Implications:

The person-centred experiential approach is active in Japan and England. The findings suggest a healthy level of work in the area of scholarly output but this has declined since 2010 in Japan. Training that is solely focused on the model is more prevalent in England than in Japan. These conclusions can be extended in the presentation.

Presenters: Jayna Mumbauer, M.A.; Yvette Saliba, M.A.; Viki Kelchner, Ph.D.; Edward (Mike) Robinson, Ph.D.; Sandra Robinson, Ph.D.; Enrique Puig, Ed.D., Elizabeth Crunk, M.S.

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: bibliotherapy, children's literature, children, Counselling, phenomenology

Bibliotherapy as an adjunct service to counselling families: a qualitative approach

Aim/Purpose:

Bibliotherapy is defined as the use of literature, film, or other media to promote understanding and facilitate problem-solving related to one's therapeutic goals (Marrs, 1995). Today, Bibliotherapy is used in a variety of settings with diverse populations (Scattone et al., 2002) to prevent and treat mental health problems such as anxiety (Cobham, 2012), depression (Gregory, 2004), and aggression (Shechtman, 2006). Although numerous studies have investigated the efficacy of bibliotherapy, there is scarce qualitative research with the goal of understanding bibliotherapy from the perspective of a client. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of families within the public school system who receive bibliotherapy treatment in conjunction with counselling services that are currently being offered at the school.

Design/Methodology:

Researchers utilised a traditional phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven caregivers of students receiving school-based counselling services. Interviews were transcribed, verbatim from the audio source. Next, researchers coded data, analysed codes, and created categories. Finally, once the research team agreed that the data had reached saturation, data were analysed for common themes.

Results/Findings:

Common themes emerged from the phenomenological analysis including: children's' increased awareness and expression of emotional states, identification with characters, and knowledge of coping strategies. Expressed challenges associated with the bibliotherapy intervention were feasibility of at-home follow-up and request for more personalised approaches.

Research Limitations:

Although precautions have been taken to address positionality and potential bias of researchers, it is reasonable to expect that the beliefs, cultural background, and occupation of researchers are variables which may influence the research study. The research site is a 'Title I' elementary school with a high percentage of students from low-income families. Transferability may be limited when considering dissimilar populations.

Conclusions/Implications:

Practical implications for counsellors include a deeper understanding of bibliotherapy, feasibility of incorporating bibliotherapy in the counselling setting, and insight into clients' perception of bibliotherapy services.

Presenter: Reg O'Brien

Professional Role: Counsellor & Professional Doctorate student

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: counselling, competence, competence-framework, person-centred, emotion-focused

Exploration of how CfD trainees, trainers and supervisors perceive competence and a competence-framework in relation to CfD: implications for practice and training

Aim/Purpose:

The psychological therapies are increasingly adopting training and development based on the competence approach, the goal being the delivery of appropriate therapy in a competent manner (Fairburn and Cooper, 2011). The competence approach is not new to counselling but little consensus exists regarding the definition and application of competence in counselling. Therapists are now receiving competence-based training within the integrative counselling approach, person-centred and emotion-focused, that is Counselling for Depression (Sanders and Hill, 2014). This study explores how CfD trainees, trainers and supervisors perceive competence in relation to CfD and the implications of these perceptions for practice and training.

Design/Methodology:

A qualitative methodology was used. Prospective participants were invited to participate through CfD training institutions and a CfD Practice Research Network. Nineteen volunteered to be interviewed. All were recruited. A one hour semi-structured interview was carried out with each participant, over a twelve month period. Data were analysed using the template analysis approach (King and Horrocks, 2010).

Results/Findings:

Resulting themes provide an insight into how interviewees are adjusting to CfD and reflecting upon a number of tensions, within the CfD competence-based model, in relation to the application of the competence framework, therapeutic practice, adherence and competence and the link with a specific condition.

Research Limitations:

This is a relatively small scale study. More trainees were interviewed than trainers and supervisors. As participants volunteered to be interviewed their perceptions are specific to this group and may not represent the views of those who did not volunteer.

Conclusions/Implications:

Learning to competence has multiple implications for counselling training, assessment and practice. The mix of two models, integrative counselling and competence-based, has brought to the surface a number of tensions regarding the definition and application of a competence model. There are many areas of competence yet to be explored together with how this CfD competence model will influence the evolution of practice.

Presenter: Jean S Penman

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ABSTRACT: paper

Keywords: persistent physical symptoms, realist evaluation, integrative therapy, conceptual platform, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), medically unexplained symptoms

Sex and other medically unexplained symptoms: developing an integrative conceptual platform to support psychotherapeutic interventions

Aim/Purpose: Health Service delivery for the costly phenomenon of Persistent 'medically unexplained' Physical Symptoms (PPS) (Birmingham et al., 2010) is in the early stage of development through Improving Access to Psychological Therapies, UK (DH, 2011; IAPT, 2014). However, despite enthusiasm to address PPS found within the reported pilot sites, further clinical skills and supervision were requested (De Lusignan et al., 2013). The aim of this evaluation is to broaden knowledge and to widen access to effective therapeutic interventions.

Design/Methodology: A realist synthesis of the literature (Wong et al. 2013) was undertaken with particular focus on under-examined Short-Term Psychodynamic Psychotherapy (STPP) for adults with PPS within non-acute healthcare, with a final comparison to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). A Realist Service Evaluation (RSE) (Pawson & Tilley, 2004) supported an 'insider' contextual examination of a live therapy process using brief psychodynamic principles (Penman, 2016). Four consecutively referred adult psychotherapy cases (McLeod & Cooper, 2011) to a non-acute NHS therapy service addressing persistent sexual symptoms (age range 26-55) were analysed by transcript data abduction against a preliminary theoretical analytic framework of engagement with PPS, derived from the literature.

Results/Findings: The thematic analyses across the therapy transcripts confirmed a set of integrative STPP/CBT principles for productive engagement with heterogeneous PPS: non-judgmental reflection on patterns of response, the acknowledgement and processing of 'unacceptable' emotion and the judicious use of behavioural interventions. Further, an integrative matrix of engagement, a cycle leading to the early discovery of the underlying factors of PPS and types of engagement for reducing PPS severity were formulated.

Research Limitations: The overall findings may be subject to insider-bias in interpretation but attempts were made to ameliorate this by rigorous therapist-evaluator reflexivity and supervision.

Conclusions/Implications: A Realist Service Evaluation (Pawson & Tilley, 2004) adapted for the study of contextualised psychotherapy process, informed by a synthesis of the research literature and by clinical experience has resulted in an integrative conceptual platform for addressing mixed presentation PPS. Straight-forward, practical guidance applicable to real-world complexity reduces the therapy-modality divide. This holds potential to enhance confidence in IAPT PPS service delivery and wider access to effective care.

Presenter: Sophie Preston
Other Author: Mhairi Thurston

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: transgender, generic counselling, lived-experience, gender-identity, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

'Just sort of accept me for who I am as a person' an investigation of UK-based transgender clients' experiences of counselling, an IPA study

Aim/Purpose:

A qualitative enquiry into transgender clients' experiences, assessing if, and if so how, their gender identity interacted with their counselling experiences.

Design/Methodology:

An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis methodology (IPA) underpinned this study. A purposeful sample was recruited via online transgender networks. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with three UK-based transgender-identified individuals who had received generic counselling within the previous five years. An IPA methodology was used to develop key experiential themes from the participants' narratives.

Results/Findings:

Superordinate themes:

- 1) The clients themselves: participants' gender identities were understood as both unique to them and also routine.
- 2) Experiences of seeking counselling: They sought counselling for pragmatic reasons, largely unrelated to counsellor expertise. Therapists' gender identities were important.
- 3) Experiences of receiving counselling: counselling was helpful in relation to gender identity, and all experienced a change toward greater self-acceptance. Counsellor acceptance, awareness, understanding and an active approach were helpful.
- 4) Interaction with other people / agencies: a history of being pathologised affected two participants' counselling experiences.

Research Limitations:

The small sample size limited generalisability, and there were participant differences in age and gender identity. Participants' self-reporting incurred the possibility of distorted memories, and perceptions of their therapists could not be verified. Analytical subjectivity was inevitably present, although steps were taken to counteract this.

Conclusions/Implications:

This importance of therapists' preparedness to counsel trans clients was evident, as participants chose counselling on a pragmatic basis, but used counselling to discuss their gender. Basic concepts such as non-judgement were important, but manifested in relation to gender e.g. through the importance of pronoun usage, suggesting the importance of trans awareness. The potentially negative legacy of other healthcare provision and the prevalence of fear and anxiety points to the importance of counsellors understanding transgender in a social context and an appreciation of the concept and functioning of minority stress. These findings are broadly in keeping with existing research, though more nuance was possible as a result of the in-depth nature of these interviews.

Presenter: Jo Pybis

Other Authors: David Saxon, Andy Hill, Michael Barkham

Professional Role: Senior Research Fellow

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: CBT, counselling, depression, effectiveness, efficiency

The comparative effectiveness and efficiency of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and counselling in the treatment of depression

Aim/Purpose:

CBT is the front-line psychological intervention for step 3 within UK psychological therapy services. Counselling is recommended only when other interventions have failed and its effectiveness has been questioned. This paper aims to compare the effectiveness and efficiency of CBT and counselling for patients with depression in IAPT services.

Design/Methodology:

Data were collected from 39,121 patients across 111 Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services as part of NAPT (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2013). Rates of effectiveness and efficiency between CBT and counselling were determined. Effectiveness was defined as rates of reliable and clinically significant improvement on the PHQ-9, while efficiency was defined by the rate of patient gain per session administered.

Results/Findings:

Overall, CBT showed marginally better pre-post gains on the PHQ-9 (.22 of a point) than counselling and yielded a marginally higher percentage of patients meeting a criterion of recovery: 46.5% (CBT) vs. 43.7% (counselling). This was a statistically significant difference. CBT returned better rates of reliable and clinically significant improvement than counselling only when the severity level of anxiety was equal to or exceeded that of depression. Counselling was found to be more efficient than CBT in all instances, demonstrated by a greater pre-post change per session, with the exception of clients experiencing severe levels of depression and mixed anxiety and depression.

Research Limitations:

The counselling intervention pre-dated the implementation of the specified IAPT intervention termed Counselling for Depression (CfD; Sanders & Hill, 2014). While the NAPT data captured service-level data, it did not collect therapist-level data that would have enabled an evaluation of the variability across therapists.

Conclusions/Implications:

The results suggest counselling is not only effective but is more efficient than CBT. CBT was only found to be superior to counselling in the treatment of mixed anxiety and depression, rather than depression alone. In a climate where services need to be ever more efficient, there is a robust argument for investing in counselling.

Presenter: Mahwish Qamar

Professional Role: Psychodynamic Therapist

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Islamophobia, unconscious, institutionalised, watched, internalised

Same hate, different enemy: psychodynamic inquiry into psychotherapists' experience of Islamophobia in the consulting room

Aim/Purpose:

The research aims to focus on psychotherapists' experiences of Islamophobia and its impact on clinical work. It helps to understand how the external socio-political events impact the internal world of clients, providing valuable insights on understanding the impact of Islamophobia in clinical practice.

Design/Methodology:

The research was qualitative in focus, using 9 in-depth qualitative interviews conducted within the UK, employing thematic analysis and bottom-up inductive approach for data analysis. Participants were recruited via snowballing, purposive sampling and through recommendations. Psychotherapy organisations, newsletters, websites, and social media were also used to advertise the study. The sample was relatively small and homogenous as only 1 of the 9 participants identified as a Muslim.

Results/Findings:

There are two overarching themes that emerged through the research:

1. Experience of psychotherapists: watching for Muslims v. watching for Islamophobia
2. Experience of clients: Muslims feeling watched v. Muslims watching themselves

The study suggests that there is a tendency to be suspicious of Muslims or of people perceived to be Muslims in the external world and that unconscious Islamophobia and political correctness creeps into the consulting room. Institutionalised Islamophobia turns psychotherapists into terrorist-watchers signifying role confusion. It has an impact on clients in their external lives affecting their internal world, as they feel watched and fear Islamophobia but also internalise it, losing authenticity. Muslims may then become their own worst enemies, which influences the quality of their psychotherapy.

Research Limitations:

The study largely focused on the experiences of psychotherapists who were not perceived to be Muslims in transference or reality. The participants mainly focused on the experiences of their clients, who were predominantly Muslims, so the findings are limited to the experiences of 'non-Muslim' psychotherapists and 'Muslim' clients. My own religious affiliation with Islam may have shaped the study even though I have tried to remain as objective as possible.

Conclusions/Implications:

This research has unravelled the subtleties and nuances of the experiences of Islamophobia in the consulting room. The study highlighted the personal, social and political issues that impact the psyche and the psychotherapy, which emphasize on the need for engagement with Islamophobia, so the thinking can also be applied in a wider context to thoughtfully address Islamophobia in both therapy and society.

Presenter: Joanna Quinlan

Professional Role: Pain Management Worker/ Private Counsellor

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: persistent pain, pain management plan

Independent validation of the Pain Management Plan: benefits of self-management within a counselling setting

Aim/Purpose:

Over 14 million people in England are reported to live with persistent pain (Bridges, 2012). This has wide ranging impact on peoples' lives with 25% losing their jobs and 25% diagnosed with depression. Unfortunately pain services are unable to meet the demand with only a third ever attending a pain specialist (Breivik et al., 2006). The Pain Management Plan (PP) is a brief cognitive behavioural (CBT) self-management programme for people living with persistent pain that can be individually facilitated or provided in a group setting. Although a CBT programme, the PP could be delivered within a person-centred framework of core conditions, a therapeutic relationship, emotional processing and reflection. For this reason, the PP would fit well into integrative therapeutic approaches already employed by counsellors/ psychotherapists. The PP is an effective and low cost option that has reported efficacy; first in the original Cole et al. evaluation, and now as part of an independent validation by Quinlan et al. The first aim is to provide an independent evaluation of the PP and second to suggest how this could be used within counselling practice.

Design/Methodology:

The PP programme was delivered by the County Durham and Darlington Pain Management Team as outlined in Cole et. al. led training sessions. Key pre and post quantitative/ patient experience measures were repeated with clinical significant change determined and compared to the original evaluation.

Results/Findings:

Of the 69 participants who completed the programme 20% achieved clinical significant change using the Pain Self Efficacy Questionnaire (PSEQ). 11-22% achieved clinical significant change in Brief Pain Inventory (BPI) interference domains. There were high levels of positive patient feedback with 25% of participants scoring a 100% satisfaction.

Research Limitations:

This evaluation is not a randomised control trial.

Conclusions/Implications:

This evaluation has results equivalent to those reported by Cole et al. It demonstrates clinically significant improvement in pain and health functioning and high patient appreciation results. Both evaluations emphasise the potential of this programme as an early intervention delivered within a stratified care pain pathway. This approach could optimise the use of finite resources and improve wider access to pain management.

Presenter: Louise Rolland
Other Author: Beverley Costa

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Multilingualism; client experience; language switching; identity; emotions

Being multilingual in psychotherapy: an applied linguistic view

Aim/Purpose:

The implications of multilingual clients' language choices have been observed in psychotherapy, from Buxbaum (1949) who noted that experiences only felt real when told in the original language, to Pérez Foster (1998) who considered therapy in a non-native language a 'pseudo-therapy'. Multilingual clients value being free to choose their language(s) of expression in therapy (Dewaele and Costa, 2013). Up to two thirds of multilingual clients have reported switching languages in at least some therapy sessions (Rolland et al., 2017). This paper examines how multilingual clients view their language choices in therapy.

Design/Methodology:

109 multilingual adults reached through snowball sampling (non-patient routes) completed an English-language web questionnaire on their experience of one-to-one counselling or psychotherapy. Five respondents participated in a follow-on semi-structured interview. Quantitative data were analysed using statistical software; qualitative data were analysed thematically.

Results/Findings:

The client sample is skewed towards highly educated white female professionals in the UK; one fifth were in mental health-related occupations; English was typically participants' first or second language. Key themes on language use include: (1) the first language mediates connection with the client's past; (2) the new language mediates the present self and creating a new identity; (3) the first language increases emotional expression; (4) a later language may introduce distance. However there were exceptions: overall language associations reflected participants' individual life journeys. Therapists played an important role in facilitating - or inhibiting - linguistic freedom.

Research Limitations:

Participants could remain anonymous, increasing reliability, however past recall may be inaccurate. The sample is not representative of a clinical population or particular region. Researcher subjectivity was reflected on in a journal and throughout analyses.

Conclusions/Implications:

Multilingual clients' language choices in therapy impact on meaning, emotional expression and identity. There is no universal rule such as 'first language is best': choices are linked to clients' language acquisition history, the linguistic context of their life experiences and the therapeutic environment. Therapists should consider exploring these as part of bringing the whole person into therapy. Counsellor and therapist training should include characteristics of multilingualism and how to explore the therapeutic meaning of multilingualism with clients.

Presenter: Faith Ruofan Liao

Other Author: David Murphy

Professional Role: PhD researcher

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Barrett-Lennard relationship inventory, Mandarin-Chinese version, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, person-centred theory

Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the Mandarin-Chinese version of Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory

Aim/Purpose:

The Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (B-LRI), formulated on Carl Rogers' person-centred theory, has been widely used for evaluating interpersonal relationships. The scale is translated into 19 languages enabling research into the utility of the relationship conditions across cultures and languages. This research aimed to address the following: is it possible to translate a full Mandarin-Chinese version of the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (B-LRIM-C) and create a valid scale? The paper reports on the results following translation of the 64-item B-LRI into Mandarin, and a principal component analysis (PCA) in an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the new B-LRIM-C.

Design/Methodology:

Translation: B-LRIM-C was translated by panel using 3 native speakers (2 x person-centred counsellors and 1 x PhD researcher), and reviewed by a linguist professional to ensure the accuracy of translation. *Sampling:* A sample of 658 Mandarin-speaking Taiwanese respondents were recruited. They completed B-LRIM-C online. The stratified random sampling was performed by ages to indicate the validity of the B-LRIM-C representatively.

Results/Findings:

Reliability of the B-LRIM-C using the Cronbach's alpha was .955 respectively. The PCA, with Varimax rotation, yielded a four-factor model termed: Level of Regard, Empathic Understanding, Congruence and Unconditionality, which explained 47.183% squared loading of the total variance and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)= .970. The results of CFA supported the structure which includes correlations among the four factors, including Normed Fix Index (NFI)= 0.95, Comparative Fit Index (CFI)= 0.97, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.092.

Research Limitations:

The limitations were as follows: Firstly, the instrument of data collection could be modified. Among the 658 respondents, only 2 people appeared in the group of age 66 over due to various levels of familiarity of computer usage and online survey. Secondly, understanding of the scale item wording was varied and it is suggested that more intuitive translation be provided. It took approximately 30 minutes to complete the scale, therefor tiredness might have affected the findings.

Conclusions/Implications:

The study has indicated a promising result of B-LRIM-C, which could contribute to research and extend the border of the community of counselling and psychotherapy, for example, Taiwan, China, etc. B-LRIM-C also could be modified as a shorter but precise version for the further usage.

Presenters: Yvette Saliba, M.A.; Viki Kelchner, Ph.D; E. H. (Mike) Robinson, III, Ph.D.; A. Elizabeth Crunk, M.S.; Enrique Puig, Ed.D.; Jayna Mumbauer, M.A.; Sandra Robinson, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: bibliotherapy, children's literature, children, counselling, quasi-experimental design

Once upon a time: the results of utilising bibliotherapy in session with children

Aim/Purpose:

Bibliotherapy has been shown to be more effective than no treatment for children and adolescents, but few studies have examined the effectiveness of bibliotherapy when used as an adjunct to counselling (Crunk & Robinson, in preparation). Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the success of using children's books in conjunction with counselling services with children. Starting in fall of 2016 a study was conducted utilizing bibliotherapy at a Title 1 school (a school with a high number and/or percentage of children from low-income families) in the state of Florida. The investigators set out to determine if the intervention was successful, and what were the best ways to effectively utilise this intervention with families.

Design/Methodology:

This is a longitudinal study that utilised a treatment-as-usual (TAU) control group design without randomisation. The intervention group (n = 7) involved individual/family sessions with bibliotherapy as an adjunct. The TAU control group (n=10) consisted of children referred to counselling by parents without the bibliotherapy adjunct. Between the fall 2016 and spring 2017 term there was a total of 7 children who received bibliotherapy. Data collected using self-report surveys and valid and reliable instruments (e.g., Child Behavior Checklist; Achenbach, 1991; Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale IV; Olson, 2008) were imputed into SPSS. Results were derived using a split plot repeated measure MANOVA.

Results/Findings:

There were a total of 17 participants (intervention group [n =7], the control group [n = 10]). The results identified that there was no significant difference between the intervention group participants' and the control group participants' behavioral concerns, emotional distress and family functioning (Wilks' $\lambda = .604$, $F(5, 8) = 1.051$, $p = .451$). In addition, no within-subjects effects was identified in the participants' scores (Wilks' $\lambda = .748$, $F(5, 8) = .538$, $p = .744$).

Research Limitations:

Working in Title 1 Schools meant that families would move, leading to attrition. Also, it was difficult to account for children being sick or getting dismissed early from school for displaying inappropriate behavior.

Conclusions/Implications:

This session presents initial findings from a longitudinal intervention study. Preliminary data found bibliotherapy was no more effective compared to counselling sessions without bibliotherapy. Presenters will discuss implications and directions for future research.

Presenter: Paula Seth

Professional Role: Doctoral Student / Psychotherapist

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: wonder, phenomenology, unknowing, I-Thou, renewal

The psychotherapist's lived-experience of wonder

Aim/Purpose:

The reflective practitioner is in touch with the capacity to wonder: to encounter the familiar anew and open to the emergence of new understandings. Wonder has been a topic of enquiry throughout history yet it remains the most under-researched emotion. The research project this paper describes the lived-experience of psychotherapist wonder, developing an understanding of its meaning and the conditions for its emergence in a clinical context.

Design/Methodology:

To generate lived-experience descriptions, the reflexive, expressive qualitative methodology of Max van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenology of practice was used. Three forms of data were collected: (1) an initial heuristic investigation disclosing the researcher's horizon of wonder; (2) written reflective descriptions of wonder from each participant; (3) phenomenological interviews. Van Manen's line-by-line and highlighting approach to analysis was employed, together with on-going reflexive awareness of how researcher pre-conceptions shaped emergent meanings and thematic statements. Eight experience-rich participants were recruited via snowballing. All were post-qualification doctoral-level existential, Gestalt, humanistic psychotherapists from Europe and North America.

Results/Findings:

The presentation will focus on three overarching themes of the phenomenon: (1) Being-open: the wonder of unknowing. The paradox of wonder as a state of unknowing and an experience of knowing something newly emergent. (2) Being-with: the experience of wondrous connection. Wonder as the experience of being opened into a state of full presence with the Other. (3) Being-renewed: the fresh revelation of wonder. In the dialogical space of the therapeutic relationship, wonder is a birthing place for new beginnings.

Research Limitations:

Small sample of participants; the use of Skype for interviews led to some loss of data richness.

Conclusions/Implications:

Wonder was both the focus of this research and the method by which participants' lived-through experience was revealed. Research findings from a small sample size, whilst having limited generalisability indicated the transformative, therapeutic potential of wonder. This study offers a perspective on wonder which might have implications for psychotherapeutic practice and education: how wonder as a fundamental mood is a healing and restorative resource; the ethical potential of wonder for the therapeutic relationship; and wonder's role in promoting radical hope.

Presenter: Philippa Skinner

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: parental bereavement, addiction, self-help, stigma, heuristic research

'Bear one another's burdens': an examination of the experiences of parents bereaved of a child through drug use, who volunteer to support other parents bereaved in a similar way

Aim/purpose:

To investigate a little-researched area of parental grief. There has been scant research either into the subject of loss through addiction or how supporting others may impact one's own bereavement process. The research asked why bereaved parents may volunteer to support others and what the role means to them. Parents' perceptions of positives and negatives of offering support were explored.

Design/Methodology:

This was a small-scale qualitative study using heuristic methodology. The researcher, who had experienced drug related loss and was explicitly part of the research, used purposive sampling to find participants. Four women and two men between forty and seventy years old responded; all had experienced losing a child to drugs between five and fifteen years ago. Semi-structured one to one interviews were conducted across a wide geographical area. The transcripts were examined using thematic analysis.

Results/Findings:

Findings were discussed under four themes: (1) experiences around bereavement, (2) on the way to becoming a supporter, (3) becoming a supporter, (4) looking after your own support needs. The overarching findings demonstrated that participants experienced their role as supporters as chiefly beneficial, helping them in their process of bereavement, in making meaning of the death and maintaining a continuing bond with their child.

Research Limitations:

The study was small scale, the sample purposive and consequently the results may not be generalisable across a wider bereaved population. All participants were white, British. The researcher's own experience will have subjectively influenced the work, a contested aspect of heuristic research.

Conclusions/Implications:

The research demonstrates the complicated nature of these seldom considered bereavements, and gives counsellors insight into the value of peer bereavement support work, meaning-making in bereavement and participants' understanding of continuing bonds. It is useful to any counsellor who works with bereaved clients and especially those who work with clients who have experienced a socially difficult or stigmatised bereavement.

Presenter: Susan Stephen

Other Author: Robert Elliott

Professional Role: PhD Student

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: person-centred therapy, outcome, congruence, measure development, Rasch model

The Strathclyde Inventory: measuring congruence as an outcome of therapy

Aim/Purpose:

Levitt et al (2005) challenged researchers to develop outcome measures that test the potentiality model underpinning humanistic therapies. Freire, Elliott & Cooper, (2007) responded by developing the Strathclyde Inventory (SI), an outcome measure consistent with person-centred theory of psychological growth (i.e. congruence-incongruence). The purpose of this study was to conduct a robust investigation of the reliability and validity of the SI using data collected from a large clinical population.

Design/Methodology:

Rasch measurement (Bond & Fox, 2015) aims to develop genuine interval ('ruler-type') measures based on a model that orders persons according to ability and items according to difficulty. In this study the Rasch model was applied to assess the SI's rating scale design and developmental pathway (item-person fit and separation) using data collected at the Strathclyde Research Clinic from 405 clients who accessed person-centred therapy and completed the SI at one or more points during their therapeutic process (total N=1174). These analyses used a brief 16-item version of the SI developed in 2012.

Results/Findings:

Analyses revealed a well-functioning 5-point rating scale, with clients able to discriminate between all rating scale points. The standardised fit statistics (infit, outfit and root mean square error) demonstrated a strong fit between the Rasch model and the persons and items measured by the SI. Separation indices identified at least three distinct sub-populations of persons and 11 item separations indicating that the SI is capable of measuring distinctive groups of individuals within an ordered set of items that represent graded levels of congruence, ranging from making choices based on internal locus of evaluation to living fully in the moment.

Research Limitations:

Rasch analysis is a powerful tool but may risk over-simplifying a complex phenomenon such as congruence by treating it as a single dimension. In this study, the use of multiple observations from the same clients can also be criticised for statistical assumptions.

Conclusions/Implications:

This study provides strong evidence that the SI is capable of genuine interval measurement of congruence within a clinical population. We encourage therapists to introduce the SI within their practice as an outcome measure consistent with person-centred theory of psychological growth.

Presenter: Colleen Swinden

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: IPA, bereaved therapist, grief, therapeutic encounter

How bereavement counsellors experience returning to therapeutic work after the death of their parent

Aim/Purpose:

There has been increased interest in the impact of external events on counsellors, however, surprisingly little written on the experience of counsellor bereavement. The aim of this qualitative study was to explore this under-researched area of how the death of a parent affects therapists working with bereaved clients.

Design/Methodology:

Interviews were conducted with four bereaved counsellors, an appropriate sample size for the methodology. Counsellors reflected on their bereavement and its impact on their work. Data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Results/Findings:

Five major themes emerged; parents' age and participants secure attachment mitigated the distress they experienced and assisted their returning to work; prior experience of death of a loved one did not ameliorate the effects of the death; the counsellors disclosed their loss to one or more clients and the majority believed the disclosure of personal grief benefited their therapeutic relationships and was a potentially positive therapeutic technique; the experience of bereavement heightened the participants' ability to empathise with their clients' loss, resulting in greater understanding and connection. A significant concern that participants felt was that they had insufficient guidance regarding fitness to practice.

Research Limitations:

Participant self-selection may have introduced an element of bias to the results. The sample size was not balanced in terms of gender, ethnicity or social class. Researcher subjectivity as a bereaved counsellor may also have influenced the interpretation of data. This was managed initially by not disclosing this information to participants. Bracketing was used during interviewing, and during analysis, a close connection to the emergent themes from participants was maintained.

Conclusions/implications:

These findings support existing literature and also reveal potential gaps in grief and loss training for counsellors and supervisors. A particular training issue for supervisors might be identifying and discussing fitness to practice issues with supervisees. There are also implications for supervisors and counsellors in terms of counsellor self-care and the use of self-disclosure in therapy. Suggested further research is to explore the use of bracketing and the use of counsellor self-disclosure in greater depth.

Presenter: Ladislav Timulak

Other Authors: Jennifer Murphy, Lucy Rowell, Anne McQuaid, Ladislav Timulak, Rosie O'Flynn, and James McElvaney

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: emotion-focused therapy, task analysis, generalised anxiety disorder, worry, qualitative research

Developing a model of working with worry in emotion-focused therapy: a discovery-phase task analytic study

Aim/Purpose:

Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) is an anxiety disorder characterised by excessive anxiety and worry. Worry is seen as a key-defining feature of GAD. Several cognitive-behavioral models of working with worry in GAD exist. More recently there have been efforts to adapt emotion-focused therapy (EFT) for GAD. The current study focused on task analysis, observing therapist and client processes (using qualitative observations as well as observer used measures) in the clinically developed, two-chair dialogue for worry (an intervention inspired by a similar EFT task of working with self-criticism in depression).

Design/Methodology:

A task analysis methodological approach was applied to 34 worry dialogues from 8 clients. The worry dialogues were qualitatively analysed, focusing on therapist and client processes in the task and also using observer-based measures such as Classification of Affective-Meaning States, Client Emotion Arousal Scale and Client Emotion Productivity Scale.

Results/Findings:

A tentative model of worry transformation using the two-chair dialogue for worry is presented. The model consists of marker identification, enactment of the worry, deepening the toll of the worry, articulation of the need towards the worry and the worry softening or the client's standing up to the worry. The results also focus on the progression in the dialogues across the series of dialogues.

Research Limitations:

Limitation typically found in qualitative research (e.g., sample size, subjectivity of the researchers, etc.) apply. The developed model may also reflect a particular therapist's style.

Implications:

The model has an immediate practical application as it can inform therapists' actions when working with worry processes in GAD clients. Implications for future research are also discussed.

Acknowledgments. The research was supported by the Health Research Board, Ireland (award H01388-HRA POR/2010/7).

Presenter: Wendy Traynor

Professional Role: Student and Senior Lecturer

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: person-centred, psychotic processes, effectiveness, change interview, grounded theory

Person-centred experiential psychotherapy and pre-therapy for adult clients who hear voices or have other unusual experiences

Aim/Purpose:

To investigate clients' views of the effectiveness of person-centred and experiential psychotherapy for clients who experience psychotic processes and consider possible optimal clinical practice implications.

Design/Methodology:

Structured change interviews (Elliott, Slatick and Urman, 2001) were conducted with 20 clients who had experienced psychotic processes (Warner, 2000) and experienced at least 6 therapy sessions. Participants described helpful and unhelpful PCT therapy processes and outcomes as well as relevant contextual factors impacting on change. Quantitative data was generated as clients rated changes. Qualitative data for this study were analysed using grounded theory.

Results/Findings:

Preliminary analysis to this point shows 97 changes specifically noted in data from the first 15 client change interviews; clients attributed 80% of changes partly or totally to the therapy. Most clients showed positive changes in social functioning, sense of self and being more connected to reality. Results also showed evidence of decrease in psychotic processes, anxiety, mood issues and reduced risk of harm.

Research Limitations:

This was a small scale study but nonetheless produced rich data.

Conclusions/Implications:

Person-centred and experiential psychotherapy can show positive changes in clients who experience psychotic processes, with particularly strong outcomes relating to increased social functioning. Our results specifically highlight the importance of moderating therapist intensity of presence, working with careful attention to person-centred values, which appeared to be useful for a population of clients who are often undervalued and stigmatised.

Presenter: Alison Trott

Professional Role: Primary Care Senior Counsellor & EMDR Practitioner

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: social class, therapeutic relationship, equality, similarity, disparity

Social class and the therapeutic relationship: the perspective of therapists as clients

Aim/Purpose:

Whilst much has been written about the impact of gender, culture, age, sexual orientation, and race on the therapeutic relationship, little research attention has been paid to social class. This research aimed to explore how client/therapist social class similarity/disparity impacted the therapeutic relationship. Specifically the research aimed to address the following question: 'to what extent do perceived differences in social class between client and therapist impact upon the therapeutic relationship?'

Design/Methodology:

Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from a mixed-method online-survey. Using maximum variation sampling, 45 completed questionnaires, comprising 30 middle-class and 15 working-class qualified, practicing therapists from their role as client, were returned. A quasi-phenomenological approach and Thematic Analysis were used to interrogate the data.

Results/Findings:

Four primary themes were identified: Perceptions of own social class; Social class as facilitative aspect of therapy; negative impact of social class on therapy; clients perceptions of their therapeutic relationship. Findings demonstrate that where there was social class disparity, the explicit recognition and acknowledgement of this disparity were shown to impact positively on the client, improving equality, increasing rapport and enabling greater psychological growth. Social class similarity resulted in more effective relationships with greater client/therapist equality and rapport.

Research Limitations:

Main limitations included: the exclusion of other socio-demographic factors, eg: race, etc may have influenced the findings. Due to ethical considerations, only trainees and/or practicing therapists, who are likely to be more self-reflective than the general population, were used. Therefore, extrapolation of this data to 'real' clients, whose perceptions of social class in therapy may be very different, should be avoided. Researcher subjectivity was mitigated through the use of a reflexive journal and supervision.

Conclusions/Implications:

Despite many respondents believing social class to be an irrelevant factor within their therapeutic relationship, this study illustrates that social class was a silent but powerful force affecting clients' feelings of equality, which were often ignored. For a client to take full benefit from therapy, therapists must recognise the importance of social class and classism and their impact upon the therapeutic relationship, and be prepared to attend to these dynamics when appropriate.

Presenters: Biljana van Rijn, Evi Chryssafidou

(Please see associated paper on page 47. These two papers will be presented consecutively on the programme)

Other Authors: Carline Falconer, Bill Stiles, Mick Cooper

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Avatar-based counselling, young people, counselling for adolescent boys, case study

Avatar-based counselling for young people. Case study 'Richard'

Aim/Purpose:

This case study examined the use of avatar software developed by a UK-based company, ProReal, in therapeutic school based counselling. The software offers a dynamic array of images, much like a video game, including avatars and various 'props'. The case was drawn from an initial trial, which suggested that this tool may be particularly useful in counselling adolescent boys, and clients on Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Design/Methodology:

Richard (a pseudonym) was a 14 year old boy, diagnosed with ASD and seen in school counselling for anxiety and behaviour problems. Study material centred on the screen recordings of a sequence of 9 sessions. This was supplemented by interviews with the counsellor and client, and quantitative analysis of YP-CORE scores. The research team used assimilation analysis (Stiles & Angus, 2001) to track therapeutic change. Informed consent was given by all the participants.

Results/Findings:

The analysis focused on Richard's work on the assimilating problematic experiences of feeling different from his peers. Richard made good use of the digital imagery - for example avatars to aspects of himself and significant others and props to represent problems and coping (e.g., treasure chest images to represent a seemingly inaccessible 'being normal'; walls to represent obstacles; and roadblocks to represent internal defences). Assimilation analysis seems to indicate assimilation of the sense of difference moving from vague awareness (APES Stage 2), through increased differentiation and problem clarification of (APES Stage 3) towards the joint search for understanding and insight (APES Stages 3.8 and 4). The imagery provided a non-verbal, creative, medium for expression and facilitated the working relationship, providing meaning bridges between the counsellor and the client as well as within the client. It also illustrated some characteristic ASD tendencies, such as repetitive use of props and avatars and a preoccupation with building and precision.

Research Limitations:

Absence of recordings for all counselling sessions and the sessional segments during which the client was not using ProReal.

Conclusions/Implications:

Avatar software could provide an additional resource for counselling, particularly for clients with verbal expression difficulties.

Presenter: Katy Wakelin

Other Authors: Christine Stevens, Jane Stringfellow, Judith Waring

Professional Role: Assistant Professor of Counselling

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ABSTRACT: Paper

Keywords: Gestalt therapy, CORE, comparative effectiveness

How effective is Gestalt psychotherapy?

Aim/Purpose:

There has been little quantitative outcome-based research on the effectiveness of Gestalt therapy; this paper aimed to measure effectiveness and compare with other modalities.

Design/Methodology:

This three-year project used the CORE (clinical outcomes in routine evaluation) self-report questionnaire of 34 questions covering: subjective well-being, problems, life functioning, and risk. The comparison of pre- and post- mean scores provides an outcome measure. The system is completed for each client in a practice. We collected information on 249 clients; 180 were complete data sets suitable for analysis.

Results/Findings:

Most clients were seen in primary care, 70% were women, dominantly white British or European (90%). Around 25% of the therapists were trainees the others were qualified. The pre-post difference of the CORE measures is 8.4 comparable to 8.8 and 8.9 in the comparison studies for CBT, person-centred therapy and psychodynamic therapy and to the benchmark result of 9.0 (well within one standard deviation of 6.8). Effect size, a comparison of overall effectiveness, given by the mean of the difference between pre and post-counselling scores over the pre-counselling standard deviation, is lower at 1.12 to the other effect sizes of 1.36, 1.39 and 1.42, possibly because a quarter of the therapists were trainees. Other measures include improvement (74%), and reliable deterioration (0%). Reliable and clinically significant improvement (56%) is comparable with the benchmark studies for other modalities of 54%, 58% and 61%. Overall, the results broadly support the equivalence paradox: Gestalt therapists appear to be as effective as other therapists at generating reliable and significant improvement in clients.

Research Limitations:

There are limitations in measuring outcomes and in the CORE system: a) subjective wellbeing is difficult to measure; b) it may vary from day to day so measurement is unreliable; c) may be incompatible with humanistic values as any measurement is reductive and well-being is a complex phenomenon and cannot be reduced to a number.

Conclusions/Implications:

Gestalt therapy is as effective as other therapies supporting the equivalence paradox found in other studies. Perhaps research needs to focus on which characteristics make a therapist effective other than therapeutic modality.

METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION PAPERS

Presenter: Chrysostomos Athanasiadis

Other Authors: Professor Brendan Gough, Professor Steve Robertson

Professional Role: Lecturer in Counselling

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ABSTRACT: Methodological innovation paper

Keywords: online qualitative research, ethics in online research, naturally occurring interactions, synchronous and asynchronous interactions, male depression

The value of qualitative research online: men's accounts of depression

Background and introduction:

Qualitative research offers ways to achieve an understanding of people's experiences from their own perspectives and to explore the social construction of meaning (Burr, 1995; Smith, 1995). However, qualitative data obtained through interviews are often affected by social desirability (O'Brien & Clark, 2010). An innovative approach to researching participants' personal experiences that helps avoid this methodological shortcoming is the use of data from online forums (Gough, 2016). Qualitative research offers ways to achieve an understanding of people's experiences from their own perspectives and to explore the social construction of meaning (Burr, 1995; Smith, 1995). However, qualitative data obtained through interviews are often affected by social desirability (O'Brien & Clark, 2010). An innovative approach to researching participants' personal experiences that helps avoid this methodological shortcoming is the use of data from online forums (Gough, 2016). My study of unsolicited narratives from online interactions of depressed men is an example of this approach.

Nature of the methodological innovation/critique being proposed:

In this presentation, I will demonstrate an innovative way to conduct qualitative research: by drawing data from the internet. I shall use the example of my own research which is focused on depression in men. This piece of research received ethical approval, in line with the Research Ethics Policy and Procedures of Leeds Beckett University, on 7 April 2016.

The presentation will consider methodological issues and will provide practical advice on: ways of identifying relevant internet sources, dealing with ethical issues surrounding working with online data, copying and saving online data, and tips about analysing online data using an example from my research with online interactions of depressed men.

Conclusion and relevance to counselling and psychotherapy research practice:

Online forums are filled with naturally occurring data, the analysis of which can provide new insights into the participants' experiences (Gough, 2016). An additional benefit of online forums is that forum users can reach out and speak to a great number of other people with no geographical restrictions (Robinson, 2001). Furthermore, research with internet-sourced information can be of practical value since information from websites, which does not require special access rights, may normally be used in academic research and reproduced in not-for-profit research documents with the acknowledgement of the source (Snee, 2013).

Presenter: Jeannette Roddy
Other author: Chris Keech

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ABSTRACT: Methodological innovation paper

Keywords: participant recruitment, male victims, social media, domestic violence, accessing counselling

Reflections on recruiting a 'hard-to-reach' counselling client group

Background/Introduction:

A previous research study investigating the client experience of domestic violence (DV) counselling (female and male), successfully recruited participants through specialist DV agencies. Male participants were recruited in Eire, as there was no equivalent service in the UK. More recent developments in specialist DV agencies for male victims provided the opportunity to undertake additional research. This new project was designed to determine how male victims in the UK had accessed counselling, what they had found useful or not, and how that differed from the experience of men in Eire.

Recruitment strategy for the project was based on working with specialist DV and general counselling agencies to identify potential participants. The project initially recruited 12 UK agencies who had contact (personal, e-mail or web-based) with potential participants. After 4 months, only one participant had been recruited. The specialist male DV agencies suggested that few of their clients receiving counselling and the general counselling agencies suggested that they saw very few male victims. It seemed that if this client group accessed counselling, it was in some other way.

Nature of the methodological innovation/critique proposed:

A new recruitment strategy was required which would encourage men to identify themselves as potential participants and then contact the research team directly. A media campaign was developed in conjunction with the university public relations and social media teams with the theme of 'finding the invisible men of domestic violence'. The campaign and resulting adjustments to the recruitment and interview processes were reviewed and approved by the university ethics committee. This change in recruitment strategy resulted in local radio and journal coverage, which was picked up and shared through the social networks of male victims. Over the next 3 weeks, more than 30 men from the UK and overseas volunteered for the project, with 10 UK participants recruited.

Conclusion and relevance to counselling and psychotherapy research practice:

The diverse nature of counselling services in the UK means that not all groups of clients will find support through expected, established pathways. In these cases, a direct approach to potential participants using public and social media may be more effective.

Presenter: Megan Rose Stafford

Other Authors: Karen Cromarty, Charlie Jackson, Peter Pearce, Tiffany Rameswari, Mick Cooper

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ABSTRACT: Methodological innovation paper

Keywords: Randomised control trial, young people, humanistic counselling, school setting

Developing ETHOS: a randomised controlled trial of school-based, humanistic counselling with young people

Background and introduction:

Levels of mental health problems in children and young people are increasing. Investing in support for young people with behavioural and emotional difficulties can help them achieve academically and improve longer-term outcomes such as employment and health. One potential intervention that may achieve this is school-based counselling. School-based humanistic counselling (SBHC) is based in evidence-based competences for humanistic therapies. In pooled analysis of data across four pilot studies comparing SBHC with pastoral care as usual (PCAU), SBHC resulted in reductions in psychological distress and demonstrated cost-effectiveness, as compared to PCAU. A fully-powered randomised control trial (RCT) is needed to establish the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of SBHC.

Nature of the methodological innovation/critique being proposed:

The ETHOS study is a fully powered RCT aiming to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of SBHC for young people, as compared with PCAU. The present paper aims to describe the experiences of setting up and implementing an RCT of this nature, to inform research professionals with an interest in conducting similar work. This paper is a reflective account of the experiences of conducting an RCT evaluating humanistic counselling in a school setting with young people.

Conclusion and relevance to counselling and psychotherapy research practice:

The key challenges of developing and executing a fully powered RCT of this nature, can be categorised as logistical (e.g. implementing a RCT across multiple sites, and in a school environment), ethical (e.g. managing ineligible participants and/or clinical risk) and practice-based (e.g. recruitment and training of humanistic practitioners in a real-world setting). We present these challenges, how we have mitigated for them and our learning over the first phase of the study, including set-up and participant recruitment. What we have learnt from developing and implementing this study, will be of interest to practitioners, researchers and educators working in the field of young people's mental health and well-being, and/or in school-based settings.

WORKSHOPS

Presenters: Sarah Cantwell, Jacqueline Hayes
Other Authors: John Rae, Joel Vos, Mick Cooper

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ABSTRACT: Workshop

Keywords: conversation analysis, skills training, collaboration, pluralistic therapy

Integrating conversation analytic findings about therapy sessions into therapeutic skills training and development

Relevance of the workshop to counselling and psychotherapy research:

The need to extend our understanding of the tacit knowledge and micro-skills used by therapists is widely acknowledged (e.g. Stiles, 2008; McLeod, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1999). Addressing this need would inform therapeutic skills training and the continuing development of practice post-qualification (Hill & Lent, 2006; Ladany & Inman, 2011; Schön, 1987). The growing body of Conversation Analytic findings is well-placed to contribute here by observing how clients and therapists respond to each other on a moment-by-moment basis (e.g. Muntigl et al., 2013; Madill, 2015). Such detailed, observational data is especially relevant since tacit knowledge and micro-skills may be organised at a level of specificity difficult for therapists and clients to remember and describe (Hepburn, Wilkinson & Butler, 2014). However, Conversation Analytic research is sometimes perceived as highly technical, and thus, as inaccessible to therapists (Gale, 2000). To bridge this practice-research gap, this workshop will build on existing efforts in other fields to communicate Conversation Analytic findings to practitioners (e.g. Stokoe, 2014; Strong, 2003).

The aims of the workshop:

To demonstrate and reflect on how Conversation Analytic findings can inform therapeutic skills development.

How the workshop will be structured:

Participants will take part in a skills awareness exercise, derived from the organisers' Conversation Analytic findings on how clients and pluralistic therapists (Cooper & Dryden, 2016) collaborate.

This exercise will involve both small and larger group discussions about transcribed examples of therapists working to collaborate with clients. The examples will be presented one at a time and in segments, so that participants can react to the interaction as it unfolds. Participants will have the opportunity to critically reflect on and discuss their experience of this skills awareness exercise and its application to therapeutic skills development.

Key points for discussion:

- Micro-skills and tacit knowledge used by therapists in collaborating with clients i.e. content from skills awareness exercise
- Differences in Conversation Analytic and therapeutic perspectives on interactions in therapy sessions
- Advantages, limitations and practicalities of integrating Conversation Analytic findings into skills development

Who will benefit from attending the workshop?

Practitioners, trainers, trainees and researchers interested in how Conversation Analytic findings can be communicated in order to contribute to skills development.

Presenters: Dr Linda Dubrow-Marshall and Professor Rod Dubrow-Marshall

Professional Role: Programme Leader

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ABSTRACT: Workshop

Keywords: self-care, ethics, compassion fatigue, reflective practice, auto-ethnography

Reflexive auto-ethnography: a means to self-care for practitioners

Relevance of the workshop to counselling and psychotherapy research:

The BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2016) states the value of: 'Enhancing people's wellbeing and capabilities' and extends this responsibility to self-care in its principle of 'Self-respect: fostering the practitioner's self-knowledge, integrity and care for self' (p.2). Yet there are no official guidelines for how to maintain self-care while facing the challenges of providing care to others. This workshop proposes a model for practitioners to use reflexive auto-ethnographic methods to monitor the personal impact upon themselves of working with people in emotional pain in order to deepen their awareness of how to maintain personal integrity and self-care within the inter-subjectivity of the therapeutic relationship, using principles derived from research on professional self-care, compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatisation, reflective practice and auto-ethnography. The practitioner/supervisor relationship will be explored, based on research that British practitioners believe that supervision provides their primary support for self-care (Savic-Jabrow, 2010).

The aims of the workshop:

The workshop will explore research themes with an emphasis on common challenges to practitioner self-care and how to employ auto-ethnographic methods within reflexive practice. Effective use of supervision as a means of supporting self-care whilst maintaining its distinction from psychotherapy will be explored. Personally meaningful practical guidelines for raising awareness and maintenance of self-care will be developed. Models for practitioner self-care, such as the SWIMMER (Self-care with Information Management, Moderation, Empathy, and Resources) Model (Dubrow-Marshall and Dubrow-Marshall, in press) will be presented.

How the workshop will be structured:

Following introductions and an overview of research on self-care, paired interactions and small group discussion will identify barriers and pathways. Participants will start a self-care journal as an individual exercise in reflexive auto-ethnography and will reflect on this experience with the group. The SWIMMER Model and other models of self-care will be presented. Finally, there will be a group discussion of points to consider in the future practice of self-care.

Key points for discussion:

Research on self-care and using an auto-ethnographic approach to monitoring self-care will be discussed. Participants will discuss how to develop a bespoke model of self-care that they can apply to their practice.

Who will benefit from attending the workshop?

Psychotherapists, counsellors, supervisors, and counselling/psychotherapy researchers.

Presenters:, Dr Darcy Haag-Granello, Dr Paul Granello
Other authors: Dr Colette T Dollarhide

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ABSTRACT: Workshop

Keywords: counsellor professional identity, qualitative, quantitative

Professional counsellor identity evolution: researching counsellor knowledge, attitudes and skills

Relevance of the workshop to counselling and psychotherapy research:

Professional identity of counsellors can be understood as the culmination of professional knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and each of these developmental domains directly influences both practice and training in counselling. Each presenter has conducted studies in these domains: counsellor cognitive development during training (knowledge), counsellor identity development during and after training (attitudes), and rigor of field experiences for counsellors in training (skills). Using these three studies as examples of research paradigms, participants will discuss ways to explore these domains using various research methodologies.

The aims of the workshop:

To facilitate participants' ability to research the professional identity evolution of counsellors in these three domains using various research methodologies.

How the workshop will be structured:

First, an overview of professional identity will be offered and questions posed to the audience. Each of the three studies will be presented and connected to professional identity. How does this structure (knowledge, attitudes, skills) capture counsellor development? Focusing on methodology, what future studies can expand on this understanding?

Key points for discussion:

- (1) What is professional identity? What was your professional identity development process? What was your greatest learning experience? Why was that so meaningful for you? (5 minutes)
- (2) How is professional identity developed: changes in knowledge, attitude and skills? Each study will be shared in 5 minutes maximum focused on *research methodology* that was designed to fit the construct being measured, either quantitatively or qualitatively. (15 minutes)
- (3) Participants will be asked to each write a research question focusing on professional identity development. What methodology would fit those questions? Depending on how many participants attend, either small or large group discussion will allow presenters to talk with groups who are interested in their particular methodology. (40 minutes)

Who will benefit from attending the workshop?

Beginning researchers and counsellor educators.

Presenter: Jacqueline Hayes

Other Authors: Clare Brunst, Nick Midgley, Mick Cooper

Professional Role: Lecturer in Counselling Psychology

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ABSTRACT: Workshop

Keywords: therapy with children and young people; common factors; review; implications for practice

Essential research findings in child and adolescent therapy: What leads to change? A look at key findings and implications for practice

Relevance of the workshop to counselling and psychotherapy research:

'Common factors' in psychotherapy research refer to those active ingredients of therapy that may be found in any type of psychotherapy. In adults, such common factors are now thought to be among the most important contributors to therapeutic change (see Cooper, 2008). Less is known about effective therapy with children and young people but the presenter recently reviewed common factors in child and adolescent therapy for a forthcoming book - *Essential research findings in child and adolescent therapy* (Midgley, Hayes, & Cooper, 2017) - and this workshop highlights some of the most important findings from this review, considering them in the light of practice.

The aims of the workshop:

To highlight some of the most important factors in effective therapy with children and young people as shown through research, and to explore implications for practice.

How the workshop will be structured:

Key learning objectives:

1. to learn about what the research says about common factors in effective therapy with children and young people
2. to consider how these relate to, inform, and develop our own practice

These will be achieved through a mixture of author presentation, small group discussion, and large group discussion. Attendees can expect that this workshop will help them to think about the links between research and their own practice. There will be opportunities to reflect on their own work, and hear the perspectives of other practitioners.

Key points for discussion:

Attendees may expect to discuss the following topics: the therapy relationship and alliance, and research on how to build strong alliances; the role that parents and caregivers have in change; factors that makes an effective child therapist; the limitations of research.

Who will benefit from attending the workshop?

From highly experienced practitioners, to first year trainees, those interested in working with children and young people, and developing practice in this area, are welcome.

Presenter: Rita Mintz

Professional Role: Senior Lecturer in Counselling

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ABSTRACT: Workshop

Keywords: research ethics, qualitative research, tensions, dilemmas

A view from inside the ethics committee: ethical complexities and tensions in conducting qualitative research

Relevance of the workshop to counselling and psychotherapy research:

Ethical considerations permeate all aspects of the research process, from the initial formulation of the research question through to the dissemination of the findings. The complexities of qualitative research bring particular aspects of research ethics into focus. These are often subtle, unpredictable and amorphous and can involve tensions with competing factors. This workshop will provide a forum to explore and debate some of these complex dimensions of research ethics.

The aims of the workshop:

- To identify some of the ethical tensions that can be experienced in conducting qualitative research, with a particular focus on the more subtle and nuanced areas
- To provide a structured context in which to examine and debate the issues which arise
- To consider potential implications for researchers and ethics committees

How the workshop will be structured:

A short introduction will be given by the presenter drawing upon her experience as a researcher, research supervisor and Chair of a University Department Research Ethics Committee. This will provide a context and broad framework for examining ethical complexities and tensions. This will be followed by a small group exercise in which participants: (1) share their own experience and perceptions in relation to the presentation; (2) consider the 'balancing acts' that might be needed in addressing complex tensions; (3) reflect on the impact on their current and future research. Feedback from the exercise will inform a whole group discussion, and the workshop will conclude with a brief synopsis of the main issues.

Key points for discussion:

- What are some of the subtle ethical tensions and complexities that can arise in the qualitative research process?
- How might the researcher balance out these tensions and complexities?
- How might these ethical tensions impact the overall research process?

Who will benefit from attending the workshop?

The workshop should be appropriate for both the novice and experienced researcher as well as research supervisors and tutors.

SYMPOSIUM

Presenter: Emma Tickle

Professional Role: Assistant Professor

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Symposium A: overview

Keywords: Counselling for Depression (CfD), person-centred counselling, education, ethics, IAPT

Counselling for Depression. How did we get here- where are we going?

The aims of the symposium:

The symposium offers the chance to review the inception of CfD, what factors are relevant to applicants achieving a successful qualification and the complexity of the ethics involved in offering person-centred experiential counselling within the NHS.

Contribution of each symposium paper to the overall theme:

Counselling in the National Health Service has a long history. BACP responded to Layard's initiative: Increasing Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) by developing Counselling for Depression (CfD). CfD is a manualised person-centred experiential approach to working with depression. Manualisation aims to ensure counsellors adhere to the approach. It also allows outcome data can be used in evidence based trails. Paper 1 explores factors which might predict the successful attainment of the full CfD license. This paper utilises the data we have access to as a result of offering CfD training at the University of Nottingham. There is an update to the 2015 predictors for successful completion of CfD training with a larger N size (from N=30 to N=90). Paper 1 has also been extended to include an analyses of applicants' statements regarding their understanding of working in a person-centred way. Paper 2 discusses the reports heard as trainers of experiences of working within NHS or NHS funded services and suggest there needs to be further research into what is happening for counsellors who take up the training.

Implications of the symposium theme for counselling and psychotherapy theory, research and practice:

By looking at historical understanding of the person-centred approach it's possible to begin an exploration into how it matches modern thinking. Research is proposed into whether significant change does occur for applicants who engage with CfD training. Does IAPT need to adapt to the counselling ethos or vice-versa?

Discussion:

Ontological consistency:

What is the importance of a clear ontology for those wishing to train in CfD? What are the implications for practice?

Presenter: Emma Tickle and Dr Sue Price
Other Authors: Catherine Hayes, Emma Tickle, Dr Sue Price
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Symposium A

ABSTRACT: paper 1

Keywords: counselling for depression, education, training, qualification

**What factors predict successful attainment of Counselling for Depression (CfD) qualification?
Extended analysis of the 2015 paper**

Aim/Purpose:

The aim is to update and extend investigation in to factors that predict the successful attainment of the CfD qualification.

Design/Methodology:

Predictor variables on the outcome of CfD training were tested for statistical significance. Applicant details for 17 cohorts of trainees (N=94) were reviewed and codified according to the therapeutic orientation of their qualification and years of post-qualifying experience. Supporting statements were rated on dimensions characterising the person-centred approach (PCA) to measure theoretical orientation. 1) The therapist's attitude that the client is the expert 2) The centrality of the relationship 3) A growth model of depression. Successful outcome was measured by assessing time taken to qualify, frequency of adherence to and mean scores of the Person-Centred Experiential Psychotherapy Scale (PCEPs) across recordings.

Results/Findings:

In 2015 the analysis showed that only theoretical approach statistically significantly predicted successful outcome. Those originally qualified in PCA were more likely to complete CfD training in less time than those from integrative and humanistic therapists. This investigation will update the results with a larger sample of data. It will extend the investigation through analysing applicant's supporting statements by rating the degree to which their theoretical orientation is person-centred.

Research Limitations:

Limitations exist to the system for codifying the predictor variables for original training. Life circumstances are not accounted for.

Conclusions/Implications:

Findings from the study can be used to inform potential applicants on the likelihood of successful completion of the course based on prior training and other factors. Possible implications could include a greater person-centred theoretical focus to the CfD courses. In order to reliably measure change as a result of the CfD course, applicants could submit a pre course recording of client work.

Presenter: Dr Gillian Proctor
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Symposium A

ABSTRACT: paper 2

Keywords: counselling for depression, education, training, qualification, ethics

**Counselling for Depression: a response to counselling education in the 21st century.
Ethical conflicts between a counselling approach operating within a medicalised
bureaucratic health service**

Aim/Purpose:

We explore the impact of the clashes of cultures and values within counselling education and counselling provision. We use the particular example of training in 'Counselling for depression', provided for counsellors working in the publicly provided health service in the UK.

Design/Methodology:

Drawing on our own experience as trainers and on feedback received from CfD delegates post training and post achieving qualification, we discuss challenges and examples of best practice for CfD Licensed practitioners working within the NHS

Results/Findings:

Isolated practitioners are more likely to find the integration of CfD into services is complex. Anecdotal evidence indicates where there are 8 or more CfD practitioners within a service confidence and a sense of agency is stronger.

Research Limitations:

The limitations of this study are the small sample number of participants. This is partly to do with the relatively recent introduction of CfD and the relatively small number of qualified practitioners. The paper relies on course feedback and as such is anecdotal and not empirical research.

Conclusions/Implications:

The implications from this exploration indicate a more counsellor friendly environment in services will encourage counsellor agency and confidence, the paper serves as a discussion point to end the symposium. A more formalised and empirical research project would be of value.

BACP 24th Annual Research Conference

Mid May 2018 (dates tbc)

Conference announcement and first call for papers

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This two day research conference runs on Friday and Saturday with a pre-conference workshop on Thursday evening prior which is open to all delegates.

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Abstract submission deadline: Friday 3 November 2017.

For further information about submitting an abstract, contact Angela Couchman at angela.couchman@bacp.co.uk

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