

## **Report on annual conference of Newport Centre for Counselling Research**

I feel prompted to write a brief account of Saturday's conference (19th November) at the Newport Centre for Counselling Research, as it was such a good day! Those of you who were not there, you missed a great conference! It was well organised, friendly and very useful.

Tim Bond, the keynote speaker, told us about his experience of receiving Maori Counselling. In Maori culture it is, apparently, not the individual but the family that is the focus. If a person has a problem, it is assumed that there is a lack of balance between him (or her) and his ancestors. So Tim was required to provide a list of his ancestors (kindly provided by his father), some of whom he had, of course, never met. However, he related how during the counselling the room slowly began to be populated by all these people and he had the sense that time was running backwards. This was fascinating and I would have loved to learn more, but unfortunately Tim was not able to stay for the rest of the conference.

Next, I gave an account of my experience of my doctoral research. I focussed on the process and what I learnt from it, both personally and professionally, which people appeared to find helpful.

Elaine Davies and Jeanette Jones did a live demonstration of a supervision session, where the supervisee announces that she is pregnant. They did this by saying what was actually said at the time; while a recording of what was going through their minds was played in between. This was fun as well as informative and highlighted the need for more research into how clients experience the pregnancy of their counsellor.

Three of the presentations focussed on research into working with people who have suffered significant trauma:

Jeanette Roddy talked about her research with people who have suffered domestic violence, Lesley Spencer gave an account of her interviews with a woman who had nearly died as a result of mis-diagnosis, and Julie Dorey discussed how people's memory is affected following rape or sexual assault. All three were fascinating and gave an insight into the effect of difficult experiences and the need to create meaning. They also demonstrated the different research methodologies that may be used and how that kind of research may in itself be therapeutic for the research participants. The possibility of vicarious trauma for the researcher was also highlighted and the need for sufficient support when engaging in this type of research,

Sheila Spong talked about the exciting development of the Counselling Research Clinic, where people can receive free counselling, but agree to take part in research. There are only a few of these clinics in the country and this is the first in Wales! At present they are able to provide 18 sessions a week at the university's premises and hope to branch out to other premises within the community.

Sheila asked us to brainstorm in small groups what kind of research might help us in our own practice. Although this exercise lasted only fifteen minutes, it was

amazingly productive and provided many ideas that warrant follow up. The need to look into the experience of the client (what they do and do not find helpful) was one that stood out for me.

The conference now also includes a prize for the best dissertation, £150 worth of book tokens, provided by PCCS Books. This was won by Kate Schofield for her work on the effects of disability (I hope I have remembered this right).

*Lastly, the Welsh cakes we had in the afternoon were to die for!*

*Next year's main address will be by Pete Sanders. So put the date in your diary now - it is Saturday, 17th November!* Perhaps you might want to think about sharing a project of your own. If you have been involved in a research project, large or small, please think about offering a paper or workshop for next year's conference. The closing date for sending in abstracts of papers or workshops is usually in June - exact date to be announced later