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# **The Professional is Personal**

## **An Evaluative Inquiry into the Experience of Setting up and Managing a University Counselling Service**

A project submitted to Middlesex University in collaboration with Metanoia Institute  
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Psychotherapy by Professional Studies

**Elizabeth Marie Jordan**  
**Doctor in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies**

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# Glossary of acronyms used

- (AHPP) Association of Humanistic Psychology Practitioners
- (ASC) Association of Student Counsellors
- (AUCC) The Association of University and College Counsellors
- (BACP) British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- (BCUC) The Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College
- (CORE) Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation
- (CPJ) Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal
- (CPJ) Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal
- (HUCS) Heads of University Counselling Services
- (IACT) Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- (LEA) Local Education Authorities
- (QAA) Quality Assurance Audit
- (QED) Quality Enhancement and Development
- (SRS) Senior Residency Scheme
- (UCS) University Counselling Service
- (UKCP) United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy
- (UKRC) United Kingdom Register of Counsellors

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# Abstract

This project is an innovative form of evaluative inquiry into the university counselling service which the researcher set up in 1992 and still manages at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. The inquiry explores the experience of the researcher in relation to this role, and also the experiences of other heads of university counselling services. This inquiry was conducted within the naturalistic research paradigm, using interviews as the primary data-gathering route. Preparation, conduct and analysis of interviews were informed by heuristic methodology. The focus of this project is to establish a structure of experience and learning drawn from reflections, self-process, motivations and subsequent actions of the researcher and ten participants from other student counselling services over a period of time. These eleven participants comprised two counselling and psychotherapy researchers; eight participants (four men and four women) who have all set up and, or managed a university counselling service; and the researcher. The information was gathered through self-process, dialogue and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative paradigms and processes have been used since these approaches value the human experience component in conception and realisation of a concrete, functional structure.

The outcomes are in the form of conclusions and recommendations regarding the management and operations of university counselling services, e.g. guidelines and checklists where core themes are gathered in such a way that important new considerations are highlighted. These findings have also made a significant difference to the continuing work and insight of the researcher and have also assisted other practitioners in both setting up and managing university and counselling services in general through providing the material for academic papers, conference presentations and training events.

# Structure of the project presentation

This project is presented in four chapters. The preface introduces the doctoral journey and reasons for carrying out this evaluative inquiry into the 'experience' of setting up and managing a university counselling service. This chapter also includes a summary of how the specialist research seminars have contributed to the researcher's thinking around this project, also it identifies the appendices that relate to the researcher's reflections on the process of this research.

Chapter 1 presents a review of literature that explores the social and working context of universities and university counselling services. It considers research perspectives on the nature of effective organisations. The chapter includes questions drawn from this literature that are used to analyse the research data and concludes with a summary of the main findings reported in the literature.

Chapter 2 examines methods and perspectives used in the project. It explores the research paradigm for this work; the structure and rationale of naturalistic inquiry, considers how the process is informed by heuristic research and outlines the background and use of interviewing as a research method. It explains how the research is based upon the experiences of "expert witnesses" who possess "applied wisdom" and explains further how the knowledge and wisdom of these experiences are drawn out in this inquiry. The chapter also reviews matters such as the ethics of research of this type, and the way in which the presence of the 'researcher' in the 'research' was managed.

Chapter 3 presents the results from the interviews and subsequent analysis. A description of the data – gathering in this inquiry is included: Phase One consists of two interviews, the self-interview and the observational interview; Phase Two consists of eight interviews with the participants from other university counselling services and phase three consists of another observational interview. Analysis of the interview material was carried out via two routes. Five core themes emerged in the process of the first route of the analysis. The second route of the analysis is presented in a narrative

way, whereby the deeper "experiences" of the interviews and self-analysis are presented under five specific categories. Such categories include, for example, "early experiences" of setting up the services and the contribution of prior training or work.

Chapter 4 presents discussion of the research findings overall: the questions which emerged from the review of the literature and the significant findings in evaluating my own service. These discussions bring about a synthesis of conclusions; a table checklist has been generated demonstrating how some of the findings and recommendations that result from part of the analysis can be acted upon. This offers other professionals (as well as the researcher) the opportunity to reflect further upon the many aspects of setting up and managing a university counselling service that have been highlighted in this study. This chapter also considers the limitations of this research project, as well as the potential of and direction for future research. A personal commentary is made by the researcher, alongside a report of how the conclusions of the project are specifically used by her to evaluate the BCUC Counselling Service. Finally, the significant outcomes, plans and products for this research project are included in this chapter.

The Appendices consist of 12 separate sections covering self-reflective processes and changes that occurred during the research process, information regarding how the researcher has met the criteria of the doctoral journey, the role of the specialist seminars and their influence on the researcher; the participants' invitation letter, release agreement and confidential verbal agreement are all included. Additionally, the BCUC Counselling Service Evaluation Questionnaire and some students' commentaries are included to demonstrate some of the feedback accompanying these questionnaires. These evaluation questionnaires are an ongoing process at the BCUC Counselling Service and are another level of evaluation which has taken place within this service during this experiential evaluative inquiry. Additionally, an extract from a consultative interview is included to give an example of the kind of interview which took place at the initial stages of this doctoral project.

# Preface

## The origins of this project

**M**y initial engagement in this project began in 1992, some six years prior to the formal commencement of the Metanoia and Middlesex University's doctoral programme in 1998, when I set up and began to manage and develop the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College's (BCUC) first counselling service. The calls for further research within this field began to increase as more student counselling services were established across the country. I decided to take the opportunity of the Professional Doctoral Programme offered by Metanoia and Middlesex University to explore creatively my experiences. Also I wanted to explore other people's experiences of setting up and managing student services so that I could usefully contribute to this expanding area of counselling and the many challenges it is presenting the profession.

The completion of this inquiry is linked with the three Level 5 projects passed by the academic board in May 2000 (full details are found in the 'Application of Prior Work Based Learning' APWBL Level 5 in the appendices, this has since been renamed 'Review of Applied Learning' RAL, contained in the Metanoia Handbook 1998). These three projects, (setting up a counselling service within a university college, a consultative supervisory evaluation of a local counselling service, and staff development training within BCUC) have all been part of the contextual framework of this evaluative inquiry, as the experience of each project has informed and prepared me further for what was involved in undertaking this level of inquiry.

To carry out an evaluative inquiry into the 'experience' of setting up and/or managing a university counselling service seemed a natural and appropriate work-based research project to do as the next step. Belief in the importance of professional aspects of good practice lay at the heart of the work in setting up the BCUC Counselling Service. The engagement with clients and the style of management I developed have supported me in

achieving the standard of “a respected, proficient and highly competent practitioner, leader, supervisor and researcher” (Metanoia Handbook 1998). Also, I considered that carrying out an evaluative project would help to close the research gap that was highlighted by the AUCC Review of Research (1998) of providing “comprehensive, comparative studies” at a time when evaluation is seen as a crucial aspect in counselling and psychotherapy.

Initially I had decided to carry out a conventional evaluation of the BCUC Counselling Service. This would have been somewhat similar to the second project mentioned above, a consultative supervisory evaluation of a local counselling service. However, at a later stage in planning this project, and inspired in part by the realisation that the most prominent and enduring contributions to the field were made by individuals through their own hands on experiences, (see Chapter 1 Literature Review) I realised I wanted the tone of the inquiry to change (these changes are documented more fully in Appendices 1 and 2). A more personal and professional inquiry into the setting up and management of a university counselling service would be an interesting way of contributing a different perspective to the notion of ‘evaluation’. This involved moving away from some of the quantitative procedures that I had originally intended, for example CORE (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation) analysis. I decided then that this inquiry would focus predominantly on qualitative aspects of this work.

At the beginning I had no specific research question in mind but the focus of my interest was “What were other people's experiences and how did they compare to mine?”. However the following questions were very much in my mind as I carried out the inquiry:

- What were the main, common themes to emerge when established counselling professionals explore the experience of setting up or managing a university counselling service?
- How can the 'applied wisdom' of experienced counselling service professionals be made explicit and shared within the counselling community of practice?

- How can counselling professionals' subjective experience be gathered, understood and presented so that it can inform future practice in university counselling services?
- What does the counselling services community already know that might help to define, to evaluate and to provide better services in future?
- How can the BCUC draw upon the experience of those working in student counselling to devise a tool for evaluation of its own counselling service?

It is this curiosity, this desire for relevant answers, the notion that the answers would help not just me but my colleagues to deliver better university counselling services, that underpinned my motivation for this project. I wanted to share the further meaning and understanding of the knowledge and wisdom from the personal and professional experiences of the counselling service professionals involved in this study. By creating the appropriate atmosphere in the interviews, new material could emerge, - conscious and previously unconscious material could be made explicit. This new, meaningful material could then be available to the field of counselling and psychotherapy. The interviews that subsequently took place, were more like conversations; they were riveting, critical, humorous and at times depressing and all these reactions and emotions have contributed to my learning process.

I studied phenomenological research methods and finally I chose to be informed by the processes involved in heuristic inquiry, embedded in the naturalistic inquiry paradigm, taking this as the methodology to use for this work.

After checking research databases, I believe I am the first person to carry out this particular kind of research inquiry within the field of counselling in higher and further education. Specifically recording the 'experiences' of oneself as a researcher is still in its early stages of development within the field of social scientific qualitative research. A researcher's interests and values, and personal experiences commonly influence qualitative research of this nature. Therefore, some further personal commentaries on

this academic journey and professional considerations are contained in Appendices 2 to 5 inclusive.

### **Meeting doctoral standards**

This project meets the standards of doctoral level work in the following manner:

The research is 'original'; no prior research in this subject area has been located in specialist publications or through the investigating of the 'psychinfo' database for a period of thirty years (1972-2002).

A further aspect of 'originality' is that this project seeks to explore collaboratively the experiences of individuals in key positions of university counselling services as a way to uncover their applied wisdom. This can make what is implicit to the individual explicit to others, affording a synthesis to emerge that will have relevance to those in the profession and related fields.

These research data and the results have already entered a wider context and the public domain via national conference presentations and have received acceptance from the informed and professional audiences that were there. (See Appendices 3 and 4)

### **The specialist seminars - their influence on me and this project**

The categories of professional 'context' 'knowledge' and 'practice' outlined in Appendix 5 have been further supported and enhanced by my attendance and engagement in the specialist seminars. These have given me the opportunity to continue my professional development at doctoral level, to be informed and to challenge and be challenged as a psychotherapist and as a doctoral researcher. On the whole I found the specialist seminars interesting. However there were specific seminars and one external conference that particularly influenced my own learning and were stimulating for this project: *'Exploring the Meaning of Reflexivity in relation to Practitioner Oriented*

*Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy*' (Metanoia Seminar, McLeod 1999) and *'Developing a Knowledge Community*' (Bridging the Gap Research Conference, Oxford University, 2000). These experiences invited me to consider carefully the possibility of making a personal reflexive inquiry in the final project. McLeod's presentation at the Oxford Conference 2000 on *'Developing a knowledge Community*' raised my interest and prompted me to engage in a collaborative project of working together with significant others.

Also at the 'Bridging the Gap Research Conference, Oxford University, 2000 I met Dr. Curtis Jenkins, a well-known general practitioner, researcher, writer and senior tutor who has spent considerable time developing both the literature and the practice of Counselling in Primary Care Settings in UK GP Practices. It was a discussion with Dr. Curtis Jenkins that decisively influenced and motivated me to take the project forward. Thanks to Dr. Jenkins, I discovered Moustakas's (1990) model of qualitative research and from this point onwards I decided to become more familiar with heuristic inquiry. *'The Art of Writing*' carried out with Miller and Hart (2000), was the seminar that influenced my ability to write in a creative way, yet it helped me to keep within the mode of researcher. The seminars *'Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice Re-visited*' (Professor Rennie, 2001), *'Advancement of Clinical Studies*' (Lynne Jacobs, 2002) and *'Writing Qualitative Research*' (Kim Etherington, 2001) informed me, in their own ways, about the background of qualitative research. A more detailed account of how these seminars relate to this doctoral work and how they have strongly influenced the outcomes of this project are found in appendix 4.



# Chapter 1

# Literature and historical context of the inquiry

**I**n order to place the intention, originality and usefulness of this research inquiry in context, it is necessary to locate the project within a review and discussion of existing knowledge and writings related to university student counselling and the management of counselling agencies.

The process of locating significant material and appropriate findings has been challenging, (especially at the earlier stage of the project), because this is a relatively new field of inquiry. Many of the writings that have explored this subject either briefly or extensively in the last ten years have not been easily accessible. Not all have been published or are in the public domain, since many have been done for Masters Degrees. Accessing these dissertations has been problematic. Only in the last five years has increasing attention been paid to this field of research. During the current period of 2002/2003 significant new material within this field is surfacing. In the light of this it is important to note that this chapter review has been written too early to include papers due for publication in 2003. For example, a report on the mental health of students in higher education is currently being prepared by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and is due for publication in October 2003. The literature review process has involved, among other things, using the psychology database 'psychinfo' for the period from 1966 to July 2002 yet surprisingly few sources have been found. Most of the more up-to-date material has been located in publications on educational and psychotherapeutic web sites, many of which were launched in July 2002. These have been very valuable, giving immediate access to sources of material for this review.

I have examined a number of subject areas in the literature and historical context to develop the framework of this research project:

Historical leading figures of student counselling in higher education  
The university and counselling service interface  
The student population  
University counselling services and factors in accountability;  
Evaluating effectiveness  
Managing university counselling services  
Research perspective

### **Historical leading figures of student counselling in higher education**

Over the past 70 years, some notable individuals have led the way in developing psychological support for students. Bell (1996:2-16) cites a number of these in relation to the development of student counselling in Britain and pays tribute to their determination and early pioneering work in the field. Mary Swainson was formally involved in many university projects and in 1967 she joined the Area Student Health Service, which served not only the University College of Leicester but also students from the City of Leicester College of Education and Leicester Polytechnic. Nicolas Malleson is another example detailed by Bell (1996), who in the 1960s was described as being ‘a true pioneer of student counselling’, even though he never trained as a therapist. His actions resulted in dynamic changes in the recognition of student counselling by universities with the consequence that further resources were made available to them, as their understanding of students’ welfare increased. Patricia Milner’s work was about identifying the important need for training in counselling and indeed her own personal training was far reaching, including a Masters Degree in Counselling in an ‘eclectic training’ at the State University of New York. Later, the work carried out by Brian Thorne in the early 1970s continued the humanistic influence, especially the work of Carl Rogers on Person Centred Counselling. In a recent and very inspiring conversation I had with Brian on his contribution to student counselling, he specifically mentioned how setting up the Counselling Service at the University of East Anglia and the Norwich Counselling Service had underpinned all his work of Person Centred theory. Taking on and training people who were committed to working within

the Person Centred approach of Carl Rogers was paramount, in Brian's opinion. These training schemes which were described by Brian invited counsellors engaged in dual roles (academic or other professional roles alongside the counselling role). An example of this combination of roles was seen through the work of Ellen Noonan in the early 1970s, since she was also involved in in-house training development. She developed an in-service course aimed specifically at people working in the university, e.g. academics, chaplains, student advisors, hostel wardens, who wanted to increase their understanding and skill in the management of student problems. This process paved the way forward for official formal training in counselling to take place throughout Britain. The foundations laid by these early pioneers still support the structure for today's student counselling services, which are faced with increasingly diverse student presentations and contexts. Each of these early pioneers contributed part of their own life's experience, their curiosity, and their commitment to improving the quality of students' lives as they went through their university experience. Some, according to Bell (1996:26), were "voices crying in the wilderness", others remain key decision-makers in student counselling today.

The intent of this project is to consider how the heads of counselling services manage and develop safe, appropriate, professional and successful services for all concerned - that is, that the university the counselling team and the student populations alike all receive the best possible care and attention.

### **The university and counselling service interface**

Another important aspect to consider in the light of historical perspectives of university counselling services is to understand more fully how the relationship - the interface - between university counselling services and university bodies as a whole has been managed. The foremost interface between universities and their counselling services took place in the British Student Health Service. The first student health service was established at Edinburgh University in 1930 (Read, 1974), with most universities following suit. Mergers between universities and student health services became a fast-

growing trend and the 1950s saw the vast majority of universities aligned with a health service. This trend reflected the general public opinion at that time that there was a clear distinction between the mind and body. Physicians were there to ensure students were physically fit - anything else was considered the responsibility of educators or religious advisors.

However, influences from the United States were having a knock-on effect. Bell (1996:8) observed that when an American psychiatrist, Read (1951) was appointed as psychiatric advisor to the London School of Economics, he found it difficult to locate others with a similar role in universities throughout Britain. He attributed this to the "traditional reticence (of the British) to anything in the region of mental derangement". Later his work, with others, gave rise to a group of physicians and psychiatrists working in university settings who came together and formed the British Student Health Association. Their intention was to expand the medical model to include a psychological understanding of students' problems. This was given further impetus by a report published in the same year by Parnell (1951) when he cited many fundamental reasons why the traditional view of student psychological welfare might need changing; pressing that the traditional view of psychiatric illness was not organically based. This change in perception of students' psychological welfare continued and became topical especially within the BSHA conference in 1951, which gave credence and validity to much of the early work carried out in the light of these changes. At the first international conference on student mental health at Princeton University Later in 1956, Eric Erikson also suggested "student problems could be looked at within a psychological developmental model for appropriate treatment". Thereafter, the BSHA devoted its conference in 1968 to the subject of depression in students; Donald Winnicott was one of the main speakers (Bell 1996:10).

This early work and influence of the BSHA established the validity and value of a psychological approach to student problems and was instrumental in preparing universities to interface with university counselling services within their institutions. The work of Nicolas Malleon (Bell 1996:10), as seen previously, is a good example of how physicians working medically with young students crossed this gap and became

fully attuned to the students' needs and the relationship of mental health to academic performance. He began to see that academic success was as dependent on the students' physical and emotional well-being as on other factors. Making his views known was important because as a result some instrumental changes took place.

By the 1960's the involvement of universities with student health services was already evident in the older universities. During this time the early pioneers worked to establish the validity of a psychological approach to student problems and this was instrumental in preparing the way forward for modern counselling. The doctors involved at that time had the authority to convey their ideas and challenge received thinking. Later in the 1960's and 1970's doctors more fully supported the increasing demands of academics for the appointment of counsellors in universities. However, with the appointment of student counsellors, Payne (1978) expressed concern that this new developmental change contributed to the demise of the psychiatrist or psychotherapist as a full time member of university health teams. He acknowledged that students with psychological problems should not necessarily have to present as being ill and in need of a doctor, but he also indicated that there was an important role for psychiatrists as consultants to counsellors. Despite such reservations this change led Universities into a situation in which the opportunity for shared work between mental health workers and counsellors in universities became diminished.

By the mid-nineties the relationship between mental health teams and universities had been reduced except in some rare circumstances and today only a few of the older more established universities are aligned to mental health services. However currently, making stronger relationships with mental health agencies is exactly what is challenging us as university counsellors, so it would be helpful to review further the whole process of being closely involved with such services as Mental Health Schemes. It is important to note that the impact of those early developments and debates has given significant emphasis to the role of counselling services within university settings. The concept of student health services may have fallen out of vogue but what has remained is the important relationship that universities have with counselling services and, on the whole, a recognition by the universities that their existence is appropriate and necessary.

It is well acknowledged today there is an urgent need in universities to have strong and open links with National Health Services so that the increased levels of mental illnesses among students can be effectively addressed and students supported.

The establishment of university and college counselling services involves vast organisational changes in areas such as hierarchical challenges, inter-disciplinary and interfaculty competitiveness, implications for the availability and appropriateness of student access for psychological help. All this is present in the entire ethos of academia. Also significant are external factors, for example governmental pressure, social pressures and competitiveness between universities fighting for survival in this world of high standards and measurement. It is not appropriate here to provide detailed information but it is important to see the pressures and challenges mentioned above in the light of the greater environmental context. The AUCC Handbook "Guidelines for University College Counselling Services" offers very important information on guidance and consultative or advisory services to members of staff, enabling them to maximise their effectiveness in carrying out their roles. It is particularly significant as the only text that relates directly to the relationship between universities and counselling services. "The work of a counselling service is integral to the work of the employing institution and needs to have close links and effective communication within the institution, while maintaining its distinct character and function, reflecting the mission statement of the institution." The AUCC Handbook, (1998b).

There is a growing amount of literature on counselling in organisational settings. Carroll and Walton (1997:1) have further developed the theme of the importance of the relationship between the organisation and its counselling provision. They identify that for counsellors "not to recognise and work with the context in which counselling takes place is to ignore the enormous impact that context has on behaviour" and what is often missing "are the values of the administrative and organisational dimensions" of counselling. Orlans (1996) writes how counselling within an organisation entails the meeting of two worlds - that of the organisation and that of counselling. This calls for clear negotiation(s), ongoing discussion(s) and mutual understanding. Egan (1994) identified the need for counsellors to understand the 'shadow side' at work in

organisations and the part it plays in decision-making. Strawbridge and Woolfe (1996) talk about the need to take a sociological perspective, which may bring up ethical considerations; this may well have implications in university settings.

Counsellors may have to consider whether and how counselling in universities is being used by the university as a way to avoid or explain certain issues, e.g. a certain amount of pressure is placed on student counsellors for retaining students, especially if numbers are low, or avoiding disciplinary actions. It seems that employed counsellors are asked to straddle these two worlds of the university and the counselling service without getting lost in either (Gutterman and Miller 1989).

Butler (1999:227-232) calls for more positive attention to be paid in the literature to counselling in organisational settings, since previously the tone has been somewhat negative. "Modern organisational thinking offers many exciting ideas on how hierarchies can be dismantled and power dispersed while quality is maintained". The relationship that does exist between university and counselling services has resulted in an enormous amount of change within the entire university framework, generating much communication, interaction and the challenging of traditions across many sections of university life.

Some universities have responded well to the development of counselling services and have actively encouraged them, fully recognising their importance and increasing their funding allocations, as well as improving infrastructure and personnel resources. Others, however, have responded less positively, as seen recently with the closure of an important student counselling service at City University. There is a worrying trend for such responses to be repeated, therefore efforts are being made by the community of student counsellors and especially through the work of HUCS to ensure that such responses are investigated and possibly avoided in the future. This is an example of how important it is to manage actively the interface between the counselling service and the linked university. What is needed, and what has been offered by this research project, are some answers or illumination, ideas or recommendations that might prevent further



erosion of student counselling provision. Chapter 5 of this report concerns itself with these issues more fully.

### **The student population**

The early 1990s saw “considerable change in the structure of post-compulsory education in Britain” (Bell, 1996:27). The nature of university status identity has changed with the increase in ‘new’ universities. There are now many different kinds of institutions of higher education; some firmly established in the traditional, highly sought after, well-established and well-respected universities. Others are adjusting to their relatively new identity of having become a university in the mid-nineties and many, like Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, are striving to attain university status. Within this context, some university counselling services are encountering an arid, even hostile, environment, striving with relatively limited resources and with little recognition, while others are developing on more fertile ground within well-funded and widely respected institutional settings where recognition has been, in some cases, well established some thirty years previously.

Much pressure is generally placed on school leavers in the U.K today to aspire to take academic routes, sometimes regardless of a student’s capabilities, and so there has been a huge increase in student numbers entering universities across the country (Ford, Goodyear, Heseltine, Lewis, Darby, Graves, Satorius, Harwood and King 1996:1). The expectations and learning styles of the student population are increasingly diverse.

Learning itself is now regarded as a life-long activity and is no longer considered something sandwiched between childhood and work (Ford *et al.* 1996:1). There has unsurprisingly, been an urgent requirement for universities and higher educational institutions to respond positively and effectively to these changes, especially as there has been a “substantial movement from elite to mass systems of higher education” (Ford *et al.*, 1996:1). The student body is now a more varied group than was previously the case. It is culturally and socially diverse and demands a sophisticated level of understanding, wider knowledge and multi-skilled management from those who are

actively involved in providing any kind of therapy services. The prior life experiences, levels of previous learning and academic abilities of student populations are also now more diverse than ever (Rana, Smith and Walkling 1999:9). Courses too, offer a more diverse and wide-ranging scope than ever before.

The rapid growth in the number and diversity of students entering university in recent years has led to considerable increases in the number of student service provisions within universities and colleges. Within a climate of overt competition, such services attempt to ensure that students' needs are best addressed by attending to high educational standards. Students usually attend university at a challenging, transitional stage in their lives, and this in itself often brings extra complexities. These factors, coupled with awareness of the normal pressures of academic courses encourage many universities to see the relevance and importance of providing counselling and other welfare services to support their student populations. Additionally more recently, there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating increasing levels of mental health disturbance and emotional distress in students, as well as amongst young people in general. This was recognised by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) when they published their Guidelines on Student Mental Health Policies and Procedures for Higher Education (CVCP 2000).

In 1998/1999 there were 2.1 million students in higher education, more than twice the number recorded in 1970/1971, National Statistics (2001). The promotion of widening access to higher education, through governmental policies and more recently in the Dearing Report (1998), means an increase in the actual number of students who proceed into higher education. Distance learning is becoming more commonplace, both in terms of global and local provision and systems are being put in place to credit students for prior experience and learning. Students are thus freer to move from one institution to another and in so doing, construct qualifications from multiple institutional settings (Ford *et al*, 1996:14). Each student category generates different sets of needs, all of which require attention. Competition is fierce among universities, so meeting the needs of students is paramount in order to be seen as successful. Ford *et al*. (1996) call for a rethink on ways in which teaching and learning can be supported. No doubt these

massive changes have reverberations right through to counselling services and the increase for student support is ever greater.

### **The Student Population and Mental Health**

*“The best days of their lives? A time for finding yourself, for forging friendships and relationships to last a lifetime, for taking time to make serious choices about a career and a life-path. A transition time between the dependence of childhood and the responsibilities of working life, or a time to change career and build a new identity. A time for testing your abilities and finding your level, for founding habits of balance between discipline and recreation. Student life has traditionally provided an opportunity for all of these things, in addition to the honing of skills and preparation of minds for contributions to the workforce and community. Things, which play a vital part in producing well-rounded, responsible citizens, with the mental and emotional resources to sustain and perpetuate a stable community”.*

(Article commissioned and published in edited form in The Times Higher Education Supplement, Meyer, D. 30/3/01).

The above passage seemed to give the picture I had imagined when I first entered student counselling. Alas, this piece went on to say that student life in the 21st Century provides less and less of this kind of opportunity. The article described how stressed and pressurised students really are and that this Mental Health study shows a general increase in mental illness amongst young people. Furthermore, a sometimes inefficient and complex student loan system, and the introduction of tuition fees, leave students substantially worse off.

As previously stated, the profile of the student population has been transformed in the last ten years (Lago 1998:3); the channels of access to universities have been broadened and multiplied (Ford *et al.* 1996:1). The government’s explicit policy is to include ‘... those who have been under-represented in higher education’. This means that greater numbers of students from non-traditional backgrounds enter university, e.g. Asian women, mature African Caribbean, those with families, students who are the first in

their family to enter higher education, students with disabilities and those with experience of psychiatric illness. This is the first time that there are more students over the age of 21 than under and there are more part-time students than ever before. Students range from young people living away from home for the first time to more mature students living away for the second time, and a huge cross-section in between. Higher education has become an accepted part of the educational experience of 30% of the age group 18-30, compared with only 5% in the early 1960s. Furthermore, the government (Blunkett 2000) proposes that by the year 2010, 50% of this age group will go to university. Rana, Smith and Walkling (1998:10) cite a significant rise in levels of disturbed students accessing universities. Rutter and Smith (1995) indicate that the prevalence of disorders in young people has increased in the post-war period, where suicide accounts for a far higher proportion of all deaths among younger people than among older people.

*"Recent research studies suggest that mental health problems among students are becoming more widespread and severe.... Meanwhile student suicide has risen dramatically from 2.4 per 100,000 students in 1992/94 to 9.7 in 1999."*

Coxon (2001)

However startling the above quotation may be, if seen from a broader perspective the level of anxiety in students has certainly risen, but how much this reflects what is happening in the general population remains to be seen. Certainly more students are accessing counselling services, receiving help, but not all problems are as severe as indicated above. Christopher Butler, Head of Counselling at the Royal Holloway University, London, cautions against jumping to conclusions (Butler, 2001:231). His response to the Guardian Newspaper (2001) regarding the above was "my experience is certainly that we are busier, but we can't say with any certainty why this is so, for example we may be publicising the service more effectively or students may perceive it as being less stigmatising."

The importance of counselling as a vital support for students has long been recognised within universities and colleges (AUCC Conference Publication, 2002). The

establishment of university counselling services attends to the increasing personal, psychological and academic needs of students, which are reflected in the enormous amounts of hard work and planning by various committees, counselling teams and individuals setting up and managing such projects. Counselling provision is effectively embedded in most universities. In the most recent survey from the Association of University and College Counsellors (AUCC) (2002), all but two universities have campus-based counselling provision in place. These provide a wide range of services from brief, drop-in sessions through to longer-term therapeutic support. Students presenting for counselling may be at risk emotionally, academically and, increasingly, financially and it is recognised that there are complex inter-relationships between all three. The emerging counselling services reflect their own individual and unique structures as they aim to provide services that are concordant with the overall objectives of university life. Additionally, their overall goal is to provide the best possible appropriate care and attention for the students who access such services.

### **University counselling services and factors in accountability**

However, these services are under increasing pressure to demonstrate the value of their provision whilst adapting to the changing context. In response to these challenges, many who are involved in setting up and managing higher education, university colleges and university counselling services are developing creative new strategies, maximising the potentials of service provision, whilst recognising limitations and constantly adjusting to such increasing demands in these establishments. The need to identify the resources for providing effective counselling services, as well as demonstrating the important interface such services have with their universities, is a continuous task. Nigel Humphreys, Chair of the Heads of University Counselling Services 2001 said in the Heads of University Counselling Services (HUCCS) (2001) Conference, “While the increased expectation for Counselling Services to be involved in quality assessments, staff training and consultations throughout their institutions is very welcome, it can also lead to a more fractured and pressured work situation.” The increasing demand to demonstrate a high standard of fairness and professionalism -

enshrined in recent primary legislation concerning human rights, disability discrimination and data protection - increases the demands on counsellors' expertise. Also the recognised need for counselling throughout the young population is leading to a greater demand on student counselling services. Robin Dollery, executive member of the AUCC 2002 in the same HUCS Conference notes, "Parents may now phone up to check the availability of counselling services before the UCAS form is filled in. Yet these increasing demands are not met by increased funding as universities and colleges generally experience a squeeze on all their income streams". Indeed the AUCC have observed that counsellor: student ratios are worsening - especially in new universities - at the very time that additional support needs were being created by new government initiatives (AUCC survey 2002).

Counselling service provisions within universities are required to make many improvements to support these governmental changes and these changes are confronted by counselling services on a daily basis in their attempt to fully support students' needs. Many of these provisions may include for example: providing in-house training facilities; seminars or consultations with academic staff; liaising with student unions; providing nightline telephone services and or creating associations of counselling services with the university itself; providing the most appropriate network of practitioners to meet the students' needs within their university. Whichever the case, it is considered that each counselling service has to respond individually to its university, and how this is done depends on several factors, which are drawn out in this project and evaluated further. In response to these pressures, university counselling services have developed a variety of integrated approaches to meet institutional needs, as well as establishing working links with other local service providers, such as NHS Trusts. The in-depth exploration of psychological pressures faced by students and staff that is carried out in counselling services means that counselling is uniquely well placed in higher education to comment on the current national debate on participation and retention of students.

We can observe from the above considerations that current and future management of counselling services requires specific knowledge, expertise and attention so that

students requiring additional support are helped. This in turn supports the objectives of university life - which is the academic task. However, for many it appears that this service provision is done within a climate of increased pressure, further accountability, and continued requirement for evidence of good practice; and in many cases within limited or reduced funding facilities.

### **Evaluating effectiveness**

How much is known about the effectiveness of counselling in university settings? Before addressing this question I consider it very valuable to look at the broader picture. There is growing evidence in the wider sociocultural field that counselling is a growing service provision and is seen to be effective. If, for example, the work of counselling provision in primary settings is observed, it has recently been documented that “over half of primary care practices in England now offer some form of counselling to patients” (Mellor-Clark 2000). In January 2002 the BACP published a major new study by McLeod (2002); conclusions from these studies revealed that counselling in the workplace could reduce levels of sickness and absence by between 25-50%. Workplace counselling is effective in relieving the symptoms of both anxiety and depression. According to McLeod (2002) “Successful results can be achieved after as little as 3-8 sessions of counselling”. The study went on to say that workplace counselling at least covers its financial costs. In a news update, October 2002, Phillip Hodson, Media Relations of the BACP asked the question “How does this (McLeod's findings) influence the field of counselling in university settings?” Until recently, it was well accepted, especially within the field of university counselling, that counselling university students is effective. Those of us working and experiencing this counselling impact on students, on a daily basis knew this, but it was not until very recently that research is carried out and papers are published that demonstrate its effectiveness.

In their recently set up website HUCS.com, the Heads of University Counselling Services (2002) have answered many frequently asked questions about university counselling services. The first question highlighted on the web page pertains to this

issue of effectiveness. A crucial question to ask before anyone considers embarking on counselling in this situation is, “What evidence is there to show that counselling is effective in helping students?” The answer given was concise and informative. HUCS (2002) indicated some growth in the material published so to establish evidence of the effectiveness of counselling in the wider frame of socio-cultural perspectives. Professor Michael King, in a study commissioned and published by the British Medical Journal (2000) states, “Not only does therapy work; we found it makes patients get better faster. It's both more humane and cost-effective. People can get back to work quicker.” The Department of Health, after reviewing all evidence concerning counselling, stated, “psychological therapy should be routinely considered as an option... [for] mental health problems [and for] patients who are adjusting to life events, illness, disability or losses” (Evidence Based Clinical Practice Guideline – published by the Department of Health, DoH Feb. 2001). Furthermore, a study by Dr. Rickinson (1997) explores the effectiveness of a short-term intervention model in reducing psychological distress and increasing students' ability to complete their degree programme successfully. Also, many feedback questionnaires from students attending counselling, recorded in many university end-of-year reports (and informed to HUCS), show a high degree of satisfaction.

Included above are most of the sources quoted by HUCS (2002) in response to questions about effectiveness. Although the findings regarding the effectiveness of counselling in university settings are relatively few, a positive point is that many people in the field are currently investigating, evaluating and forming working parties, e.g. within HUCS, to address such issues and raise public and political awareness about this topical subject. Further evidence of effectiveness, is found in larger and more detailed a more expansive report, again prepared by HUCS (2002), for submission to the Universities UK Governmental Agency on student retention.

In a cohort study at the University of Cambridge (Surtees *et al.* 2000), the mental health of a sample of undergraduate and postgraduate students was monitored through their university careers; 75% of the 8% of the study sample who had accessed counselling reported that they had benefited from it. The conclusion that counselling is likely to be



effective was also supported more fully in a detailed critique of the emotional difficulties associated with learning in higher education, in which Ross and Taylor (2002) highlight the importance of psychological therapy provision, in particular, counselling psychology. They observed that such provision is likely to be most effective when integrated with academic and teaching support provision. Additionally, the economic impact of changes in student financing is now well established with levels of individual debt commonly in excess of £10,000 at the end of an undergraduate degree course. However what is not clear from this study is the full psychological impact of these changes on the student experience. It is not at all uncommon for financial pressures to be a contributory factor in the emotional (and academic) decline of vulnerable students. The relationship between ill health, financial stability and student retention is of increasing interest and has recently been reviewed (Roberts and Zelenyanszki 2002). In addition, a significant amount of evidence for positive correlation between student counselling and retention rates is provided by a survey on a random sample of 100 counselling service users at Middlesex University (Egert 1999). HUCS (2002:2) concluded, “ These studies (above) highlight the importance of the connection between the provision of emotional and psychological support through counselling (and other sources such as personal tutors) and the ability to fully engage with the academic and developmental tasks associated with being a student”. It seems that there is certainly growing evidence to demonstrate positive effects of student counselling; however, little is mentioned to the contrary. This may be due to the lack of evidence of positive effects, or the lack of evidence of little effect, or the lack of evidence of negative effect.

Few sources have been found that indicate that counselling is ineffective or resulted no significant finding. Miller, (1978, Canadian Guidance and Counselling Assn, Canada) researched client rating of a university counselling service with a follow-up questionnaire. Large and significant differences between identified and anonymous respondents were reported, with anonymous recipients reporting fewer positive changes between initial and final contact with the counselling service.

Why are there so few cases of ineffectiveness recorded? Is it because counselling in university settings is so effective? Surely there are several cases where counselling some students is not recommended, and could even be damaging. What happens in these cases? Perhaps the reason why so few cases are documented is to do with the fact that most of the research is relatively new and much has yet to be published.

The Brunel University Counselling Service Evaluation study (Caleb 2002) noted a self-reported increase in coping by students from 10% before counselling to over 50% after counselling. Levels of motivation increased from 2% before, to over 50% after counselling. Over 80% of students participating in the survey commented that counselling had helped their studies to a significant extent. Both Manthorpe and Stanley (1999) and Monk (1996) observed that awareness and accessibility of student counselling services were key determinants in coping with the emotional and psychological pressures and difficulties that are experienced by students and tutors (HUCS 2002).

It seems fair to conclude that counselling in university settings is necessary in order to meet the increasing needs of a fast growing, diverse and complex student body.

Universities are investing in such facilities but, for many, funding is relatively poor and expectations are growing and increasing. So it may well be interesting at this stage to look back over the last 70 years and see how such counselling services developed into what they are now. In doing this, we may gain further insight into how leading counselling professionals paved the way for people such as my project participants and me. In looking back we may find more information on how to move forward.

### **Managing university counselling services**

The volume of general management research and literature is vast. The time and resource limitations of a research project do not permit a review of this whole discipline. However, a considerable amount of time has gone into researching theory in this area, especially in relation to certain aspects of this project, e.g. human resource management, organisational psychology, tacit knowledge, understanding meaning -

making, communities of practice and creating knowledge. Therefore, these few paragraphs of summarised managerial literature are included to give an indication of how this inquiry could be extended.

Over the last decade there has been a considerable shift in the old organisational ideals of hierarchy, control and demand which are now being replaced by looser organisations, based on commitment to greater self-organisation; which can lead to new forms of relationships between workers. There is now much written about the processes that underpin creative management, e.g. Henry (2001) collects seven accounts of these changes in her book *Creative Management*. Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyer (1996) show how creativity emerges from a social field and not solely from an individual; they emphasise how the community in which a person operates affects creative outcomes. This perspective resonates with the community of counselling and management practices and features identified in this project.

Our understanding of human cognition and its role in management has changed considerably in the last twenty years, in particular our understanding about the importance of unconscious information processing and the limitations of rational thought. For example Claxton (1997/99) highlights why innovative thinking benefits from drawing on tacit processes; Nonaka (1994) has drawn the management world's attention to the importance of tacit knowledge (which is an important feature of this inquiry, and is explained further in chapter 2). The work of Mintzberg (1974) challenges the mismatch between the rhetoric of management and its reality; for example, he points out the shortcomings of planning as a guiding metaphor for management processes. In Morgan's (1969) influential book, *Images of Organisation*; he subsumes management and organisation theory under eight categories of metaphors. Henry (2001) argues that the idea of different metaphors and their paradigmatic roots helped open people to alternative ways of seeing organisations.

The notion of emotion in relation to organisations and management also offers value in relation to this inquiry. Emotion has traditionally been ignored and neglected in management theory; Henry (2001); points out that the notion of emotion has also been

neglected in 'academia generally', which is another reason for investigating the features of management within universities and especially the management of university counselling services.

Gabriel (2000) explains from a psychoanalytical perspective why managers and organisations can be tempted to repress and displace emotion - so that the non-conscious dimension and deeper meaning or insights are avoided. He argues that the ability to access such material in an organisation is crucial for best results and can cause much chaos and unnecessary pressures if unaddressed. Goleman (2001) argues that it is primarily emotional wisdom that differentiates between the “good” and “bad” leader. The issue of learning has also received more attention in the last ten years. Reason (2001) explains the background, varieties and principles of action learning.

The question of organisational responsibility is taken up by Handy (2001), arguing that a changed business environment necessitates a new relationship between management and workers.

In the next few paragraphs I pay attention to the organisational perspectives of university counselling services. An important aspect of evaluating the setting up and management of a university counselling service is whether the organisation (and the counselling service) is structured in a way that will be effective and whether it may be assessed as operating effectively. I have chosen to work with the model of Egan, an author renowned internationally for his organisational work and his writing on counselling. More details on his model and its function in this project can be found in Chapter 2 page 22.

Beyond this theoretical model of organisational effectiveness there are other perspectives that have already been applied to counselling service organisations. In a study that was unusual for its time, Worth (1996) evaluated the organisation of a counselling service from perspectives that reflected almost all parts of its structure and operation, e.g. the client's views of success, types of clients presenting problems,

characteristics of supervisors and counsellors, and measures of organisational performance.

‘Visionaries, heroes and heroines’ are the terms used to describe early investigators in counselling organisations (McLeod 1994b). McLeod was interested in the conceptual work of organisational theorists, especially in the work of Hasenfeld and Schmid (1989). Their work together offered a conceptual framework for understanding the life cycle of a social service organisation, from formation, through formalisation, and elaboration of structure, to its decline and death. Lago and Kitchin (1998) further developed the concept of lifecycle in their book, “The Management of Counselling and Psychotherapy Agencies”, which identified the skills and aptitudes necessary for managers at each stage of the development process. “The pioneers must have vision, tenacity and a capacity to excite and involve others and an ability to articulate the vision to a wide range of people in the community. Other personal attributes would include the capacity to withstand and tolerate anxiety and pressure of demand, to embody hope, to empower and to stimulate” (Lago and Kitchin, 1998).

Colin Lago and Duncan Kitchin have been ‘pioneers’ in documenting material specific to the management of counselling services. In their book, they outline important components in the management of a counselling service. These components could be very useful conceptually to devise a structure of service management. These main components include: laying the foundations for a sound structure by effective staff recruitment and selection, ensuring competent, professional and safe practice; clarifying daily working practices, developing policies on crisis management and understanding one's own style of management, all arguably essential considerations when managing a service.

Carroll and Walton (1997) in their “Handbook of Counselling in Organisations” also include an extensive list of areas that need to be considered by counselling management in organisational settings. Towler (1997), in the same volume, suggests that there are six areas that require consideration when managing counselling in organisational settings - negotiating and identifying service; contracting with the organisation and

clients; identifying the client group; assessing; using short-term focused counselling; and exploring organisational culture and dynamics. He goes on to include the need for clear boundaries, especially in administrative, personal and psychological matters. Carroll and Walton (1997:20) conclude “there is no doubt that these aspects of organisational counselling, over and above the actual work with clients, can be the most difficult job for counsellors. Here they have to work with bureaucracy, politics, with departments, committees and management”. Considering organisational behaviour, management guru Charles Handy highlights the challenge of various kinds of diversity managers typically deal with.

*“... management, like politics, consists to a large degree in the management of differences. Groups in organizations have different roles, different goals, different skills, so have individuals. The blending of these differences into one coherent whole is the overall task of management.”*

Handy (1976: 212)

These perspectives for assessing organisational effectiveness are broadly embraced by the Egan (1988) model mentioned above and described in chapter 2. For the practical purposes of choosing a “framework” to consider the question of understanding’s organisations further, I will use Egan’s model in this inquiry.

There are several studies recently published by the AUCC Research Committee (2002), which indicate the rise in frequency of research inquiry in the area of management and service considerations. A total of 71 studies have been included in this list, some already referenced in this chapter, others still difficult to access. The main body of these findings pertains to a very broad focus of inquiry with relatively few specifically attending to managerial aspects. The subjects covered by these studies fall into several different categories such as: managing disruptive students; analysis of intake assessing; resistance to psychological treatments; determining the efficacy and modes of treatment in university centres; onward referrals; effects on naming services; effects on grades and retention; student perceptions on college counselling services; and focuses on international students, among others. There are surprisingly few - Davies (2000),

McManus (1994) and Denby (1997) - that actually relate to managerial issues in this field. The contribution of these studies has been reviewed earlier and drawn into this research.

The chapter on the stresses of directing a university service edited by Dryden (1995) draws on the specific stressors from accounts reported by Hope (1985). These were identified as: difficult relationships with colleagues; too many clients; the special demands of clients who are suicidal, depressed, panicky and so on; lack of clerical and secretarial support; the 'top-up' demands from other roles such as teaching and committee work; institutional problems such as politics and split site working; unsympathetic attitudes and unrealistic expectations from senior managers; inadequate time for training, conferences, or even keeping up with the literature; constant exposure to unhappiness; and the unpredictability of exposure on admissions interviews at university as counselling tools.

Up until the last four years, the best available information published for people who were involved in setting up and or managing a university counselling service was seen in the AUCC Guidelines for University College Counselling Services (1998a). Although informative, it contains little coverage pertaining to the actual 'management' of a counselling service. This booklet highly recommends "an experienced counsellor be appointed to the post of Head of Counselling, so that he or she can be in the best position to undertake the management responsibilities both in relation to the professional aspects of the service and in its day-to-day management". There are, however, now available through websites more articles and recent publications. One site in particular that has immediate access to these recent publications is the site assembled for the use of the HUCS Group - [www.counselling.co.uk](http://www.counselling.co.uk). Here there is a very useful and informative resource list and, though not exhaustive, it is particularly helpful in that information and contact with those managing counselling services for UK is immediate. Also university students and other students, i.e. relatives and general visitors, are invited to access this site. The resources are particularly helpful in that there is general information about higher and further educational institutions, funding, governing and quality assessment bodies, special sites pertaining to counselling and

psychology (including an on-line counselling site), and access to other useful sites e.g. data protection, observer articles and information about computer viruses.

The section of the AUCC that offers a more detailed account of managing a university counselling service is found in the AUCC Service Assessment and Recognition Scheme (1999). This is a relatively new scheme, set up to assess the professionalism and development of counselling services in higher education. However, it is important to note that because this scheme has been so successful the BACP have decided to model a similar scheme for all counselling services, with specific specification of requirements for each sub division of the BACP e.g. the AUCC. The AUCC service assessment and recognition scheme (1999) offers important criteria necessary for assessment and recognition to take place, but what are explicitly outlined by this scheme are, in a sense, the core elements of any counselling service agency, although here specifically applied to a university counselling service. Some of the assessment criteria demonstrate very effectively some core elements of service organisation necessary for managing a counselling service, i.e. embeddedness, purposeful, coherent, safe and professional service provision. The service recognition assessment was almost like a guidance template in itself, in that it gives some very clear indicators about what is necessary for service implementation and management. This scheme was carefully developed, however, this scheme came under review in November 2003 and is currently being reassessed by the parent organisation BACP. There are now considerations in place that a national service recognition scheme will be made available by the BACP; and aspects of the 1999 university service recognition scheme may be subsumed into the national scheme. Indeed, in relation to this project, pursuing service assessment and recognition might well be the next stage for the BCUC Counselling Service. Whether this is a viable option or is attainable remains to be seen. However, the results of this inquiry borne out in Chapter 4 will indicate whether such action will be considered. It is worthwhile to look more closely at the relationship between counselling services and their institutions, since it is here where the real impact of counselling services, together with their institutions, can be evaluated.



## **Research perspective**

In 1998 the research sub-committee of AUCC (formerly ASC) carried out a review of research among counsellors. The aim of this review was to find out how much research within UK colleges and universities actually existed. This Review (1998b) indicated that very little student counselling-related research had been published. Furthermore it was found that there was much ambivalence among practitioners about doing research. Those who were interested found it hard to persuade employers to allocate time and funding to research. What was done tended to be squeezed into an already hectic workload or was completed in private time; and those studies that were completed were very difficult to access. It seems practitioners carrying out research did so as part of their personal academic pursuit; it was also indicated that little research was carried out solely for the purpose of attending to the overall aim of university objectives. It appeared, on occasions, that the only studies encouraged by management were data collection to provide quick reference to the work of the counselling services. Although this review was a very important first step in collating research studies, the list was limited and much of the material has not been appropriately referenced.

The main conclusion of the AUCC Review (1998b) was that more research is needed – especially practice-based research and, in order to fill in the ‘gaps’ of missing information within this field, AUCC called for four particular areas to be observed for future research projects. One was ‘comparative studies’ to assist evaluation; this is the one I responded to initially when I commenced this project. In my latest research of the literature I discovered that this call by the AUCC Review (1998b) appears to have made an impact, prompting a significant increase in studies and publications.

In June 2002, the AUCC research sub-committee published a second more robust, yet not fully comprehensive, collection of research references. This publication includes papers and research publications not only from the UK but also from international sources. There is evidence that a considerable growth of interest has been generated all over the world within this specialist area. Evidence shows advancing research

capabilities, more publications and growth in the numbers of institutions investing in research as well as highlighting many continuous concerns within this area. In fact, some 68 different subject areas relating to college and university settings are identified, with sub-categorisations of references pertaining to each section. On looking closer at these publications in connection to this project, research regarding the subject area of 'management' and 'evaluation' still proved scarce.

Nothing in the AUCC Review (1998b) pertained to setting up and or managing university college counselling services in particular. One section in the AUCC Review (1998b:ch5: 24) looked at "How do Universities and College Counselling Services Operate?" Some research included in this part was indirectly relevant to this inquiry, especially the 'relationship with management and perceptions of counselling services' (5.3 and 5.4:28). However, a number of these studies only existed in individual counselling services and although the AUCC 'attempted to pull some of these together' the reports in the AUCC summary were incomplete and many studies were unable to be accessed. The outcome of this was that in my initial research into the literature I drew some inaccurate conclusions and assumptions. However in 2002 the AUCC corrected the initial omissions and have listed numerous accounts of publications within the category of 'service management'.

Out of my own analysis of the earlier studies in the AUCC Review (1998b), I found two surveys that linked directly to this inquiry. The questionnaire study by McManus (1994) contained two main themes relating to this inquiry. McManus explored management expectations in the university sector throughout the UK as well as the perceptions of roles, range of work and levels of satisfaction of heads of counselling services and of counsellors. An interesting aspect of this study was the focus of a question pertaining to Heads of Counselling Services raised in the 1992 ASC Conference (now the AUCC) on "Why am I here and What am I doing anyway?" An important aspect of this study was that it was very broad-reaching and so responses from a considerable number of institutions were involved. 100 universities received three-part questionnaires, since registrars, heads of counselling, and or full-time (or nearest) counsellors in the college were all invited to participate. A total of some 74

institutions responded. The findings included that there had been mixed messages regarding management support for an institution's counselling service, since 61% of managers denoted a counselling service as 'essential' and no one indicated it being of 'no importance'. However, a limitation of the study was that it produced a low response by the university management sections, which may suggest otherwise. Those managers who did respond indicated that they preferred counselling services to be geared towards helping students to take responsibility for themselves. The heads of counselling and counsellors considered that they made a necessary contribution to student welfare and the majority found their role satisfactory. An important recommendation of the study was that more frequent face-to-face contact between management and heads of counselling services was desirable and currently this is an aspect that is still deemed a crucial factor for effective service management today. In general, this study indicated some optimism, but no certainty, that university counselling services were viewed as 'essential' and not as 'an optional extra'. Also an aspect of this study, which is still widely discussed within this field, is the consideration of whether counselling services should be aligned with health services. However, a further limitation of the study was that it did not discuss specifically how the question "Why am I here and what am I doing anyway?" raised above, was analysed. It is these aspects of individual experience that I aim to draw out in this project.

The second study of relevance to this inquiry was Denby's (1997), investigating personal perceptions of students. Denby set out to investigate student counselling in a further education college in Merseyside, in particular views of staff, two heads of student counselling services, members of the general student population and a few students who had sought counselling interventions. She combined qualitative and quantitative approaches, starting with a hypothesis that the service being researched was not highly valued and that there were misconceptions about it. Her findings bear this out. This method involved two sets of questionnaires: the first one was sent to 24 students asking for their perceptions of the counselling service and the second was sent to 8 students who had already accessed the service. Interviews were carried out with managers of student services from two further education colleges. Whilst this was quite a detailed investigation, the limitation of this study was that the research sample was

very low and the information gained was mostly from a single institution. The findings indicated that the overall evaluation of the service was low and there was evidence of confusion around the role of counsellors and therapeutic counselling and the use of counselling skills by other professionals such as personal tutors. The outcome included quotes from a head of student services in a further education college, who believed management would be surprised that students visited the counselling service for anything other than academic concerns.

From the current AUCC research literature database on 'service management' the paper published by Davies (2000:65) is particularly pertinent. It investigates the relationship between the counselling service and academic, administrative and managerial staff. She explores the tensions that people in counselling services experience as 'private work in public places'. The issue of confidentiality is further explored and the notions of managing these tensions are discussed, especially in relation to triad relationships between the client the counsellor and the complex constellation of relationships within the institutional context. The themes of drawing out the 'experiences' are what lie at the heart of Davies' project and in this way it relates specifically to my own inquiry.

In the AUCC Review (2002), the terms 'evaluation and effectiveness' are categorised together. By doing so other aspects of evaluation may be lost. Some fifteen publications are included within the area of 'evaluation' but most studies draw out 'evaluation' in connection to outcome effectiveness and perceptions of counsellors' interventions (Rozario, and Romano 2000; Rozario 1996; and Parker 1998). Evaluating the effectiveness of counselling interventions, client satisfaction and student retention was seen in studies by Rickinson (1997), Schwitzer (1997) and Snell (1999) and the value of psychological services was considered in studies carried out by Turner and Quinn (1999), Vonk, (1999) and Wilson *et al.* (1997). Few, if any, are looking at an evaluation of a *process* most focus on an evaluation of the *outcome*.

However, the study carried out by Smith, (2000:155) on 'owning evaluation', focused on the experience of a yearlong evaluation project in a university counselling service. Some of the reasons for practitioners' reluctance to carry out formal evaluation were

considered. This particular study was very different because the process of the evaluation of the service was directly linked to the conflicts between the intimacy of 'one-to-one' therapeutic work and the constraints of 'publicly funded institutions' and thus to the difficulties of carrying out effective evaluations of service provision. According to Smith, further exploration of certain issues, coming from a sense of ambivalence by practitioners, could increase confidence in clinical work. This, together with observing the impact of organisational cultures on certain conditions, can have positive effects on the process of evaluation within university settings. What makes this paper particularly worthy of note is its focus on evaluating the 'experience' of significant participants over such a prolonged length of time - this is not only particularly demanding but is also difficult to distil in a concise manner. In this way, Smith's paper relates directly to some of the challenges of this qualitative study - how to evaluate the experience. Smith (1999:125) called for "counsellors in education to pay heed to the common sense and complexities of their contexts and their own feelings in them."

To sum up, since the AUCC Report (1998b), more pressure has been placed on student counselling services to provide practice-based evidence so that issues such as development, implementation, accountability and professional responsibility are monitored, assessed and observed. Changes in the arrangements for external accountability have also contributed to recent pressures. This is seen, for example, through the Governmental Policy of Clinical Governance, which has brought quality assurance, accountability and continuation audit to the fore (BCUC Analytic Account 2001), where these areas seem to be constantly present in almost all factors of service provision through university life.

Additionally, there has been a specific call from the BACP for more research within the field of counselling and psychotherapy, since it is committed to fostering research that will inform and develop good practice. In its publication *Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (2001), effective from 1 April 2002, it states under the heading 'Ethical Principles' that 'beneficence' - the commitment to promoting the client's well being - must include encouragement of further research and

systemic reflection. Furthermore, all practitioners are encouraged to support research undertaken on behalf of the profession and to participate actively in such work. This is echoed by McLeod (2001) in the quarterly research journal also published by the BACP where he calls for more ‘community based research’ to contribute positively to the entire field of counselling and psychotherapy. Despite this call, little formal research is carried out in any of the well-established university counselling services, although there are many ongoing studies, collaborative enquiries and challenging questionnaires that are part of many of the activities of those actively involved in university counselling teams e.g.. BCUC student evaluation questionnaires (Appendix 8).

McLeod’s (2001:3-9) article on the reasons ‘why counselling and psychotherapy research is necessary’ was an important influence for me when I was planning this project. Three of the five reasons outlined by McLeod were deemed particularly concordant with the contextual framework of this ‘evaluative inquiry’ alongside my own professional experience, and the need to bridge the widening gap between research and practice has always been a particular interest of mine. I decided that these reasons (affirming the legitimacy of counselling in the eyes of the stakeholders; making it possible for practitioners to continue to do their job better; and facilitating the personal and professional development of therapists) could be used as guides within the parameters of the project. They are seen as an extra dimension to the framework and are discussed in line with the findings in Chapter 5.

### **This literature review and this inquiry**

When I first considered this project I, like others, responded to the call for more research and the need for further ‘evaluation’ and ‘comparative studies’ but I was interested in the more personal, subjective stance. In this project I want to pay heed to the feelings, emotions, complexities and considerations that people like me have experienced in the past and currently when managing and setting up such university counselling services. I want to inquire how other people respond to the demands of the institution, the needs of the practitioners, the demands of the students, the management

of the service and how, individually, we travel on our own personal journeys in undertaking such tasks in university settings. It was not my intention to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of the counselling service that I set up and have since managed. I consider this objective task can be left to others to carry out, while the bounds of this research inquiry are about the human experiences involved. Of particular interest to me are the subjective personal and professional experiences of people in institutional settings. I agree with Armstrong (1991) when he said that the “experience of a person in role in a system can be used to illuminate aspects of the ‘emotional experience’ that is contained within the inner psychic space of the organisation and the interaction of its members”. I want to inquire further into the “constant need to rediscover and re-engage with the relatedness, between the complexities of the individual experience and ongoing organisational processes” (Smith 1999:139).

However, it is appropriate to use this review of relevant literature to frame questions that will guide the analysis of the research data. The following questions have been extracted from the review to provide a relevant frame through which to investigate the research findings. Chapter 4 (below) includes consideration of ways in which the research data is similar to, or different from, the literature review material in the areas of:

- The experiences of the Heads of Service
- University expansion i.e. there being more universities,
- Student populations i.e. diversity or size
- Interface between the universities and their counselling services.

Additionally, the research data is examined for what else emerges besides what these guiding questions draw out.

*Summary of the literature review*

Ford <i>et al.</i> (1996)	Recognition that learning is now a life-long ability. Academic credits more freely transferred between institutions
Worth (1996)	A broad based evaluation of a counselling service, ahead of its time in the number of factors evaluated
Rana <i>et al.</i> (1998)	A significant rise in the levels of disturbed students accessing university
Lago (1998)	The profile of student population has been transformed in 10 years (2.1 million students in higher education – more than twice that of 1970/1971).
Coxon (2001)	Student suicide has increased dramatically from 2.4 per 100,000 students in 1992/1994 to 9.7 per 100,000 students in 1999. Higher education is part of the educational experience of 30% of 18-30 year olds.



# Chapter 2

## The research paradigm

This project is an evaluative inquiry, carried out using qualitative research methodologies, into the counselling service that I set up in 1992 and still manage at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. Through exploring my experiences and the experiences of other heads of service, it also investigates more general issues to do with managing student counselling services. The research focus of this project is about establishing a structure of experience and learning (“applied wisdom”) drawn from interviews (which cover reflections, self-process, motivations, and subsequent actions) and literature from those involved in the setting up and management of university counselling services (“expert witnesses”). This project aims to increase understanding of the lived experience by drawing on the voices of those involved in this research inquiry. It is the human experience that can provide a deep knowledge and richer awareness of arriving at something significant - the substance emerging out of the perceived but intangible accumulation of subjective experience – and, from this, theories and potential change can be proposed. Research of this type has an extensive lineage over time, e.g. Roe 1951; Roe 1951a; Roe 1953; Vaillant 1977; Zuckerman 1977; Bloom 1985; Ryff 1989; Arnold 1994; Moon and Feldhusen 1994; Subotnik and Steiner 1994; Csikszentmihalyi 1996.

The research methods used throughout this project are qualitative in nature. Miles and Huberman (1994:253) suggest that the “hallmark of qualitative research is that it goes beyond *how much* there is of something to tell us about its essential *qualities*”.

Paradigms represent a distillation of what we think about the world (Lincoln and Guba 1985). This research project has been conducted within a ‘naturalistic’ paradigm and framework of inquiry. The naturalistic paradigm embraces the following perspectives:

- ‘Reality’ or views of reality are multiple, constructed and holistic.
- The ‘knower’ and the ‘known’ are interactive and inseparable.
- ‘Generalisation’ as such is not something that is sought.

- Research is aimed at proposing working hypotheses that are bound in time and context.
- Given that all entities are in a state of mutual shaping, distinguishing cause and effect is impossible.
- Any inquiry is value-bound.

(Lincoln and Guba 1985: 37).

Naturalistic inquiry moves research from seeking to establish ‘objective’ views to acknowledging there are multiple possible perspectives, and that the research outcomes represent but one of these, (ibid: p55). Theories and facts are not independent. Facts will influence the shaping of theories, and subsequently theories will influence further facts that may be the subject of scrutiny. The acceptance of interaction between the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’ shapes both the choice of sample, and the resultant emergent design of any research. Importantly, naturalistic inquiry also implies or relies on the ‘value’ judgement that meaningful human research is impossible without the understanding and co-operation of participants, (ibid: p105). The focus on contextual inquiry demands that the researcher responds and adapts to the indeterminate nature of what will be encountered.

The ‘flow’ of naturalistic inquiry comprises:

- ‘Human instrument’, researching in a ‘natural’ setting
- using qualitative research methods, building on experiential knowledge
- engaging in ‘purposive’ sampling
- inductive data analysis
- and emergent design
- to propose ‘grounded’ theory
- through outcomes presented to and / or ‘negotiated’ with professionals in the researched field.

(Ibid: p188).

Mitroff (1983:158) asserts, “that the mind attempting to know the mind of another requires a phenomenological approach to research” – an approach that underpins certain traditions of qualitative research. In this way, this research project uses a phenomenological approach, as is seen when compared to the following features of the phenomenological perspective) drawing from Lang’s work (1996:156). This project:

- validates ordinary experience
- embraces multiple perspectives
- is enriched by dialogue, inter-subjectivity and collaboration
- accepts knowledge as individually and socially constructed
- attempts to understand the meaning of social phenomena in terms of the ‘actor’ and their context, rejecting through this the notion of a ‘single truth’.

### **Gathering the data**

The primary means of data gathering in this research project is interviewing. However, the preparation, conduct of interviews and analysis are informed by a heuristic perspective in order to become more alert to, explore and articulate the potential ‘meaning’ in this subject area. The information is gathered through self-processes, (i.e. closely examining how one’s own events, thoughts, and interactions happened), dialogues and semi-structured co-operative interviews. The subtleties of the interviews are heuristic as this approach values the human experience component in the conception and realisation of a functional structure (in this case a counselling service). Heuristic research is a way of engaging in methodical search through different methods and processes, primarily interviewing, which are aimed at a deep level of self and other discovery. It is a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others that works towards finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences.

An open approach is also necessary because it is uncertain what the structure of the researcher's experience and learning offered might be. In an earlier, classic study involving interviewing, Roe (1951:1) states, “Since one does not know what factors

may prove effective one must try and observe as many as possible". She saw as a consequence of this an inherent limit to the number of participants that can be worked with on such a study, given that most researchers have limited time. The interviews are conducted in a manner that is interactive and seeks to establish the experience and meaning of those involved through that interaction, with a goal of generating new insights into this field. It is about creating the conditions in which understanding can take place-through narrative exploration. Establishing the best conditions where trust, openness, interpersonal dialogue and effective communication can take place is one of the most crucial aspects of this research inquiry. Through this process the participants and myself could access deeply buried knowledge, wisdom and moments of personal truths. Heuristic research falls within the paradigm of qualitative research, and in particular naturalistic inquiry - which relates to ethnographic, phenomenological, subjective, case study (qualitative), hermeneutic and humanistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Therefore, while the subtleties of the interviews are heuristic and attempt to construct meaning in that manner – the underlying view of reality and the analysis of data sit within frameworks common to other research methods, such as co-operative inquiry.

The interviewees could all be considered 'expert witnesses' on the subject of running a university counselling service i.e. informants who are experienced in and knowledgeable about the interview subject matter. The use of 'expert witnesses' is a standard procedure for elaborating on, as well as corroborating, historical facts through examining closely the experiences of witnesses who would be regarded as expert in the field being investigated. The term comes from legal practice, but has since been applied in fields such as historical and social science research (e.g. writers such as Cicero, Seutonius, and Samuel Pepys being regarded as 'witnesses' who were knowledgeable as well as astute observers.)

The concept of the expert witness in the field of psychology and psychotherapy came to popular attention due to the expert witnesses of the Holocaust, who were referenced in research on that subject. People such as Bruno Bettelheim, and his writings in his book 'The Informed Heart', Victor Frankl, his account of 'Man's search for Meaning and

Primo Levi's writings ('If this is Man'), showed the power of articulate and analytical writings on historical, psychological experiences. They had all been simultaneously participants and skilled observers of these human tragedies taking place. Primo Levi was by professional training a chemist and writer, and had no 'expertise' in psychology, psychotherapy or social sciences; however his writings did provide sensitive, articulate, analytical, detailed accounts of events, and act as valuable 'witness accounts'.

The notion of expert witnesses is of no less value to research into other less distressing areas such as this project. Writing or speaking about one's own experiences, together with observing other people's experiences of similar events, is a valuable aspect of this research inquiry one that will significantly add value to this study.

### **Why this research method?**

The study of the setting up and running of university counselling services might easily have involved other research methods. For example, it would have been possible to conduct a questionnaire survey on the characteristics and experiences of these services, or to utilise methods and theories associated with organisational management and systems studies. I investigated and considered several research methods at seminars, and through my own literature research review, examples of which included hermeneutics, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, content analysis and case study analysis. These methods all offer much value, and could have been used for a project on this area; several features of these approaches were used under the umbrella of naturalistic inquiry. I rejected simple content analysis because I considered it was not likely to be sufficiently able to draw out the deeper levels of meaning in the material. Hermeneutics was also rejected because it does not place the researcher centrally in the material but advocates keeping the researcher separate during the data generation and analysis. Another reason for not using any of the fore mentioned methodologies was that this project was intended to be relatively small-scale, and some of these other methods suit larger and longer projects better.

Therefore a varied and adapted methodological involvement in this project was found to be appropriate. Drawing on my own experiences of how I established and managed the BCUC Counselling Service from conception was what brought about the idea of working within a heuristic manner in this project. This style of research approach seemed concordant with my intention about the inquiry; the qualities of individuality and creativity appealed to me, since heuristic research aims towards composite depictions that remain close to the individual stories, rather than elucidating situational structural dynamics (Moustakas 1994). However, a limitation I saw at the beginning with heuristic research inquiry was the constant challenge to ensure that the ‘experiences’ depicted would come from the appropriate information, through meaningful disclosures and reflections. In this way it stretches beyond the bounds of an autobiographical disclosure, so extracting or collaborating on the creation of significant ‘meaning’ that would strive to describe understandings, while attempting to measure the findings, has been a constant challenging task. It was important for me to keep in mind that this process was a way of being informed, a way of knowing - “whatever presents itself in the consciousness of the researcher as perception, sense, intuition, or knowledge represents an invitation for further elucidation” (Moustakas 1990).

Heuristic inquiry was at first seen as the sole methodology, sufficient for this inquiry. However, in due course, it was seen to have its limitations, especially with regards to effective utilisation of many aspects of the material that has been collected in this project. Arguably this may have been to do with the relatively large number of participants chosen for this inquiry. But, finally, I considered that further aspects of the material would be drawn out by the means of using the principles of naturalistic inquiry, such as the analytic techniques of coding, categorising, memo-ing, theoretical sampling, explicating the story, which are included within this research process. So these two approaches fit comfortably together, especially since my own experience will be under scrutiny through the heuristic process, while the process of analysis within ‘naturalistic inquiry’ closely investigates the material and experiences of the other participants. This process can draw out more of the overall illumination from the ‘expert witnesses’ involved in the inquiry.

This method reflects my values and my personal long-term interests – the importance of giving voice to individuals, to bring forward their experiences in their uniqueness, and to learn from them. Therefore I argue that those interests highlight a valid and valuable goal for research and that the findings are likely to be of professional interest to those involved in counselling provision. This research is about making a systematic inquiry into the experiences of the expert witnesses chosen for this study; simultaneously it is about drawing on my own expertise in a reflexive way.

Locating this project in the conceptual contexts of applied wisdom, tacit knowledge, expert witnesses and communities of practice suggests important aspects that support generating further meaning and understanding in a creative way. Brown, and Duguid (2002; 25) describe communities of practice, by explaining that "Through practice, a community of practice develops a shared understanding of what it does, of how it does it, and how it relates to other communities and their practices - in all, a 'world view'". While this picture of knowledge is embedded in practice and communities, they also argue that "it is important to observe that we should not dismiss the ideas of personal and private knowledge" (ibid, p25) alone it is significantly incomplete: it requires the ensemble to make sense of it ". Brown and Duguid conclude a community of practice produces and holds knowledge, makes sense of it and actively shares knowledge by collectively owning it and distributing it.

Relating this research to traditions contexts outlined above contributes to an atmosphere where significant meaning and wisdom can become explicit in this process. The 'aha' moments described in the interviews of this project are the occasions when a deeper meaning is recognised. This can also be described as making tacit knowledge explicit to oneself.

Polanyi's, (1967:4) conception of the tacit dimension is encapsulated in his famous observation that ' we know more than we can tell'. In speculating what this meant Polanyi discussed the police's introduction of photo-fit identification as a way of expressing something tacit about the recognition of faces but he also cautions how we know this. "This very act of communication displays a knowledge that we cannot tell' (ibid, p5). As cited by



Clegg and Ray, (2003:39) Polanyi also considers the use of practical classes in university education to communicate the knowledge that cannot be told, arguing that this is only possible ... ' by relying on the pupil's intelligent co-operation for catching the meaning of the demonstration'. Clegg and Ray go on to emphasise that ' Thus ,your thoughts are always your thoughts and my thoughts are my thoughts, but the representation of one person's thoughts in explicit language might leverage understanding in the intelligent co-operation of the listener '. Every human being is enabled by tacit knowledge, but this knowledge can never be objectified - its existence is merely revealed by the ability to accomplish physical and mental actions. Polanyi, (1969: 144) sums it up by saying "while tacit knowledge can be processed by itself, explicit knowledge must rely on being tacitly understood and applied."

In order to surface the hidden or unconscious knowledge of people's experiences in relation to life events it may be important to create an atmosphere wherein tacit knowledge can be recognised and become explicit. Identifying unconscious knowledge and explicating it through a creative process lies at the heart of this project. Nonaka, (1994) has drawn the management world's attention to the important role of tacit knowledge in knowledge creation and " pointed out the extent this creation of knowledge is recognised in Eastern but not western organisations" Henry, (2002). Nonaka speaks about building a new theory of knowledge in relation to his work on organisations and corporate strategy. His celebrated 'knowledge creating spiral' identifies four modes of creating knowledge - through socialisation, combination, internalisation and externalisation. Nonaka, (1994) argues that 'While tacit knowledge held by individuals may lie at the heart of the knowledge creating process, realising the practical benefits of that knowledge centres on its externalisation' where 'externalisation' for Nonaka entails a process of 'converting' tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, (1994: 20). Moustakas (1996: 20) also identifies tacit knowledge as being at the base of all heuristic discoveries.

Making explicit the tacit knowledge drawn from the experiences of the expert witnesses in this study is very important. From an etymological viewpoint the word tacit is about being quiet, and it is accessing and speaking aloud and making explicit this deeper or undiscovered unconscious knowledge which is vital in this study. Of course this whole process is not only about accessing tacit knowledge in the 'aha' moments but also about

analysing and synthesising the outcomes of both conscious and unconscious knowledge and wisdom (another part of Nonaka's spiral). The combination of these processes is what makes this method very thorough.

This project also relates to practitioner research methodology. It uses a wide range of communication formats (including journals, poetic expressions and personal notes) and throughout this project there are intrinsic displays of a high level of 'ownership' (by myself as researcher) on this topic of university counselling. Additionally there is an intensive analysis of the material, supported by personal sources i.e. my journal, personal reflections and poetry, which draws out the development of practical understandings in this field.

Heuristic Inquiry can be seen as

*"meaningfully encompassing processes that are considered essential in investigations of human experience".*

*Moustakas (1990:9)*

*"The power of heuristic inquiry lies in its potential disclosing truth. Through exhaustive self-search, dialogue with others, and creative depictions of experience, a comparative knowledge is generated... passionate yet disciplined commitment is vital."*

*"The researcher undertakes a rich and demanding journey throughout. The research inquiry flows from inspirational and personal meaning, through methods of creative endeavour and inquiry to an expansion of knowledge, which may be "of universal significance". What is also different with heuristic inquiry is its autobiographical connection".*

*(Douglas and Moustakas 1985:40).*

My initial *engagement* began with intense inner dialogue as I struggled to set up the BCUC. I had not had the standard university education and had missed out on university life at 18. Would that make a difference, I wondered. Why was I getting involved in university counselling services? I had always been drawn to young people and empathised with their concerns, perhaps because I too had experienced considerable

levels of distress during my own teenage years. I developed a passionate need to know how I could help these students, how I could interface with the university, how I would select the best personnel, what it is like to be a young student today? How are other people managing at other universities? West's comment (1998) that without passion there will not be sufficient energy to complete the project resonated with me. I felt I had enormous energy and that energy fuelled my intense activity in setting up this service and trying to get it right. In 2001 I felt as though it was me being written about when I read Sussman describing "the initial engagement" as being the process which flows intuitively from the researcher's own life but requires a disciplined commitment in order to discern the underlying meanings, which will emerge at this stage. I had many questions to which I knew I could find economic cognitive answers but would in no way convey the individual involvement and commitment to the realisation of something as complex as a university counselling service. I wanted to know if it was possible to analyse one's own experience in a way that would make it valid and useful to others.

*Immersion* would be an accurate way to describe what was happening to me. In fact, a number of people, friends and colleagues often commented that I seemed to be immersed in the BCUC project. I walked it, slept it, talked it to the point that I did at times reflect that I was becoming a little boring to others but never to myself. I was seeing connections in everything - from sitting on the tube listening to the way young people talked, to reading articles in the Educational supplements, to paying attention to government directives - which I would never have done before. I talked to colleagues about drug addictions. I read articles on depression in young people and challenged myself about the meaning of body piercing, Goths and certain kinds of music (what is it about this music and why is it called garage?). I began to reach areas in myself which were previously closed to me. In so many ways I became alive, young again and at university. I rather liked the idea of an earring in my nose but compromised by buying myself a lilac leather coat. What did I need when I was young and didn't get? What would have helped me? What would have changed my life?

There were other areas that this immersion enhanced. My husband is Sri Lankan and he has two children from a previous marriage. I became better able to understand these two

young people because I was very focussed on the needs of young people and how to address them. Our son, of course, is mixed race and the transcultural issues which I had to give attention to in my role as head of service have helped us as parents to be more aware now of the educational and social dynamics for our son in an increasingly multicultural (but not necessarily always harmonious) society. The energy of such focus and the concerns and challenges which more knowledge inevitably brings had the effect of penetrating me very deeply on an existential level and I found myself writing poetry or reflective prose. I have always written poetry but during this period it took on a different style and emphasis. I never would have expected that reflections on a counselling service could move one to poetry but I came to realise that it was not the subject matter which accounted for that, but the intensity of the focus (Appendix 2).

What was this all about? Being a woman and being pregnant early on in the doctorate, it seemed clear to me that I was pregnant with ideas and questions, with an energy to bring both into the world and this project like, the child I was carrying, I hoped for the best and I also knew that it would be content with being 'good enough'. In that moment of being content with that 'good enough' and not some preconceived notion of perfection or grandeur, so I could let the development of the baby have time to follow its own processes inside me. I could keep it safe and nourished but during that time it was making its own connections, forming its own body shape, linking synapses and brain tissue and doing whatever it had to do to be ready to come into this world. And he came. He was a complete surprise to me and in another way totally familiar. The parallel processes with my project were very strong.

This child was an *illumination*. It was a natural process but also one that inspired awe. In his birth and his continued development out of the womb the unconscious and the conscious came together, he was a stranger and yet not, a synthesis of many elements, of parentage, heritage, nature, nurture and also uniquely himself. It was like this with the project. New meanings would surface in drafting and redrafting chapters, in examining the data closely and at a distance, being a stranger to me then being so very familiar, a synthesis of fragmented ideas of mine and others, of information and questions and emerging unique at the same time. And then he started to speak and our

communication became more balanced and I began to see more clearly where exactly he was similar to and where he was different from us and from others. I began to see into his world. It was the explication, that very exciting, engaging stage where many things become apparent. In my project a comparable time was especially when the data and interviews were being examined closely.

This process challenges the new understanding by focusing, indwelling and clarifying new knowledge and awareness, like putting the pieces together of a patchwork quilt or watching my son put together a jigsaw puzzle number of different ways, testing out which was good for him and also could be related to by others. In my work it involved in-depth time spent on refining, in great detail, the major components of the material in order to put the key ingredients together into a whole experience. This next phase would be grasping the data and being fully aware of the knowledge that illuminates and explicates the original inquiry, arriving at a point where a full integration and assimilation of the phenomena are creatively presented, enabling the research project to reach its final stage of delivery. For me this stage of *creative synthesis* with my son was knowing him and accepting him and the next stage was to take him to the nursery, present him to the world confidently knowing that he had a secure base with me and my knowledge of him and that I had prepared him robustly for the world of challenges and comparisons but also a world which could benefit from him being in it and interacting with it. I wanted to be able to present this project to the world with a similar confidence in my collaborative abilities as a researcher nurtured by what I had given both my academic and biological children through information, time, reflection and meaningful interaction with both him and myself.

### **The others. Why did I choose to interview them as a way to access their experiences?**

Interviewing was the central data-gathering route, but informed by heuristic inquiry. Interviews afford great flexibility. They are a common research tool in life span research, longitudinal studies, and research aimed at learning from the stories and

experience of others. Each participant in this project was interviewed separately, almost as if they represented a mini- 'case study'. Wallace (1989:26) describes the case study approach as follows: "the case study method is aimed at reconstructing the often tortuous path, including the blind alleys and abandoned ways of the creative work" (p33). The participants in this study were considered individually. Results were then combined for this group to be studied nomothetically (i.e. on the basis of the patterns and trends that exist across the participants).

Interviews have been defined as conversation with a structure and purpose (Kvale 1996). In comparison to the conversations of everyday life, "the research interview is characterised by a methodological awareness of question forms, a focus on the dynamics of interaction between interviewer and interviewee, and a critical attention to what is said" (Kvale 1996:20). The essential purpose of the interview in this research is to understand the lived world from the perspectives of research participants, and to construct that understanding in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Spradley (1979:34) describes the phenomenological intention: "I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way that you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand this?"

It is for these reasons I chose a semi-structured interview. In this semi structured interview I created an atmosphere of respect, openness and safety by firstly discussing with the interviewees how best this exchange could be attained. It was in the process of 'creating the best conditions' by deeply involved continuous reflection between us, which allowed the true nature of the heuristic atmosphere to take place. This process provided the conditions for both the interviewee and myself to have the personal space and time so to access knowledge and significant meaningful material on a deeper level - to access that which is 'true' of one's own personal experience. This created the conditions for the interviewee to have well-considered personal responses when I, as researcher did not know in advance what is significant. By this process I maintained an open stance with respect to all the data from each interviewees, as advised by (Lincoln

and Guba 1985:269). This account reflects the open, heuristically informed interview procedure that was set in place for this research project.

In preparing for the interviews, I was informed by Kvale's (1996:88) seven-stage model for an interview investigation:

Thematising: formulating the purpose and content of the topic to be investigated.

Knowing what is to be done and why before the 'how' is determined.

Designing: planning the study, taking into account the needs of all seven stages, and both the knowledge it is intended to yield and the ethical implications of its operation

Interviewing: conducting the interviews, based on an interview structure or guide, and a reflective approach to the knowledge sought and obtained

Transcribing: preparing the interview material for analysis, which commonly involves a transcription of the spoken to the written or printed word

Analysing: utilising a method of analysis, based on the purpose of the study and the interview material

Verifying: determines the qualitative research equivalents of 'reliability' and 'validity'

Reporting: communicating the results of the study in a scientific manner.

### **Research aim**

My research aim in this project was to:

Contact, interview and learn from a broad range of therapists and managers engaged in university counselling services.

Make that contact in a manner that interviewed these individuals in an 'open frame' way, heuristically informed so to draw out aspects of their experience that might not have been elicited in another form of research.

Analyse emerging data in a way that represented the structure of reported experience and brought out a usable summary of this to other professionals engaged in this field.

### **Research design and method**

The scope of this inquiry incorporated eleven people's experiences, expertise and reflections with the findings being recorded and documented. I as researcher was included in this number.

The data-gathering process in this project was divided into three phases:

Phase One involved two interviews - my initial self-interview and the observational interview. Phase Two involved interviewing eight participants who had themselves set up and / or managed university counselling service(s) and Phase Three involved a final observational interview.

I began each hour long interview with a summary of the purpose of the research – both for ethical reasons and in the interests of creating a relationship in which detailed personal and or confidential matters could be safely discussed. This topic is described in more detail in a later section of this chapter, examining ethical considerations.

Once the study purpose was described, I asked introductory questions to settle the participants into the interview discussions. In accordance with the heuristic practice, all interviews were semi-structured and open-ended involving dialogue, co-operative inquiry and self-disclosure. Ideas and questions relating to the themes which emerged during Phase One were asked in all interviews and further questions arose out of the material presented by the individual participants and were identified in the results as 'extra emergent themes'. The interviews were conducted in the spirit of participative inquiry, allowing dialogue to flow freely and the unexpected to come through. Questions were intentionally broad and often needed re-clarifying, since in many cases material unknown for me was surfacing in the interviewing process. Every attempt was



made not to 'lead' the participants, but rather to engage in a process of 'co-remembrance' (Hiles 1998) so to create the correct atmosphere where a heuristic could take place.

The rationale and structure of the interview series are described in more detail in the following tables. At the end of each interview throughout the three phases, I recorded my thoughts, observations and critical reflections in a journal. These were later analysed as a form of data collection. An extract of an interview from Phase Two can be found in Appendix 10.

*Table 2.1 - Phase One: self and observational interviews*

Procedure	Critical Self-Reflections
<p><b>Self-interview:</b> This involved me sitting down with an audio- tape recorder and asking myself questions about my experience of setting up and managing the BCUC Counselling Service. This self-interview was carried out over two consecutive days, with each part lasting approximately 40 minutes. Prior to each part of the interview I prepared myself by meditating for a while, so to centre my thoughts and focus my mind on my experience of setting up and managing this service. This interview was carried out in two parts because the intensity of concentrating and recording my own self-talk was exhausting. Also, it was quite difficult to keep my thoughts flowing in this way longer than forty minutes.</p> <p>This process was carried out so that a deeper level of self–dialogue and self-reflection could occur; in this way the 'emergent themes' could develop in a clear, creative and semi- structured way. This was later transcribed and a copy of the transcript was sent to the interviewer of the observational interview, participant (A).</p>	<p>I considered this was an innovative and interesting way of including myself in this analysis. Additionally it was creative in how it drew out the factors that I considered important in this research. One difficulty I experienced was that it was hard to know where to focus my initial level of inquiry. Should I repeat this process again I would not turn off the recorder during the interview when there are long periods of silence; this is what I did during the first part of the interview. Turning off the tape actually interrupted my flow of thoughts and affected my concentration. However, in the second part of the interview I did this less and it was much better because my flow of delivery was much more focused and more of the core themes emerged at the later stage of the interview.</p> <p>Additionally, on reflection I might have done this interview by speaking from different ego states or archetypal stances. It may have helped to delineate my role as interviewer as one ego state and me as the interviewee as another ego state. Then a more distinct process might have emerged and greater clarity attained.</p>
<p><b>Observational interview:</b> Participant (A) had read my transcript and some questions and observations were prepared before our meeting. An hour-long interview was arranged and I was then interviewed in a semi-structured way, which involved some open-ended questions and observations made. A dialogue continued throughout. The aim was for this person to listen to (and read the transcripts of) my self-interview and to draw inferences about the process from that. This person had also to watch for my biases in favour of university counselling, so that I could reach a more objective stance. This interview was also audiotaped and later transcribed.</p>	<p>This interview added a deeper level of rigour to this part of the data collection. The limitation in this procedure was that the person I chose was known to me and this in itself could be considered to have introduced a bias.</p> <p>However, I felt choosing someone who was already a doctoral candidate was most suitable as a research inquiry of this kind would not be a very unfamiliar process for this person. Also, I felt at ease in the interview and I consider this allowed for the best outcome.</p>

*Table 2.2 - Phase Two: eight interviews with other participants*

Procedure	Critical Self-Reflections
<p>Initially I spoke to those counsellors and heads of university counselling services, whom I knew, and invited them to become part of my research. Then I telephoned each of the others and invited them to participate.</p> <p>With their agreement I then gave two months notice of an interview date and after sending them more details (Appendix 9) the arrangement for the interviews were confirmed.</p> <p>The aim of these interviews was to draw on other people's experiences and to observe their responses during the process. An hour-long semi-structured interview was carried out with each person. I interviewed each participant in such a way that the core themes already drawn out of Phase One were addressed. Initially, I introduced what I had done so far and I identified the core themes of the inquiry. These themes to explore were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• university students;</li> <li>• the head of the service;</li> <li>• the interface between universities and counselling services;</li> <li>• managing university counselling services</li> <li>• the future of counselling in university settings.</li> </ul> <p>I asked some open questions about their respective experiences and then the interview became a natural, collaborative, dialogic process with each person speaking about his or her experiences in their own way. Each interview was audiotaped and later transcribed.</p>	<p>The selection for these interviews were quite straightforward, in that I decided to choose people I knew and some who were not known to me but who were well known in the field of counselling in university settings. I considered that this way I could access some of the most experienced people in this domain and that this inquiry could then draw out the best examples of effective practice within UK university counselling services. I chose not to use random sampling, as I was interested in recording the experiences of these particular people. It seemed an appropriate and respectful process and all of the participants were open, responsive and collaborated in a very generous way.</p> <p>A limitation was that this group of people, by their position and experience in leading universities, were likely to show positive bias in favour of counselling and its value. However, I still consider that this procedure was a very valuable way of elucidating, recording and later analysing such a wealth of experience over years of professional practice. I argue that this was a very appropriate selection process for this type of inquiry.</p>

*Table 2.3 - Phase Three: final observational interview*

Procedure	Critical Self-Reflections
<p>This phase involved a final interview with participant (C). A discussion took place between us at the final stage of writing-up the first draft text. It aimed to help me reflect upon the entire process and it invited specific attention to the final material to be drawn out. This interview involved two-way reflections and inquiries taking place between the two of us. However, some very specific inquiries were asked of me in this process. This informal interview was also audiotaped and sections of it were transcribed for analysis.</p>	<p>Participant (C) had initially been invited to participate by assisting me with Literature searches etc. throughout the research project. It seemed an appropriate step forward for this person to become the final observational interviewer; since she had been involved in the process on different levels from the beginning. Initially I had not anticipated having a second observational interview, but it came about naturally. It could be seen as excessive but I considered this a worthwhile process because I expected my view of counselling services might have changed during the time spent investigating the subject during the consultative interviews.</p>

The transcribed audiotaped material from each interview provided the data for analysis. Through the process of me listening to and being immersed in this material across all three phases of interview (11 interviews in all; one self-interview, two observational interviews and eight participant interviews) allowed for the initial themes to emerge, (see chapter 3 for greater detail). The results from Phase One developed into four core themes:

1. The University Students
2. The Heads of University Counselling Services
3. The Interface between Universities and their Counselling Services
4. Managing University Counselling Services

These themes were mentioned by me (and independently by some of the other participants also) as part of the semi-structured nature of Phase Two. An additional core theme emerged early on in the interviews in Phase Two and this was 'the future of University Counselling Services'. Although these themes were seen as important they were not 'set in stone' and some looseness around other subject areas occurred in the interviews; this flexibility was also (very much) acknowledged in the process of analysis.

This process of me being immersed in the data analysis was repeated in Phase Two and Phase Three. The results of these phases were categorised into sub themes of each of the five core themes mentioned above concluding with as many as five sub themes in each core theme category. Phase Three also drew out some additional themes.

### **The analysis**

It is recognised that an individual's perspective on experience will change over time. It reflects their understanding and representations at a point in time, and that understanding will be reworked in the light of changed experiences (Vaillant 1977; Freeman 1999; Cohler 1982 – in Atkinson 1998:60). This, coupled with questions over the reliability of memory, may imply limitations on the research approach I have chosen. This approach has proved productive in other studies seeking to establish and learn from experience gained in life, (e.g. Roe, 1951a, Roe 1953; Freeman 1993; Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi 1976; and Csikszentmihalyi 1996). The recounting of a personal narrative at a point in time can represent the "most internally consistent interpretation of the way the past, the experienced present and the anticipated future is understood by that person", Csikszentmihalyi (1996).

Questions drawn from Egan (1988) concerning the design and effectiveness of organisations were also used in part to analyse interview data. I chose this outline of effectiveness because it is a tool that I used when assessing how I set-up and managed the BCUC Counselling Service. These headings will be used in the review of research data (chapter 4) on some measures of the organisational soundness of the university counselling services that collaborated in this work. Egan (1988:10) offers seven primary headings and questions through which to consider the completeness and effectiveness of an organisation's structure. These are summarised below, with pertinent questions relating to counselling service provision beside each one. These examples and questions have been added to each of Egan's points to reflect how this structure will be used in the consideration of research data.

Strategy: Get the overall purpose and direction of the system straight. (e.g. Has the counselling service got a clear purpose or mission?)

Unit performance plans: Drive the strategy down into the guts of the system. (e.g. Has the counselling service got a defined and established way of delivering a service?)

Operations: Deliver valued services to the 'customer' cost-effectively in the 'markets' of choice. (e.g. Does the counselling service operate in a way that gives possible clients what they need at times when it is needed? Is it cost effective when put alongside other student services?)

Organisation: Design and structure the organisation needed to 'deliver the goods' both strategically and operationally. (e.g. Does the way the counselling service is set up support what it has to do?)

Culture: Develop the beliefs, values and norms needed to give spirit to the organisation. (e.g. Is there a 'climate' or 'way of working' apparent in the counselling service that reflects both the needs of the students and the context in which it is trying to operate?)

Management: Develop a cadre of (individuals) to provide direction, co-ordination and support. (e.g. Is there an appropriate source of management, and counsellors, supervisors and administrative support to deliver the required work?)

Leadership: Develop leaders to provide institution enhancing innovation and change. (e.g. Are the heads of service developing themselves in a manner that reflects the changing needs of the counselling service?)

Moustakas (1990) outlines eight procedures for analysing qualitative data and these are the procedures I did during this process (see chapter 3 for further details):

1. Gathering and organisation of the data.

2. Researcher 'enters into the material in timeless immersion' until the material is understood.
3. Data is set aside for a while, facilitating the awakening of fresh energy and perspective. This is then followed by further study and review of the data so the heuristic researcher can construct a unique depiction (including qualities and themes) of each participant's experience.
4. Return to original data to check 'does the unique depiction of the experience fit the data from which it was developed?' The individual depiction may also be shared with the research participants for affirmation of its comprehensiveness and accuracy and for suggested deletions and additions.
5. When the above steps have been completed for one participant, the same procedure is carried out for each of the remaining participants involved in the research.
6. Then the unique depictions of each participant experience are gathered together. At a timely point in knowledge and readiness, the researcher develops a composite depiction that represents the common qualities and themes that embrace the experience of all of the participants.
7. The researcher returns to the raw material derived from each participant's experience and the individual depictions derived from the raw material. Then the researcher selects the most relevant material that represents common themes represented in the group. The aim of this stage is to ensure that the individual experience is represented in such a way that both the phenomenon being investigated and the individual person's experience emerge in a unified manner.
8. The final stage in heuristic presentation and handling is the development of a creative synthesis of the experience.

The methods used for interview data analysis were shaped by the need to stay open to the stories and experiences of participants in describing the developments of their individual lives and the counselling services they managed. All interviews were transcribed from audiotapes, and notes made before and after these interviews supplemented the information contained in the interview transcripts. The transcribed material was evidence of the mutual respect that was enjoyed by the participants and myself; the standard of eloquence and comprehensive commentaries were so impressive, that at times I was reminded of how I grappled with the next question when I was in the interview. Yet there were also deep reflective periods where the material was more disjointed and sometimes halted. These were important since they demonstrated the reflexive, heuristic component within each interview. These parts however, were difficult to transcribe, yet every effort was made to replicate authentically the content of the interviews and to convey not only the verbal detail of the dialogue but the natural flow and spirit of the inquiry. Throughout many of the interviews, there were times of spontaneous laughter, and also manifestations of concerns, fears and anxieties about working in this field, but the spirit of respectful inquiry was at the heart of each experience. In an unstructured interview the resulting speech and transcript offers a record of personal phraseology used by the participants – indicating what has an importance and significance for the participant (Roe 1951:133).

Each interview was analysed (a) ‘within case’ as a means for producing analytical categories from the reported experience of the individual participant, and (b) against the categories produced by other interviews / participants, and the theoretical literature. I made a practice of coding text ‘generously’, i.e. marking a large block of text, as other researchers had advised on the importance of seeing and understanding the context from which a particular extract had come.

Qualitative research interpretation is based on the researcher’s own skill and interpretation and there is always the danger this is biased in some way. To check that my own presuppositions had not unduly influenced the analysis I asked an external qualitative researcher to recode an interview independently – an acknowledged and standard practice within qualitative interview research. This person's results indicated



that the core themes which emerged from her analysis of the material were consistent with the core themes that emerged in the process of my own self interview and subsequent analysis. No new analytical categories for this study were identified. This independent assessment by an expert witness added an extra level of validity to this research project.

The reports from each analytical category were examined further and in greater detail in the process of writing-up result chapters and the project. Participants were considered individually. The analytical outcome for this research project was based on the patterns and trends accumulated across the participant group. Some researchers have expressed ethical concerns regarding analysis. For example, Chase (1996:50) expressed concern that the process of analysis of an individual case within a broader theoretical and conceptual structure removes a participant's story from its own uniqueness – and that the act of doing this may be difficult for the contributor of that narrative. In each case, I discussed this matter with the participants and confirmed that their individual data would be examined individually and as part of the patterns found in the whole group. Further, the containment of individual data within the patterns found in the whole study was one of the principal means of ensuring personal confidentiality. In doing this, however, Chase (1996:51) acknowledges that the individual's story is being handled within the researcher's agenda, interests, choices and concerns. Through the careful introduction, 'contracting' and conduct of the interviews, the researcher believes that this agenda, interest and concerns were acknowledged and accepted by participants to their satisfaction.

## **Verification of data**

Qualitative research seeks ‘value’ or ‘credibility’. ‘Reality’ is seen as comprising many sets of mental constructions. Therefore the qualitative researcher seeks to conduct the study in a way that findings will be found credible, to ensure he or she has represented those ‘realities’ adequately, and that they are “credible to the constructors of the multiple realities” (Lincoln and Guba 1985:295-6).

Seven different factors have been used (drawn from the verification framework recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Kvale (1996)):

*Prolonged Engagement:* I invested periods of time that allowed me to be alert to, and test for, misinformation, discrepancies or misunderstandings existing within the interview data, and to build trust between the interviewees and myself as researcher (Lincoln and Guba 1985:301-2 and Kvale 1996:243). Cohler (1982:207) and Atkinson (1998:60) advocate examining internal consistency within the biography / narrative as a means of testing for misinformation, discrepancies or inaccuracies. The stories should be consistent within themselves, and the narrative should have a sense of its own. Bar-On (1996:12) writes illustratively of how he could seek internal consistency and accuracy within his participants’ stories, and explore this when found to be inadequate.

*Persistent Observation:* This also reflects an investment of time sufficient to identify characteristics and elements that are most relevant to the questions being studied (ibid.p304). In a research context where some of the relevant issues are not known, sufficient time must be invested until a range of relevant characteristics emerge. The point at which they cease to recur in new interviews, or few additional elements appear, is indicative of the amount of effort needed to investigate a given context.

*Triangulation:* This practice relates to using multiple sources of information and methods in order to raise the possibility that the relevant research outcomes are being reached. While the researcher has focused on interviewing as the main data-gathering

tool, this has been supplemented by a review of a range of work outcomes from participants where possible and available. Additional material in the form of annual reports, case notes and articles - alongside my continuous journals - were also collated and analysed and, where appropriate. The vast amount of information resulting from this project will be retained (with the permission of each participant) for further use, if deemed appropriate. The nature of the research focus has resulted in the use of multiple theories to evaluate the research data.

*Peer Debriefing:* This involves communicating one's work to disinterested or independent peers. Atkinson (1998:61) describes this as persuasion - where the story appears "reasonable and convincing to others – possible and plausible that this event or experience could happen to someone else". It opens the researcher to searching questions, particularly in the areas of potential biases, meanings and interpretations. Additionally, it provides the opportunity to gain feedback on working hypotheses and potential next steps in research work (Lincoln and Guba 1985:308; Kvale 1996:246or7). I presented theoretical aspects of this work at two conferences: (the BACP Research Conference in May 2002 and the AUCC Conference in July 2002) and I have been invited to present at the IACT Seminar Groups in Ireland later this year. Both presentations were positively received and audience reaction indicated that its contents 'struck a chord' in the work they undertook. The primary feedback from these sessions included advice on further ways of analysing the research findings, and support for a hypothesis on how individuals choose work in their early twenties (these will be further described in Chapters 3 and 4).

*Member Checks:* of data, categories and interpretations (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 314; Kvale 1996:246or7). This is described as occurring informally and formally within the research. 'Informal' checks occur continuously during the interview when the interviewer summarises understanding or clarifies using further questions. This practice has been adopted within these research interviews. 'Formal' checks took place in sessions conducted subsequent to the research interviews.

Atkinson (1998:61) uses the term ‘corroboration’, when an interview is transcribed and given to the participant to confirm or support what was originally said. Interview transcripts have been given to each participant with an invitation to amend the information recorded. Bar-On (1996:16) and others, e.g. Chase (1996), debate the extent to which it is appropriate for a researcher to confirm his or her analytical understanding of an interview text and theoretical constructs produced from its analysis with participants. Confirming findings with participants represents a research style and methodology within feminist research approaches aimed at equalising ‘power’ between the researcher and the ‘researched’ participant. In line with Chase and Bar-On, the researcher decided not to communicate and negotiate that level and detail of understanding with participants. As is common with qualitative work, verification or validation has been built into the research process, rather than treating it as something to be examined at an end point (Kvale 1996:242).

External Validity refers to the extent to which the results of a study may be generalized to other contexts and/or populations. Qualitative researchers have redefined the extent to which findings may be ‘applicable’ or ‘transferable’ to other settings. In the case of this qualitative research I can only claim to know about the research or ‘sending’ context. The role, therefore, of the qualitative researcher is to provide a sufficiently detailed description of empirical evidence to allow another investigator to determine the scope for similarity of context or judgements (Lincoln and Guba 1985:297-8).

Reliability, in quantitative research, is defined as where two or more repetitions of a similar inquiry process, under similar conditions, will result in similar findings. Atkinson (1998:58) defines reliability as a position where the same answers will be reached wherever and whenever questioning is carried out. But he acknowledges that ‘life story’ interviews will often yield individual or unique categories of analysis with a complexity of meaning that would extend beyond that which could have been anticipated at the outset of the research. No two researchers will carry out and record an interview in a completely replicable manner. For this reason the interview needs to be acknowledged as a personal encounter which will reflect the quality of the exchange between interviewer and participant. Further, the personal narrative is not meant to be

seen as an exact record of all that has happened. The use of a biography implies a certain perspective or point of view – life stories are told through interpretative eyes. They give clues as to what a participant values, and how they construct personal meaning. The qualitative research equivalents to reliability are focused on consistency and dependability. In the context of this research the interviewer has introduced and conducted interviews consistently across all participants. Where experience has brought about shifts in question structure this has been carefully noted, and this new perspective has been followed up with earlier participants who might not have been asked a question in a particular manner. The conduct of the researcher as an interviewer is reviewed below in a section examining the place of the researcher. This will also include a description of a process used (advocated by Reason (1981)) to keep as many as possible of personal reactions out of the interview context, and to focus on the meanings being offered and constructed by participants.

Roe (1951:2) also acknowledged the potential subjectivity of the research data she obtained, and questions that could therefore be raised about reliability and validity. She described using criteria similar to those of Atkinson (1998) described above - internal consistency, honesty, and plausibility of these accounts to others. Lang (1996:157) acknowledges that there are limits that must be dealt with in adopting a phenomenological perspective in research. He recommends treating results reflexively. Reflexivity means questioning interpretations, and leaving scope for reinterpretations – and accepting that insights gained are impermanent.

### **The participant group**

All the participants group and myself are white, UK-based, and largely middle class in origin. This will place the research results in this cultural, social and ethnic context and in the influences of the time period (i.e. the early 2000s) in which this doctorate project is being conducted. Future research on these or related questions may therefore produce different results given changes and developments in the research context.

I personally knew six out of the ten participants. Wallace (1989) found this position advantageous as it provided a degree of understanding. Three participants were individuals not previously known to me but who had become known to me (during the research process) by networking at events i.e., seminars and conferences. Professional colleagues referred one individual to me.

Two of the participants (women) were chosen because of their experience and interest in research; I was the first, and the second was a co-researcher and trainee at the BCUC Counselling Service. The remaining eight people (four men and four women) were chosen because together they constituted a group of eminent, senior practitioners within the field of counselling within university settings. In this particular group there was an equal gender divide and this was specifically planned to guard against any kind of gender bias. Each one has had the personal and professional experience of either setting up and / or managing a university counselling service or counselling services. Our interviews together were an effective way of drawing extensively upon the personal, clinical, professional and managerial aspects of our lives. This process created a truly collaborative synthesis of ideas, views and themes.

In order to retain anonymity (in keeping with my assurances to the participants), no profile of any individual participant is included in this research. All of these people were trained and accredited in their professional capacities. However, the following is a list of how the participants were identified within each phase of this research and the code used when making reference to quotations in the results section.

Table 2.4: Participant identification

Phase	Interview	Participant	Code
Phase One	Self Interview	Myself (Researcher)	R
	Observational Interview	Participant (A)	Code C-PA
Phase Two	Consultative Interview 1 (female)	Participant One	Code C-P1
	Consultative Interview 2 (female)	Participant Two	Code C-P2
	Consultative Interview 3 (male)	Participant Three	Code C-P3
	Consultative Interview 4 (male)	Participant Four	Code C-P4
	Consultative Interview 5 (male)	Participant Five	Code C-P5
	Consultative Interview 6 (female)	Participant Six	Code C-P6
	Consultative Interview 7 (male)	Participant Seven	Code C-P7
	Consultative Interview 8 (female)	Participant Eight	Code C-P8
Phase Three	Final Observational Interview	Participant (B)	Code C-PB
(Participants A, and B interviewed me, while Participants 1-8 were interviewed by me)			

## Ethics

There are several ethical elements to consider in a study of this nature. First, the study has been conducted in accordance with the principles advocated by the British Psychological Society Code of Conduct for Research on Human Participants, as demonstrated below:

I have been alert to the possibility that this study (as in any study involving detailed reflection on past and present activities) has the potential to create unsettling experiences for participants. Banister *et al.* (1994:3) go further in suggesting that the act of interviewing will change the person and the community in which they operate.

My concern for participants was reflected in giving the time and attention to achieving a 'research contract' - the understanding and agreement with each participant on which they would join the research. This included: written invitation to join the research, including a briefing on the interview or questionnaire structure; planned time

boundaries for the discussions, and the expected number of visits involved; undertakings of confidentiality; the use of tape recordings; a commitment to share or send to them tape transcriptions and the option of withdrawal from the research at any time up to the time of 'writing up' of the project (see Appendix 8).

The 'contract' was restated and reviewed at the start of each meeting. These principles reflect the requirements of the British Psychological Society Code of Conduct for Research on Human Participants. Additionally, I monitored the unfolding of each interview for signs of its impact on participants. There are additional aspects of research ethics referred to in other literature, particularly more recent developments in the narrative study of lives. Roe (1953:53) explained that she was unexpectedly asked by one of her participants what would happen to the study data after completion. She had not anticipated that question and made clear that it required careful consideration, even to the point of what would happen to the interview and test data after her death. I explained to the participants in this study that: all data would be held confidentially; their identity would be concealed in any published study results and when quotations were used within the text; interview transcripts might be examined by other academics – but an over-riding priority would be the maintenance of participants' own privacy and security of identity; interviews were considered to be based on 'shared ownership' – the records, transcripts and tapes belonged to me, the researcher – the copyright of the words remained with the participant.

**Research data has been handled in the following way:**

- The researcher has retained all interview tapes.
- All interview transcripts have been retained in printed text and electronic form.
- All interview analysis has been retained in printed text reports and electronic form i.e. reports by analytical category or theme, in addition to summaries of coding used in individual interview transcripts.



- A significant number of interviews include personal and professionally confidential material. For that reason names were not included in transcripts where practical. (The flow and detail of speech did not always make this possible.)

The above data are only available from me (rather than included in published printed or archive) to ensure that any other academic who may need to gain access to it may consider appropriate steps for privacy in the use of this material.

### **The avoidance of harm to participants:**

The ethics associated with research based on narrative interviews has been further explored and challenged in Josselson (1996), with particular attention being paid to the manner in which research may affect participants. Bakan (1996:5) stresses that “the most significant truths about human beings inhere in the story of their lives. Yet they need protection for making their stories available to others.” He raises concern for potential violation of privacy, and mental, legal, social and financial hurt and harm (Bakan 1996:3). Additionally, Chase (1996:45) argues, “...narrative research demands that we pay special attention to participants’ vulnerability and analysts’ interpretive authority”. She takes this position because an extensive use of individuals’ stories must render these participants more open and vulnerable to personal exposure - in the telling of the story, and public exposure in its publication – than might be the case in other qualitative studies.

In this sample most participants’ data is given privacy by inclusion within broader patterns found within the overall group. For those individuals quoted to illustrate both their voice and the events they describe as representative of the group:

- Care has been taken to exclude any personally identifying statements.
- Where identification might be revealing, this has been stated in general terms, rather than naming a particular person and or institution.

- In addition, a gap of one year between commencing the first interviews and the presentation of the project also has the potential to mitigate this vulnerability due to the time elapsing between the interview and thesis presentation (Chase 1996:47).

Bar-On (1996:9) argues that research, particularly biographical interviewing, is a direct intervention in an individual's life, one that has unclear boundaries, in contrast with therapeutic or clinical work. My experience reflects that of Roe's (1953:3) - that these participants were giving willingly of their time, without any expected gain from their work. Roe reports, any good personal study may run the risk of upsetting or unsettling the interviewee. The researcher, from training and working experience in psychotherapy, is familiar with hearing the detail and texture of individual life stories and being able to contain them through appropriate responses. This research was, however, not clinical or therapeutic in its intent, and for this reason I was particularly alert and concerned with respect to responses from the participants which may have indicated that a clinical need was present when communicating a narrative.

Many participants communicated levels of detail of their lives that indicated significant effort had been placed on their part to understanding its pattern, contributing factors and meaning. Yet strong and often unresolved grief and emotion were expressed in some places over matters like a relationship with the senior management; or sometimes interpersonal relationship problems were discussed and it was important and explicitly indicated that no such particulars should be identified through the text. In any case where this occurred I offered the opportunity either to defer or stop the work. I also made a professional (although private and informal) psychotherapeutic assessment on whether or not the participant required other support beyond the boundaries of the research study. In no case did a participant ask to postpone or stop the research work, despite these experiences. The commonest reaction to being a participant was that the discussion gave them the opportunity to reconsider the meaning of parts of their lives and work, and as such it was something from which they themselves learnt in some way. This reaction was also found in Roe's work (1953:38).

## **The position of the researcher**

A research process can give rise to research data which can be seen as 'socially constructed' as a result of the interaction occurring between the participants and the researcher. It is always worth considering, then, the 'position of the researcher', both with reference to the definition of the problem to be studied and with regard to the way the researcher interacts with both the participants and the material to produce a particular type of sense.

Factors pertaining to the position of the researcher which may have influenced the research outcome are, firstly, that I adopted a curious, open, and respectful attitude to the 'stories' described by participants, and sought to communicate this to them, both in words, and in non-verbal body language. The purpose of this was to communicate respect for them as individuals, and their stories, and to help create an atmosphere in which these might be more fully shared. This was appropriate to the intention of the research, to explore experiences, and this could not have been achieved without the interaction and the social construct that emerged between the participants and me.

Secondly, is the possibility of 'projection' (i.e. the unconscious transfer of one's own impressions or feelings to an external object or persons) on my part and its potential influence on this research? The population chosen and the results achieved could have been affected by 'projection' on my part. Was I looking for, seeing and reporting some aspect of my own enthusiasms in this study? In running university counselling services there are going to be commonalities and differences. In this research I wanted to focus on the experiences of senior practitioners in similar positions to myself but who may have encountered different and similar experiences. I did not want to test specific, formal theories or assumptions. Experiences can give rise to biases and selective attention but in my self-process I achieved openness not only to my own experiences but also to those of others.

Wallace (1989:31) suggests that the interviewer have both a phenomenological and critical role. The phenomenological role involves seeking to ‘enter the mind’ of the participant to reconstruct the meaning of their experience from his or her point of view. The critical role then follows, which involves the interviewer ‘standing to one-side’ of the participant to evaluate the data received, and to explain and interpret them. The researcher used these two roles or stances in interviews and analysis throughout the project.

I have explained that I knew six participants professionally prior to this study. Along with Wallace (1989:31) I found that this position was advantageous as it provided an established degree of understanding that is not accessible to other researchers without this familiarity. Roe (1953:51) also explained that she had prior knowledge of a number of her participants. She did not see this as a factor to exclude them from the study – only to ensure that all those involved met the criteria for inclusion. Roe 1953:53) reported that readers of her work had observed that she was ‘emotionally involved’ with some of those who participated in her work. She went on to say: “this is what a psychologist says when he means that you like someone enough to feel strongly with him. He was right.” I was alert to the potential for this involvement from the earliest stages of this project. My aim was to be personal and respectful enough with the participants to prompt them into sharing their stories – so that they felt secure enough to risk the sharing of their stories in a confidential environment. Two interviews in particular led to a warmth or rapport being developed between the participants and myself – recognised by Subotnik and Arnold (1994) as a component of a study of this nature. Being a ‘human instrument’ of research, there were occasions on which the researcher expressed either surprise or was moved by what participants reported. As a general practice, however, the intent was to act as another person hearing the story in a respectful manner, and acting in a role where she prompted for further information and clarity.

In some instances the strength and intensity of participants’ stories and emotions in interview lead me as researcher to seek personal discussions with others (e.g. peer-group doctorate in psychotherapy research candidates) to explore and understand my

reactions to them. The feedback-interview phase of work proved emotionally and physically demanding given the intensity of returning to participants to confirm earlier material and explore developments subsequent to the original interview.

### **Biases and difficulties**

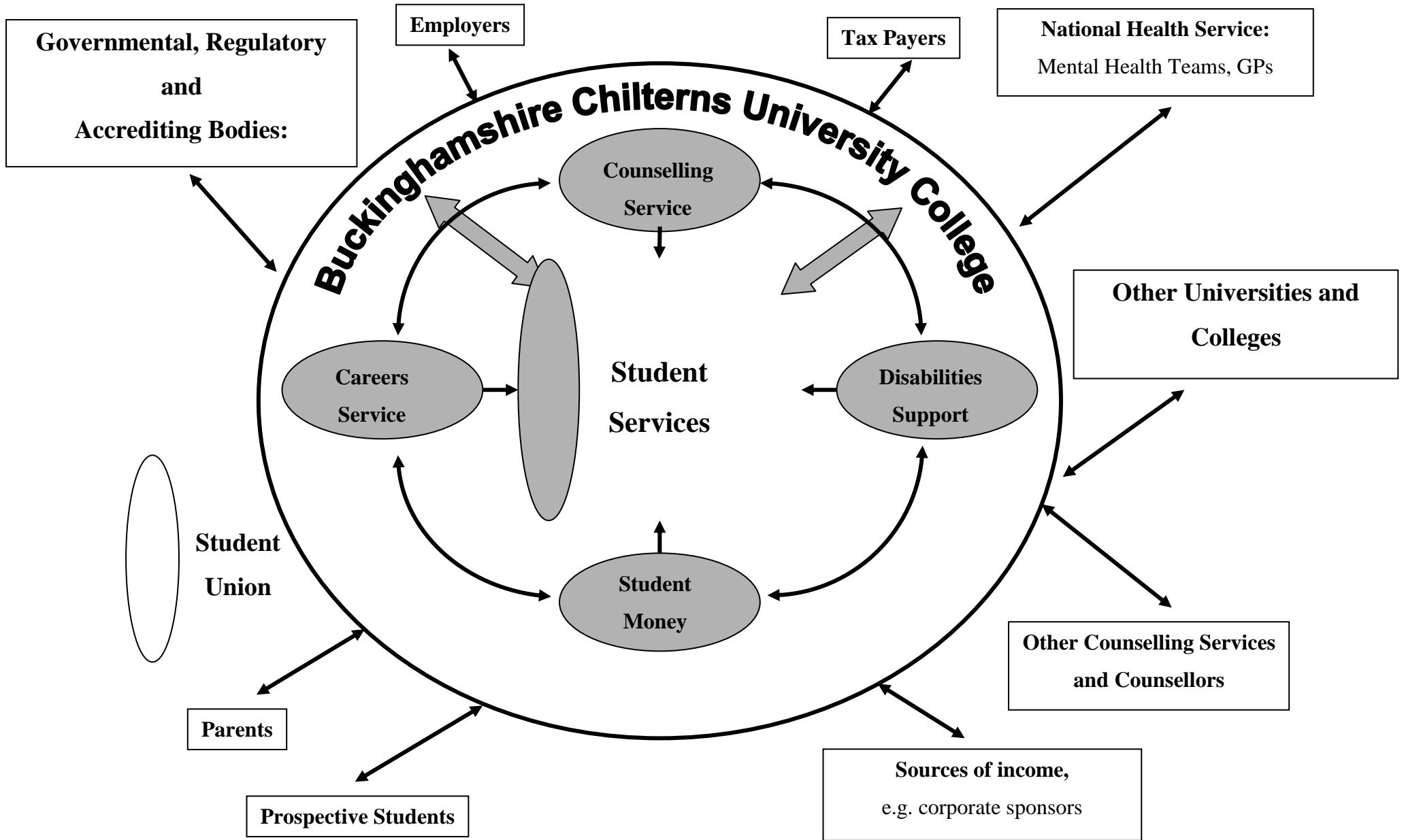
This project acknowledged from the onset the biases and difficulties of engaging in this kind of methodology, particularly in this case where there is a self-interview. A self-interview, by its very nature, would certainly have within it subjective biases. I considered that in order to counteract these biases, the ‘observational interview’ would be an interesting and innovative way of trying to ensure validity throughout the data collecting process. Because the observational interviewer received the transcripts of my initial self-interview and there was time to reflect on and analyse the data, such biases were identified. This method of securing rigour and reflexivity was seen in all phases of the inquiry, since the process effectively challenged me and the other participants throughout. In keeping with the philosophy of this heuristic method, I considered that this was an effective and sufficient means of controlling biases and subjectivity within the interviewing stage.

### **The views of the stakeholders**

In this research I have looked at the experiences of eleven people (including myself) who have set up and or managed a university counselling service. By carrying out the research in this way, this inquiry is focused on one single group of people that are specifically attached to university counselling services. This particular group of people carries, by definition, a bias towards wanting university counselling services to be received positively, since their jobs and professionalism depended upon it. However, even with this bias present, I considered that this project was still a valuable contribution to research knowledge. The direct views of university stakeholders, i.e. the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellors, the management of the BCUC, faculties and the

students themselves have not been directly researched and this could be said to limit the project. The decision to omit them was taken largely for practical reasons related to the time and resources available to this doctoral project. The articulated 'experience' of participants remains original research. Additionally, as will be seen in the research conclusions – the needs of the stakeholders and the management or delivery of them are strongly present in the outcome.

A diagram is included on the following page to illustrate some of the main internal and external stakeholders who could have an influence relationship, direct or indirect, with BCUC's counselling service (and who might also have an interest in the findings of this project).



# Chapter 3



## Interview data and results

The procedures for analysing qualitative data outlined by Moustakas (1990) on page 41 formed the basis for the procedure that was carried out in this project. Here follows a detailed description of what was done with the interview data and how the results were formulated.

1. Nearly fifteen hours of interviews and associated immediate notes were originally in the form of audiotapes, journals, reports and hand-written notes. These were transcribed into a printed paper-based manual and electronically filed versions so that the material could be accessed in at least two ways.
2. It took a considerable length of time to become familiar with the data preserved in the 80,000 words of transcribed material. I entered into the material in timeless immersion, listening to the audio tapes over and over again e.g. during long car journeys. I also listened to the audiotapes as I re-read the electronic and paper transcriptions for accuracy. (The material was also accessed through the search or find tool on the computer to identify certain areas of conversation in the interviews on the electronic files without having to read through the interview transcripts each time.) I became engrossed with the material and began to categorise specific sections of the data when particular topics emerged together. Through this process deeper meaning within the material was beginning to be more fully understood and absorbed.
3. The material was set aside for a while, so that energy for further analysis could be renewed. This period away from the material added a greater degree of clarity and perception when the analysis recommenced. Further study and review of the material was subsequently carried out. This was done by re-reading the notes and transcripts and by re-listening to the audiotapes of each interview. There were so many significant elements in the data that I could have used the assistance of

computer software such as Colin Eden's Cope software so to map each element electronically. But since I did not have the technical facilities and skills to use this approach, I analysed the data manually; also I wanted to remain influenced by the heuristic methodology.

4. I informally quantified the data. I did this by examining a frequency of occurrence of specific thematic elements, e.g. a category was given more attention if two or three of the interviewees discussed similar themes during the interviews. I constructed 'unique depictions' that represented the common qualities and themes that embraced the experience of all of the participants. Then another informal method of analysing the data was used. This occurred in the form of a natural scaling procedure; which was carried out to determine which data was significant enough to be included in the colour coding category which formed the basis of each core theme category. I constructed and applied this scale largely on the basis of my own experience and knowledge of the field. A further period of rest and incubation was necessary at this stage.
5. I then returned to the original interview audiotapes and transcriptions to check whether 'the unique depictions of the experience fitted with the audiotapes from which the transcribed data had been developed. These individual depictions (identified in different colour codes on the electronic files e.g. yellow identified student populations and comments regarding this category) were shared with each of the research participants for affirmation of its comprehensiveness and accuracy. Any suggested deletions and additions received from the participants were then carried out.
6. These natural selections of the unique depictions of each participant experience were gathered together into specific thematic categorisations and these themes formed the basis of the results. Each theme had many additional sub-issues which were also highlighted under each thematic categorisation. Categorisations were then drawn so that real meaning in the depictions were identified and illuminated.

7. Then I returned to the raw material derived from each participant's experience and the individual depictions derived from this raw material and I selected the most relevant 'quotes' and 'words' that represented common themes exhibited in the group. The aim of this stage was to ensure that the individual experience was represented in such a way that both the meanings being investigated and the individual person's experience emerge in an authentic manner.
  
8. The final creative synthesis was informed by the way in which I presented and handled the material. This stage was the most challenging and exhausting and it was essential that the reduced thematic categories were accurate, and imbued with meaning that could be understood easily and coherently. The final results emerged by a process of intermittent creative synthesis taking place at different stages of the analysis, since two routes of analysis took place (this is discussed further on in this chapter and also in Appendix 6).

Table 3.1 guides the reader through the interview data and results.

*Table 3.1: Overview of the research and analysis process.*

Research Data Collection	Analysis
	<p><b>Route One - Analysis</b>  <b>(Content Categorisation of themes, mainly related to the working life of the participants)</b></p>
<p><b>Phase One</b></p> <p><b>Self interview</b> (conducted alone)  <b>Observational Interview</b> (with a professional colleague)</p>	<p>Produced 4 core themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The university students.</li> <li>2. The head of the counselling service.</li> <li>3. The interface between universities and their counselling services.</li> <li>4. Managing university counselling services.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Phase Two</b></p> <p><b>8 Semi Structured Interviews</b>            (Producing key issues within each core theme, identified in detail in the body of text)</p>	<p>Analysed by the 4 core <u>plus</u> a further theme that emerged in the first interview</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. The future of university counselling services,</li> </ol>
<p><b>Phase Three</b></p> <p><b>Observational Interview</b> (conducted with a professional colleague)</p>	<p>Highlighted reflective processes in the analysis</p>
	<p><b>Route Two - Analysis</b>  <b>(To Extract Deeper Meaning)</b></p>
	<p>To bring forward further meaning making themes from the data. 5 themes emerged:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Heads of services appear to be considerably influenced by their initial professional training.</li> <li>2. The first stage of setting up or managing a university counselling service.</li> <li>3. Valued fully embedded university counselling services appear to be well resourced internally and have strong external links (e.g. to medical services).</li> <li>4. Attending to the needs of the wider student population.</li> <li>5. Gender considerations in relation to Managing a University Counselling Service</li> </ol>

Route One of the analysis was the first pass through the data and consisted of analysing the material so that thematic categorisations of the working lives of the participants

were identified in the context of the interviews and presented. Route Two was carried out some six months later; the material was re-analysed to extract deeper meaningful material from the interviews - where the tacit unconscious material was identified and made explicit so that further meaning and understanding of the material could be extracted and presented. The results from Route One are summarised in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 on pages 156-165; and the results of Route Two are summarised in table 3.5 on page 110

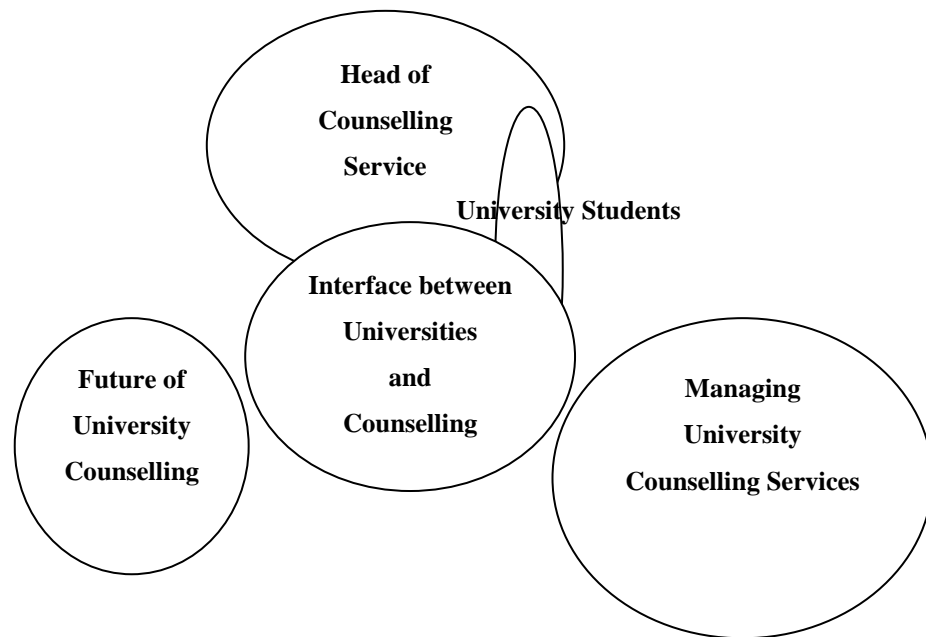
As described earlier in Chapter 3 the overall process of collecting the data consisted of three main phases: Phase One consisted of two interviews: the self-interview and the observational interview. Phase Two consisted of eight interviews with the participants from other university counselling services. Phase Three consists of another observational interview. Each part of the analysis is now presented in detail.

#### Summary of core themes in the analysis of Phase One and Phase Two

- The university students
- The head of the counselling service
- The interface between universities and their counselling services
- Managing a university counselling service
- The future of university counselling services

The first four themes were repeatedly mentioned in the two interviews of Phase One. They subsequently contributed to the thematic structure of the eight interviews carried out in Phase Two. A further core theme, The future of university counselling, emerged in the first interview of Phase Two and was incorporated as an additional focus in each subsequent interview. The following discussions in this chapter present each theme separately, but each of them has features which relate to and influence each other. (See Fig. 3.1overleaf).

Fig. 3.1 Route One Themes (mainly about the ‘working world’) are inter-related

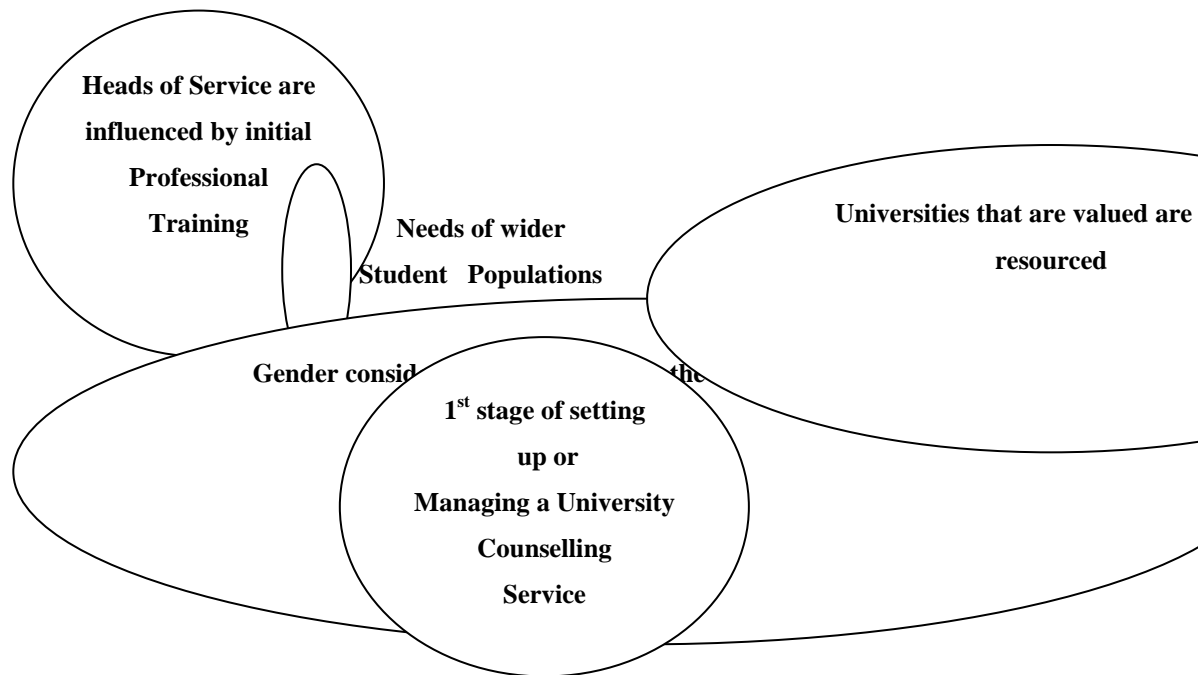


At the end of the first route of the analysis I re-analysed the material; Appendix 5 has a fuller account of my personal commentary regarding this process. The following box presents the themes which resulted from Route Two.

1. Heads of services appear to be considerably influenced by their initial professional training.
2. The first stage of setting up or managing a university counselling service.
3. Valued or fully embedded university counselling services appear to be well resourced internally and have strong external links (e.g. to medical services).
4. Attending to the needs of the wider student population.
5. Gender considerations in relation to managing a university counselling service

The following figure illustrates the inter-related aspects of the meaningful themes which have emerged from Route Two.

*Fig. 3.2 Route Two – (mainly reflecting deeper meanings) are inter-related*



## Route One of the analysis

The following tables present an overview of the analytical results across all three phases of the first route of the analysis. Narrative descriptions of each stage of the analysis are then presented.

*Table 3.2: Results from Route One - core themes from Phase One of the inquiry*

Phase One (Consisting of 2 interviews)	Initial themes emerged as	Subsequently named as
1. My Self Interview	The students. Counselling and the university. Managing the counselling service.	
2. Observational Interview (used to observe and check self interview)	The students.  The person in charge.  The university relationship.  Management of counselling service.  <i>Future issues</i> *.	University students.  Heads of counselling.  Interface between university and counselling service.  Managing a university counselling service.  <i>Future of university counselling services</i> *.

*\* This theme was retrospectively included following its identification in the first interview of Phase Two.*



*Table 3.3: Results from Route One - core themes from Phase Two of the inquiry*

Phase Two 8 participant interviews Core Themes	Key issues	Additional sub issues
The University Students (Core Theme 1)	<p>Students are important and valued.            Student populations are increasing.            More mature students.            Students' problems are complex.            Students are ready to work.            Students vary academically.            Students are at a peak of transitional change.            Students are grateful.            Students need counselling resources.</p>	<p>'Academic journey" in itself more valuable than counselling.            Stigma of counselling is less nowadays.            Suicidal students slip through the net.            Between 3-6% of the student population access Counselling Services.</p>
Heads of the University Counselling Service (Core Theme 2)	<p>Why these people came into counselling?            Why they chose to counsel students?            Why they work in a university?            What personal attributes they consider important for this work.</p>	<p>Propelled by experience.            Address inner curiosity.            Give something back.            Labour of love.            Drawn to work in universities.            Support students.            Love of learning.            Interested in how learning is affected.            Understands human misery.            Excellent communicators.            Enjoys working with students.            Organisationally aware.            Academically attained.            Ability to lead.            Understands manager's role.            Ability to empower others.            Hard working and resilient.            Autocratic stance sometimes.</p>
The Interface between Universities and their Counselling Services (Core Theme 3)	<p>Need to understand the university.            Show and demonstrate support of university's objectives.            Strong relationship with hierarchy / other faculties and departments.            Be politically astute.            Be aware of power points.            Be active, select academically bright people in counselling team.            Select friends within university.            Develop strong affiliations within / beyond university.            Avoid emotional high ground.</p>	<p>Select associates in and beyond the university.            Liase with other departments, Student Union, nightline.            Develop training courses / workshops / seminars for staff.            Be proactive.</p>

<p>Managing a University Counselling Service</p> <p>(Core Theme 4)</p>	<p>Benevolent co-operative model works best.</p> <p>Is managing counsellors and psychotherapists different?</p> <p>Is there a difference between Counselling and Psychotherapy?</p> <p>Is there a difference between attending to the 'worried well' rather than the 'badly wounded'?</p> <p>Having trainee placements involved in the service is valuable.</p> <p>Theoretical orientation of Head impacts service. Attending to waiting lists essential. Placement training facilities are important.</p> <p>Administrative support essential.</p> <p>Need to be active in national policy making i.e. BACP. Good means of support within the team. Providing evidence of providing good practice is important.</p>	<p>Further research is needed into counselling in university settings. Professional affiliations with BACP, AUCC and their sub- divisions. BACP new frame of reference not suitable for Counselling Services with regards to supervising trainees / staff. Intelligence gathering from the student body is necessary so that what is "going on" the students are made known to the counselling service.</p>
<p>Future of University Counselling Services</p> <p>(Core Theme 5)</p>	<p>Produce evidence of good practice.</p> <p>Increase liaison with Mental Health Teams.</p> <p>Demonstrate value for money.</p> <p>Needs assessment.</p> <p>Become more varied in resources.</p> <p>Be alert to service vulnerability.</p> <p>Caution is needed for future.</p> <p>Maintain good relationships with university.</p> <p>Increase maximises resources.</p> <p>Increase personal relations work.</p> <p>Come out of the counselling room.</p> <p>Become more varied in other resources.</p>	<p>Be alert to wider frame of life.</p> <p>Employ counsellor with background in psychiatric / mental health.</p>

*Table 3.4: Results from Route One - core themes from Phase three of the inquiry*

Phase 3	Key issues which emerged:
My Final Observational Interview	Observe process and creativity. Focus on creative synthesis. New emerging dimensions.

**Route One: Phase One - a self-interview and observational interview**

Phase One comprised a self-interview (conducted alone to elicit my own experiences), and a subsequent ‘observational’ interview with a professional colleague to further draw out the context and detail of my experiences. This observational interview was also carried out to confront my subjectivity and challenge my own thinking in an analytical and experiential way. Analysing the first two interviews in Phase One produced eight initial themes, subsequently refined into four core themes.

- The University Students
- The Head of the Counselling Service
- The Interface between Universities and their Counselling Services
- Managing a University Counselling Service

As explained previously, the fifth theme 'The Future of University Counselling Services' emerged in the first interview in Phase Two but turned out to be an appropriate theme for the Phase One data too.

The rest of this chapter is devoted to analytical and reflective commentary on the interviews and the meanings drawn from it. This section is designed to give some examples of typical content and subsequent reflections.

## **Phase One: first interview - self-interview**

I conducted this self-interview by reviewing my professional journals and then with a tape recorder, I recalled my own 'story' of what I had experienced in the preceding nine years of setting up and managing the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College Counselling Service.

*"I want who ever reads this... to enquire of me.... in a critical way, where have I had my blocks.... and.... what could I have done better?"*

This quotation indicates how, from the beginning, I really wanted to explore my own experience and to find ways in which I could become more alert to what I could do better and what I had overlooked and why. The use of brackets in the quotation below, is an indication of my personal thoughts at that moment, which I added when transcribing the recordings, drawing on my recollections of the self -interview:

*"In this self interview... I want to explain my own personal journey...also the journey of the service (I wonder how many students have gone through the service).... (I calculated the numbers out on a piece of paper and only then I realised that)... some 2500-3000 students have been seen over these 9 years".*

I experienced my first 'aha' moment in this first interview when I was greatly surprised just at *that moment* how many students had accessed the BCUC Counselling Service during the preceding years of the service. The sheer numbers of students startled me - to realise that approximately 3000 students had received counselling under my management affirmed the extent of my experience. At that point I realised more fully how extensive my knowledge had become (of working with students.) Also, I knew a considerable amount of this experience and understanding had become deeply embedded within me and it was this knowledge, experience and wisdom that I aimed to uncover in this inquiry.

During this self-interview, I remembered how I was challenged by my supervisor (at the time of setting up the service) as to how I was going to manage the increasing workload, considering the sheer number of students that had accessed the counselling service at that very early stage. I tried to remember what my supervisor had actually said at the time; it was something like:

*"... are you just going to stay in your room and get lost under all of this work..... or are you going to come out of the room and get involved with others ... like developing the service in relation to the whole university? "*

At first, I did not fully understand what '*coming out of the room*' meant. It was not until later that I fully realised that this question alone was one that changed how I handled and responded with respect to the *whole direction* of the counselling service by the process of working together with the university in a more robust and interactive way. Also, it was also not until I had articulated these thoughts that I realised I felt them at all. This enhanced awareness added further meaning to my work and what I expressed about it, and helped me to understand what drives me in this work.

*" I realise that my sheer enjoyment...of...and ... my ...love do I really love it.... Yeah I do love working with the students ... well most of the time anyway. "*

I had previously believed that my motivation was more practically informed but it was not until I spoke of it out loud that I truly connected to *sheer enjoyment* and the *love* I have for this work.

Through the process of reflecting on this self-interview, I noted how I had made repeated references to topics that later became the five core themes of the inquiry. I recall how the management of the service received a considerable amount of my attention and in particular I was reminded just how challenged I was by the

*" negative experiences I had when setting up and managing this service." "When I think back, God, I have had some really awful times too. The politics, the women bitching.....the competition between us all .....my frustrations.*

This included my early experiences of meeting with and working across all faculties and departments in the university. These were often fraught since working boundaries were easily blurred (for example, in how to maintain confidentiality issues with the student services department). I recalled also how few people (in the beginning) within the university organisation really understood what ‘counselling’ actually meant. Therefore, an early task involved setting up very clear boundaries both within organisational and therapeutic contexts e.g. length of counselling sessions, making referrals and working out which kind of therapeutic orientation would best suit this counselling service.

It was important for me to acknowledge feelings and concerns during the very early stages of the university counselling work:

*“I was moving into the academic world. What would it be like...I was a bit frightened I suppose... on some level, I had no idea about the whole organisation. I didn’t know about the academic world and its challenges... limitations.”*

I further challenged my own experience by considering:

*“I’m thinking about..... the whole field of counselling and psychotherapy. I wonder has the service been challenged by ...or maybe even restricted by the changes that have been taking place.”*

*“What was my model of service provision and growth?”*

These reflections had, already, led me to focus on university students themselves, the role and work of the head of service (and implicitly the model of service provision), and the relationship with the university organisation.

### **Phase One: the second interview - the observational interview**

This interview was conducted by a professional colleague who worked to the brief of seeking to access my professional experience in the primary areas of - for example "What did I do?"; "How did I do it?"; "Where did I get my motivation from?"; "When were the most or least important stages of the development of the service?" and "Why did I do what I did?" . The following narrative gives examples from a selection of these explorations.

I was intrigued by this interviewer's opening remark as it concentrated on how my experience of developing this counselling service could contribute to other counselling services - outside university settings:

*"I was really interested in your Service and how you set it up, .....you talked about your Service being focused particularly for university .....but you hoped that it would contribute to other counselling services like in setting up other counselling services. ...I am just thinking I wonder whether you thought there were any particular issues that universities counselling services need in particular .....and what do you think the differences would be?"*

It was always my intention in this doctorate project to contribute some valuable findings to the therapeutic world. However, this early observation by my interviewer made me focus on how developing a university counselling services is different from developing other kinds of counselling services.

The observational interview had themes in common with my self-interview and so contributed to the five core themes that emerged in this phase, for example, early in the interview my colleague questioned

*" Working with university students is important for you?"*

This reflected and probed the motivation for the theme ‘University Students’. Later, she asked:

*“So can we think about the setting up of the service, think about how you’ve done it? ...I was wondering how you supported yourself?”*

By this she probed and confirmed the theme of examining the role of the Head of the University Counselling Service. Later, she observed:

*“I was interested in when you talked about your philosophy. I hear how much your philosophy influences your practice, is it the same or is it different?”*

again, probing the influence of philosophy on my work as head of service.

Talking about the content and process of my work, she reflected:

*“It sounds like you are talking about looking at the organisation as a whole and looking at the history of the organisation.”*

*“It sounds like there was something around needing to distance yourself a little bit from just service provision.”*

In both comments, I was prompted to reflect on the theme of the University’s interface (relationship) with the Counselling Service – an interface that works on several levels.

In asking and observing further, my colleague remarked:

*“How have you managed all these aspects?”*

*“What I’m thinking about is..... that you must have somehow shown that it was valuable, ....valuable because you have evolved it so much.”*



*"It sounds like you are saying you modelled what a counsellor was and you reported back every year."*

On several occasions in this observational interview I was asked:

*"And exactly how did you do that?"*

However simple this question was, it was used frequently throughout the subsequent participant interviews as I experienced it as a powerful prompt for consideration and reflection. It allowed me to explore and understand deeper levels of reflexivity and meaning with each of the eight participants in Phase Two.

The observational interview was an interesting and thought provoking experience that deepened my understanding of my own professional experience. Although I was the 'subject' in this interview, both participants contributed to the process of eliciting awareness of significant issues. There was a creative interplay between us in the course of the interview that allowed new and deeper meaning to be recognised and expressed, and so constituted an early stage of 'analysis' as well as 'data collection'. This interview also added to the analytical categories of this research project (e.g. in sharpening the core theme names). I became even more curious to explore what kind of information would emerge under these themes when I interviewed the other people involved in this inquiry.

### **Route One: Phase Two - eight semi-structured interviews**

The eight participants interviewed in this phase were diverse in their professional backgrounds and in the services they sought to run; additionally some members of the group were known for what they have achieved in the national and international counselling and psychotherapeutic community. This extensive range of personal experience became evident throughout the interviews. The interviews were exploratory discussions where I tried to follow the approach I had experienced in my observational interview. This led to in-depth reflective comments being made throughout all of the

interviews. The interviews were educational, challenging and even disconcerting at times.

Core theme 1: university students

My own perspective or frame of reference as I entered into consideration of this theme in Phase Two interviews is illustrated by the following extract from my self-interview:

*“Students nowadays really are so different. They come from all walks of life... it's like the cycle and the journey for students is about... learning more.... growing up, becoming their own person .....finding a place in the world for themselves. .... My understanding of working with students is that in general most of them really appreciate the counselling service. I suppose in a way ...this strength of that general appreciation gives rise to this goodwill feeling I get this make me want to do it even better,... make it as good as I can.”*

This reflection highlighted the diversity of students encountered, as well as my perception that each was making their own personal 'journey'. An extract from my personal journal, recently recorded, also illustrates what I see and experience in this work:

*Working with young people is both challenging and stimulating and being placed in a position of trust is where we bear witness to their internal lives allowing us the often-humble experience of seeing a microcosm of life in magnification. Students nowadays are being placed under more and more pressure; academic, social, financial and family - not to mention the personal pressures they experience. Providing an effective, professional counselling service is essential so that the needs of student populations are met.*

Note: " (R) " will be used from this point as an abbreviation of 'Researcher' while other participants will be referred by the codes listed in Table 2.4 (page 63).

Discussions with participants brought out several other perspectives on the students themselves. First, was the value placed on and sense of the client population:

*(C-P6) "I think there's just a real feeling here that the students are important." "I think the students are very valued here."  
"The students were terrific." "They are challenging, they are bolshy."*

Widening student access was described in these interviews, as was a possibly surprising consequence – that widening access is changing the range of problems that students present in counselling:

*(C-P1) "But we have huge amounts of widening access..."  
"Students are much broader based and come with much more life baggage."*

Widening access had also changed the academic characteristics of students:

*(C-P6) "Academically, students now are very different than the traditional view of students." (C-P1) "Students who can sometimes barely write..."*

Several participants commented on the challenges facing the students, the experiences and priorities this might imply for counselling work in an academic setting:

*(C-P6) "Students come here ready to work, whether it's ready to work hard or ready to move on in their lives but they're ready to work in some way."*

*(C-P7) "To help students through the situations that they go through. It is such a... it's a stressful time because it's a transition time from... from adolescence into adulthood."*

*(C-P3) "The academic journey in itself can be more valuable than counselling itself."*

A general, although not universal view was that students would seek and enter counselling without a sense of any stigma being involved:

*(C-P5) "Nowadays stigma attached to counselling is less of an issue." "Many students will seek the help of counsellors"  
"Many students will seek counselling without, batting an eyelid to come."*

However, problems that must still be anticipated and addressed were reflected in the comments such as:

*(C-P6) "Suicidal students still slip through the net."*

The numbers of students becoming clients within the overall population was seen as:

*(C-P6) "Between 3-6% of students access counselling services."*

Several key issues emerged within the broader topic of university students. Those most commonly referred to, which were raised two or more times in the eight interviews in Phase Two, are listed below.

Summary of main key issues within core theme one:

- Students are important and valued.
- Student populations are increasing.
- There are more mature students.
- Students' problems are complex.
- Students are ready to work.
- Students vary academically.
- Students are at an intense period of transitional change.
- Students are grateful.
- Students need counselling resources.
- Academic journey in itself is seen as more valuable than counselling.
- Stigma of attending counselling is less nowadays.
- Suicidal students often slip through the net.
- Between 3-6% of the student population access Counselling Services

These key issues include the increasing diversity of student backgrounds, their stage in life development, their different levels of capability, and the range of problems they encounter. All these assertions influence universities and their counselling services

## Core theme 2: the head of the counselling service

Why did the participants come into counselling in the first place? A striking aspect of how these individuals entered counselling work was one that was mentioned regularly in the interviews. The journey into counselling work was indirect, it started in different occupations and involved a subsequent move. *"Being compelled by experience"* was a phrase used by participant (C-P5) that seemed to encapsulate some of the underlying energy of such a move. Comments made by participants reflect the individuality and diversity of reasons for entering counselling work:

*(C-P5) "It's really I think quite a complex question that, because I don't think there is just one answer to it. I think first and foremost it was really being compelled by experience, in other words I didn't set out as a young man to become a counsellor, to become a therapist. I actually set out to be an educator."*

*(C-P3) "Oh my god, it's like, what for me, why live? No, that sounds dramatic. That's a really interesting question. I think profoundly that I'm an extremely fortunate person in that I do what I believe in, that I am paid to do what I believe in, so for me discovering, as it were, counselling and then getting a job within counselling feels like I've absolutely come home. Yes, it's just the perfect job."*

*(C-P7) "Right from the beginning? Thinking back, what brought me into counselling was that my work background initially was in general medicine and during that training I did a psychiatric placement. I much preferred that to general nursing because of the time I could stand thinking about how people thought and how people came to be the way they were. So after that I went on to do psychiatric nursing, where I could focus more on.... people's minds and then my progression from there was very much wanting to work with people who were prepared to take responsibility for themselves."*

*(C-P8) "I had a boyfriend at university at the time who was interested in Freud, so I started reading psychology then."*

*(C-P4) "Yes, yes. That's a very simple one to answer; I mean it was just my personal experience of being a client."*

Yet having made the step into counselling as an occupation, why choose to work with students? Participants illustrated again the apparent diversity of motivation, from the pragmatics of a job and income, the challenge of a particular client group, working in an educational or learning environment and reflections of past personal experiences.

*(C-P1) "I don't think the answer is actually very noble, I think it's because it pays well, and partly... a bit crude... what I mean is... there are very few places where you can get full-time work, and that's actually a real consideration and I like having a job, better than I like having a collection of jobs, which is often the other option, if you're a counsellor."*

*(C-P1) "Because I wanted to work with more varied and probably more difficult students, because x university's students are pretty skilled really, whereas here students are much more broad-based and come with much more life baggage, and this I enjoy working with more. ... but we have huge amounts of widening access and students who can sometimes barely write, I have no idea how they do their course, you know."*

*(C-P5) "Oh yes, I'm sure it was. I mean strangely enough that's where, in many ways, the love of learning, and my own spiritual awakening kind of unites."*

*(C-P7) "Passion's probably a bit too strong, but I get great satisfaction from it, because it just combines what I like doing, because I like the clinical work, I like having an impact on an organisation, I like writing the odd article, I like teaching, I love teaching. So, as I said before, I like... I very much enjoy working with students. So I suppose it's approaching a passion, yes."*

*(C-P7)[Laughter] (R: laughing...enjoyable) Oh, it's very enjoyable (R: it's a very important role) Oh it's hugely important, I like the growing of the service, I like being, in a way the prime mover in that." "I'm a great believer in organic development..."*

*(C-P1) "There's a level of freedom and autonomy and interest in the work."*

*(C-P8) "I enjoy working with young people, the psychodynamic transition. I remember my own transition from school to university and how I changed in that time, and all the exploring that I did, I was a very quiet adolescent, teenager, but I did all my rebelling at university."*

*(R) Did you?*

*C-P8) "Yes rebelling against my parents, my internalised parental norms that I was just left to get on with."*

Given the growth in university counselling services, these interviews also represented an important opportunity to get a group of skilled practitioners to reflect on what eventually became another theme, the attributes needed by heads of Counselling Services to perform the role well. Again, the responses and answers given reflected a diversity that goes beyond the role of counselling to more organisational, communication and managerial skills.

*(C-P5) "Being visionaries..."*

*(C-P5) "Politically astute and active..."*

*(C-P2) "Organisationally aware..."*

*(C-P5) "Excellent communicators..."*

*(C-P6) "Enjoys working with students..."*

*(C-P5) "Academically attained..."*

*(C-P1) "Have an ability to lead with considered reflection..."*

*(C-P5) "Understanding manager's role.... taking an autocratic stance sometimes."*

*(R) "Ability to empower others..."*

*(R) "Hard workers and resilient..."*



Summary of main key issues within core theme two:

- Why these people came into counselling?
- Why counsel students?
- Why university?
- What personal attributes are deemed important?

Core theme 3: the interface between universities and their counselling services

An analysis of interview comments in this area brought out nine key issues, examples of some are included below.

There was a recognised need to focus on and be aware of the university organisational environment beyond the counselling service. This was illustrated in the following interview quotations:

*(C-P6) "So it's almost like keeping a very close eye on the waters, isn't it?"*

*(R) "I hear you saying it is about letting (the University) know you're intellectually aware of what's going on."*

The work involved in 'tailoring' a relationship with the university organisation:

*(C-P5) "It's about the sophistication of intervention, on political levels and hierarchical levels, this is crucial."*

*(R) "So it's making sure that there's a very positive relationship between the philosophies of the counselling service in line with the universities?"*

*(C-P5) "I'm not sure that it will be the same answers for every institution, but I can certainly identify some which would seem to me to be pretty important anyway. And the first one is that*

*the counselling service has to show and demonstrate that it really is interested in the objectives of the university.”*

*(C-P5) “Select friends in the university...”*

*(C-P2) “Liase with other departments i.e. Student Union, Night Line, etc...”*

Reflections on the people and roles encountered within the university structure and the challenges they present:

*(C-P7) “I mean it’s kind of they’re very hard-edged academics here, you know, they have all the prejudices about counselling that everybody else has.”*

*(C-P5) “Identify permanent posts and be particularly attentive to the nature of the people who occupy those.”; “So that you have to be extremely flexible when responding to individuals in these posts.”*

Summary of the main key issues within core theme three

- Need to understand the university.
- Show and demonstrate support of university’s objectives.
- Strong relationship with hierarchy and or other faculties and departments.
- Be politically astute.
- Be aware of power points.
- Be active, select academically bright people in counselling team.
- Select friends within university.

#### Core theme 4: managing a university counselling service

The interviews brought out a range of key issues which managers focused upon in the operation of their service.

The 'style' in which they needed to manage

*(C-P2) "I say it's kind of a benevolent relationship" ...*

*(C-P3) "I think clearly therapists do a very delicate job in term of the work they do and so forth. I think they are extraordinarily well qualified, deeply ethically professionally motivated, very widely read, very aware and very sensitive people ...coming up against real challenges and difficulties, and I think in some ways they also want to be nurtured... chose to work very responsibly but to a great extent deeply interpersonally with just one other person in the room... this is absolutely their choice. So whether in some ways there's an antithesis to organisational structure somehow embedded in that or both, a resistance and recognition of its need, I think there are high expectations of the leader, the manager."*

*(R) "Different models identified, i.e. democratic, autocratic, organic, and benevolent intelligence gathering..."*

The nature of the service offered, which related to being specific about what was offered to students and the 'name' of the service – 'counselling' on both of the occasions it was mentioned in the interviews:

*(C-P4) "I see a rigid distinction between counselling and psychotherapy... and so personally I try to build a model which if you like is counselling and not therapy, so I say 'yes I can accept that, but if you're badly wounded possibly we can't help you anyway, we'll certainly make a start to help you, make a diagnosis and work out that may well need therapy, which is something that we can't provide here."*

The challenges of resourcing counselling service. A participant acknowledged a dependence on counselling trainees in order to operate:

*(C-P8) “ By the end we had 13 or 14 students on placement with us...but we wouldn't have done it any other way”.*

*(C-P4) “BACP New Frame of Reference was not suitable for counselling services, i.e. supervising staff/ trainees...”*

The contribution of secretarial and administrative support was also commonly raised, illustrated by:

*(C-P5) “I think the secretaries or receptionists are absolute gold dust, and it's so important that they feel really valued.*

The number of students seeking counselling *and* the severity of their state were also a point of common focus.

*(C-P4) Here we see up to 8% of students. we .i.e. (that counselling service ) categorise them as the ‘worried well’ (rather than the ‘badly wounded’)*

A pressure created by the new BACP frame of reference separating ‘management’ from ‘supervision’ of a service was also raised. This separation, considered impractical by some, was creating practical, resourcing and financial difficulties for university counselling services.

A range of further comments was made, illustrating the focus and potential priorities of managers over and above the day-to-day management of the service – the need to research, maintain professional affiliations and seek proof of effectiveness:

*(C-P2) “I think they won't get away with services that are not linked with evidence based practice”*

*(R) “Research is needed...into university counselling services”*

(C-P3) “Professional affiliations are very important...”

#### Summary of key issues within core theme four

- Benevolent co-operative model works best.
- Is managing counsellors and psychotherapists different?
- Is there a difference between Counselling and Psychotherapy?
- Is there a difference between attending to the ‘worried well’ rather than the ‘badly wounded’?
- Evidence based practice is essential.
- Theoretical orientation of Head impacts service.
- Attending to waiting lists is essential.
- Placement training facilities are important.
- Administrative support is essential.

#### Core theme 5 - the future of university counselling services

The emergence of this core theme, in hindsight is understandable, given the extent of change being experienced in this working context. Again, the comments made by participants were diverse.

There was a widespread acknowledgement of a ‘maturity’ of service provision being achieved, reflected in the quotation below about ‘coming of age’:

*(C-P5) “I think counselling in universities has to recognise that it’s now coming of age. It’s grown up and I think it has to embrace as it were, that adult persona. I think it has to really be confident in exercising its own authority. I think it’s got to be confident about the intellectual underpinning. I think it therefore got to stand up and be counted in that way, and not to accept the role of being the submissive servant, and yet at the same time it has to, more than its ever done, really underline*

*and emphasise the heart, as against the head, but not in a conflictual way.”*

A number of participants reflected on the implications or consequences of ‘coming of age’. These involved aspects of perspective and behaviour which included accepting and even asserting the contribution made by Counselling Services, and being more ready to say ‘no’ to the university organisation as well as ‘yes’.

*(C-P5) “So I would like to see counselling services really accepting that they are truly worthwhile, and not only that but that their existence in universities and colleges may be at the very essence really, of the life of those institutions, and that the future is going to be dependant on us actually enabling persons to remain persons and not to degenerate into some kind of autonomy. And how do we do that? We talked about this kind of pressure that people are under; having to prove ourselves... my hope and aspiration is to be able to promote and maybe be significantly involved in keeping counselling in a grounded way, a more important way. That's what I believe, that's why I'm doing this.”*

*(C-P5) “Could it just remotely be that if counselling services can actually embrace adulthood, yes, they will be much more capable of saying no? They will actually be capable of saying, ‘this is ridiculous’. They will be capable of sending back this ludicrous form, saying, ‘this is a waste of my time’. They will be capable actually of engaging in conflict.”*

Yet possibly as an acknowledgement of the ‘coming of age’, there was the recognition of the need to ‘prove’ both effectiveness and value for money, and that this task had to be embedded into the operation and management of the counselling service. These skills and actions were seen as a reflection of the professionalism of ‘coming of age’:

*(C-P2) “Whilst I have no fear that this service is going to be cut, in fact we have had some periods of expansion, but now changes in government and financial procedures, we are almost back to where we started in terms of having to prove ourselves. Now structurally, not just in terms of academic predilection, but structurally we have to show we're value for money and my fear is that unless we can, as it were, get hold of that vocabulary and use it with integrity, then counselling will*

*not exist in the way that we thought. You know we've seen the first example this year of a university counselling service being cut completely, and although historically every now and again that's happened, but usually it is re-instated after a while. I think we do have to be very, very careful about what we're saying and what we're doing, but unless society changes I can't imagine that counselling will be struck off, as it were from the university."*

*(C-P2) "I think they won't get away with services that are not linked with evidence-based practice. And fortunately for us, like I said at the beginning, evidence is now coming from a variety of sources and not just one particularly well-researched theoretical model, so you know, it gives us more flexibility."*

The following quotation from a university counselling service annual report from 1974 is included because it was produced and discussed at the interview with (C-P5) and illustrates (almost 30 years later) what is still to be aimed for in managing a university counselling service, which is the need to look beyond the remedial role of counselling and the aim of improving the mental health of the community as a whole. Despite 'coming of age', learning and perspectives from the past still powerfully inform the 'present' in this work:

*"The fatal trap for a new counselling service is to become fixed in a remedial role with its personnel engaged almost exclusively in intensive counselling with highly disturbed and anxious students. It is all too easy for this to happen (there is seldom a lack of clients who might conceivably benefit from such attention) and in some ways it is a tempting proposition for those counsellors who cherish the label of 'therapist'. I am convinced, however, that such a model is totally inappropriate for a campus university in the 1970s. A counselling service must, of course, be equipped to deal with crises and with the long-term client but this should not be to the detriment of its educational role as a focus for activities aimed at serving the needs of the 'normal' student and improving the mental health of the community as a whole. Counselling, in short, is for everyone and counsellors are 'educators first and 'therapists' second."*

As with the other themes, reflections on the future of the counselling services are diverse in content. There is a clear pattern of views on proving service value and

effectiveness. Additionally there are interesting and potentially new trends (of being more assertive) as a result of the service of ‘counselling coming of age’ in this context - while at the same time being vulnerable to being out funded.

#### Summary of key issues within core theme five

- Produce evidence of good practice.
- Increase liaison with mental health teams.
- Demonstrate value for money.
- Pay more attention to the needs of the student at the time of assessment
- Be alert to service vulnerability.
- Caution is needed for future.
- Maintain good relationships with the university.
- Come out of the counselling room.
- Increase personal relations work.
- Increase / maximise resources.
- Be alert to increasing the level of resources within the counselling team

These interviews and the subsequent thematic analysis had given me a deeper familiarity with the work counsellors undertake and the experiences of it, and an expanded language or vocabulary I could use in my professional life.

#### **Route One: Phase Three - a further observational interview**

Phase Three comprised a further ‘observational interview’ conducted with a counselling professional on university premises. The purpose was for this individual to support me in reflecting on the experience of Phase Two's eight interviews and to focus both on my learning and the data analysis. It was conducted in a similar manner to the original observational interview, this time encouraging me to probe what I had learnt, how I had learnt this, why this was important to me and how it had affected me. The following quotations illustrate the effectiveness of inviting an observational interviewer to help in this way, and to help me from being over-immersed in the process and the data. These



quotations reflect a range of ways in which material and ‘meaning’ was questioned, how the data was explored, and how I worked to maintain a focus on the project:

*(R) “Keep focused on my own inquiry...”*

*(C-PC) “This is really creative stuff...”*

*(C-PC) “You didn’t say this then? Is this the creative synthesis?”*

*(R) “I want to focus on my original inquiry in the discussions.”*

This process resulted in me becoming clearer about what I wanted to include in this stage. As well as the interview itself, this stage encompassed analysing, drawing the data into a form from which conclusions could be considered. The key issues of this interview are summarised in the following table:

Summary of key issues within Phase Three

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observe the process and creativity</li><li>• Focus on the creative synthesis</li><li>• New emerging dimensions to consider</li></ul> |
|--|

Further reflections on the initial analysis achieved on all three Phases of the project prompted me to consider what else existed within the data but which was not articulated via the five core themes identified early on. The results of this additional analysis are contained in the following section.

## Route Two of the analysis

As indicated previously, the first route of the analysis was based on core themes, which emerged in Phase One, Two and Three of the inquiry. These core themes tended to reflect the daily working life or activity of the participants and were presented as themes and key issues and additional sub issues. After this was stage was completed, I re-analysed the data; I 'stepped back' so to identify further thematic categories that were present. This process is fully described in Appendix 6, and to summarise here, during this part of the analysis something 'else' was being processed. It was not only the analysis of the contribution and content from each interview that was taking place. I concentrated on the 'shared experience' or the 'aha' moments (both of the participants and my own) which took place in the interviews. This process also happened through the analysis of the *core themes* from Phase One and Two, but in this second route my 'experience' of analysing was deeper in that I became even more fully immersed in the process; knowing the material very well allowed this to happen. I was strongly alert to my own recollections together with the 'experience' of the participants during our shared moments in the interviews. During these moments, we actively demonstrated the heuristic process-taking place between us – the moments of deeper understanding in the interview. These analysed moments were then identified. The level of analysis that took place in the second route could have been unduly exhaustive. So, I restricted this analysis to the five main categories listed below. These seemed to warrant deeper definition and expression since they were the themes which came through most prominently during the re-analysis in Route Two.

1. Heads of services appear to be considerably influenced by their initial professional training.
2. The first stage of setting up or managing a university counselling service.
3. Valued and fully embedded university counselling services appear to be well resourced internally and have strong external links (e.g. to medical services).
4. Attending to the needs of the wider student population.
5. Gender considerations in relation to managing a University Counselling Service

The analyses of 1-4 of these themes reflect both cognitive and emotional elements of our experiences and contain deeper understanding of some of the core theme categories which arose out of Route One. Theme 5 reflects a further category and issues beyond the core themes identified in Route One. Table 3.5 contains a summary of the results and key issues of route two

A diagram is included on page 153 to assist the reader in understanding how:

(a) Route One and Route Two of the analysis has some overlapping themes and (b) how these themes from the content categorisations of Route One together with the deeper meaningful themes of tacit knowledge from Route Two informed the conclusions.

Table 3.5 Summary of the themes and key issues from Route Two

### Summary of the themes and key issues

1. Heads of Service Appear to be considerably influenced by their initial professional training.

- Heads of Service were considerably influenced in motivation and approach by their early professional training (i.e. teaching, nursing, and management.)
- This influence showed in how setting up or service management was perceived.

2. The first stage of setting up or managing a university counselling service.

- The initial stage of setting up the counselling service was challenging and exhausting for most participants
- The nature of difficulties experienced was very individual and personal.
- Prior training or education in management was a source of significant support.

3. Valued and fully embedded university counselling services appear to be well resourced internally and have strong links (e.g. to medical services).

- Mainly traditional universities are very well resourced internally and externally (i.e. intrinsically belonging to the core of the university and being well supported by external medical services).
- These traditional universities have well-established onward referral procedures: these led to a greater sense of security for the service and in turn the counsellors in the service could attend to other less demanding requests on the service.
- Creating cultural awareness and support networks within the counselling service.

4. Attending to needs of the wider student population

- Several avenues of support were identified to help all kinds of students (i.e. welfare groups, intelligence gathering, student publications etc)
- Identifying categories of students called the 'worried well' versus the 'badly wounded'
- Assessing the needs of the 'worried well' versus the 'badly wounded'

5. Gender issues in relation to managing a university counselling service

- Female participants tend to experience more difficulties accessing senior positions in the institutions
- Gender consideration in relation to the hierarchy of the university.
- Male head of service appear to use more confrontational or challenging interventions with the male members of the Hierarchy.
- Male and female heads of service demonstrated they fostered support for themselves in this role in very different ways i.e. men spoke about getting support from their wives and partners and women spoke of getting support from professional networking and contact with fellow colleagues.

## **1. Heads of services appear to be considerably influenced by their initial professional training**

Heads of Services appeared to be considerably influenced in their attitude by their initial professional training or academic achievements. This attitude appeared to have a considerable influence on how the task service management and development was perceived. All but two of the participants clearly described their first professional post and how they seemingly had unintentionally ended up in the counselling profession. These recollections were presented in the interview as occasions of deep reflection - almost as though something deeply known had been accessed in *that moment*.

Out of eleven participants (including myself), four people were initially engaged in teaching posts, while the remainder (bar two) had been trained in the nursing profession. Almost all participants described how they seemed to have ‘stumbled into’ this profession, as expressed by participant (C-P5). None of the participants interviewed set out initially in his or her professional journey to become a counsellor or psychotherapist. This may be a common factor in this profession because this notion was implied in several of the interviews in this project. But what is interesting is that those who had been trained in an academic field or had a teaching or lecturing background spoke of the development of the service in terms of a primary motivation of being driven by intellectual desires, or a search for knowledge, or a desire to teach within the counselling profession. Participant (C-P5) expressed this:

*“I’ve always had a great thirst for knowledge of all kinds, and the thought of being a counsellor within a university setting was immensely appealing.”*

Participant (C-P1) also said emphatically:

*“Other things have happened since (setting up the service) but it’s certainly the excitement of education, the excitement of knowledge that was strongly present in doing this job.”*

In contrast, the participants (C-P6) who had been trained in medical settings observed how their experience had led them to want to move into therapeutic training:

*“What brought me into student counselling was... my work was made up of several different elements... working in a mental health resource centre, having a private counselling practice, but also doing a session at a health centre which primarily served a large university. And I enjoyed that work very much, particularly because it involved working with bright young people who have all their lives before them, and I really enjoyed... being there at a pivotal time.”*

All these participants went on to demonstrate that their first professional experience had a strong influence in shaping their view of the counselling service. This was seen, for example, by those who trained in nursing first, who would naturally resort to medical models when evaluating a situation in the counselling service, whilst those who were more academically trained were more inclined to take into account an 'academic' indicator of the situation. Of course, these people are very sophisticated in their level of skills and competency and could perceive and evaluate service developments and happenings in many ways. However, there seemed to be an awareness coming to the fore in the interviews that pertained to a somewhat stronger influence being present in each participant's experience than they had first realised. This is perhaps also reflected in the first stage of setting up and managing a university counselling service

One participant, who had previously trained in a business organisation, had a different frame of reference in setting up the service and it seems, as a result, was one person who, unlike the others, had not experienced it as stressful or immensely challenging. To conclude, it seems that the initial training or profession first experienced by the participants embeds a very strong frame of reference that can consciously or otherwise influence future professional endeavours. It may always have a lasting impression on that person's professional life that might need to be checked from time to time.

What does all this imply? Is it that it is hard for us to take on a new frame of reference when setting out in a new training development or taking on a new job? I would argue

that this is not the case, but what seems to happen is that there is a very strong presence of experiences imparted from one's first formal training and that unless it is carefully monitored this could bias the direction of service developments. This is not to say that these underlying attitudes are bad, or indeed good, but it may be that we need to keep challenging our frames of reference when doing this task.

## **2. The first stage of setting up or managing a university counselling service**

A theme that came through the eight interviews in Phase Two was how challenging it was at the initial stage of setting up the counselling service. These challenges appeared irrespective of whether the participants had set up the service completely from the beginning or whether they had taken over the service development from somebody else. This theme raises several questions, for example, "what difference, if any, would working through a very difficult initial stage have on the subsequent process of setting up and or managing a university counselling service?"

Participants spoke about this initial stage in a very personal way. One of the participants in particular (C-P5) described it as "a deeply painful experience".

In another interview a similar reaction appeared to have resulted from external expectations placed upon the counsellor. I enquired in that interview.

*(R) "So the first stage was...horrendous?"*

*(C-P7) "Absolutely. But primarily because people wanted me to do what my predecessor had done... which was to... (long pause) maybe support people... (reflective consideration) but not, not counselling in the sense that we know it, not necessarily delving... into their experience."*

Other participants expressed some of the external pressures they too had encountered:

*(C-P3) "You see, there'd been a fierce resistance to having a counselling service in this university."*

*(C-P6) "I was trying to produce a counselling service with management that wanted no counselling service. I mean, it felt like survival, because I felt very undermined by my manager at the time."*

As is seen from these quotations, there seems a commonality of pressures experienced both from an organisational perspective and also from personal pressures and expectations. What was really interesting for me as I interviewed these people was how much each person had shared these difficult moments in a very personal way; and in the process had been reminded just how challenging the initial stage was for them.

More than one participant mentioned the advantages of working with a certain degree of 'autonomy' and of not having someone *'breathing down your neck'*. However the term 'autonomy' was also used in less positive ways. One participant, (C-P8) went on to describe the process.

*"We were given autonomy, but there was also a sense of 'get on with it, take care of these problem students, don't bother us'. I felt that we were like the, the dumping ground for problem students but we were also, we... there was also something about holding the integrity of the institute. That's the word, 'integrity of the institute'."*

Another participant (C-P1) explained that they had been given autonomy in how the counselling service had been set up in one of the traditional well-established universities. This participant spoke of the support and recognition that the counselling service initially received from the university. Even though this person had previous knowledge and experience of setting up a counselling service in another setting, their experience with the challenge of setting up this university counselling service was, as participant (C-P1) explained,

*"Extraordinarily different. I really thought I knew how to run a counselling service. I came here with utmost confidence that I knew what you had to do in order to run a counselling*



*service, having done it before ... but I have never worked so hard in my life."*

This last comment seems to indicate that prior experience does not always prepare individuals for the difficulties they will face in the setting up and the managerial post that lay ahead in the process. The real 'aha' moment came when this person realised just how hard she really worked in this job and she went on to say just how exhausting the whole process can be at times.

Exhaustion and tiredness were spoken of frequently throughout the interviews. This perhaps related to the fact that all the interviews were carried out at the end of the year and at a time when the Christmas period was very close (i.e. this time of year is particularly tiring as the first semester presents many challenges to the university students and thus to the counselling services.)

Contrary to the difficulties identified by most participants in setting up and managing such counselling services, one person took a very different perspective on the whole matter. The challenge was seen more in an organisationally oriented way. The difference seemed to be about being in a very prestigious position in that university; that the counselling service was wanted, well respected and well funded and this participant saw the job of taking over, where someone else had left, *as a solely managerial task.*

*"One thing that struck me is it's not been that hard here for me."*

Participant (C-P4) said openly in the interview:

*"They're very hard-edged academics here, you know. They have all the prejudices about counselling that everybody else has...the students are very valued here...they are very precious. So even though, probably the vast majority of people say that they think counselling is a form of archaic mumbo-jumbo that the world would be better off without, I think there's a feeling that anything that would help a student or might save a student's life, is invaluable."*

I considered this remark at length and was not surprised to hear this participant conclude:

*“So I did not have to fight for the service here.”*

This raises several questions: one person out of the eleven (including myself) had experienced a very clear and non-pressurised initial stage. All the rest had experienced something very different. Was this a result of this individual's response to the task at hand? If so, how could others learn from this person's experience? My perception was that this person was calling upon different sources of tacit and explicit knowledge and that this was to do with having a 'business' related attitude and that this person had also achieved a Masters Degree in Business Management. I believed this person was employing a completely different frame of reference, which was not primarily to do with counselling or therapy but was also to do with skills and knowledge associated with managing businesses and organisations applied to developing and managing a counselling service in a university setting. This was seen, for example, by the ways in which the task was first addressed, as this participant said:

*“Looking specifically at the expectations of the university in providing such a service and I spent a lot of time... reading the subtext, trying to, I mean a lot of what I was taught at my Masters there was... how you learn what the organisational culture is and where it might be shown, (this university) really wanted us to have a dialogue with the students.”*

This raises questions about what kinds of effect, if any, this kind of managerial-oriented attitude would have on the therapeutic nature of developing such services. All of these statements indicate that the majority of participants experienced significant personal and professional challenges and pressure in setting up their services. This challenge and pressure was absent for the participant who had prior business experience and organisational training. Was this person exceptional? Or would organisational and management training have removed or reduced the challenge and pressure for others?

However what was interesting in this interview was this person did not explain his thoughts in these previous quotes (seen above) as deeply moving material but he did allude to how his previous training '*had profound influence*' on his work; and just *how* profound it was seemed to register that *bit more* in that moment in the interview. The following two emergent themes reflected further needs of managing a university counselling service.

### **3. Valued and fully embedded university counselling services appear to be well resourced internally and have strong external links (e.g. to medical services).**

A possible limitation of the inquiry is that the majority of the people interviewed in Phase Two were representatives of the 'Traditional University' status. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4. However, what emerged out of this inquiry was the theme that universities with highly valued and fully-embedded counselling services (intrinsically belonging to the core of the university body) appear to be well resourced internally and they tend to work alongside very supportive networks externally (e.g. medical services). My inquiries on analysing these quotations was how did these participants set-up and manage such services so that they became better resourced internally and externally?

These traditional universities have well-established onward referral procedures: these led to a greater sense of security for the service and in turn the counsellors in the service could attend to other less demanding requests on the service.

One participant spoke about the extent of external support available:

*(C-P4): "We work very closely with the Health Centre which is on campus. They have a psychiatrist and clinical psychologist who come in every week; there's an eating disorders clinic at the local hospital. So if somebody came and it was felt that person needed either long term psychotherapy, we would introduce them to the psychiatrist, he would make a reference for them into the NHS system".*

Other participants echoed these kinds of observations in that there were several quotations to support such links with external services, etc. What appeared to come out of the experience beneath these quotations was a deeper sense of security embedded in the counselling service for dealing with onward referrals and the knowledge that other services and networks were there to be called upon. This aspect, therefore, led to a greater sense of containment with the services and so addressing other less demanding but equally important requests on service resources are important focuses of such counselling services.

The idea of creating cultural awareness within a university was identified very clearly by one participant (C-P5). What is meant by this phrase is that it identifies a process where by the university counselling service deliberately sets out to educate and raise awareness within aspects of the university staffing community so that there is a supportive network in the university that understands what counselling is; and how best students can be served, beyond that of the counselling service itself.

Two interesting service expansions were developed by another participant to enhance and support service resources from internally. Participant (C-P5) described the first expansion:

*“So one of the first things that I did when we started the counselling service was to create, as it were a society called the associates of the counselling... to become an associate of the counselling service you had to undertake human relations training programme under the auspices of the counselling service and that was open to any member of the university, whether it was a porter or the vice chancellor, or a student or whatever, and anybody who wanted to do the associate program applied to do it. They were interviewed, and if it was seen that they had the right kind of disposition, the right kind of personality, they undertook a training in human relations... we ran that for over 20 years”*

Talking further about this programme it was explained:

*“The training lasted 7 weeks. It was one of the brightest things I think that we ever did really. Because what it meant was that very quickly we had, as it were, our friends, people who had gone through the associates programme, who gained from it and enjoyed it, but they were also Doctor so-and-so down in biology, or Miss Somebody in the English department, or, even the head porter.”*

The second expansion of the counselling service was an in-house training of counsellors that ensured a further supply of additional counsellors that would meet students’ needs. This participant (C-P5) spoke about this with much excitement and passion:

*“We decided that the thing to do was to utilise the great experiences that we had in the counselling service and establish an academic department called The Centre for Counselling Standards and that we would start training counsellors (ourselves) and that our counsellors in training would then actually become part of the counselling staff of that service. So every November now the counselling service gets 20 new members of staff.”*

In describing how this training worked this participant concluded very positively:

*“By and large (it) works magnificently, and the university, of course, thinks it’s an absolute wow, because all those counsellors in training are actually paying the university for the privilege of being there, and the university is getting all this free counselling.”*

From analysis of this theme it appears that well resourced, highly valued and fully embedded university counselling services were more resourced internally and had fostered better links externally. Some people had developed creative ways of dealing with the increasing needs of students and many of the participants talked about taking on trainee counsellors to internally support the service. In the case mentioned above, several counsellors trained in-house were actively involved in supporting counselling services to deliver a free service not only to the students but also to the university personnel at large. This certainly offers incentives to many - the university itself, the

students, the trainee counsellors themselves - but what questions does it raise about appropriate salary and payments made to counsellors and what is this doing to the long term development of this profession?

The theme of developing external supportive networks and appropriate onward referrals was an aspect that many of the participants indicated in the interviews. But, as mentioned before, what this inquiry lacks was investigation into 'younger universities' or those striving for university status, as is my case at the BCUC. My observation is that many such university counselling services struggle at the point of making appropriate onward referrals as they try to attend to the students who are 'badly wounded' (a phrase that is explained in the next theme, as it describes students with long-term mental health care needs). Little recognition of the demands placed upon such counsellors means that many work in isolation, and developing external networks, alongside other external liaisons is beyond the core task of providing counselling in-house. This aspect, alongside the fact that many external services are already dealing with heavy client loads, that specialist care is limited and that services are in constant demand, suggests that emergencies may receive little support unless strong onward referral supports are in place. Dealing with those students described as the 'badly wounded' is fast becoming a more prominent feature of university counselling services since widening access seems to be an integral part of university places. This serious matter raises many further thoughts about what might need to be done will be addressed in Chapter 5.

#### **4. Attending to the needs of the wider student population**

Attending to the needs of the student population received much consideration and in-depth discussion within the interviews. The majority of participants referred to the growing complexities of student life and, therefore, ways in which counselling services are dealing with these challenges was an important focus throughout the inquiry.

The discussion suggested there being 'a number of layers' to address regarding this matter. Participant (C-P1) then continued:

*"For instance the intelligence gathering that one does as a manager... by going out and about and listening to students and going to student body meetings... we have close liaisons with the Student Union... we have contact with Night Line and academic supervision if they want it... supervision to the Student's Union, Vice-President Welfare and the Vice-President for Women, if they want it... it's a good thing... all the colleges have their own welfare groups."*

It was then described how these welfare groups were trained and supported by the counselling service. (C-P1) continued that in support of these welfare groups:

*"We have this training programme which goes out to 120 students a year because they have not only been trained but are under supervision... and they come back with endless amounts of intelligence about the world we live in, on what the students are thinking, what's affecting them in their colleges... you know what are their preoccupations about what's going on out there."*

Throughout this interview (C-P1) described how the amount of intelligence gathering was also supported by an additional scheme which was described as:

*"The Liaison Scheme... whereby we offer a named counsellor... who would make particular contact with a faculty and get to know the staff there. The staff gets to know that person (the counsellor), and if they want to ring up (the counselling service) there is contact (already established). It works... I mean in some places it works better than others."*

This participant added other means of finding out about students:

*"And of course there's a number of student magazines, student publications that again clues you in to what they're thinking and you can't escape, you see them all the time, they're there. So that's the kind of more general stuff, but the biggest source of information is what they (both students and staff who are involved in the intelligence gathering) bring in here. So, in listening to what the staff are saying about how the students are, what they're doing and what they are saying and the kind*

*of problems they are bringing, that tells you what you need to be thinking about.”*

In relation to these factors further questions come to the fore. For instance how do other university counselling services seek out this information about the needs of students? Other participants referred to the importance of attending to the needs of the greater populations of students, but as one participant (C-P6) explained, this task was actually surprisingly involved:

*“To suddenly realise there were other elements to this job, in terms of holding the well-being of students and staff... and to consider how to offer mental well-being, mental health, to mass education, not just the 80 or so clients I could get through in a year, or however many... a hundred or whatever it was... but it was a very tiny proportion of the mass of students, and I started thinking what is the way to support all the students here, not just the 80 or 100 that I see individually.”*

Through this we can see here that the role of university counselling services seeks to really support the entire institution as a whole, but how is this achieved and maintained?

Attending to the needs of the wider student population involved a distinct and different concern described by participant (C-P4). This was because the service delivery in (C-p4)'s situation was aimed at a different category of students. Categories called the 'worried well' (those healthy students currently in need of any personal, social or psychological help) were seen internally (i.e. within the structures of the educational institution) by counsellors, and those students who were referred to as the 'badly wounded' (those needing in-depth therapeutic work, suffering from mental ill health) were attended to externally (i.e. by NHS or other services outside the university). The following extract from this interview with participant (C-P4) explains it further.

*(R) “So you didn't have a counselling service here when you were (a student) here? The reply was: “No.” I continued: “And that's really given you the edge hasn't it... to kind of provide such a service (here)?”*



The response was:

*“Yes, absolutely. But I seem to provide it in a way that would... (pondering as though remembering an old memory) ... I mean if there'd been one (a counselling service) here when I was a student I wouldn't have gone within a million miles of it anyway! I think I... you know... (reflecting) I understand people's prejudices against counselling”.*

This became, unexpectedly, woven in with considering whether there is prejudice among students to counselling. His response was:

*“I would say personally, this is why I make a rigid distinction between counselling and psychotherapy. Personally, I would say that people do not want... classify themselves, or dare to think they may have a mental illness of any form whatsoever. I think most people would say that counselling or psychotherapy, any sort of talking therapy is for the badly wounded, yes? And that they don't want to identify themselves as badly wounded and so therefore don't want it, yes? And so personally I try to build a model (at this counselling service) which if you like is counselling and not therapy, so I say 'yes I can accept that, but if you're badly wounded possibly we can't help you anyway, we'll certainly make a start to help you, make a diagnosis and work out that may well need therapy, which is something that we can't provide here'.”*

I responded:

*“So you make that very clear distinction?”*

The response was:

*“We make that very clear... most university counselling services attempt to see or target approximately 3-4% of the overall student population. But I think I would say that a lot of counselling services end up seeing these people (pointing to the 3% of students that had been illustrated on a diagram to demonstrate how this person saw that most counselling services meet student needs)... that they (university counselling services in general) kind of completely deal with the very small proportion who have a very large need for therapy, whereas I see myself targeting ourselves (pointing to the 8% that was*

*drawn on the diagram). So in other words, by all means, offering those people who need a lot, a little bit, but then accepting that we won't meet their whole need, but more... stretching out to them."*

It can be seen that attending to the needs of the students is a considerable task, and intelligence gathering, getting out there and listening to the needs of the students seems very important. Most of the participants did not specifically mention how this was done or if indeed this was a primary function of their respective services. This does not imply that it is not taking place, but within these interviews some interviewees did not mention it as prominently as others. To conclude, this theme seems to indicate that evaluating the needs of all students is an important, and generally successful, activity in developing and managing a counselling service.

A second part of this section looked at assessing the needs of students with regard to the 'worried well' versus the 'badly wounded'. This, I consider, raises many questions about service provision, onward referrals and the need, possibly, to distinguish what core service provisions should be provided. But the questions that may be asked are: "How many services actively participate in evaluating student needs and what kinds of need assessments are being carried out, if at all? When specific attention is given to understanding the overall needs of students, what kind of effect does this have on service provision?" As is demonstrated above, participant (C-P1) described how important it is to have '*intelligence gathering*', and how this clearly leads to knowing specifically what is going on, at the time it is going on, and what counselling services need to be thinking about in order to respond to possible demands related to what is going on.

Likewise, if such assessments are not being carried out, does this imply that the counselling services are only attending to the needs of students who actively become involved in the service and, if so, is this sufficient? Is it that there is a growing need to carve out the specific resources that can be provided within the counselling services? This factor may point at the possible need to distinguish between the roles of counselling and psychotherapy. Only one participant raised this particular issue as

being fundamentally important to the whole field of counselling, especially regarding assessing the function of university counselling services. Did the other participants not raise it because everybody meant counselling and not psychotherapy, or did it mean that there was no difference seen between the two? What seems clear is that there is a lot of confusion within the whole field regarding this matter. As participant (C-P4) put it:

*"Yes, and now that the BAC have put the P (for psychotherapy) on, it's like... well, where are we with this? It's quite a challenge, isn't it?" Does this matter need to be clarified, and will this have a bad effect on the provision of university counselling all together."*

## **5. Gender consideration in relation to managing a university counselling service**

Despite demonstrating an air of competence and forthrightness, the female participants had more difficulties accessing senior places in the institutions and in some case senior members (who were men) of the institution at times appeared to actively prevent them from accessing hierarchical committees or bodies at all. Blocking tactics were common within the university hierarchy. An experienced participant (C-P 7) explained

*" Like, for instance, we wrote an annual every year, but the chair of this committee presented it to this university council, there's only one time that I presented it, but that was in the five years, that was the only time that I was invited to present. But that's because he wasn't there "*

Also participant (C-P1) also explained an aspect of her personal experience with real annoyance with how the male boss frequently viewed the counselling service:

*"We had a boss... he was pretty dreadful as a boss really... his ideal of the counselling service, (was to) compare it to Star Trek, and he would like to be able to snap his fingers and the counsellor would come to the bridge... and sort out what was causing him a problem."*

Another participant (C-P6) got in touch with how she sensed she had been personally perceived by the institution at an early stage of setting up the service, and spoke about it in the interview with recalled moments of indignation:

*"A nice woman with a nice woolly skirt with dangle earrings. Gives you a cuddle and a cup of tea, and that if you phoned up as a staff member and say 'I've got somebody crying here, will you come and get her' that you run round and pick them up."*

Given these quotations it could be argued that the female heads of service had a more challenging time on being taken seriously with regards to how the counselling services were perceived. Does that mean that male counterparts have an easier job for the counselling service to be taken seriously? The question that this brings to mind is "What

effect will this kind of influence have on the future of university counselling settings and what needs to be done in the meanwhile if this theme is consistent with others in similar positions?"

There was also some gender considerations in relation to the hierarchy of the university

*(R)"but do you think that being a male in this position makes a very significant difference?"*

And (CP-5)'s answer showed a moment of deep personal connection

*"I suspect it did. And yet strangely enough ('aha' moment), and that's very fascinating, you've made me think of all sorts of interesting things now (long pause). I think it was significant that I was a male. I think it was also significant that I could deploy the skills necessary for operating in a hierarchical institution, that I could therefore operate if you like, in a curiously sort of man to man way, but I think it was also very important that I was also a very feelingful person. (R): feelingful?) Yes. So that in a committee meeting I could sometimes say things that no other mad man would dare to say".*

There were equal numbers of male and female participants involved in Phase Two of this inquiry. However, it is well recognised that there are more female heads of university counselling services involved in this work than there are male counterparts. This participant group is not then a true representation of all university counselling services, but an equal distribution of the sexes through the research sample was seen as an important factor so that both gender perspectives could be taken into account. This was not necessarily a firm pre-requisite of the selection process but fortunately seemed to occur spontaneously.

Of course, many different aspects of gender issues came through in the analysis but the material was inconclusive, since much of it was a reflection of individual experiences. But what did come to my attention in the analysis, something I missed in the interviews, was how more frequently the male participants mentioned their personal or family circumstances. Three of the male participants spoke about their respective wives or life partners in the interviews and positioned their lives from a central home position. Two spoke about it in terms of how their earlier training or deeper involvement in this work

had been supported by their wives, even though it seemed to put their relationship / marriage under some considerable pressure. (C-P3) described how:

*"I really wanted to go and qualify in counselling, and my wife said 'well that's fine, why don't you apply, you know we'll go back and we'll do it'. And so a bit of me was feeling guilty, we'd have to live on a grant, we'd have to live on our savings, etc... you know, I ought to be doing the mortgage bit."*

He went on to say that it all worked out so well and was worth it in the end.

Does this imply that these men felt able to do this job better with the support of what seemed to be a secure home base? The female participant spoke less of their husbands or life partners. I know that I mentioned more than once the importance of being supported by my husband, but this was less the case with the other female members of the group. These other women spoke of finding professional support in the actual work setting or personal support with friends / colleagues. Participant (C-P2) emphasised:

*"I have a really good deputy... I choose them carefully... I think I am fortunate that you know, despite the different personalities in my team, that on the whole they support me and that's where I find my support. I've got a really good supervisor and I have a core group of, as it were, ancient, ageing heads of student counselling services, that we talk to each other on the phone, so in terms of professional support, that's there. And there are individuals within this university that offer personal support."*

So, could it be that women in hierarchical positions maintain the position with less support from their husbands / life partners? It seems that women foster support in different areas. Does this imply that women more frequently receive less domestic or personal support than men in similar positions? Or is it simply that men are more open to speaking about their wives and home life when speaking to a woman: and, women on the contrary tend to do this less? Or it may be that fewer women choose to disclose aspects of their personal relationships in the interviews; or maybe the men in this group have something in common that is not shared by other male Heads of Service? My sense is that since the men in the interviews made such references to their personal lives

because it was more relevant to mention to me, because I too am female. Certainly, further material is needed before making any significant conclusions.

As is seen in this chapter, an extensive amount of data has been analysed. Reducing these diverse experiences and embedded wisdom has been a considerable task. However, I consider the thematic and meaning-making processes resulted in some very worthwhile discussions and further debate of this subject. The analysed data will be discussed in Chapter 4, along with the conclusions from this research.

# Chapter 4



## Discussions and Conclusions

**R**esearch data examined directly from the perspective of the literature review.

This section consists of two parts: Five questions emerged from the review of the literature. These questions allow perspectives from current literature in this field of inquiry to be used to explore the research data of this project. For each question, I consider where the project uncover findings similar to those in published literature, and where the findings for this project appear to be different.

### **1. What effect is university expansion having upon university counselling services?**

#### *Similar*

There was a consensus among the participants that many changes are taking place in university counselling services and these comments are generally consistent with views expressed in research literature (Bell 1996:27). For example, each service is under increasing pressure to demonstrate the value of their provision while adapting to the changing context of university life (HUCS Conference, 2001). Because about two thirds of the participants in this inquiry group came from traditional universities, change in relation to university expansion was less evident among their student populations. Six of the participants did not mention issues around expansion of the student population at all. However, all of the participants indicated an increase in the demands being placed on services provision - demands of accountability, continuation audits, political changes and an increase in the variety of student needs.

The three participants representing the non-traditional universities did mention the impact of the expansion of universities in relation to increased numbers of students attending university. These changes were subsequently linked to an increase in the

demands placed upon the counselling service - especially in view of the impact of widening participation. One of these three participants spoke in detail about how the counselling service she worked in was often seen as the 'poor relation' or the 'dumping ground' of the university. The two other participants indicated this in the data when comments were made about how the hierarchy and members of the wider institution did not show any real appreciation of the development of counselling services, especially at the initial stages.

### *Different*

The element of competitiveness that was implied in the research literature regarding the struggle for survival of the newer universities (Ford *et al.* 1996:1) was not described in the research data. However, what became apparent in the data was the underlying pressure on counselling services to ensure academic standards were maintained. Participant (C-P4) pointed this out clearly in saying:

*"... so anything we ever did that smacked in any way at all of 'pop psychology' was very much disapproved of, so, although they really wanted us to have a dialogue with the students, it's clear that (the university) reputation as a centre of academic excellence is terribly important."*

A further example of this was seen when four of the participants indicated the importance of demonstrating that the standards of the counselling service parallel the perceived status of the university. Any evidence that the university's reputation as a 'centre of academic excellence' was reflected in the counselling service was sought at all times and any publications, research articles and conferences were well written, carefully researched and in accordance with the appropriate professional bodies i.e. BACP, UKCP, BPS, etc. This indicated how some of the traditional universities sought to maintain their reputations. However, what happens in the university colleges and further educational institutes that do not see themselves, or are not seen, in this category of being the a 'centre of academic excellence'? Such counselling services may need to consider paying more attention to producing academic publications. Would this help in

building better reputations within the university context itself and beyond? Would this awareness lead to improvements in additional funding? Further research in this area would be needed to answer these questions.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, a potential limitation of this study relates to two-thirds of the participants being drawn from the traditional universities. Drawing on the reports of the three participants located in non-traditional universities (of which one is my own experience) allows some representation for this other sector. If a similar project were to be repeated with a more diverse group of participants from further and higher educational settings, together with participants from new and traditional universities, a different data pattern might emerge. It would potentially indicate the constant and rigorous challenges that some counselling services face in dealing with the arid conditions they encounter in their respective institutional settings.

## **2. What effect has the growing number of students have on university counselling services?**

### *Similar*

The research data from this project reflected the material in the literature review in that more students are now accessing counselling services and that these students come with a variety of needs (Lago and Kitchen 1998:1). Furthermore, counselling students on the whole is regarded as very rewarding, valuable and worthwhile. Generally students respond well to it and show respect and appreciation for such provisions within the university. Additionally, it was strongly stated that students come to university to work, and working on their own personal issues is, for some, an engaging and meaningful process that is part of the overall university experience.

## *Different*

The extent to which the student population varies was less apparent in this research data than is indicated by the published literature (Ford *et al.* 1996). For example, there was only limited discussion of the government's explicit policy to broaden the inclusion of "students who have been under-represented in higher education" (Ford *et al.* 1996). There was some reference by two participants of an increase in the number of students problems related to cultural issues. Only two participants mentioned the impact of widening participation in such areas as ethnicity and issues of disability and mental health. The number of students now over 21 years of age (Blunkett 2000) was hardly mentioned in this research data at all. I was the only person to mention that mature students return to university. I interpret this lack of reference to the variety within the student population as a reflection of this participant group, as they primarily reflected the traditional universities' status where the students are generally academically brighter, coming from more privileged social backgrounds and are viewed more in line with the traditional image of students. However, it is important to acknowledge that the issue of widening university participation may only begun to have an impact of service developments at the time the interviews were carried out. This, alongside an increase in publications during the period of early 2003, suggests an increased alertness to such matters as mental health issues, and widening student participation. In fact the theme of the AUCC 2003 conference is Widening Participation.

There were varied reactions in the participant group as to whether students felt a 'stigma' was attached to students accessing counselling services. Research responses suggest that more students now 'don't even bat an eyelid' about going into counselling. However, this view was challenged by the comment of participant (C-P4) who believed the stigma attached to counselling is still strongly present.

The research data indicated a strong need for the heads of counselling services to be more alert to the needs of students by actively going out to gather 'intelligence' on current social, political, financial and personal needs of students. This activity and need

did not specifically emerge in the literature review but came up in the research interviews as a crucial area for counselling services to monitor ongoing changes in the university environment affecting students. This ‘intelligence gathering’, as phrased by participant (C-P2), became a basis of effective communication with service users and to help in the continued development and planning of service provision.

A comment from participant (C-P2) illustrated a crucial question and assumption about the *purpose* of a university counselling service. She emphasised what she saw as the need to demonstrate:

*" ... over and over and over again, until you're blue in the face, that you're there to support the academic task... not (to be) misunderstood (by students or others to think that)... we're here just to make sure people stay students and get through their exams, at all costs."*

This participant strongly believed that supporting the academic task was the primary and fundamental task of the counselling services. To her, the academic journey in itself was more important than other gains that may be obtained in counselling. This comment highlighted a potential tension between the possible therapeutic goals of counselling within the context of a client's life and the expectation from a ‘parent’ university that the counselling service was there to support a student's continuing work and success in the academic task. It is quite conceivable that these two goals might conflict with each other. The assumption that the academic task would be supported appeared to be so embedded in the research data that it seemed to fall into the area that it almost went ‘without saying’. Yet this illustrates the ‘tightrope’ walked by heads of university counselling services. They owe understanding and duty to the goals of the organisation of which they are part; indeed success in the academic task is crucial to funding and even existence for some universities. The heads of service need to make clear their support to the organisation's goals. Yet the very nature of counselling work involves a broader consideration of the life and needs of the student clients and it needs to be acknowledged there may be times when this will conflict with the academic task. This ‘tension’ between what a university might take to be the organisational purpose of

supplying a counselling service to its students - and the reasons counselling may serve therapeutically - were a powerful finding from the research data. This 'tightrope' is one that heads of service walk as managers and as counsellors - trying to serve both goals while recognising that at times meeting one might conflict with the other. The 'dynamic' within this tension and conflict of goals was one of the most significant findings and an important basis of recommendations of this research project.

### **3. What effect is the relationship between universities and their counselling services having on university counselling services?**

*Similar*

In the interviews this area of discussion received a lot of energy and considered reflection by the participants. Many aspects of the research data strongly supported the findings in the research literature; (e.g. HUCs Conference, 2001) the importance of developing strong relationships with the hierarchy and other faculties and departments within the university were strongly supported. Additionally the importance of developing strong affiliations beyond the institution was also mentioned throughout AUCC (Survey 2002). Furthermore the ability to achieve an integrated relationship with the university organisation was evaluated as crucial in setting up and developing university counselling services.

## *Different*

Although the literature review indicated the importance of developing strong links within the institutions themselves and then beyond into wider professional participation, (Egan 1988), specific ways how to do this were not clearly indicated. By implication, this may be an area of skill and practice that many heads of service are still developing. Examples of reaching out to the university body were seen in such initiatives as the development of counselling associate programmes and by providing in-house training within the counselling service. Ensuring that the university as a whole understands the function of the counselling service was also seen as imperative – as well as ensuring the university organisation understood what the function is *not*. Participant (C-P4) spoke emphatically about how a counselling service might imply that:

*"... the university counselling service, is far more important than what anybody else is doing... We really care about persons and we really know what makes people tick. With the implication that the rest of you (people in the university) don't really know very much about (emotional issues)... you've got caught up in your intellectual obsession. Avoiding such 'emotional high ground' or seeking to become the emotional pulse of the university and to be seen only in relation to being 'touchy feely' people was avoided by the participants. This might (he argued) misrepresent counselling and interfere with how others viewed such provisions."*

What was strongly present in the data was the need for counselling services to understand the university organisation and purpose, and to show and demonstrate support of the university objectives. This involved developing strong relationships between the organisational hierarchy and other faculties and departments. What came through the interview data and was not present in the research literature was how '*politically astute*' and '*politically aware*' heads of counselling services needed to be in order to '*choose friends*' and '*strong friendships*' and '*affiliations*' that helped their service. These factors, alongside the recruitment of academically credible members of

the counselling service were seen as important in contributing to the overall effectiveness of such services.

Another very important point that was not in the research literature but raised by almost all of the participants was the crucial and valuable role that the position of the reception staff or administrator can play in the overall function of running an effective counselling service. Receptionists and administrators, when effectively chosen, can offer substantial support. These people can be efficient means of operational support and their presence also means that the counselling task can be the primary focus of the counsellors. Additionally, having one significant administrative person who can be accessed easily helps considerably with strengthening the relationship between universities and their counselling services. Since this person is often the front-line communicator, especially at times of conflict or pressure, they act as an important bridge and a strong, reliable communication link with the counsellors or head of service who can in turn address such problems or requests immediately. Participant (C-P4) identified these people as being like 'gold-dust'. Therefore, administrative support was one of the most important aspects to consider very early on in the development and management of a service to ensure that there is an effective context or environment in which to operate.

#### **4. What effect does the role of the head of service have on their counselling services?**

*Similar*

Another aspect highlighted in the literature and also mentioned in this inquiry was the importance for counsellors and heads of service to develop peer professional support alongside links to professional networks such as BACP, UKCP, AHPP and the AUCC and its sub-committees. It was also suggested during this research that subscribing to these national bodies and becoming active, especially at policy-making levels was important for the continued professional development of the services. I propose that



updating information and keeping abreast of current issues through continued networking and communications in the field is what is necessary with respect to the professional, political and social changes that may affect managing counselling services on a day-to-day basis. Also indicated in the data is the extent to which electronic mail, web sites, recent publications and an increase in the number of conferences served as the main arteries of professional communication. However, it was also remarked upon how demanding electronic mail can be. Striking the balance of using e-mails and web sites effectively and not being overloaded by their contents was something that was commonly referred to in the interview data.

A further agreement between the research literature (Bell 1996:2-16) and interview data was how some heads of services encouraged in-house training schemes as part of their counselling service. This was evident for one participant in this inquiry, yet, for the other participants this was not mentioned at all.

There was reference in the research literature to work that some of the leading figures in this field have carried out since the late 1960s (Bell 1996:27); for example:

- developing the awareness of supporting the personal needs of students
- bringing about changes in relation to what supports academic pursuits
- What might interfere in the process of learning, for example the impact of mental health and anxiety disorders on students in their academic journey?

In the literature these people were seen as ‘pioneers’, ‘visionaries’ and in some cases as ‘heroes’ in the field, people who had carved out the niche for counselling to take on an important role in university provisions.

Yet there was limited reference in the research literature about the specific role of the leading figures or the head of such services as they are today. What is outlined in the literature and is substantiated by the research data is the sense of agreement about the kinds of people who take on such positions. Whilst no word of being ‘heroes’ (McLeod

1994b) was used in this research, phrases such as pioneers, visionaries were mentioned on at least four occasions.

An example of this activity is that some heads of services specifically designed their counselling services in line with a specific philosophy e.g. humanistic, person centred, psychodynamic or integrative. It was strongly argued by one participant (CP-5) that this allowed for a clear boundary to be created in which effective service development could take place - a single philosophy helped to keep in mind the entire focus of the service in line with its development. It was also suggested that this allowed for less conflict about theoretical underpinnings in the course of counselling activity.

Certain personal and managerial attributes were linked to the role and performance of heads of service in the literature but additional attributes were drawn out in the data; for example phrases such as '*excellent communicators*', '*politically astute*', '*organisationally aware*', '*academically attained*' and being '*hard working*' and '*resilient*'. In saying this, what is implicit in the data is that the heads of counselling services needed to be effective managers, be organisationally informed, develop styles of leadership which would encourage, empower, challenge and assert the function of the counselling services. In this way counselling services might receive the respect and value that they deserve.

#### *Different:*

An aspect that was not mentioned in the research literature (Towler 1997) is the kind of personal regard individual counsellors and heads of services have for the students in general. Two participants in this inquiry suggested the importance of enjoying the work with students as this allows access to further understanding of them, and so can illuminate the therapeutic process. However, the remaining participants did not overtly mention their relationships with the student body. They seemed to indicate that they had become more distant from the student body all together. Personally I recommend that the enjoyment of working with the students should be seen as an important component of effectively developing a counselling service in a university setting since

the overall perception of students is generally coming from a positive perspective. It is the responsibility of the heads of service to monitor their attitudes or feelings in how they relate to the students. Striking a balance between enjoying the work with the students and that of managing the service appears crucial.

### **5. What effect has the trend of assessing counselling organisations had on the effectiveness of university counselling services?**

In this section I have abandoned the 'similar or different ' category which applied in the previous four sub sections since I wanted to first explore the research data to determine whether the services were structured to operate effectively without observing it from a similar or different perspective. I chose the work of Egan (1988) to provide a model for evaluating organisational structures. His seven questions or headings are appropriate generalised indicators to measure the completeness and effectiveness of a typical university counselling service organisation.

This section is more to do with the material *implicitly* present in the interviews - in what I experienced, as well as what was explicitly mentioned. Additional research could be carried out to evaluate such organisational effectiveness using, for example, a questionnaire. This discussion makes links with theoretical or conceptual structures that others have used in the field. Few organisational models were found within the literature review, but some aspects of identifying organisational structure or effectiveness can be found in the literature on the service recognition scheme. This scheme is currently under review by the parent organisation BACP and aspects of it are being considered for the development of a national counselling service recognition scheme.

I now use Egan's (1988:10) seven primary headings of essential organisations features to prompt further questions to ask of the research data:

**Strategy: Get the overall purpose and direction of the system straight.**

*(e.g. Has the counselling service got a clear purpose or mission?)*

Only two of the nine participants mentioned that they had drawn up a mission statement for their counselling services. Both of them indicated the importance of ensuring that the mission statement was in line with the mission statement of the university, and that consistency between the two statements was an essential factor to achieve. What I observed in my own experience was that refining the mission statement meant it had also to be in line with the student services mission statement for the organisation and that aligning the three missions was a challenging task. But what does this say about the participants who made no mention of mission statements – did it mean that no such statements exist? Or that mentioning it was not viewed important at that time in the interview? Was their organisation qualitatively different? However, in the absence of the mention of mission statements, there were other indicators in the research which supported the impression that the counselling services were clear about their direction. These indicators included, for example, longstanding involvement in HUCs and the fact that they were part of conventional universities which typically do have mission statements. Yet, evaluating the impact of establishing a mission statement might be something that could be considered as a future research project.

**Unit performance Plans: Drive the strategy down into the guts of the system**

*(e.g. Are the ways the counselling service operates consistent with its overall purpose and strategy ?)*

The ways in which counselling services defined and delivered their services were recorded and published in almost every university I visited. This material was not necessarily explicitly spoken of in the interviews. In several cases, however, publications, service timetable, educational, health-related leaflets and information regarding academic support were present when I came to the counselling receptions. In each case I sensed the importance being placed on such material at the reception area of the counselling services as it allowed students to access further material independently.

**Operations: Deliver valued services to the ‘customer’ cost effectively in the ‘markets’ of choice.**

*(e.g. Does the counselling service operate in a way that gives possible clients what they need at times when it is needed? Is it cost effective when put alongside other student services?)*

The ‘operational’ aspects of the service were hard for me to evaluate through the interview data I obtained. One potential indicator for this was client waiting lists, which five participants spoke about in their interviews. There was a general consensus that all counselling services work very hard to keep waiting lists to a minimum. The nature of the academic year was a factor that affected the duration that some students might have to wait for an appointment. For example, if students accessed the counselling service in the week prior to Christmas when the service and the university would close for a fortnight at least, the duration would naturally be curtailed at that time and lengthened overall (through the holiday break). Monitoring and responding to the ongoing demands on the service and time waiting lists was clearly described as a constant responsibility of the heads of service.

Whether a counselling service is cost effective is not something that came up prominently in the interviews. However, the research data does indicate that the issue of cost effectiveness is beginning to become an important consideration, especially for future planning. A measure of this came from one participant who indicated that since the interviews had taken place, funding for the service had been frozen even though financial considerations had never been a problem in the past. This participant represented a prestigious traditional university where their service has been established for many years. This raised concern, as funding had never been an issue in this university.

It would be appropriate research for the future to investigate how university counselling services run services cost effectively and whether it would be more efficient and less expensive to resort to alternative provision models such as to out-source such provisions

outside of the university context altogether. In the meantime, however, counselling service provisions are within the institution and the need to show value for money is becoming paramount.

**Organisation: Design and structure the organisation 'required' to 'deliver the goods' both strategically and operationally.**

*(e.g. Does the way the counselling service is set up support what it has to do ?*

Issues concerning organisational structure did not arise during the interviews except for a few remarks about the interface with the university. The examples included taking on trainee counsellors for placements, having associate programmes and working closely with student unions, 'nightline' crisis telephone lines and equivalent external bodies. These appeared to be effective ways in which services kept abreast of the whole body of the university and helped the operational aspects of the counselling services.

**Culture: Develop the beliefs, values and norms needed to give spirit to the organisation.**

*(e.g. Is there an 'climate' or 'way of working' apparent in the counselling service that reflects both the needs of the students and the context in which it is trying to operate?)*

Beyond the individual ways in which different university counselling service were designed and located, there was a general feeling that each service was embedded in a sensitive, non judgmental, yet business like and professional manner. This was evident by the way, in which the physical space was set up, i.e. lighting, furniture, levels of privacy, etc. and the general ambience of the place. In all, there was an open, respectful atmosphere where I witnessed that students were given the level of privacy and individual time and attention that accorded them. There was evidence on notice boards, which indicated that an atmosphere of cultural awareness was part of the service. e.g. pamphlets, handouts, information etc. regarding cultural, social and ethnic considerations were present. Another aspect that was pronounced was that in each university the directions I received in order to locate the counselling service was always indicated by the gatekeepers as a service that was well known and clearly located. In

this way the spirit of the university was paralleled - universities are places for individuals to come together and choose how and what to learn so to integrate into society in a meaningful manner.

**Management: Develop a cadre of (individuals) to provide direction, co-ordination and support.**

*(e.g. Is there an appropriate source of management, counsellors, supervisors and administrative support to deliver the required work?)*

The level of interest in counselling as a field of work and training in this country at the present time meant that no difficulties were experienced by these services in obtaining counsellors. The importance of administration staff was mentioned above and, by implication, quality staff was not always available. The issue of supervising trainee placements was discussed by participant (C-P4) and it was strongly indicated that the:

*“BACP new frame of reference was not suitable for counselling services, i.e. supervising staff/ trainees...”*

This new frame of reference did not encourage managers to be in the role of supervisors as well, since it was seen to be unethical and not best practice. Three of the other participants agreed with this Code of Reference and did not supervise people who worked in the team but had other supervisors to do so. It appears that supervising in-house trainees (especially for the smaller non-traditional counselling service) is an issue that may need further attention, especially since funding, resources and recognition may not be high on the priority list within these institutions.

**Leadership: Develop leaders to provide institution enhancing innovation and change.**

*(e.g. What about the management of counselling services- are the leaders sufficiently supportive and competent.*

There was no direct reference to self-development for the heads of service within the research interviews. However, the public stature of a number of the participants,

together with the current standards of training in counselling and psychotherapy did indicate that this task was effectively covered. Additionally, the heads of service all demonstrated that they were currently (or had been) actively involved in bringing about change in the university counselling services by innovative ways.

The on-going reference in research interviews to the need for managing change within this working context does argue that this may be a critical skill-set for heads of service today. Further training in this area of management may be necessary for the increasing pressures now being placed upon heads of service.

The meaningful themes from route two are discussed in relation to the review of literature

### **1. Heads of services appear to be considerably influenced by their initial professional training**

There is not much data regarding the findings in this theme represented in the current research literature. It appeared that participants carving out the role and functions of counselling services were strongly influenced by their early career training. Their original training appeared to influence the working frame of reference, which in turn influenced decision-making processes within the counselling service. It was unclear whether this link affected how university service counselling services were developing. This also might be an interesting factor to research in the future. An important question emerging from this theme is “What if people are influenced?” Does this then mean that they are naturally biased towards a specific frame of reference e.g. would people initially trained in the medical field keep the medical model more to the fore as policies are developed? This research suggests that professionals might be considerably influenced by their original training and especially within the field of counselling. This being the case, internal monitors to check for personal bias would be helpful, especially within the professional supervisory context of this work.



## **2. The first stage of setting up or managing a university counselling service**

Little published research material exists relating to the first stage of setting up or managing a university counselling service. The word ‘challenging’ is commonly used in the literature to illustrate how counselling services face the continued demands of accountability and evidence-based practice, and where sophisticated levels of understanding, knowledge and management are needed in the working environment. In this inquiry the majority of participants emphasised how personally and professionally challenging the first stage of service development had been for them. Even though some of the participants were senior practitioners with years of specialist experience behind them, the challenge of setting up and managing a service within a ‘parent’ organisation was described as a considerable strain. However, as stated previously, one participant’s experience was very different. Therefore, a question that may benefit from further research is whether and how a head of service trained in organisational management (and with the appropriate counselling or psychotherapy skills) would find this task less demanding and more achievable than those who have no previous managerial experience. As a researcher, it was evident that I was examining both therapeutic issues and organisational demands and that the role of the head of service involved both of these skill areas. The implications of this are evident in many areas of this research project. The acquisition of business or managerial skills is necessary, but striking a balance between the therapeutic component of the work and the managerial components will be required.

### **3. Valued and fully embedded university counselling services appear to be well resourced internally and have strong external links to medical services**

The findings in this category are strongly represented in the data collected during this inquiry and are consistent with the literature (Bell 1996). The 'traditional' university counselling services in this inquiry found themselves in a prestigious position, where respect, funding, and full recognition were in place to support counselling provision. In this way there was a sense of an 'embedded' presence of these counselling services within their respective institutions; thus they received sufficient physical and human resources. Yet, as indicated by the research literature, increasing demands on counselling services are not being met by increased funding as universities and colleges generally experience a squeeze on all their funding sources. This was reflected in this inquiry when one of the participants from a traditional university indicated that funding was being lowered for the first time ever. It was conceivable in this environment that universities might start to freeze funds or possibly even lower them. The research also indicated that the non-traditional universities were already low in funding, and ensuring funding recognition was a constant demand on the service. Might there be considerable changes to how university counselling services meet the needs of the expanding student bodies? For example, are we on the verge of out-sourced counselling services? Would this be more financially viable? Might such services be amalgamated into external agencies, for example local statutory services? It might be that the pressure for funds and resources means that proving value for money and justifying organisational effectiveness will become an on-going requirement - and that training and or models for doing this are now strongly needed.

The process of networking with external bodies was not significantly highlighted in the research literature. There were repeated references in this research data to the gains of having and developing strong and effective onward referral procedures. This was seen in the example given by participant (C-P7) when it was pointed out that working directly with health centres was not common practice:

*"but also my university's perhaps atypical in the sense that there's a very well established health centre (close by)."*

This comment was followed by the mention of a strong onward referral procedure, which was in place. In effect this reciprocal referral agreement meant students were attended to rapidly - students suffering from medical or mental health problems were immediately referred to the health centre and those with other issues who would benefit from being seen could be referred to the university counselling service.

I suggest that becoming actively involved with local mental health teams is crucial in an environment which is witnessing widening student participation and the appearance within the client group of severe mental health issues. This could conceivably place a demand on heads of service to influence the university organisation to allow or accept this involvement with local mental health teams. In this way, clear working processes could be set in place when complex issues presented by the students (beyond the responsibilities or resources of the counselling services) are effectively managed so that onward referrals are dealt with appropriately.

#### **4. Attending to the needs of the wider student population**

Attending to the needs of the wider student population rather than solely those who access the counselling services was considered by almost all of the participants to be a major responsibility of their work in this inquiry. This issue seems consistent with the fact outlined in the literature review that there is a rapid growth in the number and diversity of students entering university in recent years which leads to considerable increases in the number of student service provisions within universities and colleges. On the whole this indicates that counselling services need to be alert to the experiences and needs of the overall student population and to anticipate ways in which demand for counselling services might change. I suspect that, for some poorly funded university counselling service, attending to the needs of the wider student population will be a difficult challenge since coping with the students that access the service, even by itself,

is a task that is not yet fully achieved (since funding and resources are very poor for some services).

### **5. Gender considerations in relation to managing a university counselling service.**

The issue of gender in the operation and staffing of university counselling services receives no overt attention in the research literature and emerges in this inquiry in a subtle manner e.g. men in these hierarchical positions appear to maintain their posts with more support from their wives or partners than their female counterparts. Is it that men and women find support in different ways, yet both receive the type of support they need? It may imply that the female participants were also very supportive of their husbands or partners' professional lives. The male participants appeared on occasion to use challenging or confrontational interventions with the male members of the hierarchy. They implied a more 'man to man' interchange takes place, consisting of very robust and overtly challenging interchanges. However, two female participants appeared to have experienced incidences of bullying tactics, undermining of work and patronising attitudes expressed by men in senior positions (who were part of the hierarchy) of the institution.

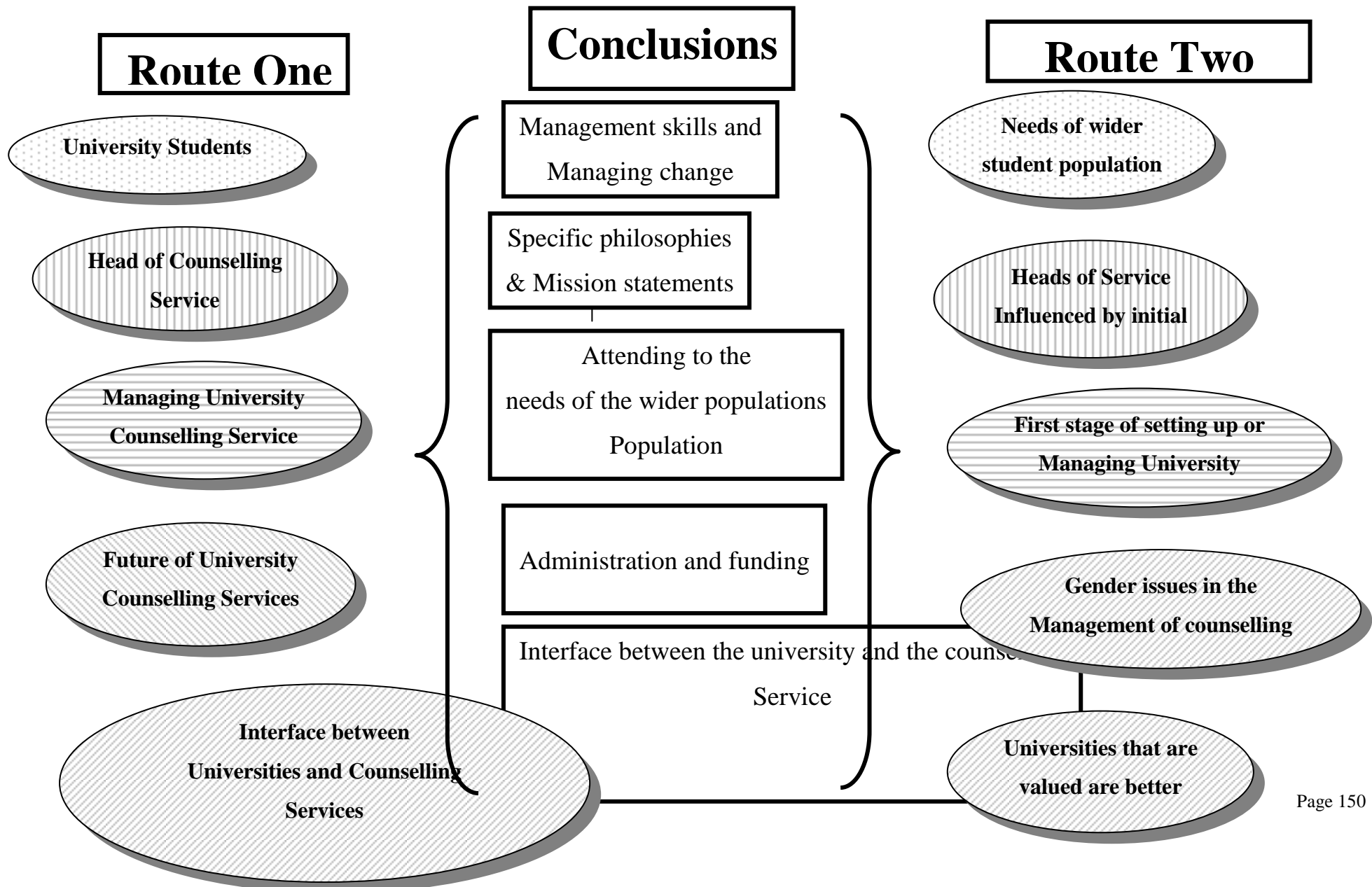
## Conclusions drawn from this study

The conclusions drawn from this study reflect the interviews and experience of eleven senior practitioners in this field of work. They constitute a limited sample, primarily from traditional universities, with a smaller number drawn from newer or non-traditional universities. The validity of much of the research information (i.e. input data, analysis and findings) has been explored in conference presentations and has received positive verification in the feedback provided. The conclusions could stimulate university counselling services to consider their present and potential development. However, further research may be necessary to explore the wider applicability of the conclusions that follow.

This study has taken place in what could be considered a milestone or evolutionary period of time for university counselling work. As little as ten years ago, this facility was commonly offered by small numbers of counselling and psychotherapy practitioners, generally working alone, whose primary focus was therapeutic work. The widespread expansion in student numbers, the diversity and complexity of problems now presented by clients and the growing recognition of the need for this type of support has meant that university counselling work has moved from small numbers of individual practitioners at work to 'counselling sections or departments' within the university organisations. Arguably, as one participant said, these services have now 'come of age'. This change places a new range of demands on the work and skills of heads of counselling services. This is reflected in the following conclusions, drawn from the research interviews, that potentially represent recommendations for further developing and professionalising university counselling services in general.

How these conclusions have emerged from Route One and Route Two of the analysis is illustrated in Fig.4.1 on the following page.

Fig 4.1



A summary of these conclusions is presented in Table 4.1 below. A discussion of the specific conclusions is then presented under each of the following headings:

- Management and managing change in universities
- Interface between universities and their counselling services and potential conflict
- Attending to the needs of the wider student population
- Specific philosophies and mission statements
- Administration and funding issues
- Gender issues.

Table 4.1 *Summary of conclusions drawn from this study*

<b>Summary of Conclusions drawn from this study</b>
<p><b>1. Management and managing change in universities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is a potential need for heads of service to obtain 'management' training.</li><li>• The skills of managing change: There is a critical set of skills for heads of service to have when managing change.</li><li>• There is a list of specific attributes that are deemed important for heads of service to have in their role.</li></ul> <p><b>2. Interface between universities and their counselling services and potential conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is an expectation that counselling services should reflect the reputation of the institute as a 'centre of academic excellence'.</li><li>• There is a potential conflict between a university's goals (i.e. academic success) and those of a counselling service (i.e. therapeutic change appropriate to the client's life)</li><li>• The interfaces with the university organisation should make sure there is an effective, two-way interchange between the counsellor and the university.</li></ul> <p><b>3. Specific philosophies and mission statements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The use of an actual 'mission statement' is rare.</li><li>• Some counselling services are set up according to a specific therapeutic philosophy (e.g. a person centred counselling service).</li></ul> <p><b>4. Attending to the needs of the wider student population</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The counselling services need to pay attention to the needs of <u>all</u> students not just those who come for counselling.</li></ul> <p><b>5. Administration and funding issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administrative support plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of counselling services</li><li>• Non-traditional universities were already low in funding their counselling services.</li><li>• Pressure on funding is increasing in most universities counselling services.</li><li>• Proving value for money and justifying organisational effectiveness is an increasing trend</li></ul> <p><b>6. Gender Issues in relation to managing a university counselling service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Female participants tend to have more difficulties accessing senior positions in the institutions</li><li>• Gender considerations in relation to the hierarchy of the university.</li><li>• Male head of service appear to use more confrontational or challenging interventions with the male members of the hierarchy of the institution.</li><li>• Male and female heads of service demonstrated they fostered support for themselves in this role in very different ways i.e. men spoke about getting support from their wives and partners and women spoke of getting support from professional networking and contact with fellow colleagues.</li></ul>



## **1. Management and managing change in universities**

There was limited yet persuasive evidence in the inquiry that where a participant had prior training in management work and organisational awareness they found the process of setting up and managing a counselling service less stressful or difficult than did other interviewees. This suggests that formal management training (for work as a head of service) would be an area of professional development worth considering for counselling service staff with management responsibilities.

The frequent references in research interviews to the need for managing change within this working context does argue that this may be a critical skill-set for heads of service today.

The interview responses suggested that a diverse range and significant and demanding level of attributes are required of the managers or leaders working in this role. These attributes include: enjoying working with students, being excellent communicators and visionaries, being politically astute, academically attained and organisationally aware and active; having abilities to lead, empowering others, and having a clear understanding of the manager's role, as well as being hard working and resilient. This would also argue for more attention to be paid to the continuing professional (and maybe also the personal) development of counselling services managers, which may well include some forms of management training.

## **2. Interface between universities and their counselling services and potential conflict**

The majority of the participants sought a professional accreditation to boost their reputation through their service being a 'centre of academic excellence'. This was also achieved by ensuring that any publications, research articles and conferences they contributed to were well written, carefully researched and were in accordance with guidelines from the appropriate professional bodies i.e. BACP, AUCC, UKCP, BPS etc. The potential conflict between a university's goals and those of a counselling service was also highlighted. There was strong evidence in the research interviews of the 'tightrope' walked by heads of university counselling services.

The interfaces with the university organisation should make sure there is an effective, two-way interchange between the counsellor and the university. The skills of managing the organisational interface were so challenging that further training or models for skills may be needed for heads of service.

## **3. Specific philosophies and mission statements**

With respect to the use of a 'mission statement': two participants used one as a means of focusing the activity and organisation of their work. Other participants made no reference to this. The potential contribution of this step in setting up and managing a university counselling service is worthy of future investigation.

Some heads of services specifically designed their counselling services in line with a specific philosophy i.e. humanistic, person centred, psychodynamic or integrative. It was strongly argued by one participant (CP-5) that this allowed for a clear boundary to be created in which effective service development could take place - a single philosophy helped to keep in mind the entire focus of the service in line with its development. It was also suggested that this allowed for less conflict about theoretical underpinnings in the course of counselling activity.

#### **4. Attending to the needs of the wider student population**

This category is an example of overlap with the results from Route One of the analysis, and has already been discussed on page 109. However what emerged as tacit knowledge was for some participants the extent to which they 'loved' working with all the students.

#### **5. Administration and funding issues**

The provision of adequate and effective administrative support was one of the most important aspects to consider very early on in the development / management of a service to ensure that there is an effective context or environment in which to operate and where counsellors could focus on therapeutic work. The research also indicated that the non-traditional universities were already low in funding, so ensuring funding recognition was a constant demand on the service.

It would be appropriate research for the future to investigate how university counselling services run services cost-effectively and whether it might be more efficient and less expensive to out-source such provisions outside the university context altogether. In the meantime, however, counselling service provisions are within the institution and the need to show value for money is becoming paramount. It might be that the pressure for funds and resources means that proving value for money and justifying organisational effectiveness will become an on-going requirement - and that training and / or models for doing this are now strongly needed.

#### **6. Gender considerations in relation to managing a university counselling service**

This category was identified and discussed in the previous chapter, which concluded that that men in these hierarchical positions appear to maintain their posts with more support from their wives or partners than their female counterparts. Is it that men and women find support in different ways, yet both receive the type of support they need? It may imply that the female participants were also very supportive of their husbands or

partners' professional lives. The male participants appeared on occasion to use challenging or confrontational interventions with the male members of the hierarchy.

## Conclusions in relation to the management of Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

The following table is included to demonstrate the application of these final findings to the continued management of the BCUC counselling service.

*Table 4.2: Application of conclusions to my management of BCUC counselling service*

<i>Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College Counselling service checklist</i>	
<b>1. Management and managing change</b>	<b>My responses with respect to this aspect of the research conclusions</b>
<p>a) There is a potential need for heads of service to obtain 'management' training.</p> <p>b) There is a critical set of skills for heads of service who have to manage change.</p> <p>c) <i>Specific attributes</i> deemed important for heads of service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Enjoy working with students</i></li> <li>• <i>Excellent communicators</i></li> <li>• <i>Being visionary</i></li> <li>• <i>Politically astute</i></li> <li>• <i>Academically attained</i></li> </ul>	<p>a) I attended a managerial one-day training in June 2000 on managing university counselling services. I was challenged to consider aspects like litigation, professional insurance, and financial considerations more fully. I don't think one day is enough.</p> <p>b) My professional orientation is informed mainly by the humanistic perspective and I set up the service accordingly. However, this was not a decision I made in the beginning, but one that evolved naturally.</p> <p>c) I consider I have most of these attributes to a greater or lesser degree. I am including my personal reaction to these attributes when I ask myself how good I am at the following aspects:</p> <p>Certainly, as evidenced by e.g. looking forward to meeting student clients. I enjoy working with senior residents and being part of 'Fresher's Fair' and open days.</p> <p>Yes, I really know how to communicate with others effectively. I do this by being astute to others and communications at all times. I am an accomplished face to face communicator; there is room for improvement with written, formal communication.</p> <p>I have maintained an on-going vision (which has been that of setting up and managing a well-respected, professional service) here at BCUC counselling service and I worked to make it happen.</p> <p>I could be better (I want to involve the staff of counselling more within the university e.g. with faculty boards, etc.).</p> <p>Doing this doctorate programme prepares me for further attainment.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Organisationally aware and active</i></li> <li>• <i>Demonstrates an ability to lead</i></li> <li>• <i>Has the ability to empower others</i></li> <li>• <i>Has a clear understanding of the manager's role</i></li> <li>• <i>Is hard working and resilient</i></li> </ul>	<p>I work hard at this, but could be better (e.g. more involved in committees, when I complete the doctorate and have more time available). By doing this project, my awareness of organisational structure, procedures etc., has increased and contributes significantly to how I develop this service.</p> <p>I consider I have ability to lead because experience has taught me how to be aware of what team needs, individually and as a group. A well-managed, happy team makes for the provision of a professional service.</p> <p>This is something I do best; I always aim to empower people to reach their personal potentials by supporting and recognising their vulnerabilities and making the best of their capabilities.</p> <p>Throughout my professional life, I have set up and managed previous projects. Setting up and managing this service continues to teach me a lot, especially about counselling in organisational settings.</p> <p>The amount of work that I have done and that I continue to do, demonstrates how hard working I am. Finding the correct balance is challenging and this needs constant monitoring and supervision. This work is diverse, calling on different skills (e.g. managing the service, making policy decisions, ensuring the service is monitored and evaluated appropriately, counselling student clients, etc., against a background of personal and professional change). It requires many skills addressed in this project, not least resilience and common sense.</p>
<p><b>2. Interface between universities and their counselling services and potential conflict</b></p> <p>a] There is a sense that counselling services should reflect the institution's reputation as a 'centre of academic excellence', as it aims to be.</p> <p>b] There is potential conflict between a university's goals, i.e. academic success, and those of a counselling service, i.e. therapeutic change appropriate to the client's life.</p> <p>c] The interfaces with the university organisation should make sure there is an</p>	<p><b>My responses with respect to this aspect of the research conclusions</b></p> <p>a] The aim of this research project is to contribute to the academic and professional standards of the counselling service at the BCUC.</p> <p>b] This is something that is discussed with every new member of the team. It is also incorporated in supervision sessions where appropriate and is monitored at the evaluation meeting which take place twice yearly. Being aware of how this potential conflict can interfere in the counselling process is regularly addressed.</p> <p>c] An effective two way process was certainly not in place for the first 4-5 years of setting up the BCUC counselling service; I was essentially left to my own devices. This is something I valued since it allowed me the opportunity to develop the service as I saw fit. However, since 1999 there</p>

<p>effective, two-way interchange between the counsellor and the university.</p>	<p>has been much more effective communication between the counselling service and the university. I am now more alert to opportunities to improve communication, through the intranet, e-mails etc., and more outreach work now takes place.</p>
<p><b>3. Specific philosophies and mission statements</b></p>	<p><b>My orientation is informed by the humanistic and while I did not set out to set up the service within this specific philosophy, it is what has happened.</b></p>
<p>The use of a ‘mission statement’ is rare. Some counselling services are set up according to a specific therapeutic philosophy</p>	<p>Setting out a mission statement for the BCUC counselling service was one of the first things we did in 1992 (i.e. those of us in student services which includes the counselling service), It is something that has been reviewed yearly since 2000.</p>
<p><b>4. Attending to the needs of the wider student population</b></p>	<p>This is something I consider I need to be much more aware of in the future. Since the BCUC counselling service was always run on such a small budget, looking after the students who accessed the counselling service was the best we could do. Now that the service has grown we can address this more fully.</p>
<p>The counselling services should attend to <i>all</i> students’ needs, not just of those who come for counselling</p>	
<p><b>5. Administration and funding issues</b></p>	<p><b>My responses with respect to this aspect of the research conclusions</b></p>
<p>a] Administrative support plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of counselling services</p>	<p>a] Administrative support plays a crucial role in effectiveness. During the first 7 years I did all my own administration work. Since 1997 the service received further funding for such support and in 1999 the position of receptionist/ administrator was officially established. This was one of the most crucial developments I have worked to establish and has been a key aspect in effective service provision.</p>
<p>b] Non-traditional universities were already low in funding counselling services.</p>	<p>b] This has certainly been the case at BCUC and raising the awareness to increase the funding is something I have worked very hard to achieve every step of the way.</p>
<p>c] Pressure on funding is increasing in most universities counselling services.</p>	<p>c] Certainly it has increased in the last three years since widening participation has had a knock-on effect, in that the type of students accessing the BCUC have specific long term mental health needs.</p>
<p>d] Proving value for money and justifying organisational effectiveness is an</p>	<p>d] Proving value for money and justifying organisational effectiveness is an increasing trend. This is something that became a focal point in the evaluations, which have taken place between 2001- 2003 and will continue to be important to address.</p>

<p>increasing trend</p> <p><b>6. Gender considerations in relation to managing a university counselling service.</b></p> <p>Male heads of service maintain their post with more support from their wives and partners than their female counterparts.</p>	<p><b>Some females receive very challenging reactions from their male bosses, e.g. the service not being taken seriously on a superficial level, or they are blocked from contact with members of the organisational hierarchy.</b></p> <p>Male heads of service appear to use more confrontational / challenging interventions with the male members of the hierarchy. I have not encountered any problems with the hierarchy with regards to gender considerations. Nor have I personally experienced any impact of this nature in setting up this counselling service. However it would be useful to find (possibly through a questionnaire inquiry), whether this has been the case for others at BCUC counselling service. My personal experience is that when I need to confront the hierarchy about specific issues that is much more effective to be assertive in a more strategic manner, showing little feeling about the matter being discussed. As a female I have confronted and challenged the hierarchy about specific issues.</p>
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**The potential use of this research material**

The bounds of this inquiry are about the 'human experiences involved' in this research. The subjective personal and professional experience of people in institutional settings is at the heart of this inquiry. In this project I have paid heed to the feelings, emotions, complexities and considerations that people like me have experienced in the past and experience currently when managing and setting up student counselling services. I have inquired how other people respond to the demands of the institution, the needs of the practitioners, the demands of the students, the management of the service and how,

individually, we respond to our own personal journeys in undertaking such tasks in university settings.

It was my aim to inquire further into the “constant need to rediscover and re-engage with the relatedness, between the complexities of the individual experience and ongoing organisational processes” (Smith 1999:139). The depth of the experiences considered in this project in relation to ongoing 'organisational processes' and the conclusions reached are a good example of this; these analysed 'individual experiences' have been refined and reduced into the main conclusions outlined in this chapter.

This material has enabled the generation of a potentially valuable tool for use by counselling service managers. ' Important factors when setting up or managing a university counselling service' can be considered systematically, using a checklist derived from the key themes emerging from the present study. This checklist should help prompt reflection and focus on many of the areas that came to attention in this project. In this checklist is incorporated how the evaluative process inherent in this project has affirmed my established, as well as newly integrated, knowledge about work with the service at BCUC. This research project has challenged my thoughts and considerations in other areas and helped me to evaluate how this whole experience has impacted what I do as service manager at BCUC. It challenges me to further understand how I manage the service in relation to current and future demands so that the best possible service provision at BCUC is sought at all times.



*Table 4.3: Important factors to consider if setting up or managing a university counselling service*

<b>Core Theme 1 University Students</b>			
<b>Key issues from Core Themes</b>	<b>Ideas for consideration if Setting Up a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>Additional Ideas for consideration if Managing a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>My observations for future plans of BCUC Counselling Service</b>
Students are important and valued	Check if this is consistent with the attitude of the university. If it is, the process of setting up such a service will be less arduous. If not, then close examination of how to bring about change in attitude may be helped by liaising with influential or senior members of the hierarchy, workshops, training days, tutor support, increased faculty contact. (Also see theme 3 in this checklist )	Possibly check to see if there is evidence that 'students are important and valued' by checking evaluation questionnaires. It may be a good time to make a personal evaluation on how the head of the service currently sees students. Has this changed since onset?	Update student evaluation questionnaire to increase quality of feedback. Consider any difference in attitude in how BCUC sees their students or the counselling service.
Students vary academically	Make observations about how much students vary academically i.e. observe entrance criteria, feedback from information systems, listen to what is being said in the counselling rooms. Check the support available for study skills, tutorials, etc.	Consider if the academic calibre of students affects the counselling relationship. Also consider, for example, if the counselling service is being drawn into inappropriate involvement in mitigating circumstances.	Students' academic abilities are present in the counselling relationship. N.B. observe the relationship that the student has with the academic world and the pursuit of his or her own academia.
Student populations are increasing	Check to see if this is the case in your university. Does the Service meet the needs of the student population? If yes, will this change over the next few years? If no, monitor what is being done and forecast for future plans.	Is the service meeting the needs of the student population? Consider other means of counselling provision, i.e. group therapy, working seminars, couple work.	At BCUC, student numbers remain the same - however increasing numbers now access the service. Consider group work and preventative work.

<p>Student problems are complex</p>	<p>The university should consider the calibre, training and experience of recruiting the first counsellor. This will support the pressure the service will first be under when the complexities of students are presented. Liasing with external agencies, GP practices and Mental Health Services is essential. Foster reciprocal relationships especially with GPs for onward referrals, essential at critical times. Decide on and define the kind of service, i.e. university service is not an emergency service. Raise awareness of emergency services.</p>	<p>Check and observe the ongoing developments of external agencies. Evaluate the relationship between the university and the mental health teams - increase mental health provisions. Possibly consider employing counsellors with a psychiatric background; especially to assist with assessments of students who suffer from mental ill health.</p>	<p>Consider liasing with local psychiatric unit, increase mental health awareness in the service; arrange seminars regarding this matter. Check to see if any additional complex problems are presented in the next end-of-year student evaluation forms. If so, take some action to meet the need.</p>
<p>Students are at a peak of transitional change</p>	<p>The experience of knowing the importance of this aspect of student life will help towards greater understanding of the philosophy of working within this area. In that, remembering the wider framework will be helpful when counselling students with different presenting problems.</p>	<p>Recognising the pressures that peak performance has on people really helps when managing timetables. Respecting the academic journey is continually important when making appointments. Remembering that we are here to support the academic journey is important.</p>	<p>The experience of knowing this has helped the service and me very much. I integrate this knowledge and experience at evaluation meetings, seminars and when appropriate, in supervision.</p>

**Core Theme 2**  
**The Head of the University Counselling Service**

<b>Key issues from Core Themes</b>	<b>Ideas for consideration if Setting up a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>Additional considerations for Managing a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>My Observations for future plans of BCUC Counselling Service</b>
Why these people came into counselling initially?	Is this relevant to you? Observe one's own initial motive for entering into the counselling field. Does it affect your attitude to the clientele? If so, how does it? What do you need to observe in your own development?	Observing this question when taking on new staff might give insight, since it may reflect attitude to theory and learning. Observing personal and professional development is always important for every member of the team.	Understanding my own Reasons always help me to understand university students because this influences my philosophy to my work. Has my attitude changed regarding this matter recently? If so, why? If not, why not?
Why counsel students	What aspect of understanding students attracts you most? Does this influence the direction of your work?	Have you moved away from students more recently? If so why, is it a good move? What are the advantages and disadvantages?	This period of less contact has been essential for the research but it is important to get closer to the student body again for effective management to continue.
Why a university setting?	Why have you chosen this setting? How do you consider you will relate to the environment? What interests you about this setting? What are the limitations of such a setting?	Has this environment changed your attitude to counselling and psychotherapy? Is it easy to recruit staff in this setting? Has the academic environment had an effect on your management style?	Working in this environment is very stimulating in many ways, and the advantage of working in a job and place where one is very happy brings positive results all round.
What personal attributes are deemed important?	Makes your own checklist from these attributes (Table 4.2) Do you generally agree these are important in your position? Observe your performance and see if you need help or assistance.	How does the checklist (Table 4.2) reflect your current personal style and capabilities? Which, if any, capabilities are less useful to you now and which ones are well developed?	This list is helpful for consideration for a re-evaluation on my personal style. It may also be useful when interviewing prospective candidates for permanent or temporary posts.

**Core Theme 3**  
**The Interface between the University and their Counselling Services**

<b>Key issues from Core Themes</b>	<b>Ideas for consideration if Setting up a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>Ideas for consideration if Managing a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>My observations checklist for future plans of the BCUC Counselling Service</b>
<p>Demonstrate support for the university's objectives</p>	<p>Find out the university Mission Statement. Make one for the Counselling Service - be consistent. This is fundamental. Feedback and booklets from AUCC or other professional bodies may be useful, as may be management literature on mission statements.</p>	<p>Does the university know how much the service supports the objectives of student life? If yes, has it had positive effects? If no, it may indicate bigger problems. This could indicate difficulties ahead for the service, be alert to changes.</p>	<p>Over these past 10 years I have worked to develop this attitude in the service. However, I have been more influenced by this aspect since carrying out this research, and I will continue to support this central issue, since it is fundamental for an effective service to thrive in a university setting.</p>
<p>Develop strong affiliations within and beyond university</p>	<p>Link your professional affiliations with this job. Become involved with professional bodies i.e. HUCs, and AUCC or other local university support groups.</p>	<p>Possibly become more active with these associations. Are you already very involved? Do you need to strengthen this aspect of managing the service or do you need to anchor more in the service - balance is important.</p>	<p>AUCC, HUCs have been very resourceful for the BCUC service. Continue with these and become more overtly active in light of this project.</p>
<p>Strong relationship with hierarchy and other faculties Be politically astute, be aware of power points, try to understand the university</p>	<p>Networking, liasing, building relationships and raising your profile in the university are important. Consider how best to do this in accordance with your own personal style.</p>	<p>Do you sit on senate? If yes, how did this come about? If not why not?</p>	<p>I don't sit in senate - maybe exploring this might be interesting to pursue further. Sitting on faculty boards has allowed strong relationships to develop since this also raises awareness of counselling.</p>

Key issues from Core Themes	Ideas for consideration if Setting up a University Counselling Service	Ideas for consideration if Managing a University Counselling Service	My observations checklist for future plans of the BCUC Counselling Service
Select academically bright people in counselling service	Do you agree with this statement? Do you need to pursue your own professional and academic training; funding may be at hand if requested.	Have you done this; does it make a difference? If not would this enhance your service?	I consider the pursuit of knowledge and professional development important. However caution against elitist attitude is important to observe and 'academically bright' or educated does not necessarily mean 'therapeutically sophisticated' or skilled in counselling.
Develop training courses, seminars, etc for staff development	It may take some time to develop such in-house training, being observant and waiting a while, may help now.	What needs to be done regarding this matter? Possibly liaising with other departments might be helpful for some new ideas, i.e. open days, Student Union, Senior Residency Schemes, and Associations of the counselling service.	In-house training is seen as an important way of keeping up with the counselling team. Maybe longer seminars in the future would be more effective. Arrange BACP, continued professional development certificates for these sessions.

**Core Theme 4**  
**Managing a University Counselling Service**

<b>Key issues from Core Themes</b>	<b>Ideas for consideration if Setting up a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>Ideas for consideration if Managing a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>My observations and checklist for future plans of the BCUC Counselling Service</b>
<p>Benevolent co-operative model works best / good team is essential support</p>	<p>Does it? Have you been a manager before? If so, what do you consider is the best style of management for this setting? Evaluating how the university impacts management style would be valuable to observe over the initial stages.</p>	<p>Is this similar to your style? Do you think managing a team of part-time staff is very different to managing a combination of full-and or part-timers? What might be the main differences in management in this case?</p>	<p>I agree with the assertion that benevolent co-operative model works best. When managing part-time staff, most of the time it is important to take this kind of attitude of management - in being more directive on one level and less intrusive on the other. This style depends on goodwill and can be vulnerable to inconsistencies. Effective communication is essential.</p>
<p>Managing counsellors and psychotherapists is different from managing other groups of people?</p>	<p>Some findings in this research indicate that for example: staffs require additional individual time from the manager; there is a tendency to over-analyse policy issues; possibly less cohesiveness as a team; as well as increased good will and loyalty.</p>	<p>Reflecting on this matter may be helpful when considering taking on new members of staff. Looking to see if people can work cohesively as a team is very important.</p>	<p>Clear boundaries, collective teamwork, strong leadership, with an ability to reflect, are important factors. Empowering staff to increase their capabilities and help support their vulnerabilities will help with good practice for effective service provision.</p>
<p>Student Categorisation 'worried well' versus 'badly wounded'</p>	<p>Do you want to set up a service that will attend to either or both of these categories? If so what might the advantages and disadvantages be?</p>	<p>Is it time to reconsider this aspect of your service provision and see how to develop stronger relationship with the disabilities department and</p>	<p>I do not see a dividing line, since the level of training and experience of counselling staff can deal with both categories - as long as the relationship with mental health teams are</p>

		external mental health teams; so to get further support with the category of 'badly wounded' and so to prevent working in isolation. ?	secured. We are working on improving this network at the moment. However, I would add another category for those students who are seen by the university as 'behaving badly' and are inappropriately referred to counselling instead of being disciplined appropriately.
Theoretical orientation of head impacts the service, since philosophy can be paralleled in the management	Have you any experience of this in your previous professional positions? Considering your orientation, where might caution be necessary in planning the service?	Does this fit with your experience? Being aware of this is probably very important as personal unconscious material may be interrupting the flow of managerial issues.	I agree this is similar to my experience. The use of personal therapy, supervision and consultancy review is, and will continue to be, necessary to highlight areas of repeated parallel process that may need to be monitored.
Administrative staff essential	Possibly you will have limited administrative support initially. Be observant of this need and plan for it once there are more staff members becoming involved.	What kind of administrative support do you consider is important? How actively involved is this person in case studies, confidential matters, etc?	Crucial for the development of the BCUC Counselling Service. Very involved in all aspects of the service - needs to be for effectiveness of role.
Trainee placements: an important factor	Consider your own qualifications. Have you trained as a supervisor? This may be helpful if considering taking on placement trainees. Be alert to training courses in your area. Start making inquiries.	Foster good relationships with training institutions, yet keep focus on needs of this service. Work with accrediting bodies to best support trainees. Check what processes of supervision will best be suited. Be alert about future policies.	I want to write to the BACP Ethical Committee and address the problems already outlined previously (Chapter 4) regarding supervising trainee supervisees.

Need to be active in national policy making e.g. by being active with the BACP, AUCC or HUCs or other relevant committees

Being involved with professional bodies either overtly or covertly is important. Be aware of conferences, meetings, etc.

Are there any issues that need attending to specifically? What have you done to increase practice-based evidence in your service?

Continue to be alert, become more demonstrably involved so to present and publish relevant material.



**Core Theme 5**  
**The future of Counselling Services within University Settings**

<b>Key issues from Core Themes</b>	<b>Ideas for consideration if Setting up a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>Ideas for consideration if Managing a University Counselling Service</b>	<b>My observations and checklist for future plans of the BCUC Counselling Service</b>
<p>Produce evidence of good practice            Show value for money and maximise resources</p>	<p>Keep abreast of other counselling services, liaise and connect with professional bodies for support and guidance so to keep up with these demands. Trainees help with limited funding issues. Support staff at all times. Their qualifications can be invaluable sources of support for the service.</p>	<p>Use the expertise within the team to help deal with these demands. Supportive relationship with senior management is crucial for funding recognition and continued support.</p>	<p>This project supports meeting these requirements. Focus is still needed in the future for effective service provision. Consider Service recognition accreditation with the AUCC to show further evidence of good practise. Funding is still a constant problem. Staff salaries in this department are not consistent with similar universities</p>
<p>Be alert to service vulnerability            Caution is needed for the future</p>	<p>In this project one person said, "Part of me thinks we won't exist in the future". Few agreed with this statement but everyone called for caution to be observed. Not taking things for granted, avoid becoming more narrowly specialised, look and be aware of changes in universities and in professional status. Evidence based practice is essential. Think how to implement this in your service</p>	<p>Consider the importance of trainee placements on the team; keep focused on object of the task at hand. Be aware of cost effectiveness. Be assertive, alert and shrewd. Consider the future and statutory regulation and how this may affect your service, especially in relation to financial considerations</p>	<p>Keep focused on our responsibilities and sharply aware of any institutional changes, alert to governmental supports i.e. grants, etc. Remember the students' needs at all times. I need to consider statutory regulation very seriously and the impact on this service.</p>

### **Afterthoughts and forethought**

This research is qualitative and subjective in nature. It is based on the experience of ten participants, explored in conjunction and collaboration with my own. The research was participative meaning making. The data is based on interview interactions and the ability and willingness of those involved to remember, offer and explore information semi-publicly. There is, of course, the possibility that information may not have been remembered accurately, completely or not offered, yet a wealth of rich research data was gained. These risks are inherent in qualitative and heuristic enquiry. The ways in which they have been anticipated and managed are outlined in Chapter 3.

### **Choice of research method**

The primary way of gathering material in this project has been through the interviewing process. Other materials were recorded, i.e. poetic expressions and training manuals, which led to an amount of data that I had to distil down to a somewhat smaller size. For this reason it may be that the conclusions disregarded some valuable comments from participants.

However, the checking of data and results with the participants and via conference presentations suggests that key meanings have been captured.

Additionally, this research could have been conducted via or encompassing alternative research methods. The choice of method reflected both the researcher's own values and objectives in exploring the nature of individual experience and a subject that was inherently 'not yet researched and documented' and this 'open' research method was seen as the most appropriate. Other research methods, for example written questionnaires, might have drawn in a wider audience, yet would also have had the draw-back of limiting the type and depth of data that could be gathered.

### **Time and resources**

This doctoral research project was limited both in time and in the resources available to me. It was never the intention that the results would be seen as generalisable to the whole 'population' of university counselling services. The qualitative nature of this research was that of extracting, drawing out significant themes and knowledge, information and experiences so that the results could be used as a basis for further exploration within the wider field of counselling and psychotherapy.

### **Choice of participants**

The majority of participants represented in this study belonged to what could be identified as traditional universities, in that they did not fall into the category of being a Higher Education College or a Polytechnic before the changes that took place in the early '90s. In this light, the findings may indicate a bias towards traditional experience rather than that belonging to new universities. This factor was considered at the time when I was selecting the participants, and while their availability and willingness was a large influence on their selection I considered that the best outcome for this research inquiry would come from the experience(s) and wealth of knowledge that these people would have. Their leading positions within current university counselling services were deemed particularly appropriate for accessing rich research material. In this light, the results and outcome of this inquiry could be available to people who may be in the position of setting up counselling provisions within new universities; or, like the experience of the BCUC Counselling Service, may be in a position of developing such a service in the future. The experiences drawn from this inquiry are perhaps reflections of what might make for the provision of best, or at least common practice. How might a more broadly based enquiry have enhanced the findings? It would be a different and further research aim to consider the place and experiences of 'traditional' versus 'non-traditional' universities. This could be the subject of additional research.

Another point that may have affected the findings was that the collection of data was carried out at the end of the first semester between November and December 2001. The

timing might have caught the participants “at a more exhausted stage of their yearly working performance” (C-P7) and so material produced might have been influenced by the sense of tiredness that was reflected by most of the participants.

### **Choice of core themes**

Other researchers may wish to validate further this work or evaluate other organisations through using the core themes that emerged in this project and developing other themes. For instance, it might be worth investigating the notion of the university counselling service being open to both staff and students of the university. Almost all of the participants alluded to this and it certainly seemed to indicate a growing trend. Little attention was specifically focused on how counselling services attend to the needs of specific groups such as local or international students, cross-cultural implications and racial differences. Again, little attention was given to substance abusers and increased alcohol consumption among university students. My focus was on the experiences associated with the overall service, rather than on specific groups such as these.

Additionally, it may be important to note that counselling provision is aligned with different departments in different universities. Some, as with BCUC, come under Student Services while others are aligned with Health Services. Again, there are those who stand independently and some that have less identity on a national level and are seen very much as 'one-man bands'.

Furthermore, it must be realised that each counselling service must be identified within its culture and organisational context. Within that, there are many other student services such as financial advice, careers and academic guidance, accommodation, disabilities and welfare in Students' Union, all providing support. At no stage does this research attempt to prioritise counselling as having an importance above that of the rest.

Another aspect that was not considered specifically was that of close relationships and onward referrals between departments, faculties and external agencies. Such liaison has

been, and continues to be, important since it provides further support for students as they go through their academic pursuits.

### **Further research arising from these findings**

The findings and results of this research project indicate the need for further exploration and evaluation of the workings of university counselling services. Many forms of research within this area could certainly be developed from this project. Research involving collaboration with university authorities might also be very informative. Other studies such as an evaluation into the management practices of counselling services might also prove useful in the light of the findings in this project, with many of the interviewees indicating that managing counsellors or psychotherapists is considerably different from any other sub-group of people since more one-to-one attention is expected.

This research has focused predominantly on counsellors, psychotherapists and practitioners in university and university college settings. However, little input has been included from students; this could be deemed a limitation of the project. One part of the data collection was to inquire further about the university students themselves. This project could have been enhanced by inclusion of interviews with students but this was not done because the focus was intended to be on counselling professionals' experience of setting up and managing a university counselling service.

Another interesting area would be to interview deans, faculty staff, other managers and / or university vice-chancellors, etc., on their experience and perception of university counselling services. This kind of feedback would certainly enhance an inquiry such as this.

## **Personal reflections at the close of this project**

In Chapter 1, I outline how personally and professionally motivated I have been in undertaking this doctoral journey. My 'experience', alongside that of significant others, has been central to this evaluative inquiry and the outcome has resulted in some valuable material drawn from our applied wisdom. Throughout the process my reflexive analysis continued and at this point I want to draw these reflections together. There are three main areas of experiential learning that have taken place for me. These are the areas of: research and the process of analysis; university counselling and its 'coming of age', and finally the world of academia.

Finding meaning and understanding from 'experience' is central to the work of counselling and psychotherapy, as well as to that of research and academic activity. Making meaning from sense and understanding, and learning from experience is also crucial to this inquiry of how university counselling services are set-up and managed. Being a psychotherapist and manager is central to me in my work and it is the issue of attempting to understand this 'experience' and to extract meaning from it which motivated me to become immersed into this challenging process of a doctoral project. But *knowing how* to extract meaning in a rigorous format from qualitative material is a challenging task and one that lay at the heart of this inquiry. It is a task that demands competencies, attributes and skills beyond the work of psychotherapy, management and organisational awareness - into the world of research and analysis.

Collaborative meaning-making has been a fundamental part of my life, training and work for many years. This project represents a structured attempt to meaning-make with a particular group about a specific set of experiences. Communicating the resultant 'knowledge' to a 'critical' professional audience in project form and in publications has been crucial part of the process, as well as an essential part of the doctoral requirements. This piece of work demonstrates that I can go beyond the one-to-one work into a larger task, to a bigger project and space - being organisationally aware and of the national context aware - and make meaning with many others, not just one to one. Through this project I have shown that I can effectively analyse qualitative 'experiential material'. I

believe it is evident in this document that I deeply know the content of the material and I know from where the applied wisdom comes. This knowledge of how to carry out this process is now in *my experience* and I am capable of repeating and improving on this process in the future. I can now draw meaning from ‘experience’ in an analytical way; I could guide others in its principles and application - even if it were to be in a different form.

The qualitative nature of this doctoral project meant that I never assumed or anticipated the project's outcomes. This kind of research is designed specifically to let meaning and knowledge surface through a largely open process. I let the process and the ‘experiences’ evolve and emerge. What has emerged very clearly in the interviews and my analysis is that the provision of university counselling has become larger, more organised and professionally focused in its own right. What was primarily therapeutically driven is now, by necessity, also heavily driven by having to ‘organise’ this work as a service. The therapeutic and counselling skills can now provide me (and other service managers, if they wish) with a focus on the skills of management, caring for and more understanding of the organisational interface in the light of the learning from this research. The conclusions have also shown me the importance and necessity of being “organisationally wise” as I carry out this role of managing the BCUC counselling service.

Equally, as a reflection of the change in my understanding and status as a result of this project, I have also participated in a ‘leadership’ role via work on the National Executive Committee of the AUCC. In the course of this I am working actively to influence the community of university counselling.

For this doctoral project, I chose a project important to me personally and professionally and I asked research questions associated with that interest. The process of writing and rewriting this project was at times wearisome. However, despite drawbacks I have continued because I believed throughout this journey - that I have something valuable to offer personally and in the research; therefore it feels right to pursue this work to completion. This driving force is the same force that made me learn to knit with two skewers and a ball of twine when I was but three years old - I wanted to learn how to knit there and then and I knew I could do it. This same driving force is the force that supported me through the difficult times when setting up this Counselling Service at the BCUC and also fuelled my capabilities to find the best possible way forward to develop the best professional service that could be offered in this context. Now on completion of this research journey I 'deeply know', and it has been confirmed that 'my experience' counts.

In many ways the successive editions of this report represent a diary of my intellectual, experiential and creative professional and developmental journey. This academic journey is truly personal and can be detected in the successive versions of this report. These real experiences of research in action - the experiences of personal challenges, deeply moving material alongside evidence of my own expertise being applied. I have looked into the experiences of significant others both past (via historical documents on counselling or accounts written by counselling staff now deceased) and present - people like myself who live or who have lived their personal and professional lives by pursuing and developing the best possible provision of university counselling services. I have lived through this whole process of setting up and managing this counselling service. I have brought many aspects of my expertise to the fore in setting up and managing a counselling service, but by qualitatively analysing my own professional and personal experience together with that of significant others, I have gone one step further. In every part of this project are embedded parts of my experience together with the experience(s) of those who helped me in the process. Together this journey has been completed and something significant about human experience is captured within this document. I set out to observe and analyse my own subjective experience in order to learn more and to communicate that learning.



Since commencing this research journey some five years ago, many significant changes have taken place, not only in the development of the counselling service as described in the checklists above, but also in within my professional profile and continuing professional development. Listed below are some of the more significant outcomes and plans for this research so far; and the products of this doctoral project are also included.

### **Significant outcomes and plans for this research so far**

**July 2002:** I was elected as an executive member of the AUCC national committee. Since then I have been involved in national policy making decisions for University and College Counselling Services in the U.K. I draw on the material in this research often as back-up and together with my own professional expertise I am able to contribute something valuable in this process.

**September 2002:** In line with the continual assessments and evaluations of all services at BCUC, I considered with my manager that together with this doctoral project independent external evaluation of the service would be also valuable. It is expected that the results of this evaluation (October 2003) will independently confirm the strengths and limitations of the BCUC Counselling Service and indicate what issues need to be addressed e.g. future financial consideration.

**July 2003:** Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College has formally requested that I now officially set up and manage a staff counselling service within the institution. This request was taken after a successful six-month trial of staff counselling provision that I have I set up and managed since January 2003.

**August 2003:** I am currently involved with a steering group with BCUC, local G.P.s and Psychiatrists so to develop, new polices and working strategies to support Mental Health issues in the institution. This has been supported by a new Mental Health Brochure which a member of my team and I have recently published

**August 2003:** BCUC have just officially announced that a new campus will be built on a new site in High Wycombe in 2006. In order to assist the Director with these plans, I have been asked to forecast the needs and developments of the Counselling Service for the next ten years and help to design the new counselling suite for the future.

**In January 2004:** BCUC is making an application to the Government for full 'University' Title, naturally this process involves the submission of lengthy academic and service reviews, evaluations and reports to demonstrate the standard and quality of academic service the BCUC offers its students. It is expected that this research project together with the external evaluators' report of the BCUC Counselling Service will significantly and effectively demonstrate to the BCUC hierarchy and the external assessors involved in this process of the high standard in the BCUC Counselling Service. It is expected that submission of these projects will support the overall application in a positive way. It is my vision to now develop the staff counselling service in the same professional and efficient manner. What will be different this time will be the deepened level of my professional knowledge and expertise.

The BCUC gave me the financial support to do this doctorate programme. I believe I have completed this academic and professional challenge in a way that I and the institution both respect and from which benefits can be derived for everyone involved in the delivery of quality counselling services to the student population, not least the students themselves. Given that I have now also been asked to set up a staff counselling service, I know my professional expertise alongside the experience of doing this research will make the journey ahead very exciting and promising.

### **Products of this project**

This research project was designed to provide three separate products - academic papers, conference presentations and training days.

#### Academic Papers

Concise academic papers expected to be published by:

- The Quarterly Research Journal, published by the AUCC,
- The Quarterly Research Journal, published by the BACP,
- The Journal ‘éisteach’, published by the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy IACT.

### Presentations

The Irish Association for Counselling and Therapy have expressed an interest for me to present this project. They have also mentioned that they would like to have access to this document to demonstrate to the Irish Government that research is very much part of the community of Irish therapists. Currently the IACT is seeking statutory status and it identifies that this project may be of some help in this process.

Additionally, I presented a workshop in May 2002 at the BACP Research Conference in London, and to the AUCC Conference in July 2002.

### Training days

A two-day training programme for people who are currently endeavouring to set-up counselling services or who are in the process of already doing so will be designed. These training days are planned to be presented in Ireland in the autumn of 2004 and will incorporate the qualitative nature of this research in that it will look at the experiential perspective of this inquiry. The aim of this is to find a medium for dialogue reflection and shared learning within the field of psychotherapy. This training will be called ‘On Managing University Counselling Services - an Experiential Perspective’.

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### **Personal commentary - change in the doctoral project**

I consider it important to acknowledge some changes that I have made since the completion of my Learning Agreement in May 2000. I outlined then I would evaluate the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College (BCUC) Counselling Service by analysing four categories: Client Evaluation; Evaluation of the Supervisory Practice; Evaluation of the Organisational Perceptions; and an Overall Evaluation of the Evaluation Process. However, on consultation with my Academic Supervisor and indeed in line with some of the feedback from the Learning Agreement Presentation, it seemed apparent to me that this project was indeed very extensive and possibly too far reaching for a 120 credits project.

On careful analysis, the project seemed too insular, in that it was only analysing one university setting. At the Learning Agreement Presentation, Dr. Derek Portwood gave some challenging yet encouraging feedback, when he added that the project could be more stimulating and valuable if a collaborative inquiry with other universities could be included. I agreed, but I was presented with quite a challenge. Already the project felt too big - adding another dimension would make it too long and drawn-out and I was concerned that the project would lose its focus.

So, after some time I came up with clearer objectives for the final project. I had moved away in some very definite aspects from the original Learning Agreement, but I had retained its main focus. That is, I still wanted to carry out some sort of evaluation of the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University Counselling Service but I did not feel motivated to do it exactly how I had originally stated. I decided that I would document and analyse how I had set-up and managed the service, and at the same time I would research the experiences of others who are or who have been through a similar process.

The focus of this final Doctorate Project is still partly evaluative. However, it does not limit the findings solely to BCUC and finally it incorporates and collaborates with other

university services. The documentation and data collection already collated for the original project were not lost since they became an integral part of the inquiry. The original Learning Agreement had intended to provide an evaluative research tool for other universities. Now, the methodology and process may still be seen as evaluative, since others could use the material in a similar process if further comparative studies take place. Additionally, close investigation was carried out to inquire whether a new Learning Agreement needed to be resubmitted to the Academic Board. However, after careful consultation with my Academic Supervisor and my Academic Advisor, it was deemed that this renewed project still falls within the bounds of the original learning agreement.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Further personal considerations about this doctoral project**

One of the co-participants involved in this project said during our interview “people in university believe in thesis, antithesis, and ultimately some sort of synthesis. That’s what you are trained in if you are an academic and if you’re in a university that’s the world you’re in”. I thought about this quote for some considerable time and I focused on the word ‘academic’. I wondered why this word in particular was poignant for me and of course being an ‘academic’ in the traditional sense is not something I had ever fully identified with – for I had not taken the conventional route of continued higher education through a university when I first left secondary school. I had taken a more individual route to develop my own personal and professional career and this has been through many creative avenues.

Yet, I was drawn to work in a university setting. ‘Why was this?’ I wondered. Yet the above quote led me to further question my own academic experience and my attitudes towards academia. I was, from the onset of this doctorate programme, an accomplished and well-respected practitioner; an accredited and registered counsellor, psychotherapist and supervisor, with a Masters of Science Degree, and additional undergraduate credits in the field of counselling and psychotherapy. All had been completed after a full-time undergraduate diploma course in home economics, yet something was missing. Something within my professional journey and within me still needed to be completed.

I began to question the notion of knowledge and wisdom and seriously wondered why there appears to be a general consensus held that the monopoly on knowledge pertained only to traditional hard-edged academics. Of course, I don’t experience this to be true but somehow it was this particular kernel of thought that led me to consider undertaking a journey such as this. Somehow I knew, deep within my experience and academic potential, that by undertaking a challenge such as this, I too could find something that had been lost deep within me. I believe that people like me - I mean people who did not first choose to go to university by the traditional route, (indeed were not encouraged to do so) - can still make very significant and valuable contributions to the world of

academia and research. I consider that this is because life experience and a fuller desire to reach deeply hidden inner potentials seem to be a strong active drive for some people at later stages of life. Consequently, I see myself in this category. Therefore, successfully completing this doctoral programme will be a true representation of unleashing an often-troubling potential that carries within itself true academic ability. This process is my own academic and professional journey in pursuit of recognition. Thus, this doctoral project aims to contribute something significant to the field of counselling and psychotherapy research, by a non-traditional means of researching and analysing the human experience at work.

I was drawn into the field of university counselling perhaps for other reasons too. Was it perchance that “I knew at some level the needs of a number of students because they reflected my own needs; which may not have been met or addressed at that time?” On further reflection I am reminded of a passage, which I had included in my learning agreement to demonstrate an aspect of my own personality and how, at certain times in my life, I recall being influenced by deep unconscious aspects of my earlier childhood experiences. One memory was that of a powerful recurring dream and, without going into the detail of what I am reminded of by this dream, I wonder if there is a deep part of my childhood experience that holds the belief that in some over-compensatory manner I must respond to challenges by doing things alone. I refer to this dream because I consider that, in part, on some level, and at different stages of setting-up and developing this university counselling service, I was brought back to this position of knowing that I could do it alone. Of course there were positive aspects to this notion.

Echoes of Irish stock phrases still remind me of how I journeyed through my younger years in Ireland and ‘if you want something, go and get it for yourself’ was something I still recall as a powerful factor during the first few years of setting-up the service. At the first stage of setting-up the service I ventured it alone. By practical implications I could not have done it any other way since only one post was available, yet I was drawn to this position. It may be that I re-enacted the recurring fear, which in turn led me to the point where I felt that I had to do the job alone. However, then wisdom guided me

from different avenues: deepening self-awareness in personal therapy and continued professional development, together with supervision, made me alert to choices that I could make. Subsequently I began to concentrate my efforts on how to instigate gathering a group of practitioners together to work as a team. After considerable periods of expansions together we began to tackle the ever-increasing, emerging, demanding and satisfying task of counselling students in a university setting. This development led to continuous networking with collegiate groups of professional peers whom to this day help to support and guide this service and me.

In essence my work at the College developed successfully from the time I fully realised and integrated the experience that I did not have to do it alone, unlike I had feared in my dream. I had learned to resolve ways of coping with my hidden fear. My new awareness gave me insight to bring very positive changes in my self and in turn how I developed professionally within my work. As a result, the outcome was very fruitful for all - especially the Counselling Service.

So this journey of setting-up and developing the Counselling Service here at BCUC since 1992 has been quite a personally driven journey. What lay at the heart of this process has been a very subjective personal and professional experience. Reflecting on this journey I realise that my determination and professional competence, together with the selection of a very good team, gave me further drive in developing the service that it has become today. I suspect that our personal reactions to life and experience of education have much to do with understanding the university contexts further and our individual and collective roles within the institution. The needs of the students naturally became motivating factors, and the force of this motivation merged with my own motivations. Thus, the combined factors produced the insight, curiosity and energy that have brought about today's effective BCUC Counselling Service. I know this to be a valuable service, because of the respect other people give it. This is evident by the increased funding that the university provides for the service. Alongside the recent request for me to set-up a staff counselling provision, much more evidence is found in some very valuable and informative feedback from student satisfaction questionnaires, end-of-year reports and other written material. Additionally, the general reports from



the team of counsellors and psychotherapists in this service also reinforce this view. The general consensus is that we are ‘on the whole, doing things really well’.

## Appendix 3

### Meeting the criteria for the doctoral journey

#### *Programme Action Plan*

M/Prof /D Prof Award Sought Doctorate Professional Studies In Psychotherapy
November 1998 I applied for APWBL level 4 in respect of DPS4531 and DPS4533. The board validated both projects in December 1998 60 credits (20 for DPS4531 and 40 credits for DPS4533)
May 1999 I applied for Review of Previous Learning (Compulsory model) successfully validated in June 1999. 20 credits
January 2000 I applied for APWBL level 5 in respect of three projects already carried out at doctoral level. Successfully validated in February 2000. 100 credits
March 2002 presentation of the 8 Specialist Seminars attended since November 1998. On successful submission and validation 40 credits

Final Doctoral Project DPS5121 (120 credits) An evaluative inquiry on the 'experience' of setting up and managing a university counselling service.
March 2002 Presentation May 2002 Viva and Presentation December 2003 final submission

#### **Doctoral Journey**

Throughout the last eleven years I have been specialising as a senior practitioner in the capacity of researcher, manager, supervisor, trainer, clinician and private practitioner. I consider that the level of academic and professional projects that I have successfully

undertaken and the resulting influence and positive interaction within the therapeutic community and beyond has been at doctoral level.

So far on this programme I have successfully achieved 200 credits.

20 credits in respect of DPS4531,

40 credits in respect of DPS4533,

20 credits in respect of the Review of Previous Learning

20 credits in respect of the Learning Agreement

100 credits at Level 5.

Outstanding Credits: expected to be validated within this doctoral presentation; 40 credits in respect of specialist seminars and 120 credits in respect of medium sized research project.

Since commencing this programme I have also attended eight specialist seminars and on satisfactory completion I expect to be validated with a further 40 credits. In this project I want to draw all my capabilities together so that I can finally demonstrate with evidence, a clear, precise, persuasive and descriptive final project.

The completion of DPS4531 and DPS4533 represented a concrete base for this course of study to continue and progress. In November 1998 I applied for and was granted an APWBL at Level 4. Throughout that application I highlighted how I had by that stage successfully achieved a Masters of Science Degree in Psychological Counselling at the University of Surrey. During that period, a project on 'Factors, which influence the ideal client-load of Counsellors and Psychotherapists in Practice' was carried out. In that particular paper I provided sufficient evidence of the formal training that I had completed by that stage, demonstrating further how the experience of being a researcher informed my thoughts and beliefs about additional psychotherapeutic projects.

I was able to demonstrate how the experience of carrying out extensive research at Masters Level informed me practically and kept me grounded. I developed the capability of becoming more realistic and clear on a practical level. I learned how to

implement the crucial statistical tools in a way that was useful and since then I have used these capabilities more fully. The continued research, experience and the integration of further knowledge has allowed me to be clear about this doctoral project and somehow allowed me further freedom to be congruent with the changes, challenges and indeed ultimate choices that I have made throughout this research journey. In fact, the last period of apparent stagnation that I now call the 'necessary creative stagnation' or what Moustakas (1990) calls the 'incubation phases', finally gave rise to the catharsis to complete this final research with the inspirational intention I upheld in the beginning. I used my maturity, persistence, perseverance, and optimism to complete the final project and I now consider I am a capable, competent and innovative researcher.

Having the opportunity to draw together the professional and personal development in my Review of Previous Learning allowed for clarity, analysis and exploration to take place. The identification of what had been the significant influences in my learning really informed me consciously of what is at the heart of my therapeutic work. This is the firm belief that counselling, provided in appropriate settings and effective therapeutic relationships, can nurture the best possible outcome for clients at all times. This work-based experience at the core of my work, alongside many other strands, provides a very clear framework from which I work. Pulling all my experiences, knowledge, expertise and achievements together enabled me to develop the psychotherapeutic project of setting-up the Counselling Service at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. I consider many aspects of this service could be evaluated effectively if the closer evaluation originally planned had been carried out. However, I consider that there is still sufficient documented evidence available in the service to demonstrate significant effective practices, especially if observed in the light of the interface between personal development and academic achievement.

I consider that the way in which the service was developed and managed allowed an increased number of students being seen for counselling over these years. The service provides employment for several staff and provides in-house supervision for training counselling and psychotherapeutic placements. It aims to work within an accountable,

professionally transparent and ethical framework. All of this has been within severely limited financial, physical and human resources.

The validation of my APWBL Level 5 enabled me to draw together clearly current and past work-based projects that I had undertaken more recently. I considered that the three projects: Setting up a Counselling Service in Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College; A Consultative Review of the Supervision Arrangements within the Wycombe Counselling Service; and A Staff Development Training, were all at doctoral level. All three have resulted in some positive change and interaction taking place within their respective institutions and has generated dialogue and discussion within the psychotherapeutic framework. I felt thoroughly achieved and satisfied when the board of examiners awarded full credits to me at Level 5.

This proposed programme of study is also based on my earlier achievements of becoming UKCP registered as a psychotherapist, BAC accredited as an independent counsellor and becoming a Metanoia registered supervisor. (This involves supervising trainees and qualified counsellors and psychotherapists). Throughout this process of becoming more competent as a practitioner, my level of commitment and sense of professional responsibilities have grown and strengthened as I have become more involved in complex specialised work settings.

My continued ongoing academic development allows for further synthesis of knowledge. I consider that I am now at a more advanced stage of translating assimilated knowledge into practical work-based practices. This is seen especially in my work at the University where I challenge constantly the trials, dilemmas and unpredictable situations placed upon the BCUC Counselling Service.

## Appendix 4

### Specialist seminars and the research journey

#### Advanced practitioner and specialist seminars

16 September 1998	Towards an Effective Process and Outcome Strategy for Evaluating the Psychological Therapies Michael Barkham Ph.D. University of Leeds – Metanoia (1)
13 November 1999	How hard can you kick a baby? Valerie Sinason, Consultant Child Psychotherapist Tavistock Clinic, Metanoia (2)
27 January 2000	‘Voices in the Dark’ An Inquiry in Writing Miller Marie Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist David Hart, Poet, Metanoia (3)
6 November 2000	‘Psychodynamic & Self-Psychological Formulations concerning the effects of Trauma’ Gillian Starker Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist (4)
February 2001	Action Research Peter Reason (6)
May 2001	‘Advancement of Clinical Studies (7)’ Lynne Jacobs Ph.D. Co-founder of the Gestalt Therapy Institute of the Pacific
May 2001	‘Closing the Gap between research and Practice Revisited – The Implications of Hermeneutics’ Professor Rennie York University, Toronto
May 2001	‘Qualitative Research – Foreword Narrative Personalised Accounts’ Kim Etherington

## **Overview of specialist seminars**

On reflection, I consider that attending these seminars was a very important component of completing the doctorate. I remember that I first attended the Briefing Seminar at Metanoia to investigate whether or not this doctorate programme was for me - certainly the idea of attending the specialist seminars was an initial attraction. It transpired that these sessions alone were inspirational and they contained the taught element of the programme that allowed me the opportunity to apply to the BCUC for funding. As this taught element was an integral and compulsory component of the complete programme I was able to apply for funding for taught courses through the Quality Enhancement Development (QED) section of the University. This application in itself strayed from the norm since usually traditional PhDs did not fall into a category for full funding, since they do not contain taught course elements. I was successful in my application, since my then manager was also very supportive of me undertaking such an academic pursuit.

Naturally the funding played a huge part in enabling me to commence this programme; certainly without it this course of action would not have been a possibility. I was most privileged and believed then, as I still believe, that I was given a marvellous opportunity to work through such a fascinating programme.

I owe a great deal of my appreciation to many. However, pertaining to this section I owe much appreciation and thanks to Mr Gary Turton, my previous manager, for his strong recommendation, support and encouragement in suggesting initially to me a doctorate, several years before this programme existed. He always encouraged me toward a traditional PhD, but I knew then that taking the conventional route in what I considered to be a lonely, highly academic way, was not for me. Fortunately, a different way forward became possible when I first heard about the Masters/Doctorate in Professional Studies at Metanoia and Middlesex University.

From the very beginning I was intrigued about whether or not Metanoia would develop a doctorate programme. I remember in December 1996, when I attended a Metanoia 'staff away day' that I first heard about the possibility of this idea coming to fruition. I tentatively put up my hand when it was asked how many people would be interested in doing such a programme. There were many who responded and I was one who was definitely interested.

From that moment I was inspired by the vision of the Metanoia doctoral programme. What really attracted me was the notion that "knowledge is conceived as a collaborative creation rather than simply an objective discovery"; and this notion of "conversation based learning" (Metanoia Handbook 1999, p31) is very much in line with my final research project, since it is mainly the collaborative creation of knowledge through the heuristic inquiry that makes my research original.

It is then, by doing this doctoral programme, that a final research project will be contributed to the field of psychotherapeutic literature. It is expected that this end product will be original, valuable and, hopefully, a useful piece of practice-based research to which others can have access. In this, it is expected to fulfil the philosophy of the doctorate programme in that the projects within this programme are "judged not only on their methodological rigour but also on the value and usefulness of such projects been carried out". (The Metanoia Handbook, 1999 p5).

The 'community of scholarly practitioners' aspect of the specialist seminars appealed to me most. I knew the style of learning was consistent with my personal style since the self-directed component using discussion, dialogue, critical discovery and community-based scholarly activities to probe specialist areas of psychotherapy would, McLeod (BACP Research Journal, 2001) points out, 'bridge the gap' between research and practice. I knew that I could respond well to this kind of learning and so my attitude to attending the specialist seminars was open and enthusiastic. I knew that I would enjoy the days together with other colleagues and I was ready to take on the challenge in creative ways.



Throughout this doctoral programme I also attended two other conferences on different aspects of research, focusing especially on research within university settings. The first was held at Cambridge University in June 2000 and then I attended a Conference at Oxford University in July 2001. Both days looked at research and its impact on bridging the gap between research and practice. Both, in their different ways, contributed to my development and learning and significantly informed me regarding my final project. A closer observation is seen later in this section.

### **Learning and influences from specialist seminars**

I have spent considerable time reflecting on the value and importance of attending these seminars throughout the last three years. I consider that on the whole they were interesting and thought provoking. In general, I enjoyed the collaborative nature of the learning forum with specialists and their related subjects. It was a pleasure to have such a forum in which to work creatively with others to stimulate and renew my energy, creativity and overall focus for my own development. I kept a detailed journal of my complete attendance on the doctoral programme and now really appreciate how important these journals are.

On reflection, they have been more important now as this project comes to an end, especially since the notes, reflections, prose, tasks and continuous account of my personal journey have given a record of my own inner heuristic inquiry. Of course, these journals preserve my accounts of attending the specialist seminars so have been invaluable in assisting the analysis. However, I would say that only approximately 50% of them directly influenced the final project.

### **The specialist seminars that related directly to my learning**

‘Exploring the Meaning of Reflexivity in relation to Practitioner Oriented Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy’ (Metanoia Seminar, McLeod 1999) and ‘Developing a Knowledge Community’ (Bridging the Gap Research Conference, Oxford University,

2000) were most influential for me. They invited me to consider carefully the possibility of making a personal reflexive inquiry in the final project. I found the concept curious, challenging and exciting. What I remember most of all about that seminar at Metanoia was the importance of being able to include one's own narrative reflexively. I understood then the deeper level, the inward dialogue which is involved in the process of reflexivity that allows deeper unconscious material to come to the fore, revealing in this process a greater sense of awareness and insight. It has been this component particularly that is really important for the project. This was one of the most important aspects that I kept close to mind as I carried out my research. "The crisis of representation has brought about the notion of reflexivity" were McLeod's own words, and it was this precisely that fundamentally influenced my research. As my fellow seminar participants and I discussed the matter closely later on in the day, I pondered on how I could represent my work at the University in a reflexive manner. I realised then that I had found a kernel to ponder over and the way forward was opening to me.

I found John McLeod's writings clear, informative, descriptive and in some cases prescriptive, which was actually what I needed. The conference almost a year later was the most inspirational of all, since it was at this time that I was going through the period of contemplation and incubation. I knew that I wanted to have an alternative focus in the final project and McLeod's presentation on 'Developing a Learning Community' raised my interest and re-ignited my passion in completing this final journey. It was out of this conference that I decided to engage in a collaborative project of working together with significant others. At that stage I then embarked on developing a specific learning community, where great attention was paid to building a cohesive approach. This was done by allowing the experience of several people, all of whom had contributed in a major way to the field of university counselling services, to come together 'in harmony'. To this end, the likelihood of having a beneficial impact for clients by "pooling resources in the pursuit of learning" (Metanoia Handbook 1999 p31) had found another forum.

'The Art of Writing' carried out by Miller and Hart (2000) was the seminar that influenced my ability to write in a creative way, yet it helped me to keep within the

mode of researcher. This seminar invited candidates to ponder in a poetic way to inform, rather than the normally academic tone of writing within psychotherapeutic literature. This really opened up processes that had always been familiar to me. Writing creatively, even poetically, was a thing that I had always enjoyed. Here I was being given permission, and even being encouraged, to present a project in a way that I had thought would never have been appropriate. I knew that I had found ‘my’ way and since then I have been able to use this process freely as is seen throughout various stages of this project.

The limitation of this seminar and indeed the process of reflexivity in writing research was that little consideration was given to the difficulties that practitioners may face in trying to publish work that does not fall within the conventional academic presentation. Yet I consider that the current experienced dialogic, qualitative research growing continuously within the field of psychotherapy will ultimately challenge the voice of social scientific research. Even if this process may appear relatively new for psychotherapists, it is certainly not new within the field of contemporary ‘relationship’ analysis. For me, it has given me permission to speak and in a creative way.

The seminars ‘Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice Re-visited’ (Professor Rennie 2001), ‘Advancement of Clinical Studies’ (Lynne Jacobs, 2002) and ‘Writing Qualitative Research’ (Kim Etherington, 2001) informed me, in their own ways, more generally to the background of qualitative research. The question on which I have reflected right through this research journey is ‘Can qualitative research be carried out effectively?’ and now my answer is definitely ‘Yes’. I now know from carrying out my third piece of qualitative research that there are limitations to qualitative work but that it is possible to find scientific means of analysing subjective data with rigorous validated means (McLeod, J. 1998; Moustakas, C. 1998). The outcome and findings do contribute in positive ways to the field of psychotherapy, thus benefiting many in the long run.

Another main component of the seminars was the focus of evaluation and research as was seen in ‘Evaluating the Psychological Therapies’ (Michael Barkham, 1998). As described previously, I was initially very eager to embark on an evaluation of the BCUC

Counselling Service by possibly using the 'Core System Group' (1999) and indeed this seminar was very informative and clear about evaluating service provision. Even though the material did not attract me sufficiently to pursue that direction.

On a more critical note there were some disappointments, especially in the case of Professor Rennie's presentation, where little group interaction was encouraged. However, the expertise and in-depth analysis and quality of the material on qualitative research were very impressive. In fact, I received some valuable individual attention, as did other members of the group, and the general feedback was helpful in that it revealed a level of frustration and confusion about the focus of the research. It was during this seminar that I decided against using specific grouped theory/hermeneutics as part of my project on the grounds that the process did not include me as an additional researcher. The outcome of the day was that I felt disempowered, confused and weary. In hindsight, it was this seminar that led to me searching for another form of qualitative research.

It was during the last conference in Oxford on research that I met with Dr. Curtis Jenkins, a well-known general practitioner, researcher, writer and senior tutor who has spent considerable time developing both the literature and the practice of Counselling in Primary Care Settings in UK GP Practices. Over lunch we discussed our professional lives and he was very interested in my project and invited me to discuss the matter further. His valuable time and attention during that day was one of the most important turning points on this research journey. It was this discussion that strongly influenced and motivated me to take the project forward by using Moustakas' (1990) model of qualitative research and from this point onwards I decided to become more familiar with heuristic inquiry.

There was little opportunity to influence the choice of the format or presentation of the seminars; and I experienced this particularly in the seminar that was led by Valerie Sinason. I considered that the presentation disclosed unnecessary material about ritualistic and satanic infant abuse. The material by and large had little connection with the papers referred to for prior reading. Attending this seminar was not appropriate for

me, since hearing such abusive material was untimely, because it was close to us having our son Ciaran. However, a desire to complete the required number of seminars influenced my decision. Personally, it turned out to be difficult and I would have preferred to have been informed of the change in the subject disclosure, since this would have allowed me time to reconsider my attendance. However, in all, I consider that the process of 'informing' about such matters in psychotherapy is, above all, crucial but I feel that this in itself may be a definitive problem of narrative and qualitative research. I ask the question, 'Can narrative stories be tolerated in the retelling?' - an important factor to consider.

In conclusion I considered that the specialist seminars were a very important part of the programme. They contributed to scholarly discussions, time for debate, reflection, didactic teaching and collegial interaction. Above all, they contributed to continued professional development. They were an important critical discovery of my process of learning and evolving throughout this doctoral programme because without them, the challenge would have been a lot less contained since the specialists ultimately provided a continued point of reference for community networking and shared synthesis.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Personal commentary - How this doctorate project demonstrates capabilities at doctorate level?**

Within the context of the Metanoia Doctorate in Professional Studies programme, each candidate is required to illustrate how the level five doctoral competencies are achieved whilst carrying out this doctoral project. (The Metanoia Handbook 1998).

In the category of ‘professional context’, the commitment that I have shown to this doctoral project demonstrates my focus and the high priority I place on my personal and professional development; this is also seen in areas of self-dialogue and reflection. Within the ‘professional knowledge’ the synthesis of literature and research knowledge that is demonstrated in this project is an example of how I can autonomously learn and use information and ideas, and thus create responses to problems and refine data in a creative way. I have dealt with complexities and contradictions in research information and related knowledge. This can be particularly seen in how I have changed the doctoral project from that of an evaluation process to an evaluative inquiry into setting-up and managing a university counselling service.

Within the category of ‘professional practice’, I have demonstrated the applicable ‘competency skills’, by developing a therapeutic practice, then a counselling service within the chosen field in a university setting. I have acquired and developed communication skills associated with managing the interface with the University and its managers. This was seen in particular, in the way I managed the BCUC Counselling Service through many turbulent and complicated periods.

However, the capabilities outlined above must not be seen in isolation for it is not only the doctorate itself that demonstrates my competencies as a doctoral candidate. For example, my work as a senior accredited BACP, UKRC, AHPP practitioner, counsellor and psychotherapist, together with my work as a registered person centred and integrative supervisor contributes significantly to my level of competence and expertise.

Also my academic capabilities together with my managerial skills enrich my professional knowledge and practise. Altogether these combined capabilities contribute to the whole professional context of this inquiry.

The deep levels of therapeutic experiences over these past twenty years have enriched me. Also the multi-layered training that I have successfully accomplished enables me to understand this field more profoundly; these aspects together with the high quality of supervision which I have received and the style of supervision I provide in my practice keeps me clinically alert and active. All these experiences contribute powerfully to my evolving role as manager and as a result I have matured as a professional. In this way I bring my expertise to this therapeutic and academic world.

This professional journey is truly a personal and biographic one. The respect and authority that is accorded to me is gained by my constant aim to model the best possible practice, with astute ethical considerations at all times. An example of these standards is reflected in me being an active member of the national executive committee for the Association of University College Counsellors, together with being involved on continuation audit and attaining university status committees within the BCUC University. It is the amalgamation of these roles that enriches me personally and professionally.

However, beyond these capabilities which are but a facet of what is involved when one walks the therapeutic journey with another, on this journey we have the opportunity of understanding more about all that we don't know in this world. This humbling process is the one that drives me the most. The experience of being human is a complex process and helping to unravel the ingrained emotional tangles, in order to become freer to live a fuller life is what this whole work is about both personally and professionally. So however professionally achieved and accomplished one becomes it must not be forgotten that 'accomplishment' must always be seen in context. Additionally, in order to expand my professional and managerial skills and understanding this process mentioned above also underlies the research I have conducted here. I have chosen to have conversations with fellow university professionals in an interactive manner to

elicit, and learn from their lives - to 'walk their journey' in this research context and to present an innovative project that can benefit myself and others. This whole process supports the notion that "knowledge is conceived as a collaborative creation rather than simply an objective discovery (Metanoia Handbook 1999, p31).



## **Appendix 6**

### **Personal commentary - the re-analysis**

After the viva presentation of this project May (2002), I was asked to do some additional work on the analysis to draw out further meaningful material which the examiner considered had not been made explicit enough at that time. In order to do this, I re-analysed the material in a deeper way and since then I have re named the first part of the analysis, Route One. This part now contains the same analytic process and results that were shown in original material, but is now presented in a different way, with more emphasises on a narrative presentation. Subsequently this second re analyses, is called Route Two. Let me further explain, the re analyses, the methodology and new presentation of this chapter.

At the beginning of the re analyses in Route Two, I stepped back and asked what further thematic categories were contained in the data. I then re-immersed myself in the data; I reviewed the tapes and re-read the transcripts, notes, and journals for further themes. This time with the advantage of a further incubation period, (time spent thinking about the analyses between route one and route two); plus having more hindsight about the whole project, I was more even alert to the data. My mind was more open to addressing further knowledge and subsequent meaning of the material. I concentrated on the moments in the interviews which reflected deeper wisdom and understanding taking place (i.e. the 'aha' moments) and drew out the personal and professional experiences more explicitly. I wanted to move away from tables of quotes, (which had been presented beforehand,) and to replace them with passages of narrative which reflected the active process of meaning-making which had been exhibited by us all, (the participants and myself) in the interviews. The new material is now presented in a more impactful way.

I continued to be informed by the methodology of heuristic inquiry at this stage. Because of the process of making the tacit knowledge explicit, I decided against the suggestion by the examiner at the time of the viva that being informed by grounded theory might be more appropriate at this stage. Some of the coding and categorisation

processes I used are akin to the grounded theory approach. While I did look for links and connections between the 'bracketing' off of some of the categories and themes, I did not use, for example, the 'axial coding' frame as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). And I rejected the notion of solely using the grounded theory approach because I considered this approach was too technologically informed in its structure and was not in keeping with the analysis of my own material as researcher as is described by Moustakas (1990). I considered that being informed by heuristic inquiry within the framework of naturalistic inquiry was the best forward for this re-analysis.

The new material that emerged from this re-analysis was categorised in two ways. The first part contains four sub-themes of the core themes already outlined in route one; but these sub-themes demonstrate deeper understanding and considerations of the material. In Route One the core themes were highlighted in a content categorisation format, where as, with this second route the sub-themes were drawn forward and identified in a more meaningful way (i.e. presented in a more narrative way). The second part of the re-analysis drew out a new category that had not been previously presented at all in Route One.

**Appendix 7**  
**List of sample comments received from the Buckinghamshire**  
**Chilterns University College Counselling Service**  
**Questionnaires 2002-2003**

“The Counsellor made me feel I was human and not some sort of weirdo.”

“I found this service very helpful.”

“ My counsellor was very understanding and she supported me through difficult times,  
i.e. at the end of term with my university work. I just needed a bit of support Thank You  
p.s. I could be back.”

“I was pleased I was given another six sessions which allowed me to continue a support  
which I could use alongside my studies.”

I would like to thank all the counselling staff. The service is not exposed enough and  
not many students know they can go regardless of how small the problem is.”

Excellent Service keep up the good work.”

“Six sessions isn’t enough.”

Did anything surprise you about the counselling process?

“ I was not told what to do just decide for myself.”

“I mainly just need someone to tell how I was feeling when I couldn’t do anything else:  
“I would have no hesitation in coming back. It made a big difference.”

“I felt I could have just as well been in a room talking to a brick wall, there was no  
interaction, I felt like I was just performing.”

“My counselling has had a big impact on my life and the way I view situations.”

“I have managed with the help of counselling to put a better perspective on issues.”

“It has helped me to focus my thoughts and concentrate more on my work. It enabled  
me to complete my work even though I did not manage to do my best at the time.”

“I can do nothing but sing the praises of this service. They always supported me even  
when my counsellor wasn’t around.”

“Definitely its good to talk to some one who is not emotionally involved and has a clear  
head.”

“Helped me cope with life.”

## **Appendix 8**

### **Co-participants' invitation letter and participation release agreement**

Dear

Thank you for your interest in my doctoral research project on 'An Evaluative Inquiry into the 'experience' of Setting Up/ Managing a University Counselling Service'.

I value the unique contribution that you can make to my project and am excited about your participation in it. The purpose of this letter is to explain further some of the things I have already talked to you about regarding this matter.

The research model I am using is a qualitative one through which I am seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions of your experience. In this way I hope to illuminate more about this evaluative inquiry. By the term 'evaluative inquiry' I mean to understand more about a personal evaluative experience of setting up/ managing a University Counselling Service.

Through your participation, I hope to understand the essence of the phenomenon as it reveals itself in our experience together. The interview will be an hour long, recorded and semi-structured. The aim of which is to illuminate and investigate some themes, which you consider important in managing a University Counselling Service. The themes, which I have already researched and analysed, are expected to be an integral part of our dialogue.

I am seeking vivid, accurate and comprehensive portrayals of what this process is like and any of your thoughts, feelings of what the experience of managing a University Counselling Service is like for you, so any situations, events, places and people connected with your experience can be shared. You may also wish to share any documentation that you may have recorded of your experiences i.e. letters, poems or artwork.

Then following on from our interview, through transcription and analysis I will be more informed about setting up and managing University Counselling Services from your perspective. Your interview is one of eight so together, through this collaborative enquiry, it is hoped important reflections will emerge, ultimately providing a different, more personal experiential perspective on this evaluative inquiry. The outcome, it is hoped, will contribute valuable research within the field

of counselling and psychotherapy, which may ultimately bring about the possibility of further positive change for clients through the process of effective service provision.

I value your participation and thank you for the commitment of time, energy and effort. I would be grateful if you could sign the enclosed release form, so to ensure you are fully aware of this procedure and agree that I am working within ethical considerations.

If there is anything you wish to discuss with me further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest Regards

### **Participation-Release Agreement**

I agree to participate in the doctoral research project on 'an evaluative inquiry into setting up/ managing a University Counselling Service' as described in the attached letter. I understand the purpose and intention of this project and am participating voluntarily. I understand our interview will be audio taped for accuracy.

I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing this doctorate, including the possibility of any further publications. I understand that my name will not be used in the final documentation. However, if there is anything, which I disagree with, in this process, I reserve the right to withdraw at any stage.

Research Participant

Primary Researcher

Date

Date

## Appendix 9

### Evaluation questionnaire for Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College Counselling Service

*For most of the questions you simply have to **tick** or **circle** the answers that best apply to you. If you want to add anything please write in the 'any comment' spaces. You can tick more than one answer.*

1)	Did anyone <b>suggest</b> you came for counselling? <span style="float: right;">Yes/No</span> If yes, who suggested it? - your tutor <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - another member of staff <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - your doctor <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - a member of your family <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - a friend <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - another person <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> Any comment? .....
2)	How did you make your <b>first appointment</b> ? - phoned <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - you came in to book it yourself <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - someone else arranged it <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - other (please specify) .....
3)	Was your <b>first appointment soon enough</b> ? <span style="float: right;">Yes/No</span> Any comment? .....
4)	Were you <b>happy with</b> - the booking system <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - the waiting area <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - the counselling room <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> Any comment? .....
5)	Which of the following concerns brought you to counselling: - course of study <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - relationships <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - low opinion of yourself/lack of confidence <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - changes in your life <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - anxiety <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - depression, mood changes, thoughts of ending things <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - loss of someone or something important to you <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - health <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - sexual difficulties <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - welfare problems (money, housing) <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - behaviour being too obsessional or compulsive <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - behaviour or thoughts being regarded as odd or harmful by others <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - experience of some kind of abuse <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - other concerns ..... Any comment? .....
6)	How much do you feel these <b>concerns</b> have affected your studies? - not a lot <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - a bit <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> - a lot <span style="float: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></span> Any comment? .....

7)	In what ways do you think your counsellor has <b>helped</b> you?	
-	listened to you	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	understood how you were feeling	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	understood what your situation was	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	gave you useful information	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	helped you explore your concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	helped you re-think how you do things	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	arranged for you to meet other staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	referred you to another service	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	another way? .....	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The counsellor has not helped you	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Any comment? .....	
8)	Please comment on areas that you feel <b>could have been different</b> in your counselling?	
-	It would have been better if	
	.....	
-	I didn't like	
	.....	
-	anything else?	
	.....	
9)	Do you think counselling <b>helped</b> you:	
-	stay at college/university	Yes/No
-	do better on your course	Yes/No
-	complete your course	Yes/No
-	in your life as a whole	Yes/No
	Any comment? .....	
10)	Did anything surprise <b>you about the counselling process</b> ?	
	.....	
11)	What made you decide to <b>stop</b> counselling?	
-	you felt better	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	counselling could not help you with your concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	your concerns were resolved	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	you did not wish to continue	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	you had all the sessions that could be offered	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	you were not happy with your counsellor/counselling	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	other reason	<input type="checkbox"/>
	.....	
	Any comment? .....	
12)	Would you <b>recommend</b> this counselling service to a friend	Yes/No
	Any comment? .....	
13)	Please indicate what effect, if any, counselling had on you:	
-	very effective	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	some effect	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	little effect	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	no effect	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	adverse effect	<input type="checkbox"/>
-	not known	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please</b> use this space if there are any other comments you wish to make:		

**Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. It will help us decide whether there are any changes we need to make to provide a better service for students.**

**Please return it to:** Counselling Service, Buckinghamshire Chilterns U C, Queen Alexandra Road, High Wycombe Bucks. HP11 2JZ

## **Appendix 10**

### **Agreement of confidentiality**

The contents of this research are private and confidential. Any person who was invited to assist in this process, e.g. typographer or those helping with editing were clearly informed of the confidentiality regarding the anonymity of those participating in this research. A verbal Contract of Confidentiality was agreed before any third person became involved in the process.



## **Appendix 11**

### **Confidential Verbal Agreement**

The contents of this research are private and confidential. Any person who was invited to assist in this process, i.e. typographer or those helping with editing were clearly informed of the confidentiality regarding the anonymity of those participating in this research. A verbal oath of confidentiality was agreed before any third person became involved in the process.