Weaving Indigenous Tangata Whenua and Western counselling theory and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand

Vivianne Flintoff (M.Couns)
Shirley Rivers (B.Soc.Sci)
Whariki –
A metaphor for the patterns we create in our emerging relationships
Aotearoa NZ today
Our Vision

• Counselling in Aotearoa New Zealand is not just a repackaging of Western theories but an in-depth exploration of the cultural co-construction that is a result of the lived colonial experience of Western (Pākehā) and Māori relationships.
Research:

Project Title:

– Counselling theory and Practice Frameworks for Aotearoa New Zealand
Questions

• Knowledge of Western theories at beginning of the course
• Knowledge of Māori knowledge and models
• Emerging counselling theory and practice at the end of the year
• Influences that shaped your emerging practice
Students’ entry knowledge of counselling theory

- No knowledge
- Some knowledge of western practice but not Māori
- Knowledge of some western models but not realising they were western derived theory and practice
- Some knowledge of Māori theory but within education context and not counselling
Background of Students in relation to Western theory – from research (2011)

• “At the beginning of the year I had no idea about any of the counselling theories. I was a clean slate”.
• “Nothing at all”
• “Experience of being in counselling myself in western society = talking therapy. As a child sand-tray & puppets. In terms of theorists & theories behind this experience of counselling I had none”.

4/1/2011 Vivianne Flintoff and Shirley Rivers
Western cont.

• “I’m a bit fuzzy on what ‘western’ means – is it Freud….I had encountered CBT & REBT through telephone counselling training workshops, and some client centred listening and responding skills”
Western theory cont.

• “I had minimal knowledge of western theories as they pertain to counselling through personal counselling experience I had been introduced to CBT. This was not helpful for me so I was interested in other worldviews/theories”.
Background of Students in relation to Indigenous Theory – from research (2011)

• “I knew about Te Whare Tapa Wha from a previous educational endeavour, but I didn’t know it was so universal, I thought it was a teaching model”.

• “Nothing at all”.

4/1/2011  Vivianne Flintoff and Shirley Rivers
Background of Students in relation to Indigenous Theory – from research (2011)

• “I had knowledge of Rose Pere’s Te Wheke through helping a friend with her early childhood students. Thought it could be applied to counselling but not a Māori counselling theory otherwise no knowledge”.

4/1/2011  Vivianne Flintoff and Shirley Rivers
Indigenous cont.

“None that I can think of – although the models parallel theories I have been exposed to in some ways, the languaging was different, there were also new ideas. It was a relief to have some things I value acknowledge – e.g. holistic approaches sit comfortably with me – Te Whare Tapa Wha is a holistic type model”.
Themes from the research in terms of weaving an Aotearoa NZ practice

• Confidence in knowledge of Western Theories
• Preferred theories
• Limited discussion on Māori Theories
• Teaching learning process
• Self awareness
Confidence in knowledge of Western Theories

• Confidence in knowledge of theories linked to the number of weeks dedicated to those theories e.g. CBT and Narrative were mentioned more than others

• Preferred theories also linked into the number of weeks dedicated

• ‘I lean towards using narrative….CBT while still trying to pertain to a cultural model’
Limited discussion on Māori theories

• This linked back to time allocation of teaching the two theories
• The newness of these theories and their cultural content needed more time allocation
• ‘Poutama …… presented by 2 different tutors ….. good to see differing interpretations of the model’
Teaching learning process

- Passion and knowledge of the tutors
- Positive teacher / student interaction
- In-class counselling practise sessions
- Self reflection of own work on DVD
- Class reflection of own work and other classmates
Self Awareness

• Being aware of self in the context of the counselling relationship and process
• Beginning the naming of worldviews, their place and the place of others
• ‘The realisation of differences between people’
Where to from here?

• Time allocation for each theory

• Threading across all three years

• Threading across the whole Degree throughout all modules
Our challenge

• How do we (tutors) help students of all world views come to a professional practice and identity for working in Aotearoa New Zealand which incorporates a weaving of western and indigenous theories and knowledges?
How might “we continue to allow our differences shape our uniqueness and our new togetherness”?  

Vivianne Flintoff and Shirley Rivers
Student comment

• “I have learnt that not all Māori will involve the whole whānau in their life and not every Pākehā will feel / need a sense of individuality – not all Pākehā have strong western ways of thinking only”