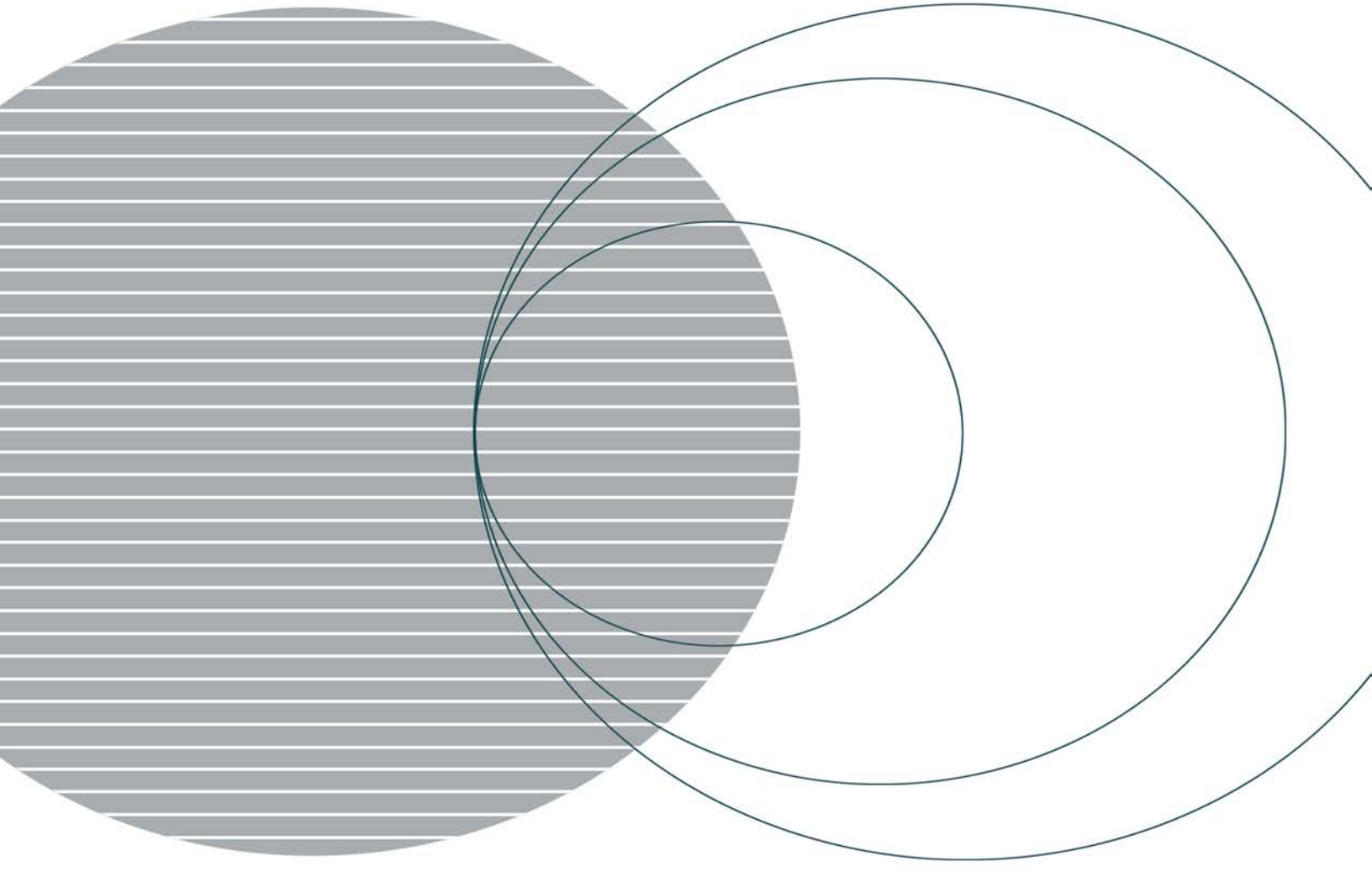
Counselling Psychology

Integrating Theory, Research and Supervised Practice

Edited by Petrūska Clarkson



Counselling Psychology

A newly emerging discipline, with its foundations in academic psychology, counselling psychology has the unique potential to develop and sustain a powerful model for the integration of research and practice in counselling. Practitioners are sometimes reluctant to introduce research into their place of work, seeing it as a distraction from the counselling process. This book shows how a blend of theory, research and supervised practice can be employed in ways which will benefit both counsellors and their clients. It also encourages students to take up and extend research that is already under way.

The nineteen contributors to *Counselling Psychology* are all actively engaged in ethically aware and culturally sensitive research and, through supervision, promote its integration into the therapeutic encounter. They argue that comparative study of theory serves to highlight common ground between different theoretical orientations, and helps practitioners avoid dogmatic adherence to a single approach. By addressing the professional dimensions of counselling psychology, their aim is to bridge the divide between academic study and counselling practice, whatever the setting, and to ensure the future research base of this rapidly expanding discipline.

Counselling Psychology is not designed to be read from start to finish, but will provide a secure grounding for trainees, and a valuable sourcebook for experienced practitioners.

Professor Petrûska Clarkson is a consultant counselling and clinical psychologist, an accredited psychotherapist, supervisor and organisational consultant with some 120 publications in these fields. She is Chair of the BPS Counselling Psychology Diploma Examinations Board, and she teaches internationally and in the UK (University of Surrey, Roehampton Institute, University College London, and at PHYSIS, London).

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John Rowan is the author of a number of books, including *The Transpersonal in Psychotherapy and Counselling* (Routledge, 1993), and *Healing the Male Psyche: Therapy as Initiation* (Routledge, 1996). He is a past Chair of the Humanistic and Integrative Section of the UKCP. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a member of the Counselling Psychology Division. He teaches, supervises and leads groups at the Minster Centre in London.

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Preface

I think of the discipline of counselling psychology as the professional application of the integration of psychological research and supervised practice in the amelioration of distress and the improvement of quality of life for individuals, groups, families and organisations within the relevant historical and cultural contexts. I believe that the primary vehicle for this endeavour is through relationship – with the people, between the specialities and between this discipline and others.

As Chair of the British Psychological Society Counselling Psychology Diploma Examination Board and as an active professional practitioner, teacher, supervisor and consultant in this and cognate disciplines, I know how much this has been a counsel of perfection rather than an accurate statement about our everyday work. In the planning and preparation for this book, I found that there were many contributors who were in principle interested in contributing to this volume within such terms of reference. However, there were but relatively few authors who eventually delivered.

Shortly before going to press I discovered that, in the preface to his book on the practical implications of research for counselling and psychotherapy, Dryden (1996) wrote about his own experience that virtually all contributors to that book (which he had edited with a similar intent to that which I bring to this present book, in the much wider fields of counselling and psychotherapy) 'had difficulty' with addressing the basic task of integrating research and practice.

The BPS Division of Counselling Psychology is little more than three years old and there are only some fifty chartered counselling psychologists in Britain at the moment. So, Dryden's and my experience is perhaps not unexpected. However, we should delight at the richness and variety of material which people who have published on this theme in this country – and also in this book – have felt generous and brave enough to make available at this stage.

However, I also agree with Dryden (1996: xi) that 'If the research–practice divide is to be traversed, then research, skills training and supervised clinical practice need to be far more closely integrated on training courses than they are at present'. We have a long way to go. And there are few maps and even less travellers who have returned knowledgeable and victorious from trying publicly

to harvest their work in this field. (Writing is indeed speaking publicly, as Bakhtin said (Hirschkop and Shepherd, 1989).)

Counselling psychology on the other hand is perhaps the mental health discipline which, because of its very youth and recent emergence in this country, its philosophy of openness and inquiry, and its lack of dogmatic adherence to singular approaches, methods or ideologies, could be most hospitable to the development and celebration of less traditional and perhaps more innovative and experimental forms of integrating research and practice.

According to Barker, Pistrang and Elliott (1994) some of the reasons which clinical and counselling psychologists give to explain why they do not do research are the following: the irrelevance of research to ongoing work with patients or clients ('journals are filled with rigorous but irrelevant studies' (p. 26)); the emphasis on generalities and lawfulness rather than individual uniqueness; the positivist paradigm which still has hegemony in the academy is seen to be reductive and simplistic, patriarchal, Eurocentric, dualistic, Newtonian, etc. Research is also feared to be intrusive and disturbing to the therapeutic relationship, making disproportionate demands on professional time compared to clinical work, and it is not encouraged, supported, valued or rewarded by managers or colleagues. Furthermore technical expertise is felt to be lacking with 'journal editors and other gatekeepers setting prohibitively high standards that discourage those beginning research' (p. 27). There are also (as there should be) ethical concerns affecting the integration of practice and research – particularly when the research paradigm or process 'dehumanises' the 'subjects'. (Of course one could raise the question of whether unresearched clinical practice or lack of accountability for one's work is ever ethical.) Many clinical and counselling psychologists also specifically mentioned feeling threatened by anxiety about being scrutinised and the possibility of coming up with findings which do not support one's convictions or beliefs. 'Sometimes these feelings of threat may find their expression in the form of some of the other reasons listed' (p. 28).

Yet, unless we understand the process and demands, the potential as well as the impossibilities of research, we can hardly be effective – even at evaluating the previous research of our colleagues, upon which *the body of psychological knowledge* which is the underpinning of all our professional work is based. Furthermore, if we all refrained from undertaking this task of integrating our practice with research, for any combination of these (or other) reasons, students and colleagues perhaps would also be reluctant to engage in this work. Worse, they would be deprived of the joys, excitement and satisfaction that comes so richly from the effort of carving out new land where before there was only a choice between jungle and weeds on the hand, and, on the other, the artificially cultivated gardens of factory farms. I am interested in work in progress as much as in finished products – and I rarely believe in the latter. Sometimes there is more to learn from seeing a craftsman or craftswoman at work than just buying (financially or metaphorically through introjection) the outcome of their labours. Some of these papers show ideas in embryo, some at halfway stations, and others

circling back already along the feedback loops of increasing confidence and understanding.

Therefore I took the bit between the teeth and forged ahead anyway presenting here what we could find now, not as perfect pieces of completed research, confident that they have been crafted as the next step in the advancement of science in the modernist idiom of the Enlightenment Project, but as moments of punctuation and communication along the road of discovery and mistake, map-making and shopping for instruments, model-building as well as experimenting with unusual and even sometimes controversial forms and themes.

This book is not necessarily meant to be read from beginning to end. It is probably more useful as a source to be consulted for argument, inspiration, education or amplification as the need or curiosity dictates. It is divided into two parts. Part I acts as orientation and introduction where the field is defined and outlined *vis-à-vis* adjunct disciplines, and contains a rich harvest of chapters focusing on integrating research and theory as counselling psychology practice, bringing together practitioner–scientists from a wide variety of orientations and settings who apply their very different kinds of energies to this endeavour. Part II continues in this vein, but with the emphasis on application to professional dimensions of counselling psychology research integrated with supervised practice.

May our colleagial conversations continue as our relationship thrives with increased communication in the bookshops as well as in the conference halls, in the academy as well as in the consulting rooms. All of the work in this book can be developed further 'had we but world enough and time'. We also look forward to seeing such improvements on our own work, and that of other colleagues yet to join us in print, as we endeavour to advance the frontiers of competence in our shared professional discipline.

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter 4, 'Qualitative Research in Counselling Psychology: Using the Counselling Interview as a Research Instrument', by Adrian Coyle, is an extended and elaborated version of a paper, co-authored with Clare Wright, which appeared in 1996 in the *Journal of Health Psychology* 1: 431–40.

Chapter 5, 'Researching the "Therapeutic Relationship" in Psychoanalysis, Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy – A Qualitative Inquiry' by Petrūska Clarkson was first published in *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 9, 2: 143–62, 1996 (© Journals Oxford Ltd, reprinted with permission of the Editor).

Chapter 7, 'Psychological Counselling in Primary Health Care: A Review', by Linda Papadopoulos and Robert Bor was first published in *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 8, 4: 291–303, 1995 (© Journals Oxford Ltd, reprinted with permission of the Editor).

Chapter 10 was originally published in 1996 in *Counselling Psychology Review* 11, 1: 4–42.

Chapter 13, 'Phenomenological Research on Supervision: Supervisors Reflect on Being a Supervisor' by Petrūska Clarkson & Orit Aviram was first published in *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 8, 1: 63–80, 1995 (© Journals Oxford Ltd, reprinted with permission of the Editor).

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Chapter 1

Counselling psychology
The next decade[1]

Petrūska Clarkson

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a brief but necessary review of the boundary and definitional concerns which most affect the discipline of counselling psychology (Part I) is followed by an overview of what our future could look like (Part II).

PART I: COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY – WHAT IS IT?

The issues, concepts and disputes of disciplinary demarcations between the designations psychologist, counsellor and psychotherapist have been exhaustively discussed elsewhere and will no doubt continue in many voices. Three factors may change this preoccupation: (a) the legal protection of the term psychologist as currently being mooted by the British Psychological Society (BPS); (b) the possibility of a more generic training for all psychologists; and (c) the outcome of initiatives to establish a special designation of psychotherapist psychologist (or similar).

For our purposes here, acknowledging that there are vast areas of similarity, we will separate the descriptions of clinical and counselling psychologists as follows.

Psychologists and applied psychologists

Psychologists are professionals with at least one degree in psychology. Many move on to further postgraduate studies in applied psychology, one of which, these days, is counselling psychology.

The dictionary definition of psychology as 'the science of the nature, functions and phenomena of the human soul or mind' (Onions, 1968: 1700) is

1 This chapter is a revised version of a paper published as 'Counselling psychology in Britain – the next decade' in *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 8 (3): 197–204, 1995, and of a paper given at the Division of Counselling Psychology 2nd Annual Conference in Birmingham on 12 May 1995. I am most grateful to Dr Michael Carroll for his input on the earlier article and to Dr Zoubida Guernina for presenting the latter on my behalf at the Conference.

somewhat restrictive in its view. Psychology is not only the 'science of the mind' but also the science of human behaviour in all its aspects. Psychology interprets the person (Carroll and Pickard, 1993) and results in a number of theories of personality and research methods for understanding the person. Its questions are person-related: Why do people behave the way they do? What motivates the individual? How do people grow and begin to think and use language? Can we isolate stages of life as individuals progress towards old age? From its academic base, psychology is divided into a number of subsections, such as development psychology, cognitive psychology, personality theory, biological basis of behaviour, abnormal psychology, psychological assessment. From this academic basis, psychologists move to apply their subject to the world.

Clinical psychologist

> The key tasks of clinical psychologists are: Assessment, Treatment, Training/teaching and Research (both patient and service related) as well as Management (BPS, 1988b: 4).
>
> The range of treatment techniques has grown considerably during the last twenty years, from the previously limited range of essentially educational or psychodynamic techniques. . . . Examples are the treatment of elimination disorders in children, phobic conditions in adults and the remediation of cognitive difficulties following different types of brain injury. Some of these treatments now offer positive alternatives to drug treatments (such as anxiety-management procedures), and supplement medical treatments in people with long-term-disabling conditions (BPS, 1988a: 5).
>
> Behavioural methods (such as desensitisation), methods based on social learning principles (such as social skills training) and cognitive methods, used especially for altered mood states, are now widely used. In addition, a wider range of psychotherapeutic approaches has been developed, based on theories that are not essentially psychodynamic (such as personal construct theory). It has become apparent that there are a number of non-specific factors which are relevant to many apparently different techniques. A number of these approaches are used by counsellors and other non-psychologists to help people with less serious conditions (BPS, 1988a: 5).
>
> The boundaries between clinical psychology as a discipline and other academic and health-care disciplines, are not fixed (BPS, 1988a: 1).

Counselling psychologist

This has become an avenue to chartered psychologist status and an independent Division of the BPS. At the time of writing it is a Special Group of the BPS, as Carroll (1992: 74) makes clear:

> Counselling psychology moved from being a 'Section' in 1982 to becoming a 'Special Group' in 1988 with increasing aspirations to becoming a Division within BPS. Its membership . . . is still probably the fastest-growing section of the BPS. . . . Becoming a Division within the BPS would bring with it major implications for training, training courses, career structure and pay levels, status, and supervision. A proposed new Diploma in Counselling has been outlined as the next step on the journey to Division status.

One important, if not the most important, difference between counsellors and counselling psychologists is the conscious use of *academic psychology alongside practical counselling skills*. Counselling psychologists have a basic degree in psychology, and then further training in counselling psychology (MSc). Counselling psychology is here conceptualised as the overlapping area between counselling and psychotherapy in the Venn diagram (see Figure 1.1, p. 6) representing the three primary arenas of counselling, psychology and psychotherapy.

Counselling psychology is considered not identical with counselling (even when it is carried out by psychology graduates). In counselling psychology, there is an emphasis on the systemic application of distinctively psychological understanding, *based on empirical research of the client and the counselling process*, to the practice of psychological counselling. The relevant psychological knowledge is partly concerned with the presenting problems of clients, and partly with the procedures and processes involved in counselling. It would be remembered that counselling psychology involves work in an organisational context, as well as with individual clients, and synthesises elements of better-developed areas of professional work such as clinical and occupational psychology. Life-span developmental psychologies and the social psychology of interpersonal processes are among the areas that supply the academic foundations of counselling psychology. Of central scientific relevance, of course, are empirical investigations of the processes and outcomes of counselling and of related methods of psychotherapy.

The psychological understanding of counselling derives not only *from formal psychological inquiry but also from the interpersonal relationships between practitioners and their clients*. The essence of such relationships is one of personal exploration and clarification in which psychological knowledge is utilised and shared in ways which enable clients to deal more effectively with their inter- and intra-personal concerns. The capacity to establish and maintain such relationships ultimately rests upon the personal qualities and maturity of the individual counselling psychologist. Personal qualities, such as non-defensiveness and a capacity to experience and communicate emphatic resonance, constitute essential resources which the counselling psychologist draws upon. Whilst these characteristics may be enhanced by skills training they derive primarily from a foundation of personal experience and integrative maturity (BPS, 1989: 1).

Having made some distinctions between counselling and clinical psychologists, we now address common descriptions of two other professions which interlink and overlap in terms of many variables.

Counsellor

The British Association for Counselling, founded in 1977, defines counselling as follows:

> Counselling is the skilled and principled use of relationship to facilitate self-knowledge, emotional acceptance and growth, and the optimal development of personal resources. The overall aim is to provide an opportunity to work towards living more satisfyingly and resourcefully. Counselling relationships will vary according to need but may be concerned with developmental issues, addressing and resolving specific problems, making decisions, coping with crisis, developing personal insights and knowledge, working through feelings of inner conflict or improving relationships with others.
>
> The counsellor's role is to facilitate the client's work in ways that respect the client's values, personal resources and capacity for self determination (BAC, 1989: 1).

Psychotherapist

'Legislators and courts of law have found it almost impossible to define "psychotherapy" in such a way as to include, by universal agreement among therapists, that which *is* psychotherapy and to exclude that which is *not* psychotherapy' (Watkins, 1965: 1142). The professional body for psychotherapists is the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP).

Here follow some definitions of psychotherapy:

> Psychotherapy is defined as a form of treatment for mental illness and behavioural disturbances in which a trained person establishes a professional contact with the patient and through definite therapeutic communication, both verbal and non-verbal, attempts to alleviate the emotional disturbance, reverse or change maladaptive patterns of behaviour, and encourage personality growth and development. Psychotherapy is distinguished from such other forms of psychiatric treatment as the use of drugs, surgery, electric shock treatment and insulin coma treatment. (Freedman, Kaplan and Shadock, 1985: 2601).

> Psychotherapy is the treatment by psychological means of problems of an emotional nature in which a trained person deliberately establishes a professional relationship with a patient with the object of 1) removing, modifying or retarding existing symptoms, 2) mediating disturbed patterns of behaviour, 3) promoting positive personal growth and development (Wolman, 1965: 118).

In discussions at the United Kingdom Standing Conference for Psychotherapy (as the UKCP used to be known), the following definition of psychotherapy had been used: 'the systematic use of a *relationship* between therapist and patient – as opposed to pharmacological or social methods – to produce changes in cognition, feelings and behaviour' (Holmes and Lindley, 1989: 3).

In the UKCP, the Psychotherapy Training Organisations are currently divided into the following sections:

1 Analytic Psychotherapy Section;
2 Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy Section (HIPS);
3 Family, Marital, and Sexual Section;
4 Experiential Constructivist Therapy;
5 Behavioural Psychotherapy Section;
6 Hypnotherapy Section;
7 Psychoanalytically-based Psychotherapy with Children Section;
8 Analytical Psychology.

It should be clear that membership of all of these divisions (with the exception of 3) is made on the grounds of avowed and practised adherence to one or more theoretical orientations.

Figure 1.1 shows each of the three areas – counselling, psychology and psychotherapy – as distinct in itself, but relating to each of the other two areas, and indicates the interrelationship between all three. The overlap between counselling and psychotherapy represents the work of counselling professionals with advanced practice qualifications or the psychotherapist using counselling skills. The overlap between psychotherapy and psychology represents psychotherapists with a psychology qualification or psychologists trained as psychotherapists. The overlap between counselling and psychology represents counselling psychologists (i.e. psychology graduates with counselling qualifications, but no special training in psychotherapy). Finally, 'X' marks the area which involves the work of psychology graduates who have training and experience in both counselling and psychotherapy. This may be the appropriate area for the profession of counselling psychology.

Research (Norcross, 1986) shows that theoretical differences between 'schools or approaches' are far less important in terms of successful outcome of counselling or psychotherapy than the quality of the *relationship* between counsellor and client and certain client characteristics, including motivation for change and the willingness to take responsibility for their part in the process. The literature and an extensive twenty-year-long qualitative research project is reviewed, discussed and amplified, for example, in Clarkson (1991, 1995a) and Chapter 5 of this volume.

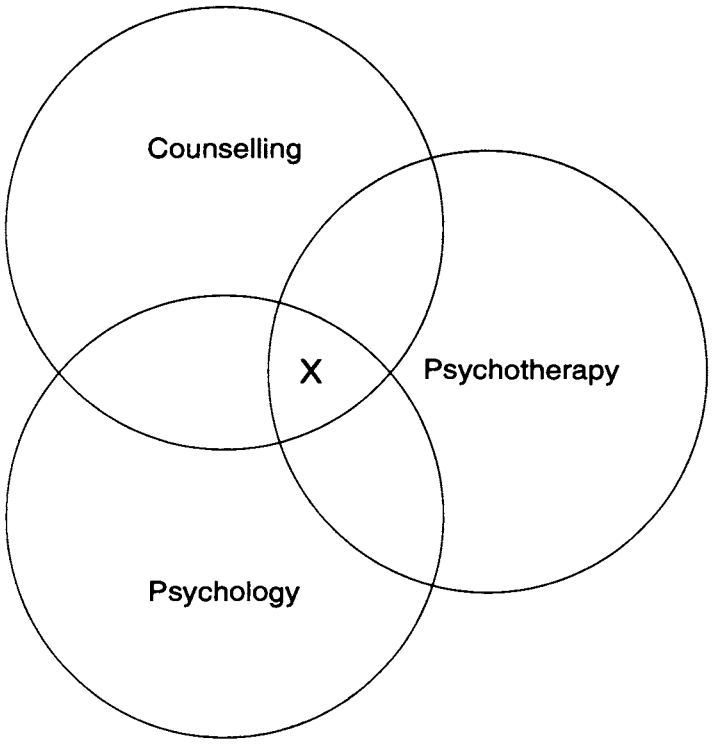

Figure 1.1 Venn diagram of the relationship between counselling, psychology and psychotherapy

Source P. Clarkson and M. Pokorny (eds) *Handbook of Psychotherapy*, London: Routledge, 1994.

PART II: COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY – THE FUTURE

In this part of the chapter, originally written in response to a specific assignment, I will survey some of the major trends developing in counselling psychology, which may shape the future of the profession into the next decade. For purposes of consideration rather than an attempt at spurious demarcation, the major themes of the discussion will be organised under the four headings of Professionalism, Theory, Practice and Research. I will use a device of polarisation to highlight the major issues as I see them now. It is not meant to be comprehensive or definitive, but a spur towards exploration, debate and development.

Professionalism

Counselling psychology has comparatively recently emerged as a separate profession in Britain, largely in response to pervasive and large-scale changes in the socio-economic, political and cultural forces affecting the helping professions.

Some of these are the aftermath of the Thatcher years (such as what has been experienced as the dismantling of the National Health Service), the restructuring of care and medicine in terms of market forces and the popularization (through books, radio and TV) of self-development and counselling both as a resource as well as a career opportunity for many people of the middle classes in these uncertain times. (It has been one of the few professions relatively untouched by the recession and counselling schools have flourished while city firms and industry have languished and suffered.)

Quantity and quality

Emerging thus as a profession for and from our times, counselling psychology can both suffer and benefit from the upsurgence of recognition, demand and popularity. On the one hand, given the large numbers of professionals seeking registration as chartered counselling psychologists, the profession can capitalise on these boom times by recognising more courses, more psychologists, more professional opportunities, representation and influence in all probably and possibly relevant forums. On the other hand the energies and capacities of those concerned with professionalisation can be concentrated very specifically towards goals of quality and more discriminating selection procedures, more stringent examinations and qualifying criteria on par or better than the most demanding of neighbouring professions (for example, psychotherapy), thus focusing the profession more in the direction of quality and forgoing some of the populist arguments based on numbers (such as numbers of applicants for recognition). At a certain point in our history this was politically necessary in achieving our professional goals – for example, in dealing with the British Psychological Society. Hopefully, there will come a time in the next decade when a balance will be achieved. Quantity can provide the healthy base for the development and crystallising of quality. The criteria and consequences will have to be worked out over time in strategic response to changing conditions of the world in which our profession needs to make its way.

Uniformity and diversity

In the early development of professions, there is often a willingness to include (even if reluctantly) diversity, difference and a tolerance for idiosyncrasy. This was certainly the atmosphere of the early meetings of what has now become the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. As soon as the criteria have been more or less agreed, the standards for inclusion start changing and people become more and more resistant to including those who do not quite fit in at the same time as the demands become more stringent and more difficult to meet. I have seen this and heard about it from colleagues in almost every professional organisation which currently exists. It is a well-known phenomenon in the psychology of organisations generally.

Classically and predictably, students and new organisations seeking to join then complain that 'they keep moving the goalposts'. Of course it is right and natural that developing professions are developing. Continuous review and revision of standards and improvements related to changing conditions and circumstances are what marks out the thriving from the dying in personal as well as professional life. However, what usually happens next is that this drive for acceptability to the status quo, commonly agreed standards and consensually developed criteria becomes a repository of conformity, uniformity and 'people who are like us'. The unusual, the challenging, questioning of the basic assumptions underlying the hard-won professional status (or similar) is often experienced as threatening, untrustworthy and therefore to be excluded or marginalised.

Somewhere I came across a book on organisational behaviour, which I have not been able to trace since. It tells of the metaphorical barbarians who break new ground, machete their way through the jungle and struggle with their ox-wagons over the mountains; the bureaucrats on the other hand end up balancing the books and decreeing how wide the paths should be and how much those who don't do it correctly should be fined. In this way the creativity and counter-dependent energies often end in schismatic breaks (Jung from Freud, the BCPC from the UKCP, the Social Democrats from the Labour Party, etc.) rather than in fruitful fertilisation, enhanced diversity and delight in increased choices in the organisation itself and an enrichment of its creative and discriminating capacities.

Elitism and access

The third theme which can be noticed around the issues of professionalism for counselling psychology in the next decade is that between the ideal of open access in dialogue, engagement or contest with the desire for exclusivity, professional/academic excellence and a sociologically normal 'closing of the ranks' when resources (of, for example, finance, status or support) are threatened. Although Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) has been instituted in this country, in order to give equal opportunities to people who have non-academic learning and experience, this worthy goal still seems to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Graduate basis for registration is still necessary, as far as I understand it, in order to begin to engage in recognition processes to become a chartered psychologist or chartered counselling psychologist. This necessitates a particular culture-bound accomplishment which research has amply shown to mitigate against women, non-whites and the disabled (to mention only some examples).

Therefore people with less conscientious academic training, people with unconventional kinds of wisdom or unusual experiential backgrounds, people who come from cultures which have valued less rational, left-hemispheric, patriarchal forms of education are automatically disadvantaged. Yet if precisely these people are (however subtly) discouraged or disallowed from entering and

starring in our profession, it appears inevitable that we will continue to serve effectively only certain sections of the population in a certain language, who have access to certain privileges in certain very narrowly prescribed contexts – and even so in ways which can disable by the very prejudicial gulfs in which they are rooted.

Theory

Conservatism and revolution

I hope that the next decade will see a good and solid tournament joined between conservative and revolutionary forces within counselling psychology theory. Classicism, fundamentalism even, has a certain purity of form even if it does act as some Procrustean bed upon which to slice or stretch all human phenomena. The ideas and ideals which have guided some hundred years in psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioural therapy and humanistic/existential psychotherapy have each their own integrity, soundness and coherence within their respective ideological, epistemological and aesthetic universes of discourse. The problem with such pure forms is when they acquire some hegemony of power, criteria-setting or reality definition. An instance of this is in a recent code of ethics formulated for Gestalt therapists in which the only psycho-technical terms are transference and countertransference: there is no representation of autonomy, responsibility or actualisation in the guidelines – the very radical theoretical and philosophical foundations of the originators of Gestalt therapy who formulated their work in such terms in rebellion against what they perceived as psychoanalytic reductionisms such as transference.

It is likely that as the forces of conformity, cohesion and scraping off of the barnacles of idiosyncrasy and individuality grow apace, counterforces will come into play. These could be and perhaps will be of the sudden discontinuous nature of revolutions in knowledge which Kuhn (1962) wrote about. Chaos and complexity theory have hardly touched psychology yet. In such event, much of what we take for granted now in psychology, counselling and psychotherapy will be redundant and the unlearning of our assumptions will be at least as, if not more, important than the learning of new knowledge, skills, attitudes and habits.

Integration and deconstruction

Given the fact that outcome research studies show little if any differential effectiveness related to theory, the debates, competitions and differentiations between different approaches seem less and less realistic, interesting or relevant to the needs of clients. The identification of more than 450 different approaches (Corsini, 1984); the lack of sound evidence of differential effectiveness (Norcross and Goldfried, 1992); the studies which point to a common factor such

as the relationship (Norcross and Goldfried, 1992); or that senior people from different approaches resemble each other more than beginners and experienced practitioners in the same approach (Fiedler, 1950) – all these point in the direction of integration rather than exclusive or dogmatic adherence to any one approach. Indeed integration is the way in which the majority of American counselling psychologists now identify themselves and it is one of the fastest growing avowed orientations in the world. Few 'pure forms' remain and those are rapidly becoming inaccessible or unaffordable to anyone who may challenge the basic assumptions or simply want relief from their immediate pain or distress or even learning for dealing with similar problems in the future.

At the same time as many approaches are recognising their similarities, commonalities and integrating capacities (although these may be exercised within only one system (e.g. the colonisation of empathy by Kohut in Self-Psychology), there are also termites gnawing at the very roots of the psychological edifice of our *fin de siècle*. Is there such an entity as an individual? Does childhood have anything to do with adult pathology? Is it possible to practise psychotherapy without abusing power? How can we justify individual psychotherapy in a world riven with injustice, inequality and uninvolvement in the important social justice issues of our time? Powerfully intelligent voices from the postmodern Zeitgeist are questioning and problematising most of what we have accomplished or even taken for granted so far.

Individual and field perspectives

Psychology has drawn its inspiration and its models largely from science – particularly physical science. We can see this originating in the Wundt laboratories as well as in Freud's hydrostatic conceptualisations of psychic energy. However, physical sciences, particularly physics, currently hardly resemble the ideal which modernist positivistic empirical psychology is still striving after. Theories of psychological investigation or intervention based on notions of measurement or observation by objective observers or researchers (for example, most of the papers in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*) are drawing on a model of scientific investigation which has been substantially discarded or radically revised in the light of new knowledge and new perspectives.

The observer not only is part of the field, but influences and affects the field perhaps to the extent that he or she is unaware of such influence. It has been said that 'there are only relationships' – there can be no possibility of measurement which excludes the values, expectations or effects of the experimenter. Perhaps there should be no theory which considers the individual separate from the field – the child from the family system, the woman from our advertising culture, a young man from the collective pressures of our economy, an employee's problem drinking from the organisation's relationship with environmental ethics. Counselling psychology is uniquely placed and can without too much historical baggage be the approach to evaluate and implement theories which are used as

tools, as metaphors, as Wittgensteinian ladders rather than as laws set in tablets of stone, unresponsive to changing conditions, unaware of the interrelatedness of all our explanatory theoretical nets.

Practice

NVQ and creativity

One of the biggest challenges counselling psychology will have to grapple with in the next decade is the counterpoint between component analysis of competencies and the potential stifling of creativity and spontaneity. I have been active in and applaud our professional concerns with explicit measurable standards, learning objectives and specific skills, accountability, audit, NVQs, contracting, health insurance categorisation and so on. Yet the more uncertain our economic conditions, the more questioned our basic assumptions, the more our meta-narratives buckle under the combined onslaught of inner and outer challenges, the more we seek the security of structures, and the more we tend to develop an obsessive-compulsive preoccupation with the details, compartments, measurabilities, respectabilities, predictabilities, regulations, laws and ultimate control over all relevant aspects of practice.

How to be seated, how to make a contract, how to do an assessment, how to deal with one's countertransference, how many hours of what kind of supervision, what standards in training, what kind of records to comply with the Data Protection Act, what kind of topics or movements are allowed in order to ensure no censure from either customer or colleague – these are the themes of so many professional meetings and indeed is the very stuff of professionalisation itself. Elsewhere (Clarkson, 1995b) I have expounded on how these valid, important and admirable accomplishments can lead to the emergence of a kind of 'defensive practice' which stifles the kind of creativity, discovery and novelty with fear, conformity and compliance. Counselling psychology will need to find ways, idioms and spaces for the jagged edges, the mistakes and the disordered randomness of the creative process if it is not to suffocate itself in a misguided quest for an empty respectability.

Ahistoricity and cultural contextuality

Psychotherapy and psychological counselling have in recent years come under increasing attack for their irrelevance to the real world of the people who come to us for help. Counselling psychology will have to address the fact that it draws its origins from approaches, models and roots that essentially began a century ago and therefore in some very important ways need to be modified in terms of the changed cultural context in which we now live. I think the practice will have to change substantially in the direction of greater accountability, short-term interventions, flexibility from theoretical models and rapid responsiveness

to situations. For example, ferry accidents, natural disasters, and rapid economic changes.

Individual and systems

Much as the practice of counselling psychology has focused on the individual and the bulk of the literature concerns interventions with individuals, the urgency and epidemiology of psychological distress will necessitate increased skills in the practice of systemic interventions, whether these be through families, groups or organisational interventions. It has become obvious, for instance, from people working in HIV counselling that the demand on counsellors, whether volunteer or qualified, rapidly exceeded the one-to-one practice paradigm.

This has enormous implications for training, requiring knowledge and facility in conceptualising as well as working effectively in the great variety of settings. In particular, if we take into account that most people spend more of their life in work settings (or the expectation of organisational settings), the fluctuations in education, jobs and the corporate mushrooming of our time, a thorough understanding of the organisational context and intervention skills of an organisational consultancy nature will be essential to every practitioner. We can no longer work as if an individual is not part of a system. In this way it is possible that the ambitions to be purely and exclusively clinical will conflict with consumer demand for counselling approaches which are also preventive, educational and equip people specifically, not only in working with their own familiar psychological heritage but also with the collective pressures, demands and opportunities.

Research

Positivism and postmodernism

The traditional, positivistic research tradition of psychology has grown such strong and healthy roots and such far-reaching branches that psychologists sometimes seem to believe 'that oranges are the only fruit'. The effects of the postmodernist turn in our cultural worldview will certainly reverberate for the next decade. At least during this time we can develop a postmodernist attitude to research which does not privilege any one particular form but welcomes and supports a psychology of practice which can develop a pragmatic body of knowledge, for example, by collecting the knowledge from clinical experiences of experienced and expert practitioners to find the patterns, models or interventions which have been found to work in the clinical setting (Polkinghorne, 1992).

New paradigms and old paradigms

One of the most encouraging contributions of counselling psychology already has been its welcoming of models of research and investigation which are non-

traditional, non-parametric and even qualitative. On the examination board we have specifically allowed for the necessity of counselling psychologists in their training to become knowledgeable and familiar with qualitative and phenomenological research methods. In this sense counselling psychology has a major contribution to make to the neighbouring disciplines of clinical psychology and psychotherapy, hopefully infecting them in a positive sense with new vision, a fresh approach and the willingness to make serendipitous discoveries rather than to continue indefinitely and unquestioningly with the old style positivistic, experimental models of research. Of course this does not mean relinquishing the enormous benefits of our classical traditions. It does mean a growing mutual respect and understanding.

Following and leading

The research component of most academic psychology programmes is the one that is often least attractive to students and most burdensome to the teachers. Counselling psychology as a newly emerging discipline in Britain has a unique opportunity to develop, encourage and sustain a model of blending practice and research in an ongoing, interesting and satisfying way. Process as well as outcome will be investigated perhaps even considered equally important (Elton Wilson and Barkham, 1994). New research questions and new kinds of research questions can follow the interests of clinicians rather than the funding priorities of the laboratory. The divide between the academy and the consulting room could potentially become a meeting place as their inhabitants learn to speak and work and supervise in the same language.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In particular I am suggesting that the practice of the clinic should not be separated from rigorous and constant research borne from and bearing theory. For example, a qualitative research project such as a disciplined and methodologically informed case study is not something to be done once for a dissertation or paper – I believe it needs to be conducted with every client, every session, for as long as a clinician/supervisor thinks and works in the profession.

It would therefore also be necessary for all professional supervisors to be skilled in acting as co-researchers in every case or situation brought to disciplined reflection – also subjecting their own clinical and supervisory work to investigation. This may need to be done – not once or twice in a life time, but all the time. Although there will probably always be important differences in experience, interests and expertise, conjoining the work of *doing and reflection* in this way might even begin to signal the end of the difference between research and clinical supervision in training. This could potentially be to the benefit of all concerned – not least the clients. Learning with the client in such a way

introduces a praxis of the recovery of knowledge which is surely at the very heart of the therapeutic endeavour itself.

In conclusion, for the purposes of this discussion, I have separated four areas of counselling psychology practice and supervision – professionalism, theory, practice and research. I would wish for the next decade that, for all practical purposes, they become inextricably interwoven.

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