

Rivalry and Cooperation: Psychotherapy, Counselling Psychology and Counselling

Emmy van Deurzen-Smith

'They despise and yet fawn on one another; each would outstrip the other.

And yet cowers and cringes before him.'

Marcus Aurelius

'One must require from each one the duty which each one can perform.'

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The Relative Positions of BPS, UKCP and BAC

Like many other people I am both a chartered counselling psychologist and a UKCP-registered psychotherapist. I am also a member of the British Association for Counselling, but I have not bothered to apply for accredited status with that organization because I feel amply covered by the other two forms of registration. This voting with my feet has a clear hierarchical connotation. Perhaps if I were to make a living purely through private practice I would have been tempted to get BAC accreditation in the hope that it would bring referrals my way, but otherwise BAC is only of interest to me as a forum for information and debate. I do not depend on it for my recognition as a professional. I do not suffer any degradation

from not being accredited by BAC and the reverse might in fact be the case. BAC accreditation would have marked me out as a mere counsellor amongst this racy breed of psychotherapists that I have thrown in my lot with. In such circles it is suspect enough to be a psychologist and an academic; it is not advantageous to be further contaminated by also claiming counsellor status and descending to the level of the merely vocational professions.

Unspoken Hierarchical Relationships

There is a taboo on making these hierarchical relationships explicit. As long as people remain silent on these matters it is not possible to challenge any false assumptions underlying the hierarchies. This may be quite convenient in the short

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term, for it allows everyone to be content with their own particular professional position, but in the long term it stops us from achieving clarity about the way in which the various professional qualifications are related to each other. This is a major problem in terms of public access, for we all end up competing with one another. The net result is a confusing array of choices for members of the public who need help, and who are faced with very little visibility and even less clarity on the parity or disparity of the services available. Professionals contribute to this situation by avoiding confrontation with each other and by silently maintaining an attitude of superiority. The field will remain underdeveloped as long as we are incapable of exploding the pernicious myths that keep us apart. These myths are everywhere.

Persistent Myths

Counselling psychologists often believe that they are entitled to feel fairly smug by virtue of having undergone a rigorous scientific training, which is, on the whole, more than one can say for either counsellors or psychotherapists. Many counselling psychologists are also trained as counsellors or psychotherapists and there can be little doubt that spanning a wider range of the professions gives one added security and self-assurance. Counselling psychologists often have more problems establishing their authority in relation to other sorts of psychologists (clinical psychologists, for instance) than in relation to counsellors or psychotherapists.

Counsellors tend to feel superior to psychotherapists about being more able to

work short-term; more pragmatic, street-wise and better tuned in to the troubles of ordinary people; and more broad-minded about the relevance of competing theoretical models. They are scornful of psychotherapists, whom they often see as unrealistic, arrogant and ignorant of the requirements for work in crisis situations such as can be found on telephone helplines, in GP surgeries or in student counselling services. They are often critical of counselling psychologists because they consider them to be too intellectual and scientific: not in touch with the real world.

Psychotherapists in turn regard themselves as superior to counselling psychologists, whom they consider to be too academic and scientific and not well enough trained in personal terms. Although they may envy counselling (or clinical) psychologists' bona fide chartered status and the access to the national health service that this may provide, it may simply be dismissed as further proof of the inferior nature of NHS work. Psychotherapists are generally convinced that they are superior to counsellors by virtue of their longer, more thorough training, their higher fees and the exclusivity of their theoretical models, especially when the latter are psychoanalytic.

This brings us to a whole different matter, which is that of the internal hierarchies within the psychotherapy world itself, where the myth of superiority of psychoanalysis continues to rage and cause havoc. Psychoanalysts and some psychoanalytic psychotherapy organisations have long felt enticed to dominate the field, and they did not take lightly to having to discuss professionalisation with

colleagues from what they considered to be fringe organisations. Eventually some of them pulled out of UKCP and, with some others who remained within UKCP, founded what is now the British Confederation of Psychotherapists (BCP). This is a rather exclusive grouping of psychoanalysts and their allies, a confusing organisation which sees itself as equivalent in status to BPS, BAC and UKCP, although it only represents a small sub-set of psychoanalytic psychotherapists, who remain largely represented through UKCP. It would make more sense as a separate unit if it simply represented psychoanalysts, instead of duplicating UKCP's role in representing psychoanalytic psychotherapy. One has to be extremely careful when even trying to describe this confusing situation, for there are many sensitivities about position and status.

Of Taboos and Vested Interests

Not being able to state the situation as one perceives it makes it very difficult to initiate the debate on what the situation is actually like, and makes it impossible to begin negotiations on where one wants to go in the future. I have always pleaded for open communication, and whenever possible have encouraged joint discussions between all the relevant bodies to investigate the possibilities of achieving statutory regulation in unison. I believe that much is to be gained from facing up to differences and similarities and finding ways to cooperate in the public's interest. There are many people in the various professional bodies who think alike and who are willing to tackle the issues with generosity towards the work of others. Unfortunately there is also a lot of bigotry around.

A Case of 'Stars upon Thars'

The professional competition and confusion in which we find ourselves has often reminded me of a story in one of my children's books. It is the story of *The Sneetches* by Dr Seuss, which describes the war on the beaches between a group of imaginary creatures called the sneetches, some of which have stars upon their bellies and some of which have no stars upon thars. The story describes how the snootiness of the star-bellied sneetches makes them ignore the unstarred ones, who are supposed to be terribly inferior. One day a monkey called McBean arrives on the beach with a star-making machine and passes all the sneetches without stars through it for five dollars apiece. Now all the sneetches are equal, but this obviously does not satisfy the previously star-bellied ones who feel brought down a peg and who are all too willing to pay their five dollars for a go through the star-unmaking machine of McBean, which removes the offending stars on their bellies. The end of the story depicts the sneetches as having added more stars or put them in other places on their bodies until every one of them is an individual rather than one with or without stars upon thars. There may be an interesting moral in this story for the counselling and psychotherapy fields, which are currently producing stars by the thousand in the form of qualifications and registrations.

Competition or Cooperation

Let's face it: this profession is a growth industry and there are competing interests at work. Counsellors may feel that a part-time training of three years is

thorough enough to enable them to help most people who need counselling and that it is advantageous to offer counselling services in the voluntary sector mostly for free because that is how a maximum number of clients can be served. Counselling psychologists may take the view that such training is irresponsible and that all human relation professionals ought to have intensive post-graduate training. Psychotherapists will add that practitioners should also have gone through intensive personal therapy in order to work responsibly in this field. Sometimes it really is just a market place: the competing interests have differing principles, all of which can be defended, but at the end of the day it is the customer who decides whether she wants to get a functional pair of jeans or a designer dress. In the end it really is about market forces and price versus quality, and there are some who attempt to control the market with a policy of monopoly.

Lead Body for Advice, Guidance, Counselling & Psychotherapy

This is where the work of the Lead Body comes in, as it is based on the assessment of the competencies of the practitioner and the concrete objectives and achievements of the profession. The Lead Body's standards and qualifications cut right across established levels of ranking and oblige professionals to assess their actual clinical work. One can no longer say 'I must be good because I am so well-meaning', or 'I must be good because I know every theory and can quote every

piece of research under the sun', or 'I must be good because I have been in personal analysis with a bona fide analyst for five years five days a week'. The Lead Body requires one to demonstrate what it is that training produces in practice. It seems to me a praiseworthy enterprise in principle. Unsurprisingly, it is a scheme that is much resisted by professionals who instantly lose their established rights and privileges and have to start from scratch proving what they are capable of.

The scheme also has its drawbacks, for it can be applied in a very superficial manner. It is not easy to demonstrate competency in this profession, let alone expertise. We do not yet agree what good practice consists of. Different modalities of psychotherapy and counselling have different objectives and the divisions between those modalities are in the end more important, in my view, than the existing divisions between counsellors, counselling psychologists and psychotherapists.

Where is the Future?

Another problem with the Lead Body is that in spite of its democratic objectives, qualifications inevitably do come in at different levels in the end. Of course it must be possible to recognise various levels of sophistication and complexity of work in this field. One must be able to distinguish differences between someone capable of basic counselling, someone able to do intensive in-depth work, and someone best suited to supervisory and training work. We may simply find that length of experience is one of the most significant determining factors in deciding the level of complexity with which practitioners are able to deal.

The question is then whether the professional bodies responsible for the various elements of the profession will know how to negotiate the respective levels of their registrants and, more importantly, whether they will be able to bridge the differences between them to recognise similarity in level when it is demonstrated. If this were the case we might find that very different types of training could bring practitioners to similar levels of accomplishment and capability, leading to different routes of access to the same jobs. Can we really expect counsellors, counselling psychologists and psychotherapists to accept such commonalities and to open their professions up to each other if practice tells them that this would be the sensible thing to do?

Personal Views and Predictions

If my experience is worth anything at all, it leads me to predict that professionals will build new walls between themselves sooner than having to admit equality and parity. Human beings seem to have a limitless need to establish superiority and difference in order to feel secure. Although we can regret this and continue to work to dissolve such opposition to common sense, it may be necessary to accommodate it. Perhaps we just need to accept the status quo and devise fair ways of dividing the territory, building connections later on. Negotiation over bridges to be built is generally easier once vested interests have been soothed and made secure enough to enable those involved to venture out into the world and explore possible contacts.

I would have liked to encourage rapid change and a thorough overhaul of the field. I would have liked for the discussions

on statutory regulation that are now taking place on an informal basis between UKCP, UKRC (the United Kingdom Register of Counsellors, incorporating BAC, COSCA and others) and BPS to be sped along and made official. Undoubtedly BCP and the Royal College of Psychiatrists should also be included in these discussions, and they should then be taken back to the Department of Health which had encouraged them in the first place. If statutory regulation is to come about, which in my opinion is crucial to the long-term survival of these professions, it should be by means of this kind of cooperation and agreement on which aspects of mental health belong with which groupings and how one can move from one to another.

The European situation on the mutual recognition of mental health professionals is showing the urgency for such national regulation and agreement on the profession to take place. The professions simply do not have a role to play in Europe unless they find their place in an over-arching framework. As long as they are fragmented and confused they cannot be taken seriously. It astounds me to keep hearing the same tired arguments against discussion and cooperation. If 'human relations professionals' cannot themselves detect the need for communication it does not augur well for their future. Having been centrally involved in these matters for seven years I find myself somewhat jaded and pessimistic about the willingness of the professionals to get their houses in order. It is because of this that I decided to withdraw from the political scene, leaving the work to those who are more enthusiastic and

hopeful and who will have the required energy to take the enormous efforts that some of us have made to open up these professions on to the next stage. My

what sceptical stance should warn them of the hard work and considerable challenges that lie ahead for them. I wish them good luck.

Further Reading

Emmy van Deurzen-Smith, '1992 and All That', keynote speech, BAC conference 1991, *Counselling* Volume 2, Number 4.

Emmy van Deurzen-Smith, chair's remarks, BAC conference 1994, *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, Volume 10, Number 4.

A Rose by Any Other Name: A Personal View on the Differences among Professional Titles

Windy Dryden

Whenever I am asked what is the difference between a counsellor and a psychotherapist, I reply 'About £8,000 a year'. I am tempted to leave it at that; but my semi-flippant answer will not do for this special issue, however. I have been asked to treat the subject of professional titles seriously and I will do so, although, as I will make clear, I personally find it a trivial one.

I am well aware that the question of titles in the helping professions is important to many people. Many years ago,

when I lived and worked in Birmingham, I hosted a party at my house. One of my friends introduced himself to a guest and told the man that he was a counsellor. The man smiled with slight disdain and announced haughtily that he was a psychotherapist. The way he pronounced the word 'psychotherapist' left my friend and me in no doubt which title he thought had the greater status.

As I said, I personally have never cared much about the importance of titles and I must confess that the entire issue of

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