

The British Psychological Society

David Jones

The British Psychological Society (BPS) was founded in 1901 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1965. It is both a Learned Society and a professional association which has maintained a Register of Chartered Psychologists since 1987. Although the Society could use the title 'Royal' in its name it chooses not to. Membership is restricted to university graduates whose main subject is psychology. Currently about 6,000 graduates a year qualify for membership, but only a fraction of these develop a career as psychologists and it is they who form the membership of the Society. There are more than 20,000 members, of whom about 8,000 are Chartered Psychologists.

What is a Psychologist?

Psychologists are university-trained specialists who have taken the main part of their degree in psychology. Perception and other cognitive processes and the processes of learning (especially conditioning, role learning and the acquisition of language), child development, personality

and abnormal behaviour are central to psychological theory. There is a major emphasis in psychology degrees on scientific method. This involves using theories to generate hypotheses which can be tested by rigorous and systematic observation. Surveys, laboratory experiments and computer modelling are the main scientific methods and they require psychologists to be familiar with a range of statistical and psychometric skills involving the design of experiments and the development, validation and use of psychological measurements and tests. Psychologists are aware that clinical and qualitative research are valid, but these are not the main focus of their training, which tends to favour cognitive and behavioural therapies in the broadest sense, including role play, social skills, assertiveness training and other techniques, some of which may also be used by humanistic therapists.

The BPS has six Divisions: Educational and Child, (and the Scottish Division of Educational and Child Psychology), Clinical, Occupational, Criminological and

David Jones is an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society and is the Commissioning Editor for Self & Society. This survey of the BPS forms Part II of an overview of the work of the main organisations within British psychotherapy. Part I of this series appeared in our November 1996 issue under the title 'What is the British Association for Counselling?' Articles on the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the British Confederation of Psychotherapists (BCP or The Analysts) and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) will appear in future issues.

Legal, and Counselling Psychology. Membership of a Division confers Chartered status and is proof that a recognised training has been completed and specialist knowledge in that area has been tested by examination. Chartered Psychologists are expected to keep up with developments in their field and the code of ethics makes this clear. The recently formed Division of Counselling Psychology has been assessing the first applicants for the title of Chartered Counselling Psychologist. The BPS does not have a Chartered Psychotherapist category but is actively considering criteria for developing one. Well aware of the Foster and Siegert reports, the Society has a place on the governing body of UKCP and is active in the Working Group on the Statutory Regulation of Psychotherapy. (This working party has members from BAC, BCP, BPS, RCP and UKCP.)

Accrediting Psychotherapists

Although the BPS does not yet have a Division of Psychotherapy its Standing Committee on Psychotherapies (set up in 1992) is developing standards for the accreditation of psychologists (members of the BPS) in the formal psychotherapies. (By 'formal psychotherapies' they mean models of intervention based on the clinical applications of major psychological theories, including, at the very least, learning and cognitive theories, psychoanalytic theories and systemic theories.) The aim is to ensure that psychological psychotherapists (as distinct from other psychotherapists) are broad-based and flexible, able to change approaches when appropriate. It is likely that they will provide supervision and in-service training of other therapists within the NHS. In all of this the BPS ap-

proach emphasises that therapeutic models should be formulated to enable empirical research and audit and should be based on sound theory. Currently the BPS advises would-be psychotherapists that they should have a first degree and a basic training and experience in one of the helping and caring professions such as social work, and refers enquiries to the BAC and the UKCP. Enquiries about analysis are referred to the BCP.

In addition to the professional Divisions, the BPS has eleven special-interest Sections to which any member may be elected. These are: Education, Occupational, Developmental, Social Psychology, History and Philosophy (of Psychology), Psychobiology, Psychology of Women, Sport and Exercise, and Psychotherapy. The BPS has never had a Humanistic section, unlike the American Psychological Association (the equivalent of the BPS in the USA) which has had a successful Humanistic section for many years. But two sections of special interest to humanistic psychologists have recently been formed: Transpersonal Psychology (Ian Gordon Brown addressed their inaugural meeting in July 1996) and the Consciousness and Experiential Psychology section (which Richard Stevens, a past chair of AHP, writes about in this issue of *Self & Society*).

Work with Children

Child psychotherapy and 'special needs' mark different approaches to work with children. Psychoanalytic child psychotherapy is within the purview of the British Confederation of Psychotherapists (the BCP, which we will describe in a subsequent issue) and tends to be classified as Health. Psychological aspects of special needs, classified as Education, are catered for by the

BPS. Co-operation between child psychotherapists and educational psychologists is aimed for and often achieved, though the clinical psychoanalytic approach of child psychotherapists can be at odds with the empirical practices of psychologists.

Psychologists have tended in the past to be sceptical of large-scale theories and sceptical about claims that practitioners might make regarding the effectiveness of therapy. The BPS has members who are expert in 'outcome research'. Studies which look at the outcomes of psychotherapy are convincing to the extent that they meet the standards of evidence required in psychological (and medical) research. Studies of the outcome of psychotherapy do, in fact, provide strong evidence that psychotherapy can, overall, produce an improvement in the well-being of clients/patients, but it is not clear on what this depends, for it does not depend on the type of psychotherapy. Behaviour therapy, psycho-analytic therapy and humanistic integrative therapy would seem to have about the same level of successful outcome.

Currently the BPS recognises 16 university courses in educational psychology (mostly one-year full-time) and 26 in clinical psychology (three-year full-time). Some of these may be taken as part-time courses. Some of the courses in clinical psychology have greater specialism in psychotherapy than others, and some touch on humanistic psychology. They do not offer experiential work, however, and none of them provides a training in humanistic psychotherapy comparable with the training organisations forming the HIP Section of the UKCP. Recognition of counselling psychology courses is in its infancy and as yet the BPS does not have a list of approved courses.

The NHS

The National Health Service Executive published a Review of Strategic Policy in the NHS Psychotherapy Services (1996) and BPS thinking is in accord with it. The June 1997 issue of *The Psychologist* (the BPS members' journal) has an article on the registration of psychologists specialising in psychotherapy. It argues that 'the flexibility emanating from the broad generic training in psychology and psychotherapy prior to any specialist training in a formal psychotherapy is what distinguishes psychological psychotherapists from other psychotherapists.' If the NHS is moving towards this view, as it probably is, then posts for psychotherapists in the NHS, especially senior posts, will be filled by 'psychological psychotherapists' accredited by the BPS. Practitioners and trainees in a particular therapy, a humanistic one for example, who are not psychological psychotherapists may increasingly be employed by hospital trusts to give therapy sessions under the supervision of a chartered psychological psychotherapist at the equivalent level to a registrar or consultant. Some might be employed as social workers; others would probably be paid an hourly rate for seeing patients (or in the case of trainees seeking experience in order to gain accreditation, would not be paid at all).

The BPS publishes a *Directory of Chartered Psychologists* in which individual psychologists who are registered may indicate the services they offer to the public. It is available from public libraries or from the BPS, price £36. The Society may be contacted at St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, tel. 0116 254 9568.