THE THEME for this editorial is ‘Independence’. There are two reasons for this, with the first and main reason being the content of this Special Edition. Throughout this edition of Counselling Psychology Review the authors reflect upon the Qualification in Counselling Psychology, or as most of us know it, the ‘Independent Route’. As with the previous Special Edition, I leave introducing the content of this publication to the Guest Editors, Dr Barbara Douglas and Professor Pam James. Before digressing I am, however, reminded of the words of Carl Rogers noted above when considering this pathway to chartered status/Health Professions Council (HPC) registration. Much like therapy, the pathway to growth and learning on the independent route is far from an easy option, and success revolves around the candidate’s ability to embrace a relatively solitary existence. Additionally, the challenge of those supporting candidates to create a suitable learning environment is no small feat either. In exploring the inner workings of such a unique approach of learning, the end result is a fascinating read and one that helps to make this particular strand of self-directed learning more transparent. Personally, I now feel slightly jealous in not having this as a resource prior to my own journey along the independent route! I do, however, find value in the content on different levels. Initially, I sat back and enjoyed its content with voyeuristic fascination. This then led to contemplation of how the training course that I have been involved in developing at the University of Manchester can harness the positive features of such an approach. Essentially, I am certain that researcher you will find something of interest in the pages that follow.

‘The mother-child relationship is paradoxical and, in a sense, tragic. It requires the most intense love on the mother’s side, yet this very love must help the child grow away from the mother, and to become fully independent.’

(Fromm, 1956, pp.33–34).

The second area of independence discussed in this editorial relates to the future of Counselling Psychology Review itself. Over the past few months I, alongside the Editorial Board and supported by the Division Committee, have been involved in putting together a proposal to put an end to this publication. Yes, this does seem a strange first act to do as Editor, but it was not without purpose. Our hope was to see the emergence of a formal Society-backed research journal – The British Journal of Counselling Psychology. Such a development reflects the increasing maturity of counselling psychology as a profession in the UK. Surely we have grown up enough to become ‘fully independent’ from our Societal parentage by now?

Now this is not an Agatha Christie novel, so if we skip to the end of the tale I can reveal that the proposal was not accepted on this occasion. This is obviously a disappointing turn of events, but not one that was unforeseen. I do, therefore, wish to unpack this a little further with the aim of being transparent about where we are up to with this process. With this in mind, in the next sections I briefly explain the motivations behind such an endeavour, the reasons behind the Journal Committee’s rejection of the proposal and consider how we dust ourselves down and utilise this as a formative experience.
The British Journal of Counselling Psychology: A rationale

Initially the main reasons for requesting the development of this journal were as follows (this text has been slightly edited from the original proposal).

Developments in the field of counselling psychology

Counselling psychology is a profession that is steadily growing in size and influence within the UK. Presently there are 2,792 members of the Society’s Division of Counselling Psychology (BPS, 2010) and this continues to grow as new training courses emerge across the country. Despite such developments, and the increase in research conducted by doctoral trainees and HPC registered counselling psychologists, there is presently no research journal for this group of professionals which is formally supported by the Society. The British Journal of Counselling Psychology, therefore, intends to provide a natural outlet for those involved in research related to counselling psychology in the UK. This is a move fully supported by the Division of Counselling Psychology and one that is viewed as essential for harnessing the research capacity of the profession.

The unique nature of the discipline of counselling psychology

As counselling psychology develops in the UK, its distinctive nature as a strand of applied psychology and therapy becomes clearer. For instance, in contrast to clinical psychology, counselling psychology has an orientation towards well-being (versus pathology), growth (versus remediation), and is not solely focused on clinical diagnostic criteria. Furthermore, in contrast to the related professions of counselling and psychotherapy (as it is in the UK), it is rooted in psychological knowledge, and explicitly draws on practices and theories from a plurality of orientations. The British Journal of Counselling Psychology will, therefore, act as a major force in harnessing these unique qualities within this new and burgeoning profession.

The evolution of Counselling Psychology Review

This proposal emerges from recent developments in the Division of Counselling Psychology’s publication, Counselling Psychology Review. Historically this publication proved to be the major form of communication between those in the Division. Its publication remit has been broad based and included formal content such as research and theoretical papers, and informal content such as letters between members. In recent months the decision was made to focus Counselling Psychology Review upon the research output of counselling psychologists and the Division newsletter – which is metamorphosing into an online counselling psychology forum on the Society’s website – was created to synthesise many of the other strands of Divisional communications. Following this change I (Dr Terry Hanley) was appointed as the new Editor of the publication. Part of my role has been to work towards the creation of a formal journal meeting the needs of counselling psychologists in the UK.

The changing role of the British Psychological Society

As the Society moves away from being the accrediting body for psychologists and emphasises its place as a learned Society, it is felt that it needs to be proactive in supporting the growth and development of the professions it enriches. As counselling psychology grows as a profession, the Division of Counselling Psychology now needs a publication of appropriate standing and quality to support the ongoing development of those in this field. It is felt that the creation of The British Journal of Counselling Psychology, held directly under the auspices of the Society and publicised in similar ways to other Divisional publications, will be this publication. Such a rationale clearly develops upon the growth in our community, the changing face of our communications and the developing landscape of psychology as a whole. (Here I note my own
naivety related to the journal proposal process and the wording above reflects what was presented within the proposal itself. In actual fact the creation of a journal would lead to the publication being independent from the Division of Counselling Psychology and placed under the auspices of the BPS Journals Committee; this is a structure that all BPS Journals work within and something I wasn’t aware of prior to going through this process.)

Now let us turn to the reason behind the proposal not being accepted.

The British Journal of Counselling Psychology: The response
To begin with I would like to be very open about my appreciation to the Journals Committee for reviewing the proposal. Clearly the proposal had been engaged with and there is much to learn from the comments that were made in relation to it. Although I do not agree completely with some of the comments made I respect the decision and see it as a point of development for Counselling Psychology Review as it remains for the time being.

Within the response five major points were made. In the interest of brevity I will summarise them into three: (1) the existing infrastructure of the publication; (2) the critical mass of research to be published; and (3) the protection of closely related Journals. These are discussed in turn.

The exiting infrastructure of the publication
Presently Counselling Psychology Review is geared up for as a UK-based publication and its Editorial Board reflects this. The Society’s Journals Committee aims to have an international focus and presently our Board was viewed as too ‘parochial’. Such a comment was not unanticipated and will be an area to rectify in the not too distant future.

The critical mass of research to be published
Here we enter into uncharted territory. Is there really enough research being conducted by counselling psychologists of an international quality? The point raised is clearly understandable, after all why would someone want to invest in something that flopped in its early years? Such a view, in my opinion, needs to be heard and responded to with action rather than rhetoric. It strengthens my resolve to harness the energies of counselling psychologists who are conducting research and to encourage them to publish in journals that reflect their profession – rather than being pushed into those published by associated disciplines/professions. In doing so, and by consistently publishing research of quality, I hope this will provide concrete evidence of the sustainability of such a journal. Needless to say this has to be a longer term goal but not one that is insurmountable given the developing strength of the Division.

The protection of closely related journals
This last sentiment proved the most disappointing in my eyes. The proposal was viewed as potentially damaging to other Society publications. In particular the Journal Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice (PAPTRAP) was highlighted as potentially under threat. With this in mind, the Journals Committee were of the opinion that a new journal in the proposed area could only be viable once the future status of PAPTRAP had been secured. Here the sentiments of three to five years were mentioned as a reasonable timescale to reconsider a proposal.

Moving forward: Call the CoPs
Now I won’t disguise my unease with some of the sentiments behind the reasoning provided by the Journals Committee. I will, however, choose not to voice them here at present and leave space for you to digest the issues yourself. Instead I will concentrate on the issue of what type of calling it provides for counselling psychologists. Is it a ‘wake up call’ or a ‘call to arms’? I’m sure there will be those who identify strongly with both sentiments. For me I look to my last quote on independence:
‘Independence? That’s middle class blasphemy. We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth.’ (Shaw, 1916, p.91).

Here, one of George Bernard Shaw’s characters reminds us of the systemic nature of humans. We are all interlinked and we must not underplay the systemic nature of the British Psychological Society. Our brothers and sisters in psychology rest alongside us and although we do not need to agree, we need to respect one another’s views as we are stuck with each other. With this in mind, I take the stance that the counselling psychology profession needs to take such a sentiment seriously and respond with due maturity. So the wake up call is that our parents, from Fromm’s perspective, do not presently feel confident that we can go it alone and have our ‘fully independent’ journal. The call to arms is that we need to prove to those, who Shaw reminds us we depend on, of our maturity and that we will work effectively alongside them rather than prove a competitive hindrance. Finally, in tying together loose ends, I guess that leaves the question of whether the Society itself is providing counselling psychologists with the Rogerian conditions of learning to fruitfully develop our unique potential.

I hope that provides you with something to think about over your morning cup of coffee/tea/tipple of choice. It definitely gives me plenty to do and I would like to think that it may even partly inspire some of you into submitting something to the publication over the coming years. Within the next instalment you will hopefully begin to see how Counselling Psychology Review is starting to transform and it will provide an insight into the high quality work being undertaken by our colleagues. For now though, take care and do enjoy the tales of independence that follow.

Correspondence
Terry Hanley
Lecturer in Counselling Psychology and Editor of Counselling Psychology Review,
Educational Support & Inclusion,
Ellen Wilkinson Building,
The University of Manchester,
Oxford Road,
Manchester M13 9PL.
Tel: +44(0)161 275 3307
E-mail: terry.hanley@manchester.ac.uk

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