Editorial

Contributions to knowledge, conferences and Counselling Psychology Review: An ethical dilemma

Terry Hanley

Content & Focus: This editorial provides a brief reflection upon the need for counselling psychologists to be both consumers and producers of research. It takes inspiration from the 2014 Division of Counselling Psychology Annual Conference and elaborates upon a chapter that I have been recently involved in writing for the forthcoming revised edition of the Handbook of Counselling Psychology. In particular, it reflects upon a number of ways that individuals can disseminate their work and argues that not doing anything with it can actually be unethical. The five papers incorporated in this edition are then provided as examples of where people have passed over the publishing threshold to share their work with interested others.

Keywords: Counselling psychology research; contribution to knowledge; research conference; research posters; publishing.

It’s graduation today in Manchester. A bright blue sky overlooks a city known for precipitation and people wander the streets wearing robes akin to the general attire at Hogwarts. Elsewhere it’s also the Division of Counselling Psychology’s annual conference going on in London. Social media informs me intermittently about the next event or major conclusion that’s coming out of the conference (‘Paul Gilbert said this…’, ‘so and so is up next talking about x’, ‘I’m starting to feel a little tipsy’, etc.). I am, however, sitting inside staring out at all the jubilation at present trying to pull together the next (this) edition of Counselling Psychology Review. I have the papers all sorted now except for a few minor issues (they’ve been reviewed, revised and edited for copy) and I need to finish the editorial. As a consequence I’ve been thinking about a recent piece of writing that Edith, Denis and I have been working on for the forthcoming revision of the Handbook of Counselling Psychology (a stalwart on British Counselling Psychology programme’s reading lists). The focus of our chapter was upon the move from being a consumer of research to becoming a producer of it.

In the chapter mentioned above we aim to describe and discuss a number of arenas in which counseling psychologists find themselves communicating to interested others about their research. We touch upon topics such as writing articles, presenting papers at conferences, presenting professional workshops and using social media to disseminate work. It is this type of focus that brings it to the fore of my mind today of all days.

Let’s start with the act of graduation. For counselling psychology trainees this is the culmination of years of hard slog. All the hours of offering and having therapy are complete, all the course work requirement boxes have been ticked and, in many cases, a huge thesis has been produced summarising your work and thinking on a particular topic. It’s definitely a time for a celebration. However, although many see it as the end of something, it is also the start of much more. Many people get jobs in different settings and get swept into a new busy life as a practitioner psychologist. In doing so, the life within the academic institution gets left behind and the thesis, which summarised so much hard work, gets neglected and gathers...
dust on your supervisor’s shelf. In my eyes this shift of emphasis provides our discipline with a large ethical dilemma. How can we justify asking so many people to share their stories, entrust us with numerical datasets, etc and then feel satisfied that only two or three people will ultimately make use of it? It can, therefore, be strongly argued that we have a duty to try and disseminate our work and to create ‘products’ that help others to access this work.

This leads me to the research conference that is going on as I type and the papers that I have just shaped with a view to sending them to the publishers. The presentations take on a multitude of forms and cover a massive array of topics. There have been keynote talks, paper presentations, workshops, poster presentations and, something I hadn’t heard of before this conference, a Pechu Kucha (a series of six-minute talks involving 20 slides each shown for 20 seconds). These contributions were offered by a wide spread of experienced individuals, with trainees reflecting upon the work they have completed in the last year and more renowned individuals reflecting upon the work they have been conducting for the last 20 years. The common thread in this variety proved to be that each person believed they had something to contribute to the wider community – possibly even providing the oh so important ‘contribution to knowledge’ so often talked about in relation to doctoral level studies.

If I move now to consider the papers that are presented in this edition of *Counselling Psychology Review*, the message is much the same. We have a wide variety of contributions (research papers, theoretical papers, and response papers in the ‘Dialogues and Debates’ section) from individuals from a variety of backgrounds. The overview is as follows:

- ‘UK counselling psychology training placements: Where are we now?’ by Christine E. Ramsey-Wade.
- ‘Does Mindfulness help in the treatment of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)? An audit of client experience of an OCD group’ by Hamilton Fairfax and his colleagues.
- ‘The relationship of counselling psychology training with CBT: Implications for research and practice’ by Georgia Konstantinou.
- ‘Characteristics of master therapists and the influence of Carl Rogers: A discussion’ by Ross Crisp.

As with the variety at the Division conference referred to above, the breadth of topics covered demonstrates some of the broad church of interests evident within the counseling psychology community in the UK. Once again, however, the common theme is the desire to share something that is believed to be of interest to others. Hopefully you will agree with them as you make your way through this quarterly selection of contributions. If you do not, however, do feel free to write response articles that we can incorporate in the ‘Dialogues and Debates’ section.

Terry Hanley