

Counselling Psychology in a Canadian Context: Final Report from the Executive Committee for  
a Canadian Understanding of Counselling Psychology<sup>1</sup> (December 2009)

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of counselling psychology presented in this report has been endorsed by Section 24 (Counselling Psychology) of the Canadian Psychological Association and the Canadian Psychological Association Board of Directors. The rest of this report reflects the perspective of the committee members and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of either the Canadian Psychological Association Board of Directors or the Counselling Psychology Section's Executive Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Committee members are presented alphabetically.

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Counselling Psychology in a Canadian Context: Final Report from the Executive Committee for  
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Counselling psychology (CNPSY) in Canada is one of several domains of applied psychology practice (Young & Nichol, 2007) and is recognized as a distinct speciality by the Canadian Psychological Association and provincial and territorial boards of psychology. While CNPSY has existed as a formally recognized discipline in the United States since 1951 (Munley et al., 2004), its formal existence in Canada is much shorter, with the formation of a CNPSY section of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) not occurring until 1986 (Lalande, 2004).

CNPSY in Canada has grown over the past two decades but has yet to advance a unified and consensual definition, endorsed by the CPA's CNPSY Section, to guide its evolution (see Lalande, 2004, for an account of the formation of the section). Throughout its young history, there has been confusion among those within and outside CNPSY about the identity of professionals in this field in Canada. This confusion has been exacerbated by perceptions of CNPSY's overlap with several other professional specialities, particularly clinical psychology (CLPSY) and professional mental health counselling (PMHC). Despite a conviction among counselling psychologists about the legitimacy of their field, its well established history in North America and the growing membership in the CNPSY section of CPA<sup>3</sup>, confusion persists within psychology at large, including among those pursuing undergraduate study in general psychology. As a result, few published articles have described the discipline of CNPSY in Canada. Extant descriptions published in Canadian journals are almost entirely (e.g., Sinacore-Guinn, 1995) or at

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<sup>3</sup> About 180 in 1993 (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993), 179 in 2004 (Lalande, 2004), 135 in 2005 (Canadian Psychological Association, 2005), 175 in 2006 (Canadian Psychological Association, 2006), 230 in 2007, and 300 in 2008 (Dr. Vivian Lalande, current chair of CPA Section 24, personal communication, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008).

least predominantly (e.g., Friesen, 1983; Lecomte, Dumont, & Zingle, 1981) centred on American literature and events, and “seem to represent a ‘Canadian perspective’ largely because the writers are Canadians, not because they focus on the state of affairs in Canada or review Canadian research” (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993, p. 307). Nevertheless, the evolution of Canadian CNPSY reflects important national and cultural contrasts to U.S. CNPSY (cf. Boucher, 2004). These differences have implications for the practice of professional psychology (Bowman, 2000) and training of counselling psychologists and therefore highlight the need to focus specifically on the Canadian experience of CNPSY.

### **Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this report is to examine the question, “What is counselling psychology, as conceptualized and practiced in Canada?” This report not only sets out a definition that takes into consideration Canadian history and traditions but, more importantly, attempts to outline the distinctiveness of CNPSY in Canada, particularly in contrast to similar applied professions within Canada. This task is complicated because the field is constantly changing (Lalande, 2004) and because counselling psychologists are an extremely diverse group (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993). We do not claim to fully represent all possible perspectives on CNPSY in Canada with this report; however, we believe that this report represents a broad range of perspectives on Canadian CNPSY at this point in time. It is hoped that this report will educate others about the nature and practice of CNPSY in Canada, thus bringing a broader awareness of CNPSY as a distinct speciality within applied professional psychology and as a vibrant section within CPA.

In addition, developing a formal definition of CNPSY for CPA Section 24 (CNPSY) is an ethical and professional imperative for a number of reasons, including (a) providing fully informed consent for clients using CNPSY services, (b) articulating a set of core competencies,

which can be used to promote greater consistency in training across universities, and (c) establishing a consensual scope of practice (Cross & Watts, 2002).

It is also important to recognize that CNPSY in Canada is particularly “endangered by allowing [their] practice to be defined by others, whether these are employers, professional associations, or other stakeholders in the field of psychology, or those outside of psychology” (Young & Nicol, 2007, p. 29). For example, as provinces proceed with regulating PMHC and continue to regulate the practice of psychology, there is a heightened risk of CNPSY being defined by default as whatever lies outside of the legislated scope of PMHC and CLPSY. This is particularly concerning because national and provincial counselling associations (e.g., Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association [CCPA], British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors, Canadian Association of Marriage and Family Therapists) will understandably want to define their discipline and scope of practice as broadly as possible. Additionally, without an adequate characterization of CNPSY and what counselling psychologists do, there is also risk that the regulatory authorities for psychology will base decisions about the scope of practice of CNPSY on inaccurate perceptions of CNPSY training and professional identity. As Young and Nicol, Sinacore-Guinn (1995) and others point out, if Canadian counselling psychologists do not take the initiative to explain who they are and what they do, they risk losing their identity and existence as a unique speciality.

Finally, devoting time and attention to develop and communicate a definition of CNPSY will inform other applied psychology specializations in Canada, and CNPSY in other countries. For example, over a decade ago, the CPA Sections for CLPSY and Industrial-Organizational Psychology presented official definitions for acceptance by the CPA Board of Directors, and subsequently published their definitions in *Canadian Psychology* (Kline, 1996; Vallis & Howes,

1996). Similarly, the American Psychological Association's Society of Counseling Psychology (Division 17) has articulated a formal American definition of CNPSY, most recently in 1999 (Division of Counseling Psychology, American Psychological Association, 1999). Organized bodies of counselling psychologists outside of North America (e.g., Japan; Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007) have also recently followed suit. At this point in this field's evolution, there are compelling reasons for CPA Section 24, CNPSY, and the CPA Board to adopt a formal definition of CNPSY, one that adequately reflects the unique history and context of the specialization in Canada.

This report is organized as follows: First we describe this committee, including its members, mandate and tasks. We then explore CNPSY's status as a discipline. This is followed by an analysis of various published Canadian descriptions of CNPSY that informed our working definition of the field and its subject matter (which is presented on page 22-23). After is further elaboration of Canadian CNPSY in terms of underlying philosophy, values, and issues related to identity, and the scope of practice of those who practice CNPSY in Canada is delineated. Lastly, we provide commentary on the issues of training/education and professional regulation, and review some of the similarities and differences between CNPSY in Canada and the discipline as it exists in other countries.

### **Committee History and Tasks**

The previous chair of the CNPSY Section of CPA (Section 24), Dr. Vivian Lalande, commissioned the "Executive Committee for a Canadian Understanding of Counselling Psychology" on January 26th, 2007. Her action was motivated by the membership's requests for a formal definition of CNPSY, as endorsed by Section 24. Through a call for volunteers from its membership, a nine-member committee was formed to propose a definition of the specialization

of CNPSY that reflects the Canadian context, and to summarize the features of CNPSY as understood and practiced in Canada<sup>4</sup>. This Committee included representatives from diverse work settings (public and private universities, public and private agencies, and independent practice), primary areas of practice (from teaching/research to counselling/assessment), education level (M.A. to Ph.D.), career level (early, middle, and late career), vocational status (employed vs. student/trainee), geographic location (five provinces and two territories spanning the country), and both urban and rural settings. Members also notably differed in age, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

A previous attempt to define CNPSY in Canada using empirical methods (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993) was hampered by an unacceptably low response rate (9%) and sample size ( $n = 23$ ) for a national survey. Consequently, there is no representative survey of Canadian CNPSY practices that characterizes the philosophies, characteristics, and scope of practice. Without available data on current practices and attitudes, our work consisted primarily of a recursive process of examining published Canadian conceptual descriptions, as well as definitions used by regulatory bodies and CPA-accredited CNPSY training programs.

The method we employed was to identify major Canadian CNPSY articles (Friesen, 1983; Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Hurley & Doyle, 2003/rev.2007; Lalande, 2004; Lecomte et al., 1981; Sinacore-Guinn, 1995; Sinacore, 2007; Young & Nicol, 2007) and assign committee members the task of conducting in depth, analytic reviews. An additional 30 relevant international readings were reviewed by individual members, who provided critical analysis and commentary to the other members of the committee. Material from the four existing CPA-accredited CNPSY programs in Canada was also examined, as well as information from

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<sup>4</sup> Two original members of the committee respectfully resigned from the committee within the first year and prior to the completion of this report, citing life circumstance issues affecting their ability to actively participate in the committee.

provincial/territorial psychology boards and other associations that register or certify those with training in fields related to CNPSY (e.g., the CCPA). Together, the committee members identified recurring issues, distinctly Canadian elements of practice, and consensual elements of published definitions of CNPSY. This information was extensively discussed and discursively analyzed by committee members as a group.

A preliminary copy of this report was presented and disseminated through a symposium entitled “Towards a Canadian Understanding of Counselling Psychology” (Angus, 2008; Bedi, Beatch et al., 2008; Haverkamp, Beatch et al., 2008; Smith, 2008) and subsequent conversation hour (Haverkamp, Harris, Domene, & Bedi, 2008) at the 2008 annual CPA convention in Halifax, Nova Scotia . Nearly 50 individuals attended either the symposium or the conversation hour. A transcriber was present to document verbal feedback from the twenty minute question/discussion period during the symposium and the fifty minute conversation session. Thirteen points of feedback were extracted from the symposium attendees’ comments and countless more from the attendees of the conversation hour. A feedback form was also handed out at the symposium for immediate feedback (see Appendix A) or delayed feedback (see Appendix B). Unfortunately, only two of these forms were returned. The preliminary definition contained in the report and request for feedback was also presented in the CNPSY Section’s November newsletter (Bedi, Haverkamp et al., 2008), which was emailed to all section members, with a link to the Section website that contained a similar request plus the text of the entire preliminary report. In addition, an e-mail was sent to all locatable authors of Canadian counselling psychology articles identified in this report further requesting feedback. Through these later two processes, eight individuals responded with various amounts of feedback ranging from 0.5 pages to 2 pages of feedback. A revised definition was created, incorporating this

feedback, which was then presented in April 2009 at the University of British Columbia to an audience of about 25 individuals (4 CNPSY faculty and 21 CNPSY doctoral students) as part of a doctoral level professional development seminar. Feedback from this audience was documented and used to create the version of the definition proposed at the Annual General Meeting of CPA CNPSY's section for official adoption by the Section on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The definition was passed unanimously after one friendly amendment that added two words to clarify the meaning and underlying intention of the committee with respect to supporting divergent research methods. The Section Executive put the approved definition forth to the Board of Directors of CPA during the summer of 2009, who sought some clarification and provided feedback. In response to the Board of Directors, minor and non-substantive changes were made and resubmitted to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors of the CPA approved the definition and formally adopted it as their official definition of CNPSY in November 2009.

### **Distinctive Characteristics of Counselling Psychology**

In 1983, following initial academic discussions on forming a CNPSY section within CPA, Friesen used seven criteria to evaluate whether or not CNPSY deserved status as its own discipline. The criteria included: (a) a distinct subject matter, (b) an adequate body of theory and research, (c) well-developed research methods, (d) a community of scholars, (e) the presence of supporting organizations/services, (f) widespread utility, and (g) a belief that CNPSY exists. He concluded that, on most fronts, CNPSY in Canada clearly met the criteria. Friesen suggested the most disputable areas were the criteria of belief (because there was ample lack of awareness amongst other professionals that the field of CNPSY existed) and research methodology (the development of which was still in its early stages and largely adopted from other areas of psychology).

Thirteen years later, Sinacore-Guinn (1995) echoed the conclusion that CNPSY is a true discipline in psychology because it “has methodology, a body of knowledge, and contributes in specific ways to the understanding of human behaviour” (p. 270). For example, there have been numerous methodological developments that now characterize CNPSY research (e.g., sophisticated integration of qualitative and quantitative research designs), as noted by Canadian counselling psychologists (e.g., Beck, 2005; Bedi, 2006; Haverkamp, 2005; Shepard & Marshall, 1999; Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005). More recently, Young and Nicol’s (2007) SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) analysis of CNPSY in Canada and Sinacore’s (2007) discussion of the values that counselling psychologists hold have reaffirmed CNPSY’s status as a discipline.

In Canada, the discipline of CNPSY has emerged as a distinct section within CPA and an applied psychological speciality within provincial/territorial psychology authorities. In addition to being a specialization within applied psychology, Canadian CNPSY has complex trans-disciplinary characteristics. CNPSY shares areas of practice and research with other psychological specialities (and vice versa), including educational psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, and CLPSY. It also intersects with various non-psychology disciplines including psychiatry, anthropology, social work, child and youth care, and education. These statements should not be alarming, as many other disciplines hold such overlap. For example, neurology has close ties to fields such as psychiatry, biology, genetics, and biochemistry, but retains its own disciplinary base (cf. comments of Friesen, 1983). Further discussion of some similarities and differences between CNPSY and CLPSY/PMHC is in Appendix C and comparisons are presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

At the present time, CNPSY has made significant strides in its development and maturation in Canada. On one hand, Canadian CNPSY possesses (a) a subject matter that, while overlapping with other disciplines, is recognizable by its practitioners, (b) a large accumulation of research and theoretical literature that has considerable applied value, and (c) a diverse community of scholars across the country, who have a shared sense of identity (as counselling psychologists) and affiliation (e.g., CPA Section 24). On the other hand, as will be outlined later, there is notable divergence in the definitions of CNPSY used by accredited training programs and psychology regulatory bodies. There is also no widely acceptable dissemination source that is both Canadian and specifically devoted to CNPSY. Moreover, the field has not progressed to the point where there are clear training and practice sub-specialities within CNPSY. Typically, doctoral programs train their students to be generalist counselling psychologists, rather than specialists in some specific area of the discipline such as health, vocational, or family psychology. However, some masters level programs in CNPSY do have speciality tracks (e.g., University of British Columbia: school, community, and higher education), reflecting closer integration between CNPSY and PMHC at the master's level of training.

### **Counselling Psychology in a Canadian Context**

#### **A Specialization within Psychology**

CNPSY originated as a distinct specialization within psychology in the United States, emerging as a division of the American Psychological Association in 1951, and with CNPSY doctoral training programs first accredited by the APA in 1953 (Munley, Duncan, & McDonnell, 2004). Given this history, CNPSY in the United States is deeply embedded within professional psychology. In Canada,<sup>5</sup> however, the situation is somewhat more complex because the discipline is rooted not only in the emergence of CNPSY in the United States, but also in

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the content of this report refers primarily to Anglophone Canada.

educational counselling (Young & Nichol, 2007). Indeed, virtually all CNPSY programs in Canada (including all four programs that are currently accredited by the CPA) are located in faculties of education rather than within departments of psychology, reflecting this distinctive history.

As Hiebert and Uhlemann (1993) point out, this historical affiliation with both counselling and psychology requires both sets of history and perspectives to be taken into account in understanding CNPSY in Canada. At the same time, there should be no debate as to the classification of CNPSY as a specialization within psychology because: (a) CNPSY has existed as a section within the CPA since 1986; (b) counselling psychologists are licensed for practice as psychologists; and (c) CNPSY training programs follow a scientist-practitioner model that emphasizes the use of *psychological* research in guiding practice decisions. CNPSY also exists as a specialization within psychology in the United States, Britain, and other countries around the world. However, many in the broader professional community may not be familiar with CNPSY. Our task is to acquaint others with the nature of this specialization and to explore the implications of this distinct identity, for the field's further development and to support further collaboration with other mental health professions.

### **Extant Definitions of Counselling Psychology**

Examination of CNPSY literature in Canada reveals the existence of diverse definitions, along with substantial overlap between CNPSY and fields such as CLPSY and PMHC (Friesen, 1983; Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Lalande, 2004; Lecomte, et al., 1981; Sinacore, 1995, 2007; Young & Nicol, 2007). Additionally, this literature reveals a dynamic and evolving discipline, with historical definitions possibly no longer accurately reflecting current patterns of practice (as outlined in the "Scope of Practice" section of this report).

Currently, there are four CPA-accredited doctoral programs in CNPSY (i.e., University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, McGill University, and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education). In the absence of a CPA-endorsed definition, these programs have formulated their own definitions of CNPSY (see Table 1). In addition to providing training in the core areas of psychology (e.g., developmental, personality, social, neuropsychology, measurement, statistics, research methods, history and systems, and ethics), these programs incorporate training in areas historically associated with CNPSY (e.g., diversity and multicultural competencies, vocational and career psychology, remediation and prevention, facilitation of social change, and systemic understandings). All accredited CNPSY doctoral programs either explicitly identify the scientist-practitioner model as their underlying framework or clearly imply it, highlighting the importance of both research and practice.

In contrast to a focus on psychopathology or medical diagnosis, CNPSY programs pursue “a wellness model” (McGill) designed for “enhancing human potential and quality of life” (University of Alberta) “across the lifespan” (University of British Columbia), that is applicable for addressing “emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and interpersonal difficulties” (University of Alberta). They also emphasize the importance of training professionals to work in a wide variety of settings (e.g., community, schools, health care settings) with a diverse spectrum of the population using remedial, preventative, and educational/developmental interventions. In contrast to the historical roots of CNPSY, only the University of British Columbia’s definition explicitly includes career/vocational psychology as central to the discipline of CNPSY, and one accredited program (the University of Alberta) does not require students to complete a course in this area.

Table 1

*Definitions of Counselling Psychology provided by Doctoral Training Programs**Accredited by the Canadian Psychological Association*

| University                     | Definition  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| McGill University              | <p>Counselling psychology is a professional discipline. In addition to training students to counsel professionally, this program teaches them to be intelligent consumers of the relevant research literature in this field and to do research in the applied aspects of the profession. For this purpose, it draws on the findings of developmental psychology, personality theory, social psychology, career psychology, and neuropsychology, among several other basic sciences.</p> <p>Counselling Psychology as a clinical discipline is distinct from clinical psychology and other mental health professions such as psychiatry, social work, and psychoeducation. Its approach is predicated on a wellness model of human nature rather than a pathognomonic one. It is multicultural and emic in its approaches.</p> |
| University of Alberta          | <p>[The program] is based on the scientist-practitioner model and is dedicated to training leaders of the profession through pursuing disciplined inquiry, understanding and respecting human diversity, and developing, using and evaluating effective counselling practices.</p> <p>Counselling Psychology is a helping profession devoted to preventing, remediating and ameliorating emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and interpersonal difficulties, and enhancing human potential and quality of life. Integrating science and practice, and developing the awareness and skills to work with diverse populations from individual, social, and organizational perspectives hopefully achieve these aims.</p>  |
| University of British Columbia | <p>[Commitment] to the use and application of psychological foundations and research to understanding and solving human problems across the lifespan and in diverse contexts including families, communities, schools, and workplaces .... the program recognizes the multicultural dimensions of society and therefore provides leadership in understanding culturally-based concerns in learning, human development, measurement and counselling .... training follows the scientist-practitioner model, with preparation in both research skills and counsellor/professional skills.</p>   |

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| University of Toronto (OISE) | [A definition is not provided on their website but the following is listed in their description of the field] Five areas of essential course content for a professional training program in counselling psychology are: counselling and psychotherapy, psychological measurement and statistics, advanced research methods, history and systems, ethics and professional issues. |
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*Note.* The information on this table was taken verbatim (between January and April 2008) from the web-site of the respective programs.

Definitions of CNPSY adopted by the various provincial and territorial regulatory bodies (see Table 2) sometimes emphasize core components that differ from those advanced by CNPSY training programs. For example, some jurisdictions identify counselling psychologists as working with a “clinical” population (implying either an overlap with CLPSY and/or perhaps using the term “clinical” to identify medical/healthcare settings), through the use of such terms as “maladjustment, “disability” (Alberta), and “treatment” (B.C., PEI). In other jurisdictions, the definition emphasizes work with non-clinical populations (“the work of counselling psychology is generally with reasonably well adjusted people” and “counselling psychology is the fostering or improving of normal human functioning” [Ontario, Saskatchewan]). The various regulatory bodies are more consistent, however, in concluding that the key expertise of the field includes: (a) promoting adaptation and coping to problematic life circumstances; (b) helping individuals accomplish life tasks, solve problems, and make decisions; and (c) facilitating personal development. The variations in how CNPSY is defined by the different provincial regulatory bodies may reflect a lack of familiarity with CNPSY as a distinct specialization, or dissimilar trends, norms, and practices across the provinces/territories. It could also be argued that apparently divergent definitions imply similar meaning as they are referring to “flips sides of the

same coin” (e.g., treating maladjustment vs. promoting adjustment) and that the linguistic emphasis is not very meaningful.

Table 2

*Definitions of Counselling Psychology provided by Provincial Colleges of Psychology and Other Regulatory Bodies*

| Organization   | Definition  |
|--|---|
| Alberta<br>(College of Alberta Psychologists)                                | Clinical/Counselling is the application of psychological knowledge, skills, and judgment to alleviate maladjustment, disability, and discomfort as well as to promote human adaptation, adjustment, and personal development.   |
| British Columbia<br>(College of Psychologists of BC)                         | Counselling psychology is the application of psychological knowledge to the assessment, prevention, and treatment of individuals, couples, families, and groups in order to help people adjust to problematic events and accomplish life tasks within the major spheres of work, education, relationships, and family during the lifespan developmental process.                      |
| Ontario<br>(College of Psychologists of Ontario)                             | Counselling Psychology is the fostering and improving of normal human functioning by helping people solve problems, make decisions and cope with stresses of everyday life. The work of Counselling Psychology is generally with reasonably well adjusted people.   |
| Prince Edward Island<br>(PEI Psychologist Registration Board)                | Counselling psychology is the application of psychological knowledge to the assessment, prevention, and treatment of individuals, couples, families, and groups in order to help people adjust to problematic events and accomplish life tasks within the major spheres of work, education, relationships, and family during the lifespan developmental process.                      |
| Saskatchewan<br>(Saskatchewan College of Psychologists)                      | Counselling Psychology is the fostering and improving of normal human functioning by helping people solve problems, make decisions and cope with stresses of everyday life. The work of Counselling Psychology is generally with reasonable well-adjusted people. The practice of Counselling Psychology might not entail the use of the controlled act of communicating a diagnosis. |
| Manitoba, New Brunswick,<br>Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec and | No legislation governing the practice of psychologists currently exists in the Yukon. The rest of the provinces or territories either do not identify counselling psychology as a distinct area of practice within professional psychology, or identify it as a specialization but do not currently have a  |

the Territories definition.

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*Note.* The information on this table was collected verbatim in April 2008 from the web-sites of the various boards or, if sufficient information was not available, from a telephone call / e-mail to the Board's office.

As noted above, we examined extant publications on Canadian CNPSY and identified definitions provided by or endorsed by Canadian writers (see Table 3). In these definitions, a number of characteristics emerged repeatedly, some of which are:

- Focusing on remediation, prevention, and promoting development and growth.
- Significant attention to how personal characteristics interact with and are contextualized by environmental and sociocultural factors in understanding client situations.
- Inclusion of numerous kinds of work (e.g., assessment, consultation, treatment), with numerous client types (e.g., individuals, families, and groups), and on a wide range of presenting issues (educational and career, interpersonal and relational issues, adjustment and coping).
- Emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity as paramount considerations.
- Grounding practice in research findings.

Table 3

*Definitions of Counselling Psychology provided by Published Canadian Articles  
(Presented Chronologically)*

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| Author(s) | Definition |
|-----------|------------|
|-----------|------------|

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|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Lecomte et al.</i> | Counselling psychology can be defined as a specialty whose |
|-----------------------|--|

(1981) practitioners help people improve their psychological well-being, resolve crises, and increase ability to solve problems and make decisions. Counselling psychologists assume that human problems and their solutions lie at the interaction of personal and environmental forces. (p. 9)

*Friesen (1983, p. 148, 150)* “The subject matter in counselling psychology is on the interaction of personal and environmental forces in the natural contexts of school, family and work-place. The counsellor is expected to intervene constructively in that interaction. Both human development and pathology are understood in this framework .... Counselling psychology uses the science of human behaviour to assist people in individual, small group and family contexts to deal with a variety of life concerns. Some of these concerns are personal problem-solving and decision-making, educational and vocational planning, family problems, interpersonal issues and other matters relating to personal growth and human effectiveness.”

*Hiebert & Uhlemann (1993, p. 291)* “Counselling psychology [is] a specialization within the broad field of psychology. The focus in counselling psychology was thought to be working with “normal” (vs. pathological) clients, living in community (rather than institutional) settings, who were experiencing any number of developmental life issues or personal life crises. The realm of practice was identified as primarily remedial and rehabilitative, in the attempt to resolve a discrepancy between the demands or problems people face and their skills for dealing with those problems.”

*Sinacore-Guinn (1995, p. 261)* “The counselling psychologist is interested in research and practice that focuses on individual lifespan development with particular attention to the interaction with sociocultural factors that either enhance or inhibit that development. Within this focus the counselling psychologist is interested in facilitating the individual’s growth and development through prevention and remediation with attention being given to educational, vocational and interpersonal satisfaction. Thus the counselling psychologist is interested in enhancing and providing for “positive” human experiences.”

*Hurley & Doyle (2003/ rev.2007, para. 1,6).* “Counselling psychology is a broad based and inclusive branch of psychology....Although counselling psychology is organizationally younger in countries such as Canada....analogous branch definitions have been developed that reflect similar value systems and research, training, and practice foci.”

In highlighting the American perspective which they believe is comparable, Hurley and Doyle emphasize both academic and professional environments, broad scope of activities, diverse historical roots especially in Education and Psychology, promotion of human

strengths and diversity, multicultural perspectives of human problems, and both remedial and preventative practice.

- Lalande (2004, p. 278-279)* After summarizing a number of different Canadian definitions of counselling psychology that exist in the literature, Lalande concluded that  
 “Although it is difficult to elaborate a single definition or philosophy for counselling psychology in Canada today, there are certain tenets fundamental to the field that reflect the field of counselling psychology in the USA. What seems characteristic of the practice of counselling psychology in Canada is the emphases on a social context of career development, qualitative research, and a multicultural perspective.”
- Citing Hurley and Doyle (2003/rev.2007, p. 2), she describes these shared tenets as ““a broad range of human functioning, identifies strongly with research, education/training, and practice synergies, and generally promotes human strengths, human diversity, and multicultural perspectives on human problems and solutions.”
- Sinacore (2007, p. 4)* She did not provide her own definition but instead reviewed American definitions and seemed to endorse an American definition by Gelso and Fretz (1990): “counselling psychology is a specialty that focuses on research, assessment, and interventions on and with relatively intact personalities.” She also provides a comprehensive description of values that she sees as being central to the counselling psychology identity.
- Young and Nicol (2007)* Young and Nicol did not provide their own definition of counselling psychology, by instead cited the Ontario College of Psychologists as a representative example of the definitions that exist.

### **Defining Counselling Psychology in the Canadian Context**

The following text is offered as our characterization of CNPSY in its Canadian context. Some of the characteristics noted are not exclusive to CNPSY (many are also found in related fields such as CLPSY, PMHC, marriage and family therapy, and clinical social work), and some that were omitted could still be appropriate within CNPSY. However, we believe that many

counselling psychologists in Canada can endorse these elements as being central to their understanding of CNPSY's professional identity. Thus, drawing on the material in the various regulatory, educational, and previously published definitions, we propose the following definition of CNPSY in Canada.

*Counselling psychology is a broad specialization within professional psychology concerned with using psychological principles to enhance and promote the positive growth, well-being, and mental health of individuals, families, groups, and the broader community.*

*Counselling psychologists bring a collaborative, developmental, multicultural, and wellness perspective to their research and practice. They work with many types of individuals, including those experiencing distress and difficulties associated with life events and transitions, decision-making, work/career/education, family and social relationships, and mental health and physical health concerns. In addition to remediation, counselling psychologists engage in prevention, psycho-education and advocacy. The research and professional domain of counselling psychology overlaps with that of other professions such as clinical psychology, industrial/organizational psychology, and mental health counselling.*

*Counselling psychology adheres to an integrated set of core values: (a) counselling psychologists view individuals as agents of their own change and regard an individual's pre-existing strengths and resourcefulness and the therapeutic relationship as central mechanisms of change; (b) the counselling psychology approach to assessment, diagnosis, and case conceptualization is holistic and client-centred; and it directs attention to social context and culture when considering internal factors, individual differences, and familial/systemic influences; and (c) the counselling process is pursued with sensitivity to diverse sociocultural factors unique to each individual.*

*Counselling psychologists practice in diverse settings and employ a variety of evidence-based and theoretical approaches grounded in psychological knowledge. In public agencies, independent practices, schools, universities, health care settings, and corporations, counselling psychologists work in collaboration with individuals to ameliorate distress, facilitate well-being, and maximize effective life functioning.*

*Research and practice are viewed as mutually informative and counselling psychologists conduct research in a wide range of areas, including those of the counselling relationship and other psychotherapeutic processes, the multicultural dimensions of psychology, and the roles of work and mental health in optimal functioning. Canadian counselling psychologists are especially concerned with culturally appropriate methods suitable for investigating both emic and etic perspectives on human behaviour, and promote the use of research methods drawn from diverse epistemological perspectives, including innovative developments in qualitative and quantitative research.*

In considering this characterization, it becomes evident that we are proposing a definition of CNPSY that is centered on philosophy and worldview, one which posits a particular perspective on the practice of professional psychology, rather than a discipline-specific set of skills or a wholly unique knowledge-base. Thus, it is crucial to elaborate upon the worldview that underlies Canadian CNPSY.

### **Underlying Philosophy and Values of Canadian Counselling Psychology**

The following two quotations by Canadian authors summarize the modal philosophy of Canadian CNPSY at the present time:

The basic tenets, values, and identity of counselling psychology provides a focus and orientation that is much needed to counter the obsessive focus on what is

wrong with individuals that more medically oriented approaches provide.

Counselling psychology instead questions what is right with the individual and problematic with the environment. It asks what kind of intervention is necessary for the person-environment interaction to be more productive and satisfying. It is this focus on strengths and wellness that gives counselling psychology an edge in understanding the social and political issues that individuals and society are struggling to address. (Sinacore-Guinn, 1995, p. 270)

[Counselling psychology] embodies the motto of the Canadian Psychological Association, *Advancing Psychology for All*: actively bringing psychology to the people of Canada by generating new knowledge and engaging in professional practice with an attention to inclusivity and diversity, holistic frameworks, and an appreciation of the challenges and actions of everyday life navigated across the lifespan. (Young & Nicol, 2007, p. 21)

### **The Identity of Canadian Counselling Psychologists**

At the heart of any attempt to understand the discipline of CNPSY in Canada is the need to carefully consider the issue of identity of counselling psychologists. Canadian counselling psychologists tend to be a diverse group, which contributes to their inclusive professional identity but also to tension within the discipline and with other related disciplines (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Lalande, 2004). Sprinthall (1990), a U.S. counselling psychologist, has suggested that overlapping boundaries between CNPSY and related disciplines, along with CNPSY's move toward areas traditionally perceived as clinical/medical, places the discipline at risk of losing its unique identity. However, despite this boundary overlap and broadening practice, many counselling psychologists remain committed to a strong theoretical base focused

on growth and wellness. This stance is reflected in McGill counselling psychologist Sinacore-Guinn's (1995) proposal that counselling psychologists working within areas traditionally connected with CLPSY practice should strive to initiate broader organizational change to promote wider engagement of clients within a wellness model. In sum, to maintain its unique identity and philosophy of practice, Canadian CNPSY will need to continue emphasizing the focus on client strengths and adjustment that have long characterized CNPSY practice and research (Sinacore-Guinn, 1995; Young & Nicol, 2007).

A thorough examination of the definition of CNPSY in Canada would not be complete without the examination of two key elements that underlie the identity of Canadian counselling psychologists: Positive Psychology and the promotion of diversity.

**Positive Psychology.** According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), the three aims of psychology in general are to treat psychological disturbances, facilitate more productive and fulfilling living, and cultivate high levels of aptitude and ability. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi also report that North American Psychology has over-emphasized the first goal to the severe neglect of the latter two. CNPSY has long had a focus on the latter two areas. With their commitment to a perspective of personal growth, mental wellness, lifespan development, and optimal human functioning, counselling psychologists intentionally work to counter the growing dissatisfaction of an applied psychology based on deficits. CNPSY has wholeheartedly embraced a Positive Psychology approach to psychology from the very start of its existence as a discipline (Linley, 2006; Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood., 2006), although the label "positive psychology" did not emerge until more recently. For example, in their random sample of articles from four journals that are popular amongst counselling psychologists, Lopez et al. (2006) found that almost one-third of articles published over the last forty years clearly focused

on the positive in CNPSY scholarship.<sup>6</sup> The identity of CNPSY, in its emphasis on client strengths, anticipated the emergence of Positive Psychology.

Canadian counselling psychologists have pursued the same Positive Psychology path as their American counterparts, evidenced by countless articles on the “positive” (e.g., hope, Harris & Larsen, 2008; empowerment, Harris & Alderson, 2006; the client as expert, Henkelman & Paulson, 2006; leisure, Grafanki, Pearson, & Cini, 2005; positive acceptance of social anxiety, Chen, 1996). However, what is sometimes understood as a “new” movement in Positive Psychology (cf. Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005; Seligman, 2003; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) frequently overlooks the large and longstanding body of CNPSY research that emphasizes Positive Psychology constructs and assessment practices. It would be of benefit to CNPSY if counselling psychologists provided more vocal reminders of CNPSY’s past and present contributions in this area.

**Promotion of diversity.** Diversity, in its broadest sense, is a fundamental value of Canadian CNPSY and something for which counselling psychologists have repeatedly advocated (Sinacore-Guinn, 1995). The CNPSY valuing of diversity is consistent with the CPA Guidelines for Non-Discriminatory Practice (CPA, 2001) and promotion of the inherent rights and dignity of all persons, and is reflected in the graduate training emphasis on multicultural competence. As a fundamental value, diversity is also reflected in an acceptance of multiple perspectives on how CNPSY researchers and practitioners approach their work. Diversity is manifest in the range of work settings, type of service provisions, nature of interventions (e.g., preventive, remedial), theoretical bases, professional roles, research methods employed, and even philosophies of science that are found in CNPSY. Despite this great diversity, what unifies counselling

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<sup>6</sup> For additional details about the congruence of CNPSY and the current Positive Psychology movement, the reader is referred to a special issue of the *Counseling Psychologist* (2006, volume 34, issue 2), which contains nine articles examining various aspects of this association.

psychologists is less a matter of what they do and more a matter of how they think and how they approach their tasks and problems (Meara, 1990; see also Vespia & Sauer, 2006). The underlying values and philosophy of CNPSY (as outlined earlier) and perspectives/principles (to be outlined later) that they bring to their work is what characterizes the identity of those who practice CNPSY.

**Influential contextual factors.** There are several contextual factors that seem to disproportionately influence the identity of Canadian counselling psychologists at the present time, including: (a) its minority status compared to CLPSY, (b) opportunities for a range of different professional affiliations, (c) unregulated activity, and (d) the bilingual nature of Canadian society. In Canada, the field of CNPSY is considerably smaller than CLPSY, most evidenced by the large discrepancy in CPA-accredited training programs (4 CNPSY vs. 23 CLPSY) and 2006-2007 section membership (230<sup>7</sup> in CNPSY vs. 725 CLPSY) (CPA, 2007). As a consequence of its minority status, there is considerable pressure for counselling psychologists to assimilate or at least acculturate into the dominant model of psychological mental health services – the medical (i.e., “diagnose and treat”) model typically endorsed by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists (Sinacore-Guinn, 1995). To confuse the matter further, many Canadian counselling psychologists (especially those in independent practice) maintain a scope of practice that is virtually indistinguishable from Canadian clinical psychologists (Linden, Moseley, & Erskine, 2005). According to Young and Nicol (2007), some of these similarities may be a consequence of the “the clinical psychology lobby whose numerical and historical influence in provincial regulatory boards and the CPA allows for very little differentiation between these two domains” (p. 25).

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<sup>7</sup> The membership size of the CNPSY section of CPA was incorrectly reported as 130 in the CPA 2006-2007 Annual Report. It should be 230 (Dr. Vivian Lalonde, personal communication, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008).

Those trained in CNPSY in Canada are currently afforded choices in professional affiliation: with either/both the disciplines of psychology and education and as psychologists or counsellors (or both). The location of CNPSY programs can shape the identity of counselling psychologists due to the nature of interactions, resources, accessible colleagues, and collaboration opportunities as well as how outsiders perceive identity and belonging (Leong & Leach, 2007). Thus, it is important to note that no accredited CNPSY programs in Canada are located within departments of psychology. Instead, virtually all of them are part of faculties of education<sup>8</sup>, which reflects the strong Canadian historical roots in Education. In Canadian academic institutions, CNPSY developed out of programs in Counsellor Education (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993), sometimes primarily by virtue of a name change rather than substantive changes in curriculum (Young and Nicol, 2007).

Additionally, as noted by existing descriptions of CNPSY in Canada (e.g., Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Lalonde, 2004; Young & Nicol, 2007), the discipline is rooted in two professional affiliations: counselling and psychology. Although some Canadian counselling psychologists may still struggle with the question of “Are we counsellors or psychologists?” (Hiebert & Uhlemann, p. 308), current definitions of CNPSY found by this committee (see Tables 1-3) affirm the discipline’s status a specialization within psychology. However, Young and Nicol reported that, in contrast to the United States, CNPSY in Canada grew primarily out of counselling profession not the professional psychology profession. As a result of this interface, and based on the experience of several of the committee members, it must be recognized that a notable number of individuals in Canada who are trained in CNPSY, even at the doctoral level, choose to affiliate primarily with the CCPA rather than the CPA (and these individuals are often

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<sup>8</sup> An exception occurs at Trinity Western University, a small, independent Christian liberal arts university located in Langley, BC, in which the Counselling Psychology program is one of several independent programs within the School of Graduate Studies.

not provincially registered psychologists). Additionally, Young and Nicol report that a large number of doctoral-trained counselling psychologists in Canada are not members of CPA's section 24.

A situation that hinders development of the identity of both counselling psychologists and professional mental health counsellors is the fact that counselling remains unregulated in many parts of Canada. Additionally, the word "counselling" itself has many associations outside of the mental health area, and many individuals without any training in CNPSY or even PMHC/ counsellor education refer to what they do as counselling (e.g., financial counselling, travel counselling, spiritual counselling). However, Young and Nicol (2007) offer a contrary opinion. Nevertheless, the everyday non-professional use of the term "counselling" combined with the fact that PMHC is only beginning to be regulated may actually work against a unitary and strong identity for Canadian counselling psychologists. As such, counselling as a professional activity remains ill-defined and misunderstood by people outside of CNPSY and PMHC.

There is also a linguistic diversity in Canada that influences the identity of CNPSY in Canada. Specifically, despite being officially bilingual, full fluency in both English and French is relatively rare amongst Canadian citizens and residents outside of New Brunswick and Quebec<sup>9</sup> (Statistics Canada, 2006). As such, CNPSY literature or developments in Anglophone Canada are less accessible to French-speaking Canadians and vice versa. Consequently, developments in Francophone Canada have not mirrored those in Anglophone Canada (Young & Nicol, 2007) and there is little awareness of cross-language advancements in the discipline.

**A shared identity.** Despite these challenges, a common affiliation and shared identity exists for many psychologists trained in CNPSY and is grounded in shared values and a distinct

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<sup>9</sup> Of note is that, in order to be licensed as a psychologist in Quebec, one must demonstrate fluency in both English and French through examination.

philosophy of practice. The CNPSY Section of CPA has been in existence for over 20 years, CPA accreditation of doctoral programs in CNPSY began in about 2000, and several provincial/territorial regulatory bodies recognize CNPSY as a distinct area of specialization for psychologists. Moreover, the identity of Canadian counselling psychologists is also confirmed by their publication practices. In the absence of any existing Canadian CNPSY journals, they often publish in international CNPSY venues (but this point is clouded by the fact that they also frequently publish in national venues for PMHC).

### **Scope of Practice**

Canadian counselling psychologists maintain a diverse scope of practice in their professional activities, ranging from work with individual clients and groups of clients who could benefit from a primary or secondary prevention approach, to assisting individuals, groups, or organizations in the remediation of any number of presenting complaints. Canadian counselling psychologists serve diverse client populations presenting with a wide array of concerns, utilize a broad set of skills, and maintain multiple practice activities (e.g., counselling, psychotherapy, psychological assessment, teaching, research, supervision, consultation, and program development/evaluation). Indeed, as noted earlier, Canadian counselling psychologists tend to be a highly diverse group (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Lalande, 2004). Despite such varied practices within the field, most counselling psychologists share an underlying primary orientation to promote human growth and potential. This underlying framework, combined with a central focus on psychological principles, helps distinguish this field from other closely related practice areas (Leung, Chan, & Leahy, 2007).

### **Core Roles**

The practice of professional psychology can be conceptualized as encompassing a number of overlapping roles, including remediation, prevention, and education/growth-promotion (Jordaan, Myers, Layton, & Morgan, 1968). These categories are salient in Canadian CNPSY today and highlight the cardinal roles assumed by Canadian counselling psychologists in their practice (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993).

**Remedial.** Counselling psychologists engage in remedial or rehabilitative work, helping clients resolve a broad range of life concerns. Hiebert and Uhlemann (1993) noted that, for many Canadian counselling psychologists in their sample, their realm of practice was largely remedial or rehabilitative, and focused on dealing with discrepancies between client concerns and client skills for dealing with these problems. Although much of the work of present day counselling psychologists is likely remedial, often as a result of work setting philosophies and demands, the discipline's philosophical focus on client strengths, positive psychology principles, and developmental perspectives are evident, even in remediation settings. Congruent with the field's emphasis on research-informed practice and the scientist-practitioner approach espoused by the CPA-accredited CNPSY training programs in Canada, we expect that CNPSY practitioners are employing evidence-based practice in their remedial work.

**Preventative.** Counselling psychologists "anticipate, circumvent, and forestall difficulties that may arise in the future" (Jordaan et al., 1968, p.1). Although engaging in primary prevention is an important value of CNPSY (Sinacore, 2007), it may not always receive the attention that one would expect. Heibert and Uhlemann (1993) found that many Canadian counselling psychologists surveyed in their study were not engaged in prevention activities, a sentiment echoed nearly a decade later by Young (2002, as cited in Lalande, 2004). In addition, our examination of the curriculum in Canadian CNPSY programs reveals no greater focus on

training practitioners to engage in prevention activities than in remediation practices. As a core aspect of a distinctive CNPSY identity, we would recommend greater attention to prevention-oriented activities and training.

**Educational-Developmental-Growth.** Counselling psychologists engage clients through educational and developmentally-appropriate facilitative practice. Teaching clients specific skills to help them deal with life challenges, or avoid potential future challenges, is a key role of counselling psychologists (Gelso & Fretz, 1992; Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993). In fact, several authors have suggested that counselling itself is largely education-oriented (Hiebert, 1989; Martin & Hiebert, 1985). This area of practice is congruent with the placement of CNPSY training programs in faculties of education which, when viewed in this context, can be considered a strength rather than a limitation, as it offers access to evidence-based practice in adult and child education.

### **Practice Applications**

**Work settings and clients served.** In Canada, counselling psychologists are employed in a wide range of settings, including schools and related educational facilities, independent practices, university departments and university counselling centres, community-based agencies, mental health clinics, correctional facilities, government and corporate organizations, sports associations, hospitals and other health care settings, and rehabilitation clinics (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Lecomte et al., 1981). Canadian counselling psychologists work with virtually all populations, sometimes collaborating and, at other times, overlapping with related disciplines such as CLPSY (Pelling, 2004). In Hiebert and Uhlemann's study, counselling psychologists reported working with client issues such as life stressors (e.g., unemployment, marital tension, abuse, interpersonal conflicts), psychological and mental health concerns (e.g., anxiety), and

physical concerns and chronic illnesses, as well as in secondary prevention (e.g., emerging low self-esteem or concerns about their future careers).

**Skill set.** Counselling psychologists utilize a broad skill set in delivering interventions to clients. Aspects of a CNPSY approach may overlap with other professional groups such as school counsellors, professional mental health counsellors, clinical and industrial/organizational psychologists, marriage and family therapists, and clinical social workers (Young & Nicol, 2007). Although these intervention skills are not unique to CNPSY, counselling psychologists do maintain several defining or core skill sets, that, when combined and applied within a CNPSY philosophical framework, form the basis of a distinct scope of practice. These defining skills include: multicultural and diversity awareness and competence, career and vocational skills, therapeutic process-oriented skills, therapeutic alliance/relationship-oriented practice skills, skills for working with “normal” populations, health promotion skills, client-focused assessment skills, and reflective practice (Young & Nicol; Leong & Leach, 2007). Of course, other skill sets exist (e.g., clinical diagnosis) but they are not as defining or distinct. Canadian CNPSY has been informed by social justice, feminism, post-modernism and other critical theory orientations, which has resulted in developing skill sets and a practice orientation that go beyond what some consider traditional counselling/psychotherapy skills (e.g., systemic change skills such as advocacy and community-based partnership building skills) (Young & Nicol).

Sinacore (2007; Sinacore-Guinn, 1995) has proposed that the central skill set of counselling psychologists is the ability to identify what is healthy within the individual and the environmental influences that impact an individual’s functioning. She notes that counselling psychologists can identify and utilize interventions to facilitate productive and satisfying person-environment interactions. She further suggests that CNPSY’s focus on strengths and wellness

gives CNPSY particular advantages in understanding, and intervening in, the social and political dimension of individual and societal struggles. We concur and extend this to say that counselling psychologists can and do typically bring this strengths and wellness focus to their work with individuals diagnosed with psychiatric disorders.

**Practice areas.** In Canada, the practice areas of other types of psychologists tend to overlap with the practice of counselling psychologists. These areas are broad, and encompass practices such as: counselling, psychotherapy, psychological assessment, diagnosis, consultation and program evaluation, national and international sociopolitical advocacy work, teaching, supervision, and research.

Counselling psychologists engage in research-informed counselling and psychotherapy with individual clients, couples, families, and groups. Counselling psychologists utilize a diverse array of theoretical models to inform their therapeutic practice, spanning models such as: feminist, humanistic, experiential, cognitive, behavioural, and systems (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Lalande, 2004). As a specialization within psychology, counselling psychologists utilize psychological knowledge to facilitate growth and change for clients within broader social structures. Some authors have suggested that counselling psychologists tend to emphasize brief treatment modalities (e.g., Sinacore-Guinn, 1995). Although there is no Canadian research exploring this topic, Lambert (2005) notes that many U.S. practitioners have increased their emphasis on brief intervention formats, influenced by that country's emphasis on empirically supported interventions and cost effective treatments. This emphasis is likely to have influenced practice in Canada given our extensive exposure to American CNPSY and psychotherapy literature.

Counselling psychologists also engage in psychological assessment. Areas of assessment practice vary, often depending on work environments, but can include vocational, psycho-educational, personality, personal functioning, person-environment fit, rehabilitation, and diagnostic. Counselling psychologists are trained in a broad array of personality, vocational and cognitive ability measures. Duckworth (1990) notes that, across these diverse areas, what defines a CNPSY approach to test use is that assessment is conducted in the service of client goals, with clients as active participants in the assessment process.

For many counselling psychologists, the emphasis tends to be on assessing “normal” personality/functioning rather than severe clinical disturbance. All doctoral programs provide curricular coverage of psychopathology and clinical diagnosis and assessment but the emphasis, amount, and quality appears to differ across programs. For example, the University of Alberta offers some of its CNPSY students practica opportunities in psychiatric settings which can result in students better developing and honing clinical diagnostic and assessment skills introduced through coursework. However, these practica opportunities are not offered as commonly to CNPSY students at the University of British Columbia. In addition, some counselling psychologists work in settings that eschew the use of standardized testing altogether, while others work in settings such as hospitals, mental health centres, and correctional facilities, which require the diagnostic assessment of psychopathology. Clearly, differences exist among counselling psychologists’ practice, training, and indeed perspectives surrounding diagnostic assessment (as is also present in other professional areas of psychology). Even among the current committee there exists different perspectives as to the role of diagnostic assessment in the field of CNPSY. More attention and investigation is needed to examine what role diagnostic assessment plays or should play among Canadian counselling psychologists. Nevertheless, we

assume, consistent with the CPA's professional ethics codes, that those counselling psychologists who use formal clinical diagnosis and assessment have acquired the appropriate expertise through supervised experience on the job or supplemental training if such areas were not sufficiently covered during their doctoral education and supervised training.

Counselling psychologists, from their core philosophical orientation, are trained to see beyond diagnostic labels, to focus on environmental/socio-cultural causes that can create/perpetuate/contribute to psychopathology, and to avoid unnecessary diagnostic labelling of individuals (Sinacore-Guinn, 1995). However, that does not mean that counselling psychologists are unable to provide clinical diagnoses, when this serves the best interests of their clients. Some counselling psychologists intentionally work within diagnostic systems to ensure clients are actively involved in the diagnostic process. These psychologist work with clients to help them understand diagnostic labels critically and to facilitate empowerment and growth. Indeed, all accredited doctoral programs in CNPSY provide curricular coverage of psychopathology and clinical diagnosis.

Counselling psychologists may engage directly with stakeholder groups that play a role in client problems. They may engage in information dissemination, advocacy and empowerment of clients and stakeholders. Counselling psychologists may also engage in program evaluation (cf. Astramovich & Coker, 2007; Daniels, Mines, & Gressard, 1981), which is a course in many CNPSY programs. Consultation and program evaluation fit well with CNPSY's role of social responsibility, which involves facilitating change at broader local, national, and international levels.

Counselling psychologists also engage in teaching and clinical/counselling supervision (Sinacore-Guinn, 1995). Importantly, these activities are not restricted to academic counselling

psychologists. Many counselling psychologists working outside of academia engage in part-time teaching and supervision of graduate students. To support this activity, several CNPSY doctoral programs (e.g., McGill University, University of British Columbia) mandate a formal course as well as supervised experience in providing clinical supervision. These roles fit well with the discipline's underlying emphasis on education and broad systems change.

Canadian counselling psychologists engage in various types of research that reflect the field's core orientation to adjustment and development and, as a result, have made unique and valued contributions to psychological research and have been influential to psychological researchers outside of CNPSY (e.g., Arthur, 2005; Bedi, 1999). Frequent topics for investigation include the counselling process, therapeutic relationship and interpersonal dynamics, culture and diversity practices, career/vocational practices, life transitions and life span development, educational processes, health-illness continuum, positive psychology, working with "normal" populations, psychological counselling/psychotherapy interventions, social change processes, and prevention (e.g., Arthur, 2005; Bedi, 2006; Cahill & Martland, 1996; Harris & Alderson, 2006; Harris & Larsen, 2008; also see articles cited in Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Sinacore, 2007; Sinacore, 1995; Leong & Leach, 2007; Pelling, 2004).

The situation in Quebec may differ from the above description. Ritchie and Sabourin (2004) have argued that, historically, French universities in Canada did not place much emphasis on basic psychological research. As such, the early focus of research at French Canadian universities was on applied aspects of psychology more so than in many English-speaking universities. We would expect that this difference in research emphasis would affect both CNPSY and CLPSY in Quebec.

All CNPSY doctoral programs accredited by the CPA adhere to a scientist-practitioner training model. Doctoral level counselling psychologists are trained to be research producers and research consumers. In the initial years of CNPSY's development in Canada, several authors (e.g., Heibert & Uhlemann, 1993; Whiteley, 1984) suggested that many counselling psychologists were practitioners first and did not engage in research production past graduate training. With the emergence of CPA accredited doctoral training, not only are counselling psychologists able to critically apply research in their practice, but are increasingly conducting research. Although this is especially apparent at the doctoral level, master's training programs in CNPSY also include a focus on application of research findings.

The growing emphasis on research has also been characterized by an expansion of research methods that are recognized tools for investigation. Calls for methodological diversity were present in Canada as early as 1976 (Zingle, 1976) and Canadian CNPSY has been particularly associated with growing expertise in qualitative research (Lalande, 2004). CNPSY research in Canada is distinguished, from both Canadian CLPSY and U.S. CNPSY, by greater openness to, and utilization of, qualitative research methods (Rennie, Watson & Montiero, 2002). Qualitative paradigms have long been recognized as legitimate in the discipline of education; perhaps CNPSY's greater adoption of these less traditional methods in psychology can be traced to greater exposure derived from placement of training programs in faculties of education.

One major obstacle facing the field of CNPSY in Canada is the absence of a peer-reviewed CNPSY journal, leading Canadian counselling psychologists to publish in American (e.g., *The Counseling Psychologist*, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*) and European CNPSY journals (e.g., *Counselling Psychology Review*, *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*). Canadian

counselling psychologists also publish in the *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, the journal of the CCPA, which has a primary audience of professional counsellors rather than counselling psychologists. Canadian CNPSY would likely be enhanced with the development of a Canadian CNPSY journal as well as greater representation of CNPSY authors in CPA journals such as *Canadian Psychology*, *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, and *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology*.

## **Training and Education**

### **Accredited Programs and Core Competencies**

The CPA accreditation process emphasizes a common set of requirements for accreditation of professional psychology doctoral programs (CPA, 2002) rather than enumerating standards that are specific to individual specializations. In fact, of the four professional psychology specialties that are identified by the association (i.e., counselling, school, clinical, clinical neuropsychology), only clinical neuropsychology has some of its own unique standards. These common accreditation standards include an expectation that training in professional psychology occurs at the doctoral level and that there be a focus on the integration of research and practice. Programs in all areas of applied psychology provide training in the core areas of biological bases of behaviour, cognitive-affective bases of behaviour, social bases of behaviour, individual behaviour, historical and scientific foundations of general psychology, scientific and professional ethics and standards, research design and methodology, statistics, test construction, and psychological measurement. Program faculty are expected to have doctoral degrees in the designated professional area, which produces differentiation between the speciality areas in the accreditation standards (i.e., faculty hold doctoral degrees in CNPSY).

Another important requirement for accreditation is the pre-doctoral internship and preceding practica placements. In Canada, there are only three CPA-accredited CNPSY internship sites (compared to almost eight times more CLPSY sites, which are only infrequently open to CNPSY applicants). Thus, many pre-doctoral CNPSY students must compete for accredited CNPSY internships in the U.S. or complete an internship in a non-accredited site, and perhaps even outside of the CNPSY area (e.g., connected with CLPSY). This has implications for students' training, future employment, and understanding of Canadian CNPSY, none of which supports development of a strong Canadian CNPSY identity. Nevertheless, accreditation requirements for CLPSY and CNPSY internship sites are virtually identical. Moreover, in our experience, and through discussing this with various staff at CNPSY internship sites, CNPSY internship sites appear to be very open to welcoming those trained in CLPSY than vice versa.

Although CPA does not accredit master's programs in psychology, there has been a move by PMHC in Canada to accredit master's level training in PMHC. Beginning in 2003, the CCPA offered accreditation of terminal masters degrees provided in programs designated as either counsellor education or CNPSY. This offers a challenge to Canadian CNPSY identity as the CCPA accreditation standards are geared toward PMHC and counsellor education training. As noted previously, some of the same departments that house doctoral programs in CNPSY also provide master's level training for practitioners who choose to become professional mental health counsellors rather than counselling psychologists (Young & Nicol, 2007). This state of affairs makes it difficult for students, faculty, and the professional bodies to differentiate between training in CNPSY and counsellor education at the master's level.

Some of this confusion can be attributed to a lack of consensus on how such training programs should be labelled, and to differences in the regulatory status of the two professions.

Young and Nicol have contended that, historically, some master's level programs in counsellor education changed their name to CNPSY without substantive changes in curriculum while others engaged in substantive revisions. We suspect that this issue will receive increased attention in the future, as PMHC begins to pursue governmental regulation and psychology considers the issues of labelling at all levels of training.

It should be noted that the foregoing discussion in this section largely pertains to Canada with the exception of Quebec. Quebec currently has the only established PsyD programs in Canada.<sup>10</sup> These are practice-oriented doctoral training programmes (Lalande, 2004), offering a type of doctoral degree that is firmly established in the United States, as evidenced by APA-accreditation of numerous PsyD programs. Of note, however, is that no PsyD programs in Quebec are specifically dedicated to CNPSY. In fact, CNPSY training is not offered at any level of study (masters or doctoral) in any French-language university in Quebec (Young & Nicol, 2007).<sup>11</sup> In addition, CCPA membership is not widely accepted in Quebec, with master's level practitioners tending to register with provincially-regulated non-psychology boards instead.

### **Faculty of Education versus Department of Psychology**

All doctoral CNPSY programs in Canada are located in faculties/departments/schools of education, rather than psychology departments. Little research has been conducted to explore the appropriateness of this connection in Canada, although considerable attention has been devoted to this issue in American contexts (see Heibert & Uhlemann, 1993, for a detailed review). Some researchers (e.g., Hiebert, 1989; Sprinthall, 1990) have made the case that CNPSY's roots and theoretical orientations are well aligned with education faculties. Thus, faculties of education

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<sup>10</sup> Although Memorial University's Psychology Department, in collaboration with Memorial University's Counselling Centre, just initiated a Psy.D. program in Clinical Psychology in September 2009.

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that one of the three speciality tracks in the CLPSY program at the University of Montreal was Counselling-Humanistic (the others being Clinical-Dynamic and Clinical-Behavioural). However, this specialty track was discontinued in 2001.

may be a better fit for CNPSY than psychology departments, which are often more focused on natural science methodologies and a CLPSY model of practice. Being located in education faculties also permits other benefits, such as maintaining a clear distinction from CLPSY programs housed in psychology departments, along with natural opportunities for multidisciplinary partnerships, education, and research (particularly qualitative research).

This positioning of CNPSY within education faculties also creates significant challenges (cf. comments of Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993). For example, CNPSY programs often have to argue for their relevance to the core priorities and central mandate of a faculty of education, particularly when budgetary decisions must be made. Administrators are likely to expect that CNPSY research and training contribute to traditional education, particularly at the kindergarten to 12 level. This can be problematic as the field of CNPSY is focused on the entire lifespan. Further, there is a risk that university decision makers will consider the profession of counsellor education, which includes the training of master's level school counsellors, as more compatible with a faculty of education mandate, in contrast to training in psychology (i.e., counselling psychology). At a minimum, CNPSY programs need to be proactive in articulating the relevance of applied psychology training to lifespan development and educational practice.

### **Regulation of the Profession**

Although the recommended entry level graduate degree for independent practice in psychology is the doctoral degree (e.g., Cohen & Caputo, 2006), several provinces allow independent practice as a psychologist with the master's degree (e.g., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia). In addition, some provinces (e.g., British Columbia) that require the doctoral degree for independent practice as a psychologist permit master's level psychology graduates to become registered/certified/licensed under a different title (e.g.,

psychological associate) and still maintain independent practice. For all areas of applied psychology, the majority of provinces and territories also require pre and/or post-graduate supervised practice and satisfactory completion of a written and oral examination in general psychology, ethical practice, and declared competency areas. As professional psychology is a provincially/territorially regulated field, there are some differences in requirements between the jurisdictions (Hall & Hurley, 2003). However, several of these differences are being addressed with the recent emphasis on the facilitation of cross provincial/territory practice through the federal Mutual Recognition Agreement. Given the regulation of the discipline of psychology, the term “psychologist” is reserved for those who have met the requirements for licensure in their province/territory of practice and who have been granted a license by the regulatory authority in that province/territory. In contrast, the specializations within professional psychology (e.g., counselling, clinical, school) are not designated in licensure (i.e., one becomes licensed as a “psychologist” not a “counselling psychologist”); however, in most jurisdictions, individual psychologists are required to declare competency areas and must limit their practice within these boundaries (Lalande, 2004).

As mentioned earlier, master’s level CNPSY graduates (as well as some with doctoral level training) may pursue certification as Canadian Certified Counsellors (CCC) through the CCPA, a voluntary status that differs from the legislative requirement than those who practice as psychologists must meet provincial and territorial standards and examinations. Governmental regulation of the profession is a key area of differentiation between CNPSY and PMHC, although this situation may be changing. At present, only Nova Scotia and Quebec have provincial legislation concerned with the title “counsellor,” and Ontario has regulated “psychotherapists and mental health therapists” (which may include PMHC), and other

jurisdictions (e.g., British Columbia) have organized groups exploring the option of provincial regulation of the PHPM profession.

The situation in Quebec is unique and merits specific mention. A linguistic challenge in French Canada is that the term “counselling psychology” is English and there really is no equivalent translation in French (A. Sinacore, personal communication, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008), as one is either a psychologue (psychologist, which includes licensure specialization in CLPSY, school psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, neuropsychology, or teaching/research) or conseillers d'orientation (guidance counsellor). In Quebec, professional guidance counsellors and psychologists are viewed as separate professions regulated by different regulatory boards; the L'Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation et des psychoéducateurs et psychoéducatrices du Québec [Order of Guidance Counsellors and Psycho-educators of Quebec] (OCCOPPQ) and the Ordre des Psychologues du Québec [Order of Psychologists of Quebec] (OPQ), respectively. In fact, when the OPQ describes the subsections of psychologists' disciplines, CNPSY is not one of them (OPQ, 2008). Under provincial regulation, the mandate for psychologists is to determine the nature, causes, and effects of personal distress and “prevent, treat and correct emotional conflicts, personality disorders and skill deficits that underlie human misery and dysfunction” (OPQ, 2008). In contrast, the mandate of professional guidance counsellors is to work with individuals to help them solve problems that result from their life-span and career development and transitions as well as to engage in psychological testing through the use of psychometric tests (OCCOPPQ, 2008).

The emergence of CNPSY in Quebec, still in a premature stage yet supported by the CPA's accreditation of the CNPSY doctoral program at McGill University, may parallel the early years of CNPSY evolution in Canada at large. As “new arrivals,” CNPSY students and

practitioners find there is limited awareness that a field called CNPSY exists in Quebec, and McGill CNPSY doctoral students frequently experience difficulties in seeking local internships and practica placements (A. Mikhail, personal communication, June 2008). Anne Marie Mikhail, a McGill doctoral student (and co-author of this report), has observed that many francophone psychologists hold the belief that “counselling is what counsellors do and psychotherapy is what psychologists do.” Several students who graduated or were graduating from the only CNPSY program in Quebec (McGill University) informed us they did not emerge with a clear understanding of CNPSY identity and that they somehow felt that they were not “real psychologists,” based on how they were treated by the regulatory authorities and some Quebec psychologists trained in CLPSY. Nevertheless, graduates of the McGill M.A. program who seek employment in Quebec typically work in schools or private practice. Doctoral graduates who remain in Quebec typically work in the same settings or seek teaching or research positions.

Because CNPSY is not recognized as a specialization by the Psychology Ordre in Quebec, there is widespread confusion about what exactly CNPSY is. When attempting to be licensed in Quebec (or New Brunswick, according to an individual who provided written feedback on our report), counselling psychologists are compelled to officially identify as “clinical” psychologists in order to obtain licensure. Now that Bill 21 in Quebec has passed, only psychologists (including those trained in CNPSY and licensed as psychologists in Quebec but recognized under the area of CLPSY) and psychiatrists/physicians will be granted free reign to provide psychotherapy. Other professions, including guidance counsellors, psycho-educators, marriage and family therapists, and social workers will be permitted to perform psychotherapy upon receiving a psychotherapy permit from the Ordre Professionnel des Psychologues du Quebec. Therefore, (counselling) psychologists in Quebec are or will be clearly associated with

the provision of psychotherapy rather than counselling, while counselling is being promoted as more of the purview of guidance counsellors.

In addition, according to this Bill, the practice of Quebec “clinical” psychologists seems to include elements that seem to characterize CNPSY in Anglophone Canada (e.g., conceptualize person in context of environment, non-remedial work) but associated with the practice of CLPSY in Quebec. For example, as stated in Bill 21: “assess psychological and mental functioning, and determine, recommend and carry out interventions or treatments with a view to *fostering the psychological health* [italics added] and restoring the mental health of a person in interaction with his environment.”

### **Comparison with Other Countries**

Much of this report’s content pertains to North American CNPSY in both Canada and the United States. The following section attempts to highlight distinctive characteristics of Canadian CNPSY that appear to set it apart from CNPSY as conceptualized in the United States and the rest of the world.

#### **The USA**

The Canadian understanding of CNPSY is highly similar to American conceptualizations of the discipline (Hurley & Doyle, 2003/rev.2007). These shared elements include the focus on diversity, social justice for marginalized populations, mental wellness over psychopathology, person-environment fit, psycho-educational interventions, resolving practical problems, helping others successfully transition through developmental life stages and typical life events, conceptualizing client concerns through a lens of growth and development, working with individual’s strengths, relatively brief interventions, and applied research; and a decreasing focus on the traditional areas of vocational psychology, career counselling, and prevention (see Gelso

& Fretz, 1992; Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993; Munley et al., 2004; Sinacore-Guinn, 1995; Sinacore, 2007).

Consistent with its American roots, Canadian CNPSY is grounded in psychological science. At the doctoral level, counselling psychologists are trained to conduct research and create scientific knowledge and, at the master's level, to critically appreciate and integrate research into practice. While this stance is similar to U.S. CNPSY, Hurley and Doyle (2003/rev.2007) noted that Canadian CNPSY places more emphasis on constructivist, social learning, and societal theories of career choice and change in training and education. In the practice domain, they reported a greater Canadian focus on the social context of work-related issues, due to Canada's stronger roots in social democracy (see also Lalande, 2004) and a stronger tradition of not only accepting but promoting both quantitative and qualitative approaches to such scholarship (Rennie et al., 2002).

**Diversity and multiculturalism.** As noted earlier, an important characteristic of Canadian CNPSY is its strong commitment to promoting social justice, multiculturalism and diversity in its broadest sense: across individuals, cultures, and even research methods. This is evidenced by, for example, numerous CNPSY articles on diversity topics (for some examples see those cited in Young & Nicol, 2007). This parallels a longstanding concern with diversity in U.S. CNPSY, where the field has played a leadership role within the American Psychological Association in promoting action on diversity (Fouad, McPherson, & Gerstein 2004). This is also an area of recent collaboration between North American counselling psychologists. As recently as March 2008, the discipline's commitment to multiculturalism and diversity was reaffirmed at the inaugural International CNPSY Conference, a small, APA-CNPSY sponsored conference

that brought together practitioners and researchers in CNPSY from around the world, including over 30 Canadian registrants.

Despite these similarities, Lalande (2004) has argued that Canadian CNPSY has an approach to diversity and multiculturalism that is different from American CNPSY (Hurley & Doyle, 2003/rev.2007). The Canadian view of multiculturalism “attempts to maintain a variety of cultural perspectives by law and other legislative practices. It protects and embraces cultural differences” (Lalande, p. 278). Young and Nicol (2007) also note that a commitment to multiculturalism and social justice have been a part of CNPSY since it first emerged in Canada. The approach to diversity and multiculturalism taken in Canadian CNPSY mirrors the broader social fabric of the country, in that it is considered important to maintain a variety of cultural perspectives, and to protect and embrace linguistic, cultural and other forms of diversity<sup>12</sup>. In Canada, this commitment to diversity and multiculturalism extends not only to practice but also to research, both in terms of the choice of phenomena that are researched (Leong & Leach, 2007; Sinacore, 2007) and the widespread acceptance of qualitative and quantitative methods of conducting this research (Lalande, 2004; Rennie et al., 2002).

**Focus on research.** At the outset of the development of American CNPSY in the late 1940s and early 1950s, equal importance was assigned to both science and practice with the explicit dictate that research should inform practice (Munley et al., 2004; Vespia & Sauer, 2006). The scientist-practitioner requirement of CPA’s standards for accrediting CNPSY doctoral programs carries a similar but implicit mandate but this committee has identified a perception that the emphasis given to research varies across CNPSY training programs, both at the masters and doctoral levels of training. In 1993, Hiebert and Uhlemann made the point that, “If research

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<sup>12</sup> Noting that Canada was the first country in the world to be “officially” multicultural through broad and sweeping national legislation.

is one of the cornerstones of our profession, then we would expect far more emphasis on applied research in training programmes and a greater, or at least more obvious, display of research endeavours by those involved in the practice and training of counselling psychologists” (Hiebert & Uhlemann, 1993, p.302). In 2009, we would argue that research is occupying a more an integral place within Canadian CNPSY, as reflected in its overall definition and scope of practice. This aspect of the field’s location within psychology can be further supported by making it a central part of the practice of Canadian counselling psychologists.

**Research themes.** In the early 1980s, the foundational areas of research in American CNPSY (vocational psychology, human cognition and development, human learning and behaviour, human communication and interpersonal behaviour, and the nature of the optimal person-environment fit; Blocher, 1982) were also prominent in Canada (Friesen, 1983; see also Lecomte et al., 1981). Given the sheer quantity of CNPSY research in the United States, we expect that core themes of research in American CNPSY will continue to include themes of concern to Canadian CNPSY. The review by Lalande (2004) indicated the following as the focus of contemporary Canadian CNPSY research: social context of career development, qualitative research, and multicultural research. Young and Nichol (2007) have noted our field’s strength in transition and adjustment research related to immigration, and that cultural diversity has been well represented in Canadian CNPSY literature. Finally, the field’s openness to new methodological paradigms has produced notable theoretical and methodological contributions in qualitative methodology (e.g., Haverkamp, 2005; Young et al., 2005).

### **Global Comparisons**

In order to more fully consider the uniqueness of CNPSY in Canada, a brief comparison with the global practice of CNPSY is also needed. The following is not intended to be an

exhaustive review of CNPSY across the world but draws upon published literature to explore some ways in which Canadian and North American CNPSY may be similar to and differ from the manifestation of CNPSY in other parts of the world (also see Appendix D).

Starting in the 1950s, American counselling psychologists were promoting the field of CNPSY across the world (e.g., Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007). At the present time, Canadian CNPSY is amongst the most developed, surpassed only by a few countries such as the United States and Britain. In many countries, even in those in which CNPSY was introduced over 20 years ago, the discipline remains in its early formative stages (Pelling, 2004). What is striking is that CNPSY professionals in virtually every country are currently being challenged to provide definitions of CNPSY and demarcate the identity of counselling psychologists. Just as in Canada, formal committees are being commissioned to develop country-specific definitions of the profession in many nations (e.g., Leung et al., 2007; Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007).

Globally, CNPSY is a more mature discipline in predominantly English-speaking countries such as Britain and Australia (e.g., Brown & Corne, 2004; Pryor & Bright, 2007). For example, the CNPSY section of the British Psychological Association was established in 1982 (Pugh & Coyle, 2000), only a few years prior to the emergence of the CNPSY section within CPA. However, formal recognition of CNPSY is not limited to English-speaking countries. For example, in 2006, CNPSY became one of four recognized divisions of the Hong Kong Psychological Society (Hou & Zhang, 2007), and there has been intense recruitment by both schools and private employers for counselling psychologists in Portugal for about 20 years (Duarte, Paixao, & Lima, 2007).

There are many nations in which CNPSY exists but is neither considered to be a distinct specialization within psychology nor a separate discipline, including France (Bernaud, Cohen-

Scali, & Guichard, 2007), Japan (Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007), China (Hou & Zhang, 2007), and Israel (Benjamin, 2007). However, even in countries where CNPSY is more developed, issues of identity and legitimacy as a distinct discipline are overriding concerns, particularly in relation to differentiating the field from CLPSY and PMHC (e.g., Hou & Zhang; Pelling, 2004; Pugh & Coyle, 2000). Given the lack of formal recognition in many countries, it should come as no surprise that the use of the actual term “counselling psychology” is relatively uncommon in many parts of the world (e.g., Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007).

### **Conclusions**

Our proposed definition of CNPSY in Canada identifies the core of this specialization and similarities and differences with closely allied mental health domains, CLPSY and PMHC. This process of identifying the dynamic boundaries between related professions is a necessary step in establishing a professional identity for CNPSY, but is one that should be approached with caution and recognition that there is a choice in how these boundaries are managed.

One option would be to view elements of training or scope of practice in an “either/or” fashion, where particular skills or disorders are identified as “belonging” to one specialization or another. This option is fraught with difficulty and would exacerbate professional rivalries and competition. The other alternative is to view our “fuzzy” boundaries in terms of “and,” with the acknowledgement that CNPSY shares areas of expertise with other fields. This is not unusual among allied professions: chefs and nutritionists, as well as (astro)physicists and astronomers, biologists and (bio)chemists etc. share knowledge and skills while retaining their distinctiveness as disciplines or professions.

We would argue that “fuzzy” boundaries are an aspect of CNPSY’s identity and should be viewed as something positive. In particular, areas of shared expertise create important

opportunities for interprofessional collaboration. Health care researchers have documented a growing movement toward interdisciplinary training and practice (e.g., Pringle, Levitt, Horsburgh, Wilson, & Whittaker, 2000) based on the recognition that effective health care requires a high degree of collaboration across professional boundaries. In other words, clients benefit when mental health professionals, family physicians, nurses, and social workers collaborate with each other.

We believe that counselling psychologists are uniquely positioned to promote and enhance interprofessional mental health collaboration in Canada. While we are not aware of any empirical investigations on this topic, or even published commentary, we would argue that CNPSY's focus on wellness and adjustment, coupled with their training in core psychology, are highly relevant to this challenge. This distinct training and scope of practice can help counselling psychologists act as a bridge between professions, and between the pragmatic, community-based focus of PMHC and CLPSY's greater expertise in biological elements of psychological disorders and greater familiarity with medical settings.

Finally, interprofessional collaboration has little meaning or value if everyone is trained to "do the same thing." We believe that achieving clarity in professional identity is a necessary task and view this effort at providing a definition for CNPSY as an important step forward in this process. We invite our colleagues in allied mental health professions to join in the task of elucidating one's own professional identity, then understanding—and valuing—what each profession can contribute to our shared clients' well being.

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## Appendix A

*Feedback Form for Symposium Attendees at the 2008 CPA Conference in Halifax, NS*

**Feedback Form**

Symposia and Conversation Hour, CPA, Halifax, NS June 14, 2008

Counselling Psychology in a Canadian Context: Report from the Executive Committee  
for a Canadian Understanding of Counselling Psychology

CPA Section 24, Counselling Psychology, intends to propose a formal definition of counselling psychology in Canada to the CPA Executive Board. Your brief response to the questions on the reverse side will help us with revisions of the proposed definition of "Counselling Psychology in a Canadian Context."

Proposal:

*Counselling psychology (CNPSY) can be conceptualized as a specialization within professional psychology concerned with the health, well-being and growth of individuals, families, groups, and the broader community. At its core is the interconnection of research-informed practice and practice-informed research.*

*Counselling psychologists address issues such as: physical and mental health, personal growth, self-awareness, improved decision-making and problem-solving, favourable adjustment to unexpected life situations and normal life transitions, optimal vocational and career development, improved functioning in social relationships, and advocacy in promoting positive social change in society.*

*CNPSY is committed to a developmental, multicultural, and wellness perspective to addressing presenting issues that recognizes the importance of prevention and psycho-education, rather than remediation alone (even when working with those who meet criteria for a psychiatric disorder). The CNPSY perspective also tends to emphasize clients as agents of their own change, which leads to an approach that involves the implementation of evidence-based techniques drawn from research in CNPSY and related fields, and which draws on the resourcefulness and pre-existing strengths of the person and the power of the counselling relationship.*

*Counselling psychologists adopt a holistic approach to assessment that emphasizes the importance of contextual/environmental influences, diversity, and individual differences in client conceptualization and diagnosis (noting that diagnosing contextualized problems is generally preferred to diagnosing clinical disorders out of social context).*

See questions on reverse side.

1. How well does the proposed definition capture *your* sense of Canadian counselling psychology? (e.g., philosophy, scope of practice, education and training, relationship with other disciplines?)

1.a. Which aspects of the proposed definition fit best for you?

1.b. What changes to the definition would you suggest?

2. Is there additional information that would help you decide whether to support the proposed definition? If yes, what information would you find helpful?

## Appendix B

*Take Home Feedback Form for Symposium Attendees at the 2008 CPA Conference in Halifax***Take-home Version of Feedback Form**

Symposia and Conversation Hour, CPA, Halifax, NS June 14, 2008

Counselling Psychology in a Canadian Context: Report from the Executive Committee for a Canadian Understanding of Counselling Psychology

CPA Section 24, Counselling Psychology, intends to propose a formal definition of counselling psychology in Canada to the CPA Executive Board. Your brief response to the questions on below will help us with revisions of the proposed definition of "Counselling Psychology in a Canadian Context."

Proposal:

*Counselling psychology (CNPSY) can be conceptualized as a specialization within professional psychology concerned with the health, well-being and growth of individuals, families, groups, and the broader community. At its core is the interconnection of research-informed practice and practice-informed research.*

*Counselling psychologists address issues such as: physical and mental health, personal growth, self-awareness, improved decision-making and problem-solving, favourable adjustment to unexpected life situations and normal life transitions, optimal vocational and career development, improved functioning in social relationships, and advocacy in promoting positive social change in society.*

*CNPSY is committed to a developmental, multicultural, and wellness perspective to addressing presenting issues that recognizes the importance of prevention and psycho-education, rather than remediation alone (even when working with those who meet criteria for a psychiatric disorder). The CNPSY perspective also tends to emphasize clients as agents of their own change, which leads to an approach that involves the implementation of evidence-based techniques drawn from research in CNPSY and related fields, and which draws on the resourcefulness and pre-existing strengths of the person and the power of the counselling relationship.*

*Counselling psychologists adopt a holistic approach to assessment that emphasizes the importance of contextual/environmental influences, diversity, and individual differences in client conceptualization and diagnosis (noting that diagnosing contextualized problems is generally preferred to diagnosing clinical disorders out of social context).*

1. How well does the proposed definition capture *your* sense of Canadian counselling psychology? (e.g., philosophy, scope of practice, education and training, relationship with other disciplines?)
  - 1.a. Which aspects of the proposed definition fit best for you?
  - 1.b. What changes to the definition would you suggest?
2. Is there additional information that would help you decide whether to support the proposed definition? If yes, what information would you find helpful?

E-mail responses to Dr. Jose Domene [Jose.Domene@twu.ca](mailto:Jose.Domene@twu.ca) or Dr. Greg Harris [gharris@mun.ca](mailto:gharris@mun.ca) If you prefer to respond during the session, please use the other feedback form.

## Appendix C

*Counselling Psychology, Clinical Psychology, and Professional Mental Health Counselling*

The issue of how CNPSY can be differentiated from other mental health professions is central to the task of defining a professional identity. The following sections present information, derived from published literature and the consensus observations of the committee, on a number of similarities and differences between CNPSY and CLPSY, and between CNPSY and PMHC. Where possible, we have grounded our observations in formal documents such as the training requirements produced by accrediting bodies and training programs. At the same time, it is important to note that there has been little empirical research on the activities or scope of practice actually pursued by the three professions. In some cases, the descriptions offered below are based on the published observations and perceptions of senior members of the field.

We do not presume to define either CLPSY or PMHC. If there are instances where our colleagues in CLPSY and PMHC hold differing perceptions, we would welcome the opportunity to explore those differences. We believe that such dialogue can only enhance our ability to work collaboratively, which would benefit our clients and the profession at large. We also believe that efforts to collect data on the attitudes and activities of Canadian counselling psychologists would be an important next step in strengthening this portrait of similarities and differences.

*Counselling Psychology and Clinical Psychology*

The struggle to differentiate CNPSY from CLPSY has not only been a challenge for Canada and the US, but for several other countries (e.g., New Zealand, Australia, Britain) (Pelling, 2004). Although much of the literature cited below is American based, we felt that it was generally applicable in a Canadian context as well. Some Canadian and American authors have noted that practice and discipline distinctions between CLPSY and CNPSY have become

blurred (Gelso & Fretz, 1992; Heibert and Uhlemann, 1993; Leong & Leach, 2007; Norcross, Sayette, Mayne, Karg, & Turkson, 1998; Trull, 2005) and that much of the existing distinction may be more academic than actual (Leong & Leach). For example, some research suggests (e.g., Beutler & Fisher, 1994; Gaddy, Charlot-Swilley, Nelson, & Reich, 1995; Norcross, et al.1998) suggests that a notable proportion of CNPSY faculty primarily teach and conduct research in areas traditionally connected to CLPSY (e.g., psychopathology, diagnostic assessment, psychotherapy), and graduates of accredited CNPSY programs successfully seek employment in hospital, medical, forensic and other typically CLPSY settings. Nonetheless, there are distinctions or different tendencies between CNPSY and CLPSY, many of which exist at the level of worldview or conceptual framework. The following non-exhaustive table (Table 4) is presented for educative purposes, to highlight some *possible* areas of similarity and differences between CNPSY and CLPSY. Please note that these differences are not always in kind but rather in degree of emphasis.

Table 4

*Similarities and Differences Between Counselling Psychology and Clinical Psychology in Canada*

| Canadian Counselling Psychology   | Canadian Clinical Psychology  |
|---|---|
| Practice psychology, with a specialization in the sub-field of CNPSY.   | Practice psychology, with a specialization in the sub-field of CLPSY.   |
| Provide psychological services to all facets of the population (i.e., normal to psychopathological) within the frameworks of CNPSY. | Provide psychological services to all facets of the population (i.e., normal to psychopathological) within the frameworks of CLPSY. |
| Includes research training. Greater adoption of qualitative research methods (Rennie, 2002;   | Includes research training. Core focus on quantitative methods (Rennie, 2002; Rennie et   |

Rennie et al., 2002).

Skill set informed through research.

Research areas are varied but characterized by areas such as: multiculturalism, positive psychology, transitional constructs, counselling process, and career/vocational constructs.

Training in complex assessment and psychometrics. Emphasis on exploration of person-environment fit, “normal” populations, health/wellness model, and career/vocational assessment.

Emphasis on emic worldview that emphasizes developmental, wellness, social justice, and multicultural models of mental health services.

Diversity and multicultural orientation is paramount to training, practice, and research (and often is included as a separate course in addition to integration throughout the curriculum).

Associate their practice with both the terms “counselling” and “psychotherapy.”

Less training in DSM-IV and diagnostic assessment, although all accredited doctoral programs do include coursework in this area; Diagnostic assessment generally used in service of client directed goals and to facilitate client development and growth.

Typical entry level for the profession is doctoral degree (CPA); PhD accreditation standards cover core areas of psychology. Separate master’s degree is common but not always well differentiated from PMHC.

CNPSY is usually housed in the Faculty of Education and not usually in its own department.

al., 2002).

Skill set informed through research.

Research areas are varied but characterized by areas such as: mental health, psychological treatment, psychopathology, and diagnostics.

Training in complex assessment and psychometrics. Emphasis on psychopathology and diagnostic assessment, personality and cognitive abilities.

Emphasis on an etic worldview that emphasizes the medical (i.e., diagnose and treat) model of mental health services.

Diversity viewed as an individual differences factor; less emphasis on a multicultural approach. The training that exists is usually integrated into existing curriculum.

Associate their practice with the term “psychotherapy.” [See Appendix E]

Emphasis on DSM-IV training and diagnostic assessment; diagnostic assessment primarily used to inform practice and treatment decisions.

Typical entry level for the profession is doctoral degree; PhD accreditation standards cover core areas of psychology; Separate masters only degree exists but is rare (e.g., at Acadia University).

CLPSY is usually housed in the Faculty of Science or Faculty of Arts, often in a Department of Psychology.

Graduates typically become registered/licensed psychologists and but may elect to become certified counsellors.

Graduates typically become registered/licensed psychologists.

Regulated by psychology profession and provincial/territorial law.

Regulated by psychology profession and provincial/territorial law.

### *Counselling Psychology and Counsellor Education*

Canadian literature has also suggested significant challenges in differentiating CNPSY from counsellor education / PMHC (Heibert & Uhlemann, 1993; Pelling, 2004). Some similarities and differences are presented in Table 5. CNPSY and PMHC do overlap in some aspects of a professional worldview; however, the areas of difference are central to a CNPSY definition and identity. Some of the most salient distinctions have included CNPSY's major focus on the practice of psychology, research, and psychological assessment. Please note that these *possible* differences are not always in kind but rather in degree of emphasis.

Table 5

### *Similarities and Differences Between Counselling Psychology and Counsellor Education in Canada*

| Canadian Counselling Psychology (CPA accredited programs)   | Canadian Counsellor Education/Professional Mental Health Counselling  |
|---|---|
| Broad training in psychology and application of psychological knowledge in empirically informed CNPSY practice. | Specific training in counselling, a practice discipline emphasizing counselling theories and pragmatic skills.                |
| Practice psychology, with a specialization in the applied area of CNPSY.  | Practice counselling, with a variety of specializations (e.g., career counselling, school counselling, clinical counselling). |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Strong emphasis on research training – (scientist-practitioner) (Scheirer, 1983).   | Variable emphasis on research training (Scheirer, 1983).   |
| Emphasis on application of psychological knowledge in conceptualizing client concerns; training in evidence based practice.   | Emphasis on skill development to provide effective service for specific client concerns (e.g. substance abuse, family conflict); pragmatic orientation.                |
| Usually housed in the Faculty of Education.   | Usually housed in the Faculty of Education.  |
| Overlapping [with PMHC] history, theories, significant figures.   | Overlapping [with CNPSY] history, theories, significant figures.   |
| Worldview emphasizes developmental, learning, wellness, social justice, multicultural, and emic perspectives (Gelso & Fretz, 1992; Sprinthall, 1990) within a psychological foundation. | Worldview emphasizes developmental, learning, wellness, social justice, multicultural, and emic perspectives, within a counselling skills foundation.                  |
| Training in complex assessment and psychometrics (Scheirer, 1983).  | Training in basic assessment (Scheirer, 1983).   |
| Emphasis on diagnostic assessment and psychopathology as a core area of psychology (especially at doctoral level).  | Less emphasis on psychopathology and diagnostic assessment.  |
| Typical entry level for the profession is doctoral degree. However, some provinces permit practice with a master's degree.  | Masters degree is the norm for independent practice. Doctoral degrees do exist but typically for training/supervision/education purposes – usually academic positions. |
| Regulated by psychology profession.   | Currently unregulated in most Canadian jurisdictions, but in process of establishing separate professional colleges (Lalande, 2004).                                   |
| Recognized as a healthcare profession by provincial governments.  | Not widely recognized as a healthcare profession by provincial governments.  |
| Trained in producing research from a scientist-practitioner perspective with the aim of improving the counselling process and the mental health of individuals.                         | Less formal training in the scientific method and its application to producing research for the benefit of counselling clients.  |
| National annual conference (i.e., CPA); with representative support of Provincial associations (e.g., British Columbia  | National annual conference (i.e., CCPA); with representative support of Provincial/Territorial chapters (e.g., BC Chapter of the CCPA).                                |

Psychological Association).

### *Conclusions*

Despite overlap between the professions of CNPSY and CLPSY, and between CNPSY and PMHC, several important distinctions have been noted. Perhaps the most significant distinction is that CNPSY is ultimately a discipline that draws upon key aspects of PMHC, CLPSY, and general psychology; whereas PMHC and CLPSY tend not to integrate characteristic elements of these other fields in a consistent and uniform manner. It is this unique emphasis and combination of skills and underlying frameworks which allow for CNPSY's fruitful application of psychological knowledge through a wellness/health model of practice to both individuals diagnosed with psychiatric disorders and those not.

## Appendix D

*Global Counselling Psychology*

There are countless dimensions on which to compare and contrast Canadian CNPSY with CNPSY in the rest of world. Some of these dimensions are relevant in for developing a Canadian definition of CNPSY, while others are informative and interesting in other ways. For the sake of brevity, we focus here on three areas that we find particularly meaningful: historical roots, education and training, and applicability.

*Historical roots.* As in Canada, the roots of CNPSY in most countries can be traced to American counselling psychologists and their literature (e.g., Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007). To this day, many countries still appear to rely almost exclusively on American and to a lesser degree British literature; we located very little published literature addressing country-specific development of CNPSY.

Although CNPSY in many countries shares the educational and vocational psychology roots of North American CNPSY (e.g., Portugal; Duarte et al., 2007), this is not always the case. For example, CNPSY in China has stronger roots in medical science, with many counselling psychologists characteristically practicing within the medical model; (Hou & Zhang, 2007). Some nations (e.g., New Zealand; Pelling, 2004; South Africa; Watson & Fouche, 2007) share the strong social welfare traditions in CNPSY that Canada exhibits, especially related to educational and vocational programming. Indeed, these traditions can be so strong dominant that the practice of CNPSY rarely occurs outside of the context of government policies and initiatives in those countries; that is, the existence of CNPSY is almost inextricable from the activities of the Government (Watson & Fouche). Of course, in countries without strong social welfare policies, close ties with social welfare policies and government are not a defining historical

feature. On a different note, in countries with well-established indigenous healing practices, counselling psychologists typically find ways to reconcile conventional CNPSY practices with these long-standing traditions. For example, counselling psychologists in India have been known to characteristically incorporate yoga, reiki, acupuncture, and meditation into their practice (Arulmani, 2007). Nevertheless, in countries without a well-established presence of CNPSY, those who consider themselves counselling psychologists often have to adopt co-identities and other disciplinary perspectives (Leung et al., 2007). Even the associations in which counselling psychologists typically affiliate across the world are often not limited to psychologists or even professionally trained counsellors (e.g., Bernaud et al., 2007; Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007).

*Education and training.* In contrast to the CPA's recommendation that counselling psychologists be trained at the doctoral level (Cohen & Caputo, 2006), in most countries that regulate the practice of psychologists, a masters degree or even a bachelor's degree with additional supervised training is the entry level standard for counselling psychologists (Pelling, 2004). This is sidestepping the fact that, in countries without government regulations, individuals with little or no training in CNPSY or even PMHC can technically call themselves counsellors or counselling psychologists (e.g., Arulmani, 2007).

Outside of North America and a few English-speaking countries across the world, degree programs that specialize in CNPSY are rare (e.g., Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007). CNPSY education, if it exists at all, is often through obtained through courses within graduate CLPSY programs, or treated synonymously with training in PMHC (which can be through diplomas, certificates, or free-standing courses; e.g., Arulmani, 2007). For example, in Japan, a few "Introduction to Counselling Psychology" courses are available, but only within CLPSY training programs. Given these factors, it is understandable that instructors of courses in CNPSY across the world

often have little or no formal training in CNPSY, especially in comparison to North American standards (e.g., Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007).

As in most Canadian provinces and territories, a difficulty that is commonly encountered across the countries that we examined is the colloquial use of the term “counselling.” Many countries have little or no regulation of the practice of counselling (e.g., Bernaud et al., 2007; Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007). Since a defining characteristic of the counselling psychologist is to base one’s practice in psychological research, association with professionals who practice counselling but do not have a depth of training in this research base has hindered the widespread acceptance of the discipline (e.g., Arulmani, 2007; Hou & Zhang, 2007). This situation is further confused by the fact that the differences between the practices of counselling and psychotherapy are as unclear in many other countries, as in Canada (e.g., Watanabe-Muraoka).

*Applicability.* On a surface level, in countries such as France, Japan, and China, an impediment to the development of the field of CNPSY can be traced in part to difficulties in translating the English terms “counselling” or “counselling psychology” (Bernaud & Guichard, 2007; Watanabe-Muraoka, 2007; Hou & Zhang, 2007). However, a larger issue may be the lack of indigenous conceptualizations of CNPSY (Watanabe-Muraoka), as American understandings and theories have sometimes been assimilated without adaptation to cultural, ethnic or racial considerations, or alternative indigenous philosophical perspectives (Arulmani, 2007; Watson & Fouche, 2007). To clarify, the inherent assumptions that make up the existence of CNPSY and demarcate its accepted practice in Canada and the United States seem to reflect the materialistic and individualistic culture that is prevalent in North America, and the empirical nature on which its CNPSY knowledge is based (cf. comments of Arulmani). This stands in stark contrast to other countries, such as India, that embrace more of a collectivistic way of life and a theological and

meta-physical worldview (Arulmani). Consequently, it is probably no coincidence that CNPSY, as originally conceptualized by American counselling psychologists, has flourished more in countries (e.g., Canada, England, Australia) that share ethnic, cultural, linguistic, socio-political, and philosophical characteristics with the United States.

## Appendix E

*Counselling and Psychotherapy*

Those enrolled in CNPSY programs are expected to be trained to apply psychological research to counselling practice. Some programs (e.g., McGill) explicitly include psychotherapy in their expanded definitions of CNPSY, while others only make use of the term “counselling” (e.g., University of British Columbia). In fact, it is currently unclear whether students in the CPA-accredited CNPSY programs receive training in counselling, psychotherapy, both, or some hybrid amalgamation of each. Admittedly, there exists great bewilderment about the differences (if any) between counselling and psychotherapy amongst both faculty and students in CNPSY programs (and often the terms are used virtually interchangeably, in our observations). Such disparity even exists amongst our committee members. For example, some members of the committee feel that the differences between the terms “counselling” and “psychotherapy” are largely academic and have little effect on actual practice and thus can or should be used interchangeably. Others believe that a difference should exist (even if one does not clearly exist right now) and that this may be more a matter of defining each differently (and then using such definitions as decision-making points of reference). A recent entry from the *Encyclopedia of Counseling* (published by Sage), may shed some light on the latter perspective.

A simple perspective may conceptualize counseling [as practiced by counselling psychologists] and psychotherapy as falling on a continuum, with counseling designed for normal populations and psychotherapy designed for clinical populations....An alternative conceptualization is to attend to the traditional paradigmatic differences between the two. Counseling typically follows a growth-oriented, developmental and preventative framework. In contrast, psychotherapy

typically adopts a medical (i.e., diagnose-and-treat) model. Although the practice of counseling is not intended specifically to diagnose and treat psychiatrically classified mental disorders in the tradition of the medical model, it is intended to facilitate wellness, personal growth, needs attainment, and adaptation to changing life circumstances. Consequently, when professional counseling [as practiced by counselling psychologists] is employed with individuals who meet the criteria for specific disorders, the emphasis remains on the person's ongoing adaptation, personal growth, wellness, and needs attainment. Through facilitating positive movement and change in these areas, the person's diagnosable condition may improve. (Bedi & Domene, 2008, p. 19-120)

Lecomte et al.'s (1981) proposal of the term "clinical counselling" may further help clear the confusion. This is a useful term because it can be used to refer to developmental, growth-oriented, adjustment-related, counselling of people with diagnosable psychological disorders without indicating the traditional non-medical model paradigm (as the term "therapy" in "psychotherapy" implies). Alternately, the Counselling Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association indicates that those in American CNPSY programs are trained to provide both counselling and psychotherapy (Roger & Stone, nd). This may also be the case in Canada. Perhaps, by partial virtue of their title, Canadian counselling psychologists are supposed to be trained to both – counselling and *psychotherapy*. If this is the case, then perhaps the lack of clear distinction amongst counselling psychologists between the two terms/practices is related to their overlapping nature and training in both (noting that most clinical psychologists will likely state that they received training in psychotherapy and may deny any formal training in professional counselling).

Although resolution of this dilemma is beyond the scope of this report, we believed that this issue was imperative to mention and that doing so will hopefully stimulate further critical dialogue on this topic.