

Power, politics and points-of-view

Huw MacRae Jones



'Learning Outcome'

"Critically assess the social and cultural context of their practice."

transcript0000 module description (2017/18, by Huw)



Power

What are the *good* and *bad* connotations of this word?



Power imbalance

What factors may lead to a power imbalance within the therapeutic relationship?



Power

imbalance can derive from...

- Personal
- Technique
- Cultural

...based factors.

Power in Psychotherapy

Power imbalance is both a source of debate *within* psychotherapy and used as a criticism *of* psychotherapy from *without*...



'Power' critique of psychotherapy

"Power is embedded in the fabric of human existence and all who exercise it are inevitably corrupt." (Giddens, 1984, p. 100)

"Psychotherapy is the only profession where the practitioner can be fraudulent, corrupt, patronising, arrogant, dishonest, and a witness of just plain evil, and where these observations of the carter have to be an admission of their condition, not that the authority may need to look at the carter's history." (Giddens, 1984, p. 100)

Structure: sometimes individuals engage in resistance to the therapist

'Power' critique within psychotherapy

"In therapy the client does exercise a power, but it is not that this approach gives power to the person; it never takes it away." (Rogers, 1959, p. 10)

Rogers said of the PCA: "It is not that this approach gives power to the person; it never takes it away." (Rogers, 1959, p. 10)

Structure: can be helpful in creating a power imbalance

All Power Bad?

Can power manifest itself in a good way within the therapeutic relationship?



The Power of Listening

Almost always, when a person realizes he has been deeply heard, his eyes moisten. I think in some real sense he is weeping for joy. It is as though he were saying, "Thank God, somebody heard me. Someone knows what it's like to be me." (Rogers, 1959/1980, p.10)



3 minute presentation challenge

- Say something about power.**
- Beginning - introduce topic
 - Middle - say something about power in the therapeutic relationship
 - End - a concluding remark
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References

Giddens, A. (1984). The Constitution of Society. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Rogers, C. R. (1959/1980). The Power of Listening. In C. R. Rogers (Ed.), *On Becoming a Person* (pp. 10-19). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

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'Learning Outcome'

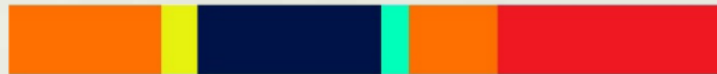
"Critically assess the social and cultural context of their practice."

From ECHC5002 module description (UWTSD, no date)



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'Power' critique of psychotherapy

"Power is embedded in the theories of therapy, with assumptions of influence oozing from each concept." (Morrall, 2008, p.125).

"Psychotherapy is the only profession where the practitioner can be insensitive, evasive, patronising, arrogant, discourteous, self-righteous or just plain wrong, and where clients' observations of this can be taken to be an expression of their problems, evidence that what they really need is more of the same therapy." (Sands in Totton, 2005, p.83)



**Exercise - summarise and critically
analyse an excerpt from the literature**

'Power' critique within psychotherapy

[referring to non client-centred approaches] "Superiority is evident and is considered necessary for the successful outcome of the operation, the battle for the 'sake of the patient' ". (Shlien, 2003, p.208)

Rogers said of the PCA
"It is not that this approach gives power to the person; it never takes it away." (Rogers, 1974, p.xii)



Discussion - does directivity in counselling lead to a power imbalance?

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References

Morrall, P. (2008) The trouble with therapy: Sociology and psychotherapy. Maidenhead, United Kingdom: Open University Press.

Rogers, C. (1974) Carl Rogers on Personal Power. Reprint, London: Robinson, 2016.

Rogers, C. (1995 [1980]) A Way of Being. Kindle edition. New York: Mariner Books.

Schmid, P. (2019) 'The power of hope: person-centered perspectives on contemporary personal and societal challenges', Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 18 (2), pp.121-138.

Shlien, J. M. (2003) To lead an honorable life: Invitations to think about client-centred therapy and the person-centred approach: A collection of the work of John M. Shlien. Ross-on-Wye, UK: PCCS Books.

Totton, N. (Ed.) (2006) The Politics of Psychotherapy. Maidenhead: McGraw Hill/Open University Press.

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