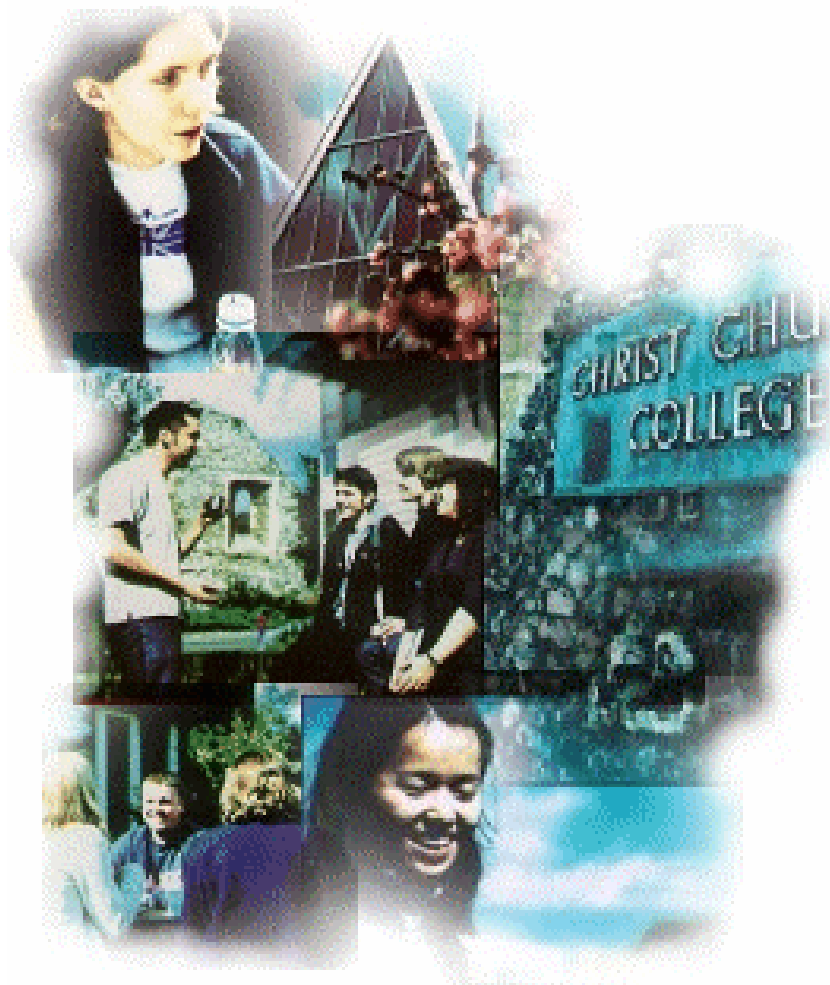




Canterbury Christ Church
University College

Promoting Diversity in Clinical Psychology



PROMOTING DIVERSITY IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY - SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction and Context

People from ethnic minority communities, those with disabilities and males are under-represented in the clinical psychology workforce. Arising from and supported by equal opportunities legislation, Government policy in relation to the health and social care sectors and the widening participation agenda in Higher Education, there is a recognition by the health and social care sectors, the profession and Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) of their joint responsibility to develop a workforce that reflects the communities they serve.

This summary reports on a study undertaken by Canterbury Christ Church University College (College) in 2001-2002 and funded by Kent, Surrey and Sussex Workforce Development Confederation. Its purpose was:

- to identify issues that impact on the recruitment, selection and accommodation of people from these under-represented groups to post graduate higher education programmes leading to state registration in clinical psychology, and subsequently into employment
- to make recommendations and suggest strategies for higher education institutions and the profession that would enable them to enhance or develop their existing policy and practices in relation to the aim of attracting and retaining a diverse workforce in clinical psychology

Method

A total of 51 participants contributed to the study through interviews, focus groups or survey.

At a local level the focus of the study was on the doctoral course in clinical psychology at the Centre for Applied Social and Psychological Development (CASPD), Canterbury Christ Church University College and on the views of current trainees and staff directly involved in the recruitment, selection and accommodation of clinical psychology post-graduate trainees. Male students and those from ethnic minority groups studying on undergraduate psychology degree courses in the London area contributed their views of clinical psychology as a career.

At a national level, a survey of careers advisers in HEI's offering degree courses in psychology that confer graduate status for registration with the British Psychological Society (BPS) informed the project about issues related to the guidance and recruitment of trainees to clinical psychology.

Both course programme specific and national recruitment materials for clinical psychology were critically reviewed with regard to their appeal and representation. A number of recommendations are included in the report.

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

General Issues

Although recognising the low numbers of applicants from these groups to the course, some staff queried the basis on which it is understood that they are under-represented nationally within the profession.

A number of issues relating to recruitment, selection and accommodation were seen by participants in this study to be of relevance to all potential applicants regardless of ethnicity, gender or disability. These included financial restraints associated with the lengthy route into the profession exacerbated by student debt on graduating; high competition for trainee places and the length of time needed to gain sufficient relevant pre-course work experience. In addition, undergraduates experienced confusion about course titles and the routes to entry. HE careers advisers reported their own lack of contact with university psychology departments or with those in the profession. Fear of rejection and the motivation needed to repeatedly re-apply to courses were seen by careers advisers to act as disincentives to potential applicants.

Trainees viewed the lack of clear job descriptions and access to selection criteria as having hampered their ability to appropriately tailor and present their experience when applying, and in their preparation for the selection process. HE careers advisers also considered that a lack of clarity in the selection criteria worked as a disincentive to potential applicants.

Diversity within the staff group at CASPD and the eclectic orientation of the course were seen to contribute positively to attracting applications from under-represented groups. Staff at CASPD considered their approach to equal opportunities to be an integral part of their professional experience and viewed the staff team as actively working to address diversity and difference by ensuring that the best possible opportunity is provided for all applicants to be assessed through the selection process.

Summary of recommendations and examples of suggested strategies

Recruitment

- **A discussion is needed (both at local and national levels) about how much of a priority it is for clinical psychology to recruit more males, ethnic minority and disabled trainees**
 - e.g. consider whether there is a need to recruit these groups on to undergraduate psychology courses
- **Consider the establishment of other routes into clinical psychology that ease the pressure on applicants of getting through the 'bottle-neck' of training**
 - e.g. consider establishing more linked undergraduate courses - such as at the University of Hull.

- **Dispel some of the myths surrounding the profession of clinical psychology amongst the wider population, psychology undergraduates and careers advisory services**
 - e.g. produce a job description for use in undergraduate teaching, careers advice and on the BPS website that includes aspects of the profession that applicants find appealing, such as diversity within the profession, variety within the work, stability of employment and pay scales once qualified
- **Produce some clear information about the route into clinical psychology, to be used for publicity and careers advice**
 - e.g. make connections with careers advisory services so that clinical psychologists are available to provide advice at 'A' level and undergraduate level

Selection

- **Clarify the selection criteria and consider making them more explicit and publicly available**
 - e.g. debate positive action and discrimination in terms of legality and legitimacy

People from Ethnic Minority Communities

Recruitment

Both staff and trainees perceived that the ideology and practice of clinical psychology as alien and challenging to some cultures, with few clinical psychologists available who can act as role models or mentors to those from ethnic minority communities. Undergraduates from ethnic minority communities found it difficult to access information about this profession and cited a lack of exposure to practicing clinical psychologists within their communities. Some experienced parental pressure to enter the more well-known professions, such as law, medicine and engineering. Some trainees felt that it is regarded as a relatively low-status occupation within Asian communities and that this attitude would be reinforced by the 'haphazard' route and low- status work experience required prior to entry. The expected pattern of life for Muslim men and women entering adulthood was seen to limit their opportunity to consider entering clinical psychology after an initial psychology degree.

Further deterrents to considering this profession included a lack of targeted recruitment materials; a lack of initiatives to attract applications from ethnic minority communities and the geographical restrictions to accessing training courses. Further, some trainees from ethnic minority communities identified difficulties in accessing support networks of those seeking to enter clinical psychology training.

Selection

Staff and trainees expressed concern about if and how the ethnicity of a candidate may be taken into account in selection. Some considered that ethnicity may affect the interview process and voiced a need for the course to be explicit about how issues of difference are addressed in the whole selection process. Some trainees from ethnic minority communities felt

that they had to compensate for their background by trying harder and achieving more in order to gain a place.

Some staff and trainees felt that applicants from ethnic minority communities may have had experiences which work against them being selected on to a course e.g. having experienced difficulties in acquiring the relevant work experience required or cultural reasons for poor first degree performance. Views differed among staff about whether there should be an attempt to have an ethnically diverse selection panel.

Accommodation and Support

HE careers advisers suggested that racism from clinical psychology clients would present a problem to trainees from ethnic minority backgrounds and some trainees on the course reported a number of experiences of ethnic insensitivity on the part of members of the profession and fellow trainees. Staff recognised that those who experience racial discrimination from clients may need additional support whilst on placement. Current opportunities to reflect on experiences within the course were seen to need broadening to include support when dealing with issues of ethnicity and culture.

Staff generally viewed the programme as providing an integrated approach to race and culture, although the extent to which this achieved was queried and some trainees felt that these aspects should be strengthened within the course content and through exposure of all trainees to clients from different ethnic groups during placements.

Summary of recommendations and examples of suggested strategies

Recruitment

- **Educate people from ethnic minority communities about the profession**
 - e.g. produce information about the profession in formats and venues that are readily accessible to people from ethnic minority communities
- **Tailor some recruitment materials towards applicants from different ethnic groups**
 - e.g. consider ways of offering support to young Asian men and women with family pressures
- **Provide role models in the form of publicly visible clinical psychologists from ethnic minority groups**
 - e.g. where the public profile of clinical psychologists is being improved, ensure that ethnic diversity is included in the public image
- **Ensure that the support networks available en route to clinical psychology training, such as the Assistant Psychologists Group, are accessible to people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds**
 - e.g. consider posting information about such groups in the BPS website or in 'The Psychologist' journal.

- **Courses that do not already do so could consider making an explicit statement in the Clearing House Handbook about the desire to recruit more trainees from diverse ethnic backgrounds**

Selection

- **Clarify how, if at all, the ethnicity of the applicant is taken into account in the selection process**
 - e.g. produce information for candidates about how the selection process works and what factors are taken into account
- **Staff teams may need to discuss the impact of culture and ethnicity on the interview and presentation processes in selection**

Accommodation and Support

- **Consider an explicit route for making complaints and/or gaining support when racism or discrimination is experienced during training**
 - e.g. some guidelines for staff in supportive roles may better equip them to respond to allegations or requests for additional support from trainees
- **Review the coverage of issues of ethnicity and culture within the training course content**
 - e.g. consider the comments that the impact of ethnicity is not always integrated into all teaching and look for ways to incorporate issues of difference more thoroughly

People with Disabilities

Recruitment

It was anticipated by staff that potential applicants with mobility problems might be deterred from the course due to the physical layout of facilities at the College and the perception that they would need to be able to travel within a large placement area. Staff were aware that in order to recruit more trainees with disabilities, the course would have to be able to accommodate their needs and that CASPD could be more proactive in this. The learning experience undergone by staff through having accepted trainees with sensory and physical disabilities, together with having shared this with other courses was recounted in a positive light.

Disabled trainees felt strongly that there is a need for society to encourage and enable people with disabilities to achieve in education, including aspiring to clinical psychology. This view was reflected by some HE careers advisers who suggested that people with disabilities may have lower expectations of their own abilities and may be deterred by a fear of not coping with a clinical psychology training and the demands of the job.

Selection

Some trainees with disabilities had experienced being rejected during an initial exploratory enquiry by some courses that were not prepared to accommodate their needs. However, staff at CASPD felt that providing encouragement at this early stage was an important part of ensuring a fair selection process, together with making every effort to discuss and meet any additional needs to enable applicants with disabilities to complete the selection process.

Staff were pragmatic about the need for applicants to meet the selection criteria, relating their examples to the need for a clinical psychologist to be able to relate effectively to clients. Some pointed to the need to assess each person on an individual basis, particularly in relation to mental health where it would be appropriate to make a clinical judgement.

Accommodation and Support

There were differing views about accommodating clinical psychologists with disabilities in mainstream work. Some staff questioned whether a clinical psychologist with a specific disability could work effectively with all clients. However, it was felt that by trainees with disabilities that they should be given the same range of clinical placements as their peers, rather than be placed with clients who had the same disability. Resource implications and dealing with the anxieties of clinical staff providing placements were raised by staff as possible issues to be addressed.

Trainees felt that the course should take some responsibility for ensuring that other trainees understand and can cope with the fact that a disabled trainee's requirements are different and will be met by the course providers.

HE careers advisers considered that disabled students are likely to choose options that are close to home, in order to maintain existing support networks. The geographical location of doctorate courses may cause some to be concerned about the support available.

Summary of recommendations and examples of suggested strategies

Recruitment

- **A discussion needs to be held about the practicalities needed to be addressed before any active recruitment initiatives are considered**
 - e.g. address the physical changes to the environment needed to accommodate physically disabled trainees
- **Consider making a statement about the level of desire to accommodate people with disabilities in the Clearing House Handbook**
 - e.g. examples of where this has successfully been achieved by individual courses could be used to encouragement to other applicants with disabilities

- **Consider disseminating encouraging information about the profession through disability communities/groups**

e.g. the fears disabled people have of high competition and not coping with the demands of training and the job could be addressed through this publicity

Selection

- **Clarify how, if at all, a given disability may be taken into consideration in the selection process**

e.g. it may be possible to be more explicit about the selection criteria for applicants and HE careers advisers to make judgements about these in relation to their abilities

- **Ensure that the needs of a disabled applicant are established prior to the selection day and met to enable them to complete the process**

Accommodation and Support

- **Where possible, ensure that a trainee with a disability obtains the same diversity and quality of experience in training and on placement as their peers**

e.g. specifically, do not restrict placements to client groups with the same disability as the trainee

- **Ensure that the trainee peer group is not unbalanced by the presence of a trainee with a disability**

e.g. the course may need to take responsibility for facilitating peer group relationships if they are at risk from the effects of accommodating the additional/different needs of trainees with disabilities

- **Prepare placements to be able to accommodate the needs of a disabled trainee**

e.g. consider preparing information with the help of the disabled trainee that sets out how to meet any additional needs they may have, to be sent out to placement supervisors

Males

Recruitment

Male trainees described being aware of their minority status early on in the route to clinical psychology and suggested that although they were now used to it, this may deter other males from applying. The anticipation of being rejected by a course and the poor financial return in the early career years appeared to be central concerns to both male trainees and psychology undergraduates. Relatively low pay was also anticipated by some staff to be more important to males than females.

HE careers advisers suggested that the 'caring' careers are less popular with men and that they are less orientated to non-traditional roles than women. The image of clinical psychology as a 'female' occupation was seen by male trainees to present a challenge for them to work out how they could maintain their masculinity in this role. They emphasised the importance of having male role models in management positions in clinical psychology and staff suggested that the presence of males in the staff team could be used more effectively to attract more male applicants. Some psychology male undergraduates viewed the profession as 'female' in both the skills needed and in a predominance of female clients which would deter males from considering it as a career. Whilst some were attracted to clinical psychology as it was seen as a 'medical subject' with the same status as medicine, others viewed it as inferior to other health professions.

Selection

The selection process was regarded by some male trainees as an important opportunity for establishing their gender identity in relation to clinical psychology. Some felt that creating a gender balance on a course had positive benefits. Staff, however did feel that they consciously positively discriminated to the advantage of the other sex.

Accommodation and Support

Male trainees raised issues of experiencing difficulties on the course as a minority which needed addressing. This related for example, to problems encountered when discussing male sex offenders and sexual feelings towards clients. Some regarded the most important source of support as being other male trainees.

Summary of recommendations and examples of suggested strategies

Recruitment

- **Some discussion needs to be held about the rationale for increasing the numbers of men training as clinical psychologists**
 - e.g. consider the differing views as to whether making the profession more masculine in its image, demographics or professional practice is necessarily a good thing
- **Consideration could be given to changing the gender bias of the image of clinical psychology through specific targeted recruitment and promotional materials**
 - e.g. the suggested case studies for careers guidance could include men's success stories
- **Some mention of gender issues could be considered in the Clearing House Handbook, once the profession's position on addressing gender imbalances has been established**
- **Consider ways of competing with other professions for male psychology graduates**
 - e.g. disseminate information to psychology undergraduates about the positive career prospects of trained clinical psychologists, including certainty of employment and financial rewards

Selection

- **Consider using the selection day to set a precedent around gender issues**

Accommodation and Support

- **Encourage the use of peer group support by male trainees when in a minority**
- **Maintain awareness of any gender issues there may be in the provision of formal supervision to trainees**

Research Implications

- **Research could be carried out into the perceived imbalance in positions held by men and women at different levels within the professional hierarchy**
- **Consider some further exploration of the complex effects of the gender imbalance in teaching and learning about sex offenders**

Recruitment Materials

Clinical psychology training courses are over-subscribed and competition for places is fierce. The advertising and recruitment literature reflects this in that there is little information promoting awareness of the courses and prior knowledge is assumed in the literature. However, the recruitment materials reviewed imply a buoyant recruitment market on to courses as opposed to the reality of competition being high.

The majority of courses make general references to their equal opportunities policy in an all embracing statement in the CHPCCP Handbook.

With the exception of one course, none explicitly refers to the under representation of ethnic minority communities in the profession or encourages those from minority groups to apply. Although a few make reference to being situated in a culturally diverse area and discuss the opportunity to work with different cultural groups on placements. Courses vary in the emphasis given to issues of culture and ethnicity in the information about course content.

Courses vary in the provision they cite for disabled trainees and in their capacity to accommodate and support disabled applicants. No reference to gender is made in any of the recruitment materials.

Summary of recommendations and examples of suggested strategies

- **Target the under represented groups more explicitly in the recruitment materials**
 - e.g. think about targeting particular schools and undergraduate psychology courses with a view to attracting people from each of the identified groups
- **Make a clear statement about equal opportunities within the Clearing House information that includes a tone of welcome to those applicants from diverse groups**
- **Better publicise the features of courses that are known to attract a more diverse pool of applicants**

Printed and electronic copies of the full report (also in large print) are available from:

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