Response to Professor Jean Guichard

Jean Guichard is Professor of vocational psychology at the INETOP (Institut national d'étude du travail et d'orientation professionnelle) in France. His research focuses on factors and processes of self-construction and life-designing. He gave lectures and held seminars in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, USA and Poland. He received honorary doctoral degrees from the University of Eastern Finland, the University of Lisbon and the University of Buenos-Aires. He also received awards from the American Psychological Association and the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling. He is also Director of the UNESCO Chair of Lifelong Guidance and Counselling in Wrocław.

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The article recounts a discussion inspired by Professor Jean Guichard's letter to Professor Alicja Kargulowa. Its participants – a group of female counsellogists – are engaged in an e-mail exchange that freely unfolds in the symbolic space of the on-line discourse. Embedded in their own specific research, their contributions depart from a conventional, structured line of argumentation, spontaneously, and at the same time insightfully, reflecting on various facets of purification and translation processes that Professor Guichard points out both in the lived reality and in the practising of counselling science. The article addresses such issues as difficulty in defining the essence of counselling, relationships between counselling theory and counselling practice, counselling and other helping practices, and outcomes, side-effects and disturbances in everyday counselling practice. The article includes Professor Guichard's letter.

Key words: dialogue, help, counselling, counsellogy, pseudo-help, purification, translation, coping, SEP zones

Studia Poradoznawcze/Journal of Counsellogy, with its first issue published only last winter, is a new journal. Still uncertain whether the journal's profile was accurately defined, its Editorial Board wholeheartedly welcomes all opinions about the merit of the contributions published in it and its general usefulness. Lack of reactions

from the academia would imply that our endeavours in selecting the themes to address and the interpretive frameworks in which to address them were altogether pointless. Hence, the Editors appreciate both approving and harshly critical voices. The positive appraisals offered by some of our readers and expressed in letters from two of the Journal's Research Board members have greatly encouraged us.[1] In most general terms, they reflect on counsellogy as a separate sub-discipline and on the distinct object it studies, i.e. counselling, its scope, its difference from other processes and phenomena that "mould people" and its place in social life.

In his letter, Prof. Jean Guichard reminds that it is vital to refine reflection on counselling, to revisit the fundamental tenets of counsellogy and to define its scope and object in more detail. Actually, Polish counsellogists have been voicing similar postulates since the 70s and still keep debating them hotly in their scholarly polemics. Prof. Guichard aptly suggests that defining the object of counsellogy in strict terms is all the more urgent as counselling, in which new assumptions and approaches keep proliferating, is turning into a sprawling network, "simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society," to use Bruno Latour's pithy phrase (Latour, 1993, p. 6)

In slightly highbrow terms, both current counselling and counsellogy – a science of counselling we are involved in constructing – are products of late modernity. And "the word modern," according to the French thinker,

> designates two sets of entirely different practices, which must remain distinct if they are to remain effective (…) The first set of practices, by "translation", creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings – hybrids of nature and culture. The second, by "purification", creates two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand [culture, A.K.]; that of nonhumans on the other [nature, A.K.]. Without the first set, the practices of purification would be fruitless or pointless. Without the second, the work of translation would be slowed down, limited, or even ruled out (Latour, ibid., pp. 10-11).

The dichotomy of translation (transfer) and purification (refinement) is tempered by mediation. "As soon as the work of mediation is taken into account simultaneously with the work of purification, ordinary humanity and ordinary inhumanity must come back in," as we read in *We Have Never Been Modern* (Latour, 2011, p. 116).

Through our *Journal*, we participate in social mediation by analysing counselling, which we conceive as an inter-human relationship, as an other-oriented action and as the activity of various helping institutions. Studying counselling, we explore

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[1] Prof. Jean Guichard's long letter inspired the members of the Naukowe Towarzystwo Poradoznawcze (the Counsellogical Association) to re-think the fundamental issues of counsellogy and prompted an on-line debate on the questions posed in the letter. Prof. Spyros Kriwas sent us a shorter, but equally important letter.

both solutions/responses to the deeply entrenched human need for reciprocity as well as people's attitudes to culture-produced, often inhumane, demands, rigours, and regulations which breed existential – i.e. spiritual, moral and material – problems.[2] We also seek to employ technologies ubiquitous in the satellite communication era in order to advance global counselling practice. Engaged in such mediation, we engage also in the reproduction of translation practices. But when on the basis of our findings we seek to formulate general counselling-related laws and principles, when we seek to distinguish that "hybrid," as Latour would put it, from a science about it, our mediation gravitates towards purification practices.

Nevertheless, the insights cited below attest that the two sets of practices – purification and translation – are hardly distinguishable not only in counselling and counsellogy, social phenomena *par excellence*, but also in the realms of nature and technology as well as in the scientific study of the two. In the fluid modernity, counselling is becoming one of flows, to resort to Manuel Castell's terminology. It turns into a stream made up of human predicaments, emotions, knowledge, actions and behaviours as well as of material and symbolic products (ideas, ideologies, organisations, associations or appliances). Though undeniably global, this flow has its local manifestations in everyday life; it is, in fact, deeply anchored in the everyday and halted by it (Castells, 1996). Purification practices can thus contribute to systematising our discourse; they cannot however change the world of counselling.

Evaluating our *Journal*, Prof. Jean Guichard initiated the discourse across the hybrid domain of counselling and gave it an anthropological bent. He encouraged us to work on two planes. Purification is supposed to distinguish the practice of counselling from the theoretical reflection on counselling. At the same time, it is supposed to set counselling off from other helping and supportive practices, both the institutional and the casual, quotidian ones. On the latter plane, we should work to establish what is and what is not counselling in the context of social action and inter-human relationships. If we approach counselling as a network, though, the distinction between the two planes is purely arbitrary since translation practices pertain to them both. As Latour observes, "science does not produce itself scientifically any more than technology produces itself technologically or economy economically" (Latour, 1993, p. 116).

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[2] A. Czerkawska classifies the problems counselees report in the following groups: situational crises (illness, parting, divorce, mourning, loss of job, moving house); developmental crises (defining one's identity, choice of a life path, choice of goals in life); failure to cope with performance of social and vocational roles, difficulty in harmonising various spheres of life; emotional problems; problems with/in relations; family, educational, identity, occupational, child-raising problems; co-dependency; conflicts; dilemmas; secrets; transitions; transgressions (from the on-line discussion).

Purification I: Counsellogical Theory vs. Counselling Practice

As already mentioned, the status of counsellogy as a potentially separate discipline of social sciences and humanities has been debated in Poland since the mid-70s. To distinguish between accounts of counselling practice and its methods on the one hand and theoretical analyses of ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology of counselling research, on the other, proved an urgent need when educational, family and vocational counselling started to develop in Poland under the auspices of the state, the Catholic Church and various foundations. It was at that time that research on counselling as a process of social life came into being.

Initially, the positivist research paradigm prevailed, which aimed to identify and explain correlations between what psychologists and educators employed in counselling centres did and how counselees, their families or the organisations they were part of changed. The so-called systemic approach featured prominently in that type of research. Counselling was treated as a sub-system whose task was to optimise other social systems: education, employment, production, etc.. Guidance provision and other activities undertaken by the counselling centres incorporated within particular social systems were to enhance the systems' functions and boost their "productivity." The quantifiable, standardised data describing the minutiae of counselling, as well as scale-measured indices of its effectiveness, demonstrated that the development of counselling should be supported, research funding should be increased, the centres should be expanded and the specialists they employed should be given pay-raises. And the other way round: should the counselling outcomes turn out inadequate, the counselling centre that proved poorly effective could be closed down. The counsellor – an educator or a psychologist – and the counselling centre's client were "the human element" of the system, which comprised also other elements (e.g. objects and processes) and, even if relatively flexible, was rather rigorously structured and fulfilled statutory social functions in relation to other systems. A science which ventured to describe and explain how the system functioned should also be a tightly interconnected system of concepts, definitions, laws and principles. In retrospect, one cannot fail to notice that the transparent, modernist vision of the counselling system, and in particular of its theory, entailed the purist separation of nature from culture.

As mentioned above, counselling is currently envisioned and studied rather as a network-like structure. Since the paradigmatic shift in science, research has been conducted in the humanist framework. Researchers – active participants of the reality they study – aim to produce typological accounts, analyse phenomena ethnomethodologically, participate in the interpretive, *Verstehen* or critical discourse, engage in action research or launch intervention research. Having abandoned the positions of external experts who discovered connections and correlations, researchers have turned "interpreters," and even "constructors," of the world around them.

This, however, does not reduce their answerability for the narratives they produce: they are bound to present accounts solid and answers accurate enough for their recipients to find them intelligible. The scholarship they pursue consists of various knowledges and idioms. Framed as a narrative, its live discourse spins not only among scholars themselves but also between the world of research and the world of social life. This is in a sense exemplified in the hereby paper designed as a unique "amalgam of views," as Edyta Zierkiewicz put it.

Speaking about constructing counsellogy as a science of counselling, Prof. Guichard sides with other contemporary thinkers and scholars who probe into the development of science. Below, I quote the opening and closing passages of his letter[3]:

> *I admit that constructing a new scientific discipline around the "provision/reception of guidance," a phenomenon commonly regarded as so tightly interwoven with things human, seems an original and promising enterprise. I believe that constituting a scientific discipline whose object is "homo consultans" (which seems analogical to linguistics or pragmatics focusing on the "speaking subject" or economy studying "homo economicus") is an important step forward both for those who are directly and specifically engaged with it as researchers or professional practitioners of counselling as well as for all those who study people's capacity for action, interpretation and creation of symbols, or dialogue and interlocutors' role, or for that matter, various forms of support and assistance in developing new perceptions and attitudes, etc..*
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> *If I have fully grasped your intentions, I think we **could define counsellogy (Conseillologie, poradoznawstwo) as a science which studies various forms of dialogue (with others as well as with oneself) and various forms of support and assistance in developing new perspectives (producing interpretations and symbols) which enable counselees to break "free," to a degree, from their internal conditioning through creating new, otherwise unnoticed or overlooked, opportunities for action** [emphasis mine – A. K.].*
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> *The broad definition you put forward in the Journal ("Counsellogy specifically seeks to understand individuals' relations to themselves, other people and the environment, particularly when they cope, advise or use advice") does indeed imply that the phenomena we do not readily associate with each other have actually several things in common. (…)*
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> *I think that proposing to present an account of the scholarly field of counsellogy, you have done more or less what Michel Foucault did towards the end of his life. Foucault came up with the concept of "governmentality," which juxtaposing*

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[3] At the very beginning of his letter, Prof. Guichard's writes: "Thank you very much for the first issue of *Journal of Counsellogy*. It is an impressive achievement. I can hardly imagine the enormous work that went into making this publication available in two languages. So far I have read the main articles." (based on the Polish translation from French by dr Violetta Drabik-Podgórna and dr Aneta Słowik).

and showing the affinities between governing others and governing the self, gave us an opportunity better to understand human subjectivity and individual attitudes, orientations and actions.

The definition Prof. Guichard proposes aligns with the definitions endorsed by Polish counsellogists, especially those who define counselling in broad terms and study its anthropological and psychological dimensions. Such an account of counselling, inclusive of a whole array of diversified counselling practices and experiences, seems to be strongly substantiated. Elżbieta Siarkiewicz provides further underpinnings for such research framework.

Elżbieta Siarkiewicz. If we agree that counselling practices are as old as the human race itself, that they came into being along with the emergence of the first social systems, where and how the first counselling processes were constructed evades any precise definition. The only thing we can ascertain is that, initially, counselling was part of everyday common life and experience, only later – when social life grew more complex – acquiring first institutional, though still rather unofficial forms (shamans, sages, oracles, councils of elders, etc.) and then fully formal institutional shapes (counselling facilities, caring institutions, welfare services). Most probably, formal counselling and informal counselling have always been practised alongside each other. Clearly, while counselling embedded in institutional frameworks is relatively easily identifiable, diagnosable and describable, informal counselling which eludes official control and defies structures cannot be identified or diagnosed with equal ease. Rather dispersed, it tends to remain unspecified. Nevertheless, I see it as permeating the texture of everyday life. There is no appointed place or time to carry it out. There are no formally delineated roles, tasks, or goals attributed to it. There are no sets of competencies mandatory for those who help, support and rescue. Still, such counselling practice does undoubtedly go on, and all of us are likely to experience it, be it as counsellors or as guidance-recipients. (…)

In everyday life, we are frequently advisors or advisees. We receive and offer help and support. At the same time, we can prevent this kind of informal counselling practice from being activated or from developing and persisting. We can stop it, interrupt it, put an end to it. Hence, such everyday counselling practice, even though undoubtedly there, is hardly predictable. We could even wonder if such practices are counselling indeed. We could also wonder who is authorised to distinguish such counselling practices from other everyday practices: participants of the counselling situations, external observers, researchers, or perhaps anybody else? What can be legitimately called a counselling practice and are such practices "eligible candidates" for the object of scientific study and scholarly reflection?

In his letter reviewing our *Journal*, Spyros Kriwas addresses the subjects explored in its articles as well as the very title of the *Journal*, which comprises the name of a science we are developing. Thereby, he answers, be it indirectly, some of the questions posed above:

Spyros Kriwas writes: *I think that it is a very comprehensive journal, which gives to the authors an opportunity to publish articles referring either to theory, or meta-theory of counselling, or to the grounded and reflective practice. It concerns a lot of aspects of counselling, e.g. its social, cultural, and multicultural facets dealt with in a number of supporting sciences, like sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc. The content of articles evidently shows, among others, the authors' attempt to adopt what the Foreword of the Journal calls a holistic approach to the individual. Therefore, I think that the term "counsellogy" highlights and illuminates the purpose and the aims of this noteworthy journal.*

The members of the *Journal*'s Research Board who positively appraise its profile and advocate the development of counsellogy as a social sub-discipline frequently refer to the discussions of the "Counselling in Contemporary Society" seminars. They agree that pursuing counsellogy (*poradoznawstwo, Conseillologie*) as an autonomous science of counselling entails both a certain mode of construing reality and a certain way of describing, explaining and interpreting practice. The emerging discipline builds on the social sciences, humanities and philosophical accounts of human mental processes. They inform its separate identity and theoretical embeddedness. Edyta Zierkiewicz's methodological remarks contribute to the attempts at defining counselling and counsellogy.

Edyta Zierkiewicz. I believe that to define what counsellogy studies and analyses, we should first distinguish between the narrow and broad approaches.

The former is mono-disciplinary, classical and, for a lack of better term, conservative. It focuses on the helping phenomena and processes which take place within professional helping institutions, i.e. counselling centres, and on the support provided to help-seekers by qualified counsellors. In such framework, the processes unfolding outside – in the social and cultural world – are considered, only marginally, as a background for the specialist facilities' work. Such processes are given a certain account of because they contribute to the founding of such facilities (and hence to "the institutions' policy," for example, to their positioning as "mediators" between a child with learning disabilities and the school) and affect the way they operate (by specifying their modes of work, i.e. by promoting the subdivision of professional help into "specialisations" which respond to the identified or anticipated social needs). Counsellogy studies and analyses such institutions in terms of micro-, meso- and macro-structures.

The latter (broader) approach is inter-disciplinary. It focuses on the context in which the helping institutions operate, rather than on the theoretical "anchoring" of their work (including the work of counsellors they employ). In such framework, counsellogists extensively study social and cultural processes (it should be remembered, however, that it does not happen "in opposition" to the narrow approach, a sequential discourse which has lost its central position). They investigate processes which contribute to the rising popularity of professional help, to the "saturation" of the public space with the counselling (as well as psychological and psychotherapeutic) content and to the alterations within the dominant discourse. Briefly, they address the

therapeutic culture, which has removed the odium of public shame from suffering and promotes individualism and new identity narratives, i.e. the individual accounts of coping with problems (with the emphasis on the problems rather than on the coping). The approach is interdisciplinary also in terms of methodology since it does not adhere strictly (as the narrow approach does) to one research paradigm. Nor does it espouse the goal of identifying the mechanisms upon which populations operate in order to develop effective instruments to control individuals. The "broadly thinking" researchers propose research projects drawing on various paradigms and methods, because they seek to understand processes in which social problems are formed and to fathom the ways in which individuals and communities (but not the whole populations) respond to such problems.

Resorting to Michel Foucault, we could say that whereas the narrow approach foregrounds the sovereign power over the population, the broad approach foregrounds governmentality, cited above, or – in slightly different terms – ethopolitics. Now counsellogists will explore the clients' empowerment and construction of their "capital of suffering".

The methodological debates are paramount to the analyses of counselling. Working within an inclusive research paradigm, scholars are bound to address the development of social consciousness as related to the acquisition by individuals of coping skills needed to face up to changes in their environment and in their own lives. Appended issues include how governmentality pertains to them and to what extent counselling is involved in it. Developing such a broad research perspective, Joanna Kłodkowska explores the usefulness of the notion of "coping," which can add relevantly to the methodological discourse of counsellogy.

Joanna Kłodkowska. The notion of *"coping"* tends to be identified or coupled with synonymous terms such as resourcefulness, overcoming of difficulties, problem solving, finding a way to handle something, dealing with something successfully[4] (*Collins, Słownik angielsko-polski,*1996, p. 97). On the one hand seemingly precise, but on the other patently polyvalent, the notion lends itself to multiple uses. We refer to "coping" primarily when we discuss processes, activities and states which occur in various spheres of human life, for example: coping with a situation which is perceived as threatening (Zimbardo, Ruch 1977, p. 234), coping as a mechanism triggered in a stressful situation aiming to manage stress (Borkowski, 2001), coping with a cultural trauma (Sztompka, 2007), coping in a total institution (Goffman, 1961), or coping as actions launched by various institutions in order to survive in contemporary reality (Kargul, 2004).

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4   The passage relies to some extent on the etymological affinities of the Polish equivalents of coping (***rad**zenie sobie*), managing/dealing (*po**rad**zenie sobie*) and resourcefulness (*za**rad**nosc*). They are derived from the same stem as the Polish equivalents of counselling (*po**rad**nictwo*), guidance (*do-**rad**ztwo*) and advice-giving (***rad**zenie*). This creates a very tight network of interconnections among the notions not only on the conceptual but also on the lexical level. In English, such interlacing does not exist on the level of the words' morphology (translator's note).

Accroding to Ewa Trębińska-Szumigraj, "resourcefulness" and "coping" are used to describe, sometimes simultaneously, personality features, attitudes and stances, skills and action strategies (Trębińska-Szumigraj, 2008a). She observes that the notion of coping refers both to the process and to its outcome (Trębińska-Szumigraj, 2010). Without differentiating strictly between resourcefulness and coping, she distinguishes the following approaches to them in social sciences: "resourcefulness as the opposite of helplessness, coping as the combating of stress, resourcefulness in critical life events, resourcefulness in problem-solving, coping as a modification of attitudes" (Trębińska-Szumigraj, 2008a) and „an ability to adjust to new conditions and situations" (Trębińska-Szumigraj, 2008b).

The psychologist Zofia Ratajczak argues, however, that coping and resourcefulness are not identical and should not be used interchangeably. Resourcefulness is the opposite of helplessness and is bound up with human activeness in improving one's situation. Thus, resourcefulness is not an action, a process or an outcome of an activity, but rather a certain ability of or a capacity for action. It is an individual's predisposition, which can be fittingly used in a situation of perceived difficulty. It is a competence formed in learning, socialisation, and experience, bound up with creative attitudes and manifest in a readiness to use one's own resources to prevent adverse events (Ratajczak 2001).

The role of mental resources in coping is underscored also by Stevan E. Hobfoll. He writes: "By coping I am referring here to the things that people do to combat stress, their thought and behavioural reactions, and particularly their guarding, investing and building of resources" (Hobfoll, 2004, pp. 120-121). He proposes that coping should be addressed in such a way as to highlight an individual's connectedness with the social context. He insists that coping must be analysed as located in a tightly interwoven, interdependent, social network of individual, family and organisations. The community nature of coping results from the fact that, as he argues, we share much of our resources with other community members. If the resources are deployed by other people, the coping action targeting the resources will affect also the members of the community to which the owner of the resources belongs (*Ibid.*). Thus, coping as a social activity aiming to prevent the loss of resources ensues from the commitment to the preservation of the resources. At the same time, the construction of coping strategies is founded upon the resources. The social practice attests to the potential of self-creation and world-creation, resources, and both individual and communal capacities for self-transformation (cf. Sztompka, 2007) in the existing structures, for modification of these structures and the environment as well as for overcoming barriers produced by these structures.

This view is rooted in the idea that reality is socially produced (cf. Kłodkowska, 2010), and the social world is a challenge and a task for an agentive subject who is the central locus of activity. As Piotr Sztompka contends, an individual experiences a degree of autonomy *vis-a-vis* the dynamic social context and builds on this independence to actualise such resources as imagination, originality or innovativeness in action (Sztompka, 2007).

Views implied by such definitions of "resourcefulness" and "coping" resemble the views on an individual's relationship with him/herself and the world encapsulated in the notion of "governmentality." They do not abolish or curtail the power of *homo consultans* (in terms of his/her social and personal role/position); neither do they exempt *homo consultans* from self-control. They expose the close interdependence between the power exerted over others and the power exerted over oneself.

The emancipation of counsellogy as an autonomous discipline and the choice of its research methodology, important issues though they undoubtedly are, did not lie, nevertheless, at the core of our virtual discussion. The discussion addressed first of all the very object of counsellogy, i.e. counselling, the translation-generated mixture which derives partly from the realm of (human) nature (such as needs, intentions, skills, etc.), partly from the realm of culture (knowledge, organisation of counselling institutions, coping, advisory, and supportive strategies, etc.), and partly from the realm of matter (technical appliances). As the divisions between the realms are largely arbitrary, difficulties in capturing accurately the practice that constitutes the object of our research can be legitimately expected.

Purification II: Counselling vs. Other Helping Practices

The discussion on this subject was triggered by Prof. Guichard's following words:

> If I'm not mistaken, one of the primary objectives of counsellogy would be to delineate its field precisely and explain why a given kind of interaction, conversation, action, support, etc. does or does not belong to it. For example, is a doctor's consultation always counselling, never counselling or sometimes counselling provided that it takes on a certain form?
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> I believe that defining the field of counsellogy in this way would entail identifying at the same time the processes which make up dialogue, exchange and shared action. It would also entail stating whether or not they belong to counselling. In other words, it would entail on the one hand identifying the fundamental processes which make up interactions, dialogue, support and shared action that are indeed provision of counselling, and on the other hand spelling out the differences in these processes which enable us to differentiate various "types" of advice-giving (…)
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> A sample of examples:
> – two adolescent women's conversation about a risk one of them would be willing to incur in order to profess her love for her girlfriend,
> – Catholic confession,
> – some exchanges on Facebook and the likes of it,
> – a dialogue of a worshipper with his/her rabbi or pastor,
> – parents' conversation with a child about his/her vocational choices,

– some pseudo-dialogical forms which are in fact expressions of opinions on this
or that choice (e.g. in a conversation about a film character),
– psychoanalytical therapy,
– coaching in sports,
– vocational counselling practice,
– some (or all) forms of support and assistance,
– some joint actions, etc.

Presumably, given the state of the art, many scholars would say: YES, indeed, nearly all situations that Prof. Guichard enumerates have some elements and features in common which make them close to, if not straightforwardly identical with, counselling. Analysing them could thus help differentiate particular counselling varieties. However the simple YES can hardly suffice as an answer since it does not provide any argumentation. And while we try to corroborate our position, we inevitably stumble upon further queries, doubts and complications.[5] The voices in the virtual discussion quoted below endeavour to tackle the issue in all its complexity. Relying on their reflection, observation and empirical research, the researchers refer to such subject areas as specificity of counselling and its difference from other practices; the embeddedness of counselling in everyday life; counselling in the media and the public space; characteristic features of institutional counselling; and effectiveness of counselling and coping. Their conclusions, cautiously formulated and tentative, might fail to be unanimously satisfying. My role here is to apply objective hermeneutics to organise these considerations (cf. Urbaniak-Zając, Kos, 2013). Thus, quoting the researchers' ideas verbatim, I will arrange them and point out how they refer to the main question. The article as such is by no means intended as a polemical confrontation of various views. It rather aims to unravel the researchers' varying understandings of counselling and counsellogy.

Defining Counselling: Challenges and Pitfalls

Daria Zielińska-Pękał. Analysing mediated counselling, I keep asking myself this very question. I think it is even more urgent than in the case of other counselling forms. When I was planning to study the counselling dimension of (especially) TV broadcasts, I thought I would analyse only the strictly guidance-related programmes, i.e. the programmes intentionally designed to advise, support or at least inform people. I quickly discovered how deeply mistaken I had been. I noticed (as did the students who collaborated with me on this project) that television (or in broader terms – the media) offers a whole array of programmes which, though not intended as advice shows,

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[5] Hence, the question I posed to the members of the Naukowe Towarzystwo Poradoznawcze (the Counsellological Association) about the feasibility and possible ways of demarcating the boundaries of counsellogy's research object read: When can and when cannot a situation/dialogue/encounter be treated as a counselling situation?

realise counselling goals, and many TV viewers (or Internauts) treat them as a source of knowledge and support.

Consequently, in the very selection of programmes to analyse I am forced to enquire: "Is this counselling still/actually/at all?" I wonder whether we perhaps tend to over-interpret things, whether we by any chance talk about something which is not there, whether we occasionally happen to see the counselling content where there is simply none at all.

The studies[6] I receive largely dispel such doubts. It turns out that the counselling content (or at least the counselling message) actually proliferates in programmes which do not start from counselling intentions or assumptions. And this is by no means a paradox. We can also observe the opposite: the shows which are supposed and intended to serve counselling ends work in a completely different way. I have repeatedly heard such opinions about mediated counselling (e.g. "I watch *The Supernanny* not because I have a problem, but because I like the show"). Clearly, the subjective perception, divergent from the assumed and expected one, makes the programme serve different purposes.

What we witness here is a subjective construal of the object of counsellogy. Objectively speaking, we would find it difficult to agree that some authors of TV shows (e.g. Kuba Wojewódzki) advise people (or that Maciej, a fortune-teller, or Martyna Wojciechowska, a traveller, do so as well). Objectively speaking, we consent that *The Supernanny* suggests ways of solving child-raising problems and improving children-parents relations (even if many TV viewers do not think of her as a counsellor).

However, I believe that defining the object of counsellogy – counselling – in objective terms only is highly limiting and problematic. To categorise (precisely define) this object might prove deceptive. I think that we should not overlook or underestimate the subjective reception I've just referred to – the fact that the object of counsellogy (counselling) may depend on individual perceptions and expectations. The programme which I perceive in terms of counselling may just as well have no such meanings for another viewer (no matter how improbable it could seem to me). On the other hand, what is intended as counselling may prove entirely useless to me and slip from any category of counselling.

Perhaps we should agree that the object of counsellogy is open and indefinite, even though it flouts our all too human desire for determinacy and closure.[7]

Edyta Zierkiewicz formulates a similar conclusion:

Edyta Zierkiewicz. Summing up, I cannot point out the limits of counsellogical reflection. Anyway, in the late (or fluid) modernity, all boundaries are an artificial (i.e. social) construct, it's not the point to demarcate them. The point is rather to spot and engage with things and phenomena which carry a counselling potential and are relevant

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6   Research reports or students' essays analysing the TV offer or on-line conversations.

7   Closure (fulfilment of need) is a very important notion in Gestalt therapy. Gestalt thinkers argue that people have a natural tendency to complete (arrive at a closure of) their experiences (emotions, thoughts, activities). When closure is not achieved, a discomfort is produced which all the more urges closure (often instead "wanting" to do something, we "must" do something).

to the operations of the counselling system. It would indeed be ideal to determine the limits, but it is utterly impossible.

These opinions seem representative of researchers pursuing science in the new paradigm and confirm that "the more we forbid ourselves to conceive of hybrids, the more possible their interbreeding becomes" (Latour, 1993, p. 12). In other words, the more zealously we strive to "purify" the object of research, the more clearly we realise how complicated and complex it actually is. And this is the case both when Daria Zielińska-Pękał and her likes carry out a type of action research and when Edyta Zierkiewicz and her likes analyse methodological tenets of counselling studies and try to detect counselling in other phenomena they research:

Edyta Zierkiewicz I find a considerable „counsellogical potential" in issues of female breast cancer patients (their pathographies and self-help groups), advice literature and women's magazines.

Both researchers opt for defining counselling in a personal framework: an action/situation qualifies as counselling when its recipient perceives it as such and finds that it affects his/her life. They also grant the groups they research the right to engage in such practices. And so does Joanna Kłodkowska, who joins in "the mediating practice" and tries to answer the question directly.

Joanna Kłodkowska. It seems to me that a situation/dialogue/encounter can be viewed as a counselling situation if it is a helping process, i.e. a process which stimulates the advice-seeker's "power"[8] to change, use resources and overcome barriers inherent in his/her environment. If it prepares the ground for an individual's or a social group's biographical change, contributes to change and promotes change in his/her/their relations with the surrounding world. The kind of change is also important: it should target subjectivity, i.e. foster becoming a subject, who is a locus of reflective practice of biography-construction and being-in-the-world with other people.

Pointing to the sources and (also theoretical) grounds that inform her answer, she proceeds:

Joanna Kłodkowska. I have come up with such ideas for my own "counsellogical and didactic uses." They are inspired by the humanist perspective as espoused by P. Sztompka in his concept of social becoming, the perspective I endorse to a large extent. Thinking in these terms about the object of counsellogy, I find it difficult to delineate its field as it overlaps and interpenetrates with social and cultural animation or, generally speaking, with social work as such. I think that a counselling situation is an activity

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[8] The passage to some extent relies on the particularities of Polish vocabulary, in which the word for help – *pomoc* – can be associated with the word for power – *moc*. In this sense helping processes become also "empowering" (i.e. power-granting) processes (translator's note).

which foregrounds the dialogue in the counsellor-counselee encounter, in which the counselee probes into him/herself and unfolds his/her narrative about him/herself and the world, creating his/her own ways of coping with everyday reality. The narrative is supposed to provide the counselee with an opportunity to become a reflective constructor of his/her biography. Animation and social work, in turn, are deeply anchored in "being-in-the-world" with others. And it is in the company of these other community members that an individual gets an opportunity to (re)define him/herself and participate in social change, with an animator or a social worker serving as a "catalyst" of the change.

Alicja Czerkawska does not articulate her personal investment in purification, i.e. in endeavours to define counselling practice and devise her own understanding of counselling. Instead, she adopts the position of an external observer who explores the outcomes of purification which is going on in the public space. She enquires how other scholars identify counselling and seeks to ascertain to what extent the discourses of science and society differentiate counselling from similar processes and phenomena. Like Edyta Zierkiewicz, she sees analyses of borderline zones and differences between counselling and other forms of help as most likely to offer a chance to capture the uniqueness of counselling.

Alicja Czerkawska. I believe that to justify emancipation of counsellogy, we would be well advised to define what is not counselling or what counselling tends to be confused with. Recently, attempts have been made to expand the object of counsellogical research by including many helping or pseudo-helping activities from the borderline of counselling or those falling completely outside the counselling domain.

What is not counselling? What is counselling confused with?
–   it tends to be confused with psychotherapy (some activities, methods and techniques of help are indeed shared by the two, but counselling does not include a therapeutic component),
–   it tends to be identified with advice-giving, which is a very reductive vision of counselling (advice-giving is in fact either just one of many elements of counselling or an entirely separate form of help provided by advisors/consultants with an expertise in finances, law, diet, tax system, investments, rehabilitation, advertising, etc.),
–   it tends to be mistakenly identified with spiritual (religious) help, in which a clergyman deals with the issues of faith, devout practices and spiritual problems. In turn, a counsellor, who deals with experiential, instrumental, real behavioural, social and subsistence problems, should not interfere with the sphere of spirituality and extra-sensory or supra-rational experience,
–   it tends to be confused with other forms of support provision, such as mediation, coaching, or mentoring, which is probably the result of their dialogical character.

Unfortunately, registering the fact of "confusion," she is able to mention the subtle differences between the processes she enumerates and counselling only cursorily. In this way she gives a partial answer to Prof. Guichard's query about Catholic confession, psychoanalytical therapy and coaching, arguing that they do not qualify as counselling. She believes that spiritual matters pertaining to faith and the sacrament of penance cannot be an object of counselling and a priest is not a counsellor. Therapy does not qualify as counselling, either, since therapy has to do with medical issues which are closer to psychiatry rather than to "mild psychotherapy." Similarly, coaching, mentoring and mediation do not qualify as counselling since they resemble "monothematic" training which targets acquisition of certain techniques of action without requiring a reflective change in one's conception of life. A mediator, a priest, a therapist, a coach or a mentor could practice counselling, provided however that they go "beyond" the role ascribed to their profession.

 The issue being as complex as it is, all we can do here is merely sketch some of the differences, but it is exactly one of counsellogy's aims to spell them out and interpret them more comprehensively, which is actually what Prof. Guichard expects.

The researchers' attempts to establish directly what is and what is not counselling are supplemented by their accounts of the social context in which counselling is embedded, therein primarily the analyses of counselling as located in everyday life. And Prof. Guichard's detailed questions concern the situations common in everyday life rather than the operations of counselling institutions.

Counselling in Everyday Life: Translation Practices

Elżbieta Siarkiewicz. Counselling practices located in everyday life occupy a symbolic social space, in which all our experiences are constructed. The everyday is a space in which we live, exchange experience and communicate, in which we are simply steeped (Schütz, 1984; Goffman, 2006; Sulima, 2000), in which counselling practices are initiated and carried out imperceptibly, unnoticeably, and yet incessantly. Everyday counselling practices are created in parallel, side by side so to say, with easily identifiable, momentous and significant events (alongside occupational and educational activities, housework, family meetings, get-togethers, participation in the media space, etc.). Because institutional help/counselling may not be easily accessible, we screen this non-institutional reality for support, as it is in the everyday that we find out about the readiness and probable competencies of potential helpers.

In his ethnomethodological analyses, Harold Garfinkel gives an account of mechanisms involved in the production of "clear, coherent, planful, consistent, chosen, knowable, uniform and reproducible" new social settings. I see the everyday counselling practices as such "new settings." I think that enumerating various practices, Prof. Guichard had these settings in mind, as well. Engaging in everyday counselling interactions, their participants perform the work of reception or offering of help/support and, at the same time, "detect in them" the "appearances of consistent, clear (…) arrangement." The methods by which the members of a social setting can explain, narrate, compare,

metaphorically render and picture it, in brief: account for it, are as much the ways to organise as the **material** of counselling actions (cf. Garfinkel 1967, p. 34). The daily counselling practices and counselling conversations become rationally discernible social orders, which have their own **material** through which they are also made perceivable, describable and explicable.

People perceived as potential counsellors tend to "display" a specific text. They produce signals which George H. Mead (1934) calls "significant gestures" in his theory of symbolic interactionism. And these gestures, among others, make the potential counsellors into live billboards communicating "You can trust me; I have time for you; I can help you; I know how to do it; I will listen to you."

We could distinguish a few channels through which to access the everyday counselling practices: everyday conversations, conversations recorded in the media and conversations recorded and preserved in our memory.[9]

Daily conversations can be a source of knowledge about counselling that has settled in and spread across the everyday; even though apparently inconsequential events, they may have very far-ranging consequences. Frequently, such everyday guidance provision touches absolutely fundamental issues. Authenticity and emotional investment in both the construction and the content of such utterances make the advice "important" even if it does not immediately come across as apt. The advice that significant others offer us is frequently framed with such expressions as "remember," "don't forget," "be strong," "don't trust," "trust yourself," which catch our attention and make us focus on the content. Such framing words isolate this particular sentence from the buzzing stream of other sentences, making it important and memorable. In such devices we witness the operations of the conversational decorum, which determines the choice of ways to address a particular person in particular circumstances (e.g. a parent addressing a child). As a result, a verbal message becomes a ritual communication, sanctioning the established, unambiguously fixed social relationship between the interlocutors (parents-children, friends, people of authority, media idols, etc.).

Counsellogists and methodologists of counselling study counselling conversations so extensively that a methodology of counselling encounter has come into being, which explores primarily the counselling conversation. The counselling conversation is approached as an "existential" conversation (focused on the client's self), as a conversation which advances problem-solving and/or as a conversation which addresses choice-making (cf. Wojtasik, 1997; Kennedy, Charles, 2004; Guichard, Huteau 2005). In the course of their formal training, counsellors learn how to conduct counselling conversations. They identify and acquire conversation techniques, such as listening and understanding, paraphrasing, explaining (clarifying), mirroring emotions, building support and trust, and asking questions (Wojtasik, 1997, pp. 148-169).

However, everyday conversations, including counselling conversations, which recur in the social space are highly likely to be based on intuition rather than on academic knowledge. Still, there are ways to capture the so-called "murmur of society" behind them, and having captured it, to listen to and interpret it. The point here is not so much

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9   I analyse them in detail in *Przesłonięte obszary poradnictwa. Realia, iluzje, ambiwalencje* (*The veiled areas of counselling: Realities, illusions, ambivalences*).

to collect "ethnographic curiosities" and, by analysing them, to formulate general conclusions, but rather to scrutinise the detail, the micro-manifestation, the local.

The memory-preserved advice safeguards the clear-cut social roles: the role of the parent wishing to transmit something s/he finds of utmost importance and the role of the child, the cared-for recipient of the message. In his doctoral dissertation (*Communication Conduct in An Island Community*, 1953), Erving Goffman calls such everyday interactions **euphoric** (as opposed to **dysphoric**), i.e. felt to be proper and natural, and making participants feel at ease (qtd. in Winkin, 2007, p. 170).

Elżbieta Siarkiewicz aptly underscores how elusive the hybrid of non-institutional counselling is. She also highlights the deeply individualised reception of counselling sought or chanced upon in the routine course of everyday activities outside the formally organised provision of help. In a slightly different manner than Daria Zielińska-Pękał above, she addresses the omnipresence of counselling in the media. The media, she argues, are not simply technical appliances or tools pliable to their users' wishes. Rather, the media are an active component of contemporary hybrid counselling since they transmit, show and store events as well as emotions conveyed in gestures, facial expressions, the tone and pitch of voice (e.g. on the phone or Skype). They have the power to intensify or to subdue the appeal of the transmitted content, and in some cases can also select this content. Finally, the media strengthen communal bonds, sustain social support networks, and co-create the social texture, which, though sometimes ephemeral and transient, is not only the palpable context, but also the "text" of counselling experienced in everyday life.

Elżbieta Siarkiewicz. Probably a surprise effect to their founders and users alike, various Internet theme forums have evolved into a media-produced virtual recess for "counselling services" to thrive in. Assembling people who have similar problems and go through similar difficulties (melancholy, depression, problems with parents, unexpected pregnancy, etc.), they are a site where communities of those in trouble and those willing to help are formed. This is the way that various support groups come into being, bringing together on the one hand people who face the same predicament and want to share their experience and, on the other, people who know how to help (because they have successfully coped with the problem) and specialists-counsellors (psychologists, therapists, educators, doctors, etc.). In this way, a virtual *realis* arises as a reality alternative to the real world. To use Jean Baudrillard's coinage, in this way a *simulacrum* of counselling is created – a copy of counselling that actually lacks an original -- an alternative counselling reality (cf. Zielińska-Pękał, 2007a). Daria Zielińska-Pękał speaks about mediated counselling, hidden counselling, counselling which is "inscribed" in the media without being actually verbalised. Having analysed various types of Internet counsellors, she has distinguished a "real hundred-percent expert," an "elder brother" and an "casual vagabond." And having analysed advice-seekers and their varying engagement with "counselling on the Internet," she has distinguished a "real hundred-percent Internaut," a "virtual shipwreck," a "rational user" and a "wandering sheep" (Zielińska-Pękał, 2007b).

The media have become another domesticated zone of sporadic, cyclical and permanent guidance provision. Initiated by a virtual, on-line support group of people who are experiencing or have experienced the same predicament, the guidance provision is founded upon the cultural distrust of strangers. It unfolds in what Martin Buber views as pseudo-encounters, taking place in pseudo-spaces, which dominate the everyday reality, having emerged wherever the strangers are too many to be easily domesticated. Pseudo-spaces appear wherever one feels safe, wherever one finds easy access, and wherever one can enter a social situation (in this case a counselling situation) effortlessly, and equally effortlessly break it, abandon it and return safely to another pseudo-space for another pseudo-encounter (Buber, 1992).

To sum up her observations on both real and virtual everyday counselling, Elżbieta Siarkiewicz tries to define the "essence" of counselling succinctly. Try though she may, she still cannot avoid citing examples and relating events. In other words, she is still involved in the practice of translation.

Elżbieta Siarkiewicz. Counselling practices that take place in the space of the everyday keep the parties neither deeply engaged nor absorbed for long. As they carry no obligation to provide or receive guidance, accessing them is a fully voluntary decision. However, the daily counselling practices do carry certain risks with them: a risk of unanticipated suspension or unexpected termination of the once initiated activities; a risk of falling back on stereotypes (e.g. "Don't worry about your son's partying. Youth must have its course. He'll let some steam off and settle down."); a risk of incompetence or, worse still, manipulation (e.g. "I was shocked when my friend kept dissuading me from taking up certain studies. She showered me with so many logical arguments, saying that studying that did not make any sense. And then I found out that she had enrolled for the course herself. She simply saw me as a rival and eliminated me.").

Nearing her conclusion, the researcher leaves examples aside and pinpoints the core of counselling as operating and experienced in everyday life.

Elżbieta Siarkiewicz Analysing counselling practices which unfold in the space of the everyday, we could perceive a few features they have in common, such as:
– considerable unpredictability of adopted or attributed roles or roles that people are (incidentally or intentionally) confronted with (i.e. the roles of a counsellor and an advice-seeker);
– various degrees of commitment to counselling on the part of both those who assume the counsellor role and those who find themselves in the advice-seeker position;
– embeddedness in everyday conversations, which in time can add up to a certain store of experience or even turn into ritual experiences, confirming thereby the reproducibility of some practices (the reproducibility that ethnomethodologists seek to capture).

In the light of analyses of the everyday, the examples which Prof. Guichard enumerates continue a puzzle: to decree that they are indeed instances of counselling is equally difficult as to rule that beyond reasonable doubt they are not. We do not know, namely, whether or not the situations Prof. Guichard mentions are construed by their participants as "counselling" situations. We do not know how they are defined by those who initiate them and those who control their course and development. **The subjective construal and appraisal** of events mentioned above by Daria Zielińska-Pękał will have a final say here.

Translation: Disturbances, Outcomes and Side-Effects

Trying to answer what counselling is, we must address the purposes and effects of counselling action. Like in other processes in which people are "formed and modelled," i.e. made to change, also in counselling it may be rather difficult to characterise unambiguously the outcomes achieved. However, if we assume that people seek help through counselling because they feel helpless, we could infer that successful counselling entails an increase in the advice-seeker's coping skills. That is why the definitions of resourcefulness and coping seem vital to counsellogy. Their significance increases further if resourcefulness and coping are regarded as amendable by counselling, i.e. if we agree that in a relation with a counsellor a non-resourceful person obtains opportunities to activate, acquire or enhance resourcefulness and coping skills.

Yet we must avoid all too easy conclusions, tempting though they might be. The role and impact of counselling are an extremely complex matter, and there is hardly any consensus as to whether using counselling is evidence of a counselee's resourcefulness or perhaps of his/her helplessness. A common expectation, held also by both a counselee and his/her environment, is that people should solve their problems on their own. This being so, consulting a counsellor can be construed as a proof of inadequate resourcefulness. Using such help tends to be endorsed only in the communities and groups which appreciate reflectivity and collective responsibility for oneself and others as well as ascribe a mediating role to counselling (cf. Bilon, Kargul, 2012). That is why the various definitions of "coping" and "resourcefulness" are so relevant in appraising the social role of counselling and in identifying its specific character. This is best illustrated in a definition which Joanna Kłodkowska formulated on the basis of her analyses as an end to crown her work:

Joanna Kłodkowska. I define coping as a social practice in which individuals and collectives overcome the perceived threat of losing (material and non-material) resources. Resourceful individuals have mental dispositions for coping with new, difficult and uncertain situations. Practically, coping indicates resourcefulness and is parallel with and tantamount to an individual's becoming a subject who – engaged in social interactions

– discovers and enhances his/her personal potential and power to self-transform and reflectively construct his/her biography.

On the one hand, the discussion on resourcefulness and coping, which is part of more general reflection on the essence of counselling, implies that they are attributable, partly at least, to the counselling impact. On the other hand, this proves a controversial point. Some researchers, who assess recourse to the counselling help less optimistically, argue that both the direct and mediated guidance reception may foster resourcefulness and coping as well as produce unanticipated, socially unacceptable outcomes. It is so because sequent effect are produced by various "actors endowed with a capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, redeploy it, and also to betray it" (Latour, 1993, p. 81), who become counsellors but often fail to support the helpless constructively. This is observed also by Daria Zielińska-Pękał, who studies TV-mediated counselling:

Daria Zielińska-Pękał. Some situations observable in mediated counselling may prove illuminating when we try to define the object of counselling. I mean, specifically, the **generating** (producing, causing) of problems for people or as well as the creation of the **SEP zones**[10] (erasing, invalidating). In *Media w poradoznawczym dyskursie* (*Counsellogical discourse and the media*), A. Kargulowa highlights the fabrication of problems: "Today, the counsellogical discourse addresses not only the deployment of the media, e.g. TV, in the provision of guidance, consultation, information or advice or in advising how to come to terms with problems and continue in spite of them. In fact, an urgent issue to consider now is television's complicity in **the generating of human problems**" (Kargulowa, 2005). Counselling is popularly associated with support, development, help in problem-solving, etc. Certainly, it is hardly ever thought of as multiplying problems and difficulties. However, a propensity to generate problems is clearly discernible in mediated counselling. All the media, and TV in particular, tend to dazzle the audience with unreal or larger-than-life images and to create a fictitious, feigned reality of shows and advertising. "Showing an invented reality, television causes people to experience problems which they have not had so far, which have been distant and alien to them, which they have never been aware of" (Kargulowa, ibid.). I find this tendency to generate problems an intriguing issue which can shed light on the counselling practice and compel us to revise our ideas about the object of mediated counselling. In the dissertation I am currently working on, I analyse the generating of problems in the framework of Herbert Marcus's (i.e. the Frankfurt school's) concept of false needs (cf. *One-Dimensional Man*).

Creation of the SEP zones (erasing, invalidating) is the opposite tendency. In mediated counselling, we can distinguish a few dimensions of this process:

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[10] SEP is an acronym for *Somebody Else's Problem. It is an unrecognised, unarticulated, unspoken-of issue that our language lacks categories to express.* In his novel *Life, the Universe and Everything*, Douglas Adams provides the following definition: An SEP **is something we can't see, or don't see, or our brain does not let us see, because we think it's somebody else's problem"** (cf. M. Czyżewski, K. Dunin, A.Piotrowski, 1991, pp. 5-22).

–   erasing the problem (*I watch The Supernanny, because I like the show, but personally, I have no problems with raising kids. It's not my problem*),
–   invalidating the counselling potential of the show (*But Kuba Wojewódzki is no counsellor! And what is it exactly that fortune-teller Maciej could possibly advise me? Supernanny? Neither super nor nanny!*[11]).

I know I've merely touched the surface of the issue, but my project on the generating of problems and the creation of the SEP zones is still work in progress. Prof. Guichard's letter made me think of these processes, and so I decided to signal them here. I am still only organising my ideas, but I think that the generating of problems may contribute to detecting the object of counselling where actually there is none. In turn, the creation of the SEP zones erases or covers up the problems which could be legitimately analysed, but they are not because they seem "low in the counselling potential" (e.g. inconsequential chat of virtual communities [Zielińska-Pękał, 2011]) or go beyond the realm of mediated counselling (e.g. conversations at a hairdresser's). The generating of problems and the creation of the SEP zones are actually tightly interwoven rather than contradictory phenomena.

Such "betrayal" of the counselling tenets attributable to television, which John Ellis views as a mediator in society,[12] is not the only infidelity in the virtual discourse. Nor is the virtual discourse the only site where departures from the counselling ideals take place. They are actually not infrequently committed when counsellors' assess their own role performance and, in particular, when they evaluate their attitude to the counselees. This problem is more and more often tackled in deliberations about the object of counsellogical research. Alicja Czerkawska finds it pertinent, as well:

Alicja Czerkawska. I've considered Prof. Guichard's questions only in the context of professional counselling, which undoubtedly is only a part of counselling as such. Noticeably, both professionals and non-professionals sometimes fail to help competently, effectively or successfully. Both may lack knowledge, skills and/or intuition, and both have difficulty managing when faced with highly complicated situations. This being so, I still think that in spite of their essentially good intentions, non-professionals are more likely than specialists to make gross mistakes when building a relation (the relations

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[11] TV viewers' utterances are quoted in italics.

[12] According to J. Ellis, „television (…) lies alongside the public institutions of school, police and hospital which have a difficult role of mediation thrust upon them (…) It promotes the consumerism of choice through its display of options and styles, playing the key role in developing the processes of differentiation (…) television also worries constantly about its customers and their satisfactions (…) Yet television does more than this. It also provides the experience of witness, giving modern citizens a sense of complicity with all kinds of events in their contemporary world" (Ellis, 2000, p. 72; cf. Godzic, 2013, p. 173).

tend to be encumbered with shared experiences, which does not always help), diagnosing problems and providing support. Their most frequent errors include:

– comparing the advice-seeker's problems with other people's problems (usually more taxing or even dramatic ones),
– diverting attention from sore points and experiences related to the suffering people go through,
– giving advice instead of providing guidance,
– helping out instead of stimulating people to act on their own,
– repressing emotional states (calming down, hushing,) instead of helping to release them.

Additionally, there is a group of non-professional counsellors who only feign helping activities.

The ideas and opinions presented here are, on the one hand, a synthesis of Polish counsellogical thought to date and, on the other, a starting point for further inter-disciplinary debate. Definitely, they are not the last word in it, and far from offering an exhaustive picture of the discipline, they can by no means dispel all doubts about the attempts to "purify" the object of counsellogical research. They can only confirm that in case of counselling, the purification processes are also very particular mediation processes, which reveal its considerable hybridity. Prof. Guichard's questions suggest, by the way, that he also realises how multifaceted counselling in fact is. This does not mean that we stand no chance to capture the essence of counselling. On the contrary, drawing also on other research paradigms, we must continue studying, investigating and analysing in order to define more accurately what counselling is. Currently, it is construed in entirely individual ways.

(Translated from Polsih by Patrycja Poniatowska)

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