

# “Let’s talk about CLASS”



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Anything that we as counsellors allow to remain unexamined (like our sexism, our racism, etc.) is much more likely to influence our relationship with our client than something we become, and remain, aware of. (Kearney, 1996, p.21)

'I feel pissed off class is not talked about in counselling circles. It feels like hard work getting it up and moving each time needs cranking up.'  
'And yet I feel I've found out so much more about people since we've started focussing on class'. (Ballinger & Wright, 2007, p.159)

From a young-ish, white counsellor, identifies as having a working class background

“I grew up believing middle-class people were entitled to manage and support me so I sometimes give my power away to them.....I think there are lots of messages in society that lead us to believe that middle-class (especially white middle-class) people are more capable than working class people. I have to remind myself that this is not true and be careful not to have lower expectations of my working-class clients or collude with the stereotyping that goes on around us.” (Simone Daniels, *Therapy Today*, 2013, p.16)

A middle class counsellor reflects back the words of a working class client, but adds the phrase 'in the car'. The client does not have a car, is overcome with shame and confusion, but feels unable to challenge or correct the counsellor. The counsellor has 'missed' the client by making an assumption based on their own frame of reference rather than the client's, and the therapeutic relationship is 'ruptured'.  
(Balmforth, 2009, p.383)

# 'Intersectionality'

“Class also intersects with other aspects of a person’s ‘identity’ in terms of gender, race, sexuality and other constructs. .... the notion of intersectionality has been asserted as a both/and position so that race, gender, class and other dimensions of difference come into focus (Chantler, 2005). Skeggs’ (2004) sociological arguments that class division and power imbalance based on class are no longer simple economic or even culturally based phenomena draw on a wealth of empirical research. A ‘self’, in her terms, is always a ‘classed formation’.”

“We need to address our own issues, such as shame, which can get in the way of us being fully present with our clients when discussing issues around poverty and inequality.”  
(Daniels, Therapy Today, 2013, p.16)

# Workshop Questions

- What drew you to this workshop?
- Why do you think we're so uncomfortable talking about class?
- When you think of class, what do you think of?
- When did you first become aware of class as a "thing"?
- 'Does class count?' (Ballinger and Wright, 2007)
- Is seeking counselling a class issue?
- Is access to counselling a class issue?
- What are the indicators of Class?
- Do you think there's any correlation between class and theoretical orientation? (Ballinger and Wright, 2007)
- When you think about COUNSELLING and class, what do you think of?
- How do we feel about our own class identity?
- What assumptions do we make about people from different social class backgrounds?
- What are the presenting issues that may be particularly likely to throw up issues of class, to highlight class differences between us and our client?
- How do we/should we bring issues of class into our work with clients?
- How do we FEEL when there's a class difference between us and our client – in either direction.
- How can we manage feelings of shame that can be experienced at both ends of the class spectrum?
- **IS** there anything we, as counsellors, can do about issues of class?
- Can we develop any '**good practice**' points for working across-class?

## References

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