Introduction to Special Issue on International Perspectives on Counseling Psychology

Frederick T.L. Leong*

Michigan State University, USA

Mark L. Savickas*

Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine, Rootstown, USA

Lors du Congrès International de Psychologie Appliquée de 2002 à Singapour, le Conseil d’Administration a entériné la proposition de création d’une Division de Psychologie du Counseling. Pour promouvoir son émergence au sein de l’Association Internationale de Psychologie Appliquée et pour encourager son développement, ce numéro spécial analyse l’état actuel de la psychologie du counseling ainsi que ses évolutions à venir dans quatorze pays différents. Ces analyses examinent les forces, faiblesses, opportunités et menaces de la psychologie du counseling. A partir de la matrice SWOT, dont la méthodologie est exposée dans un article introductif, chaque auteur présente les objectifs et stratégies de la psychologie du counseling dans son propre pays pour la prochaine décennie. La conclusion de ce numéro spécial reprend en les commentant l’ensemble des conseils et suggestions afin de construire la psychologie du counseling dans le futur.

At the 2002 International Congress of Applied Psychology in Singapore, the Board of Directors voted in support of the proposal to establish a Division of Counseling Psychology. To promulgate the formation of the Division of Counseling Psychology in the International Association of Applied Psychology as well as to foster its development, this special issue presents analyses of the current status and future directions for counseling psychology in 12 different countries. These analyses examine counseling psychology’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Based on these SWOT analyses, which used the methodology explained in this introductory article, each author presents objectives and strategies for advancing counseling psychology in their own countries during the next decade. The special issue concludes with a commentary that reviews and integrates the authors’ recommendations and suggestions for constructing the future of counseling psychology.

* Address for correspondence: Frederick T.L. Leong, Department of Psychology, Psychology Building, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1116, USA. Email: fleong@msu.edu or Mark L. Savickas, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine, Rootstown, OH 44272-0095, USA. Email: ms@neoucom.edu

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
INTRODUCTION

With the leadership of Frederick Leong, Mark Savickas, Richard Young, Itamar Gati, Paul Pedersen, and a small group of counseling psychologists, a petition and a proposal for the formation of the Division of Counseling Psychology was presented to the Board of Directors at the 2002 International Congress of Applied Psychology in Singapore. The Board of Directors voted to approve this proposal and the IAAP Counseling Division (Division 16) was formed in 2002. The 2006 International Congress of Applied Psychology in Athens served as the inaugural congress for the new Division and a full and successful program of research and applied presentations were made at that ICAP.

To mark the formation of the Division of Counseling Psychology in the International Association of Applied Psychology as well as to foster its development, we have produced this special issue on International Perspectives on Counseling Psychology that considers how the discipline of counseling psychology might be advanced in the coming years. The authors systematically construct and consider alternative visions for the counseling psychology profession in the next decade. The authors, each leading proponents of counseling psychology in their own countries, were selected from the charter members of the Counseling Psychology Division (16) to constitute a panel of analysts who represent a broad range of experience, expertise, and engagement in counseling psychology. The analysts examined the internal strengths and weaknesses of counseling psychology in 12 countries as well as the external opportunities and threats it faces. These SWOT analyses aim to raise awareness of the challenges faced by counselor psychologists and identify possibilities for advancing the discipline. The analysts were asked to use their conclusions to construct a vision for the future of counseling psychology and a set of objectives and strategies that could move the discipline in that direction. The possible futures that they envision can prompt discussion and debate that serve to guide the profession’s development. Although SWOT analyses are usually conducted by teams or committees, the authors in this issue each worked alone, or with one or two colleagues, in constructing their visions of what counseling psychology might become in their countries during the next decade. Consequently, the issue concludes with two commentaries that review and integrate the objectives and strategies recommended by the authors.

Some readers may be intrigued by the idea of conducting their own SWOT analyses and constructing a strategic plan for counseling psychology in their country and their role in it. Some professors of counseling psychology may want their students to perform the same task. These individuals and classes are invited to engage in the process recommended to the authors in this special issue. To make this possible, the remainder of this introduction...
contains the request made to those authors. The request offers suggestions and prompts for conducting an analysis and constructing a vision for the future of the counseling psychology around the globe.

CONDUCTING A SWOT ANALYSIS FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

The following outline provides a general structure for thinking about the next decade in the profession of counseling psychology, and it should serve as a rough outline for your article. You may not want to include each section or all the information you considered in a particular section. You can, if you wish, identify what you believe have been the greatest accomplishments and disappointments in counseling psychology during the last ten years. The overriding goal, however, is to articulate your vision for the next ten years in counseling psychology IN YOUR COUNTRY. To help you construct that vision in more detail you may want to consider the following topics.

Internal Strengths of Counseling Psychology in Your Country

A strength is a resource, capacity, skill, or advantage. In this context, a strength is a condition internal to our field that is under our control and can be influenced by us. The following prompts might help you identify strengths.

- Who are we?
- Who do we serve?
- Why do you do what you do?
- What do we do well?
- What are our core competencies?
- How strong is our market?
- Do we have a clear strategic direction?
- What is our culture?
- What are our resources?
- How do we distinguish ourselves from competitors?

Internal Weaknesses of Counseling Psychology in Your Country

A weakness is a limitation, fault, defect, or deficiency in resources, skills, and capabilities that seriously impedes the profession. Weaknesses are under our control and can be influenced by us. The following prompts might help you identify weaknesses.

- What can be improved?
- What is done poorly?
What should be avoided?
What embarrasses you about our profession?
What do you want to change?
What do you want to do better?
What have clients or institutions asked you to do that you cannot?

External Opportunities for Counseling Psychology in Your Country

An opportunity is a favorable situation that has the potential to meet a need consistent with your mission. Opportunities may help us reach our goals. Opportunities are not under our direct control. The following prompts may help you identify opportunities.

- What are interesting trends?
- What good chances are we facing?
- Do changes in technology and markets present any new opportunities?
- Do changes in government policy related to our field present any new opportunities?
- Do changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyles present any new opportunities?
- If you take the next step in counseling psychology, what would that be?
- What ideas have been offered to you?
- What opportunities have been presented?
- Are there new markets?
- What changes do you expect to see in demand over the next ten years?

External Threats to Counseling Psychology in Your Country

A threat is an unfavorable situation which may block goal attainment. We must respond to threats in order to grow. It is best to anticipate threats and to respond proactively.

- Who is doing the same thing?
- Are they doing it better?
- What is threatening your client base?
- What do practitioners want?

Analysis of Strategic Issues Facing Counseling Psychology in Your Country

Now it is time to build a list of strategic alternatives. To do so, analyse your SWOT list by thinking about:

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
What should we grow (concentrate on)?
Which strength do we build on?
What should we shrink (restructure)?
Which new things should we attend to (merge, collaborate, acquire)?
Which weaknesses should we correct?
Which threats do we counter?

The following questions may be useful in helping you to develop issue statements that represent the interaction between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Be specific about and give examples of issues, concerns, and ideas.

- How can strengths be used to take advantage of opportunities? (S-O strategies)
- How can we use strengths to counteract threats? (S-T strategies)
- How can we overcome weaknesses or counteract threats? (W-T analysis)
- How can we overcome weaknesses to take advantage of opportunities? (W-O strategy)
- How can this be considered an opportunity as well as a threat?
- How may this apparent strength turn out to be a weakness?
- How does this weakness really represent a strength?

A Vision or Strategic Plan for Counseling Psychology in Your Country

After completing your issue statements, state your vision for counseling psychology in the next decade, maybe in the form of a strategic plan that includes a mission, objectives, and strategies.

If you write a mission statement, please indicate why counseling psychology exists, maybe describing its chief products or services, customers served, and value added. You may want to discuss goals and objectives which specify the kind of results counseling psychology should seek to achieve. If you do the why (mission) and the what (objectives), you might want to add the how, meaning strategies for achieving the objectives.

This Special Issue: International Perspectives on Counseling Psychology

Based on these instructions as outlined above, we identified and invited some of the leading scholars, trainers, and researchers from around the world to provide a glimpse into the nature and functioning of Counseling Psychology from 12 countries. As expected, we discovered not only commonalities but also culture-specific and unique features of Counseling Psychology in this sampling of countries. We invite you review these articles for their
country-specific SWOT analyses and also to ponder the commentary by Professor Mark Savickas, President-Elect of the IAAP Counseling Division. It is our hope that this special issue will introduce the field of Counseling Psychology to our colleagues in the other fields of applied psychology. Additionally, as the special issue to mark the founding of the Counseling Psychology Division within IAAP, we are also hoping that this will stimulate and encourage more research into the education, training, and practice of Counseling Psychology by counseling colleagues around the world. This special issue will have accomplished one of its major goals if greater numbers of articles related to Counseling Psychology are published in future editions of *Applied Psychology: An International Review*. Finally, we would like to thank Professor Robert Wood, Editor of *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, for his tremendous support and guidance in the publication of this special issue.
The Current State and Future Direction of Counseling Psychology in Australia

Robert G.L. Pryor* and Jim E.H. Bright

Australian Catholic University, Sydney, Australia

Cet article décrit l’état actuel de la psychologie du counseling en Australie en termes de forces, faiblesses, opportunités et menaces. Parmi les forces identifiées, on trouve un champ professionnel très énergique, un large éventail d’activités de plus en plus acceptées de la part du public, des revues à comité de lecture, et une activité de recherche significative s’appuyant sur un engagement manifeste dans une démarche basée sur la preuve et appliquée au counseling. Les faiblesses soulignent l’accès inéquitable en termes de coût et d’éloignement géographique aux services de counseling de larges parties de la population australienne. La technologie fournit une occasion de relever des défis d’accès, de coût et d’implantation. En outre, les rapides changements économiques fournissent des opportunités pour les counselors de travailler activement avec des clients confrontés à des changements rapides et inattendus. Clairement, la psychologie du counseling se différencie comme champ théorique, de recherche et de pratique. Simultanément, elle peut mettre à disposition les compétences des psychologues du counseling lors d’investigations transdisciplinaires et d’applications ce qui constitue l’un des plus grands défis pour les psychologues australiens du counseling. Les développements futurs de la psychologie du counseling en Australie sont dépeints.

This article outlines the current state of counseling psychology in Australia in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths identified include a vibrant field of professional activity, a wide range of activities, increasing levels of public acceptance, successful peer-reviewed journals, and significant research activity that underlies a widespread commitment to an evidence-based approach to counseling. Weaknesses include the inequitable access to counseling services both in terms of cost and the geographic remoteness of parts of the Australian population. Technology provides an opportunity to address access, cost, and delivery challenges. Furthermore, the rapidly changing economic landscape provides opportunities for counselors to work proactively with clients who are confronted by rapid and unplanned change. Clearly differentiating counseling psychology as a field of theory, research, and practice while

* Address for correspondence: Robert G.L. Pryor, School of Education, Australian Catholic University, P.O. Box 24, Five Dock, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia 2046. Email: congruence@wr.com.au

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
at the same time being able to integrate the skills of counseling psychologists within cross-disciplinary investigations and applications constitute the greatest challenges for Australian counseling psychologists. A vision of the future development of counseling psychology in Australia is proffered.

INTRODUCTION

Australia’s land mass is approximately the same size as the United States. However, Australia has less than one-twentieth of the US population. Much of the continent is very sparsely inhabited. Australians like to live in urban centers (92% of population) and most live close to the coast. They enjoy an advanced economy with strong democratic political traditions. While counseling has been available in several forms for about one hundred years, the formal development of counseling psychology has more recent origins within the general aegis of the Australian Psychological Society. Counseling psychologists in Australia typically offer services to individuals, families, and organisations. These services address issues such as adjusting to stress, trauma, depression, and grief; managing problems such as chronic pain, anger, relationship difficulties, sexual difficulties, and poor communication; coping with challenges such as blended families, divorce, career planning, staff development; and fostering personal, interpersonal, and organisational development.

STRENGTHS OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia counseling psychology covers an ever-widening ambit of professional activity. In response to the challenges, opportunities, uncertainties, and stresses of contemporary life in an affluent Western society the demand for counseling services in Australia continues to grow. Traditionally, the work of counseling psychologists emphasised dealing with acute problems arising from some form of crisis or life transition. Typical examples were, and still are, marital breakdown, rehabilitation after injury or disease, anxiety onset, and support after trauma. In such situations the counseling was primarily reactive and palliative in nature. While such services continue to be widely used, more recently counseling psychologists have taken up more developmental roles. Such roles include improving communication within organisations, coaching for success and well-being, promoting lifelong learning, enhancing parenting skills, developing careers, managing change and transitions, enriching relationships, and resolving conflict.

Such developments illustrate that counseling psychologists possess a wide range of skills and that these skills have applications across a diversity of life situations for both individuals and groups. Thus for example, large
organisations employing many staff have for a long time expressed interest and concern about the development of their staff’s careers within the organisation. However, such interest and concern was always viewed as organisationally oriented rather than individually oriented. Most recently there has been an increasing trend within some organisations to provide career development counseling services which focus on the person’s needs and aspirations even when these interventions may result in the individual leaving the organisation to further his or her career. Organisations willing to promote such a possibility are likely to lose in the short term yet gain potential longer-term benefits in continuing staff morale and the future possibility that a former employee may be much more favorably disposed to return subsequently to the organisation.

As noted above, in the last 20 years or so there has been a burgeoning of demand for personal counseling services. The increasing recognition of stress and trauma-related needs for counseling has broadened its public acceptance and funding. The increasing costs of insurance for workers’ compensation, motor vehicle accidents, and public liability have highlighted the value of rehabilitation on the one hand but have also contributed to caps being placed on funding for such interventions on the other. The increasing change and complexity of the current labor market and the recognition by governments of the need to utilise the potential of the available workforce has drawn attention and public funding to the career counseling field. It is also probably true to say that the acceptance of counseling as an intervention in the public mind has also increased over the last decade. It is rare now for media commentators to brand counseling in whatever domain as a waste of time, money, and effort and that individuals should simply “pull themselves together”. In a recent survey, almost half of Australian adults had previously consulted a counselor, over three-quarters would consider it, and almost two-thirds of those who had never consulted a counselor said they would consider going (Sharpley, Bond, & Agnew, 2004). However, the generation over 50 years old, and males in general, are still less likely to use such services and to feel more embarrassed about doing so when they do.

While there are numerous organisations of counselors throughout Australia, the College of Counselling Psychologists, Australian Psychological Society is the most widespread and the most influential. Psychologists working in personal counseling, in particular, have tended to identify more with this college and have sought to organise their following of the mainstream practices of psychological associations such as a code of ethics, annual conferences, ongoing professional development training, and a national professional structure. This has the advantage of avoiding too much specialisation within counseling psychology and of avoiding counseling psychologists divorcing themselves from the rest of practicing psychology in the nation.
However, other professional associations, such as the Australian Association of Careers Counsellors (AACC) and the Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC), have developed to meet the needs of more specialised counselors. These associations typically include a mixture of psychologists and those from other occupations and professions. Rehabilitation counselors have tended to identify and associate more with medical and paramedical professions since there is a general articulation of clients from primary rehabilitation (saving life and attending to acute problems) through secondary rehabilitation (regaining health and physical functioning) to tertiary rehabilitation (vocational and avocational development). Career counselors have identified with either educational professions through career education or organisations through human resource development. The Australian Association of Career Counsellors in particular has been instrumental in raising both the profile of its members’ work and government funds for professional development through the initiation and participation in a variety of government agencies and committees including the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) and the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MYCEETYA) (McMahon & Patton, 2002).

Patton (2005) noted the increasing number of individuals offering counseling services who are employed in the private sector. This development may be a significant strength to the profession in allowing individual counselors to develop new skills and to respond to the changing needs of their clients without the lumbering burden of bureaucracy that can be the bane of those working for larger institutions. Such counselors are also among those catered for professionally by some of the more specific associations such as the AACC and ASORC.

There is a significant range of academic publications and practical resources available to counseling psychologists in Australia. The Australian Council for Educational Research publishes books, refereed journals, and psychological tests by Australian authors in the counseling field. Other international publishers also have offices in Australia and publish work by Australian authors on a regular basis. All major professional associations also produce professional standard academic journals including the *Australian Journal of Psychology*, the *Australian Psychologist*, the *Australian Journal for Career Development*, the *Australian Journal of Rehabilitation Counselling*, and the *Australian Journal of Counselling*. For a review of the work of Australian researchers during the period 1995 to 2000 refer to Prideaux and Creed (2002). Such publications reveal an impressive range of theoretical, empirical, and evaluative thinking and investigations. In addition, a significant number of Australian writers in the counseling psychology field have contributed both books and articles to a large number of international publications. As well, there is an ongoing innovation in practical resources generated by

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
A particular strength of significant numbers who can be said to be working as counseling psychologists is a commitment to an evidence-based approach and the scientist-practitioner model. Benefits of this model include the use of techniques which derive from coherent theoretical frameworks and have an empirical basis to their application as well as utilising theoretical frameworks for a more complete and thorough understanding of the client and the relevant issue. One area where the application of sound evidence-based approaches has served to distinguish between counseling psychologists and other less-qualified colleagues has been critical incident debriefing (Bryant, 2004).

When Australian counseling psychologists were asked what they thought were their greatest assets (Talbot, 2003), they indicated humility, linking understanding and action, contextual awareness, eclecticism and flexibility.

WEAKNESSES OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA

While Australians tend to pride themselves on their egalitarian values, this does not appear to be reflected in the availability of counseling psychology services. Disparities in service availability within and between States in part reflect regional and population differences. Being so heavily urbanised as a nation means that those who do live outside major urban centers tend to reside in sparsely populated places with difficulties of infrastructure provision. As a consequence, the city–country issue is a perpetual one in Australian society. Provision of all forms of counseling services outside large urban areas tends to be patchy in extent and more limited in choice. However, even within urban areas the provision of counseling services is also likely to be determined more by economic considerations than need. Due to the reduction of overall psychological services being provided by governments as a general trend throughout the country, there has been the increasing development of private counseling agencies. One almost inevitable consequence of this “privatisation” of counseling service provision is that market forces are more likely to govern what services are provided and to whom. This has had two implications. First, there has been a trend for more counseling services to be available in those parts of urban centers which have the capacity to pay for such private services. Thus it could be argued that those who already have access to opportunities and resources are also likely to be able to use more counseling services than those who are more disadvantaged and who are likely to be struggling with a wider range of problems that could be ameliorated by counseling interventions but who have much more limited service provision. One notable exception to this is that the New South Wales...
Department of Education provides trained personnel who offer students counseling services for personal, educational, and career development. Within the relatively wealthy private schools sector, provision of trained personnel to provide these services is much more variable.

The second implication of privatisation has been that often counselors have had to “meet the market” in less affluent areas by dropping their rates often below promulgated professional fee standards and sometimes to the equivalent of clerical grades. Thus only 8 per cent of urban dwellers cited cost as a drawback to counseling in a recent survey (Sharpley et al., 2004). However, this has meant that counseling as a professional practice has been made less appealing for new entrants into the field in comparison with other domains of psychology which are more lucratively remunerated. This in turn can serve to undermine the status of counseling psychology on the one hand and constitutes a disincentive for undertaking expensive training in order to enter the field.

While there are signs of change, it is still probably true that the focus of most counseling provision by psychologists in Australia tends to be on crisis response and acute problems rather than developmental issues. The public expectation remains that counselors “get called in” to help solve a problem or assist people who have experienced some crisis or trauma. However, counseling psychologists in particular appear to be viewed as having a specific personal domain of relevance. Thus, Sharpley et al. (2004) reported that the public was most likely to see a psychologist for anxiety, phobias, eating disorders, and sexual dysfunction, and less likely to see them for grief and loss, marriage problems, drug and alcohol problems, financial difficulties, sexual abuse, and domestic violence, preferring non-psychologist counselors, social workers, and occasionally psychiatrists for these issues.

The majority of employee assistance programs, for example, are likely to be based on a crisis response model rather than focused on broader personal and career development issues. As a general rule, Australians are much more likely to attend or be required to attend counseling sessions for a crisis such as an acrimonious marital breakdown than they are to seek out counseling assistance to enrich and develop an ongoing relationship that had no immediate difficulties. Obviously with counseling services such as rehabilitation or outplacement which are usually the consequences of unplanned events, then crisis intervention counseling is more the model in the public mind rather than attempting to assist people to become better at opportunity utilisation. Career and life coaching is the exception to this, yet it has the weakness of being focused on those with the funds to pay. Thus such services are more likely to be used by those in professional and managerial occupations, thereby reinforcing the disparity in the availability and affordability of some counseling services in Australia.
In Australia, counseling psychologists are not particularly good at applying their skills beyond their specific area of expertise although it was noted earlier that their training and experience often enable them to do so. There is a tendency, especially in urban centers, for psychologists to specialise in a particular type of counseling. This can sometimes be reinforced by the nine different specialist colleges within the APS and their associated specialist postgraduate training requirements, with those providing counseling being scattered across the Colleges of Counselling, Organisational, Health, Clinical, Sports, and Educational psychology. Thus most counseling psychologists focusing on personal adjustment issues are likely to avoid seeing the application of such skills to staff organisational change adjustment problems, educational issues, or challenges faced by elite performers. Williams (2003) lamented the tendency to overspecialise in counseling psychology in Australia. Moreover, there does not appear to be much communication across professional associations with members who are counseling psychologists. Thus while the AACC appears to have made a major impact on government policy and resources, other professional associations such as those representing rehabilitation counselors continue to have their skills questioned and their specific expert activities usurped by other paramedical occupations. For example, the skills of case management which are specifically taught as part of rehabilitation counseling training in Australia are often assumed by other professional groups in the context of working with those with disabilities although they have not received specific training in case management and service coordination work.

Sharpley (1986) reported that the difficulty the Australian public had in accurately identifying the proper training for counselors was due in part to the “large numbers of paraprofessionals who describe themselves as counsellors” (p. 61). Patton (2005) believes that an increasing number of individuals from a wide range of differing backgrounds have entered the field of career development counseling in recent years. She sees this as a potential threat to the credibility of the career counseling profession in Australia since many of these individuals may lack specific training in the career development field. This in turn highlights the comparative lack of training opportunities for career development practitioners in Australia (McCowan & McKenzie, 1997; Patton, 2002). Furthermore for more general counseling psychology there exist only five universities offering accredited courses that provide the basis for membership of the APS College of Counselling Psychologists. This dearth of training opportunities is apparently reflected in the lowest participation rate by students in this College compared to the others. The 2005 figures show that only 3.2 per cent of its membership are student subscribers compared to the 9.94 per cent average across the other colleges. There is also a concern that in the case of some counseling specialties such as rehabilitation counseling, there is a lack of student
awareness of the field and so those most likely to enter the field are those who were not able to gain entry into higher profile areas of the medical field or psychology in particular. Thus for many of these training candidates rehabilitation counseling is their choice of compromise rather than preference.

The use of the term “counseling” in relation to psychological services in Australia is problematic because it is used to describe a process as well as apparently delineating a distinct sub-discipline within psychology. If the word is used to describe a process, then part of the work of many psychologists from areas as diverse as the Clinical, Organisational, Health, Sports, and Educational Colleges of the APS can be classified under the rubric of counseling. In terms of counseling psychology forming a distinct sub-discipline of psychology in Australia, it is difficult to determine in what ways it is distinct from (say) clinical psychology on the one hand and organisational psychology on the other. Without a coherent identity and a reasonably distinct evidence base, some universities have been reluctant to offer specialist qualifications in this area, preferring the more popular and theoretically distinct clinical and organisational areas.

A perpetual problem for many counseling psychologists is the ongoing pressure by administrators to do more with less. A regular complaint of counseling psychologists is that the constraints of time, money, administrative procedures, case loads, and support personnel restrict what they are able to do with their clients. A consequence has been the increased use of more succinct and short-term techniques to accelerate aspects of the counseling process such as information gathering and solution option generation. The tension between counselors and administrators is most evident in counselors’ increasing reluctance to simply solve client problems for them. Increasingly, counselors are aware of the dangers of dogmatism and certitude (Talbot, 2003), and yet administrators are frequently under funding pressure to “process” people through counseling and to find quick-fix and short-term solutions which emphasise the reactive tradition rather than developmental aspirations of counseling psychology in Australia.

 McMahon and Patton (2000) note the ongoing influence and impact of constructivism particularly in the career counseling field. Australian counseling journals in general and especially the Australian Journal of Career Development have a considerable number of program evaluations, reports of procedures, and theoretical observations based on constructivism. Counseling conference programs over the last decade or so have had many presentations on the topic and its techniques. However, to date we could find no critical evaluations of the theory. This uncritical acceptance of such an approach can, we suspect, be accompanied by an implicit abandonment of more traditional psychometric and objective approaches to general counseling and career development counseling.

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian labor market has become increasingly fluid, particularly in the professions and service industries (McMahon & Patton, 2002). Technology continues to have a major impact and has had the effect of freeing many workers from being tied to a particular worksite. Many information processing and finance tasks can be carried out almost totally online. Australians as a general rule tend to be “early adopters” of new technology. A famous phrase in the Australian vernacular is “the tyranny of distance” due to the vastness of the continent and the sparseness of the population spread. Technology is likely to increasingly reduce the impact of distance at least in the sense of information and communication flows. As a consequence of the widespread availability of such technology, the provision of information to clients is no longer a major role for counselors. They may, however, still provide strategies for information gathering and information evaluation.

Improvements in technology are also likely to result in altered ways in which counseling will be delivered. Web-based, video-linked counseling and assessment is likely to increase and become a fairly standard form of service delivery as a way to overcome the problems of distance and the costs of transport.

E-mail enables counselors to keep in very regular contact with their clients and even to send material which may be helpful to clients almost immediately. This highlights the potential for regular contact between counselors and clients to assist in ongoing challenges and life transitions rather than just one-off problem solving. This ongoing relationship with counselors we see as a direct analogy with financial planners. One may see a financial planner to solve a specific problem and if a positive rapport and confidence can be developed then the relationship might continue literally for years to come either at specific decision points or just as a general development review from time to time. This also appears to be more apposite to notions of career as lifelong learning and counselors as facilitators and co-constructors of clients’ ongoing careers and lives (McMahon & Patton, 2002).

Australian governments of all complexions have tended to adopt various privatisation or corporatisation policies in the last two decades resulting in a shift of employment from government-owned and/or controlled enterprises to private companies to which government contracts are outsourced. This has led to a burgeoning of small businesses which now comprise the vast majority of employing organisations in Australia today. This raises some exciting possibilities for counselors who wish to encourage clients to create new work structures for themselves and others through small business frameworks. It allows the development of niche companies supplying specialised goods and services which in turn may be the passion of particular individuals.
The great counseling challenge for the next ten years is for counselors to be able to assist Australians to embrace and enjoy change as much as they continue to embrace stability and predictability. For many, change remains a threat to their perceptions of the world. Avoidance, denial, and blind optimism (“she’ll be right, mate”) are responses which increasingly will not be enough in the face of multidimensional change. In addition, the complexity of such change can be bewildering for clients. Counselors are frequently called upon to be agents of change but they will also need to be those who teach, support, and encourage through the processes of change and assist clients to develop positive psychological characteristics to be able to adapt to change and complexity effectively. Recent work on “luck readiness” assessment, complexity perception, and strategic learning development (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Pryor & Bright, 2005) represent some steps in this direction.

In terms of rehabilitation counseling, the possibility of linking service provision to legislative changes may be an important way to protect the integrity of counselors’ work and to raise the profile of this section of counseling psychology in Australia.

THREATS TO COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia those appropriating or likely to appropriate the roles and activities of counseling psychologists are those without extensive training and experience who use the term counseling to describe what service they think they can sell. There are no legislative strictures on the use of the term “counselor” in Australia in a way analogous to the legal requirement for the use of “psychologist” which is rigorously enforced. This can result in individuals without appropriate qualifications or professional experience being able to pass themselves off as “counselors” with impunity.

This point is especially germane since such service providers are often better at sales than they are at counseling, while counselors as a general rule are not particularly good at marketing themselves and their profession. Informing the public about professional standards, ethics, and appropriate qualifications of those who offer psychological counseling has been a major activity of the Australian Psychological Society. However, for other professional groups such as the Australian Association of Career Counsellors and the Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors, such activities constitute major ongoing challenges for the future.

The cost of services is likely to be an ongoing threat to the advancement of counseling psychology in Australia. Less-qualified service providers in the personal adjustment, career choice, and rehabilitation fields are likely to offer lower quality, less intensive, and often more superficial counseling services and to make extravagant promises of efficacy that ultimately may have the effect of besmirching the overall reputation of counseling services in the public mind.
While technology holds out promise for more effective use of resources and reducing the disadvantages of remoteness for service provision, there is a danger of overdependence on the Internet as a substitute rather than an adjunct to counseling. The increasing use of counseling and career coaching by e-mail, “blind” psychological testing, and formularised interviewing schedules may increase efficiency yet there is the ongoing danger that some issues and problems require more than advice and information. The danger is that efficiency will replace humanity in counseling service provision. In career development terms, for example, it is easy to oversimplify career choice to a matching of personal and occupation characteristics and generate options that “fit the person”. Computer technology is very efficient at matching; it is the basis of its own operating strategy. However, this static version of decision making neglects the creative, the dynamic, the proactive, and the adaptive dimensions of career development and life transition.

If the profession is not able to attract very promising student candidates into training for counseling psychology in Australia, then it is possible that many counseling functions will be taken over by other professionals. This is particularly the case for rehabilitation counselors with the development of “rehabilitation consultants” whose duties include managing and integrating service provision for those with disabilities to maximise the restoration of functional capabilities and vocational potential. Such consultants often do not have counseling backgrounds but arrogate to themselves ongoing client contact involving client support, issue delineation, client debriefing, self-efficacy building, and so on.

VISION

Counseling psychology in Australia is enjoying significant growth in both demand and general acceptance. The counseling psychology of the future envisaged will have a clarity of purpose and will draw coherently from the evidence bases already established in allied sub-disciplines of psychology. Training and practice will then reflect a commitment to an evidence-based scientist-practitioner model. Students will be able to draw upon the increasing number of well-controlled outcome studies (that we hope will be conducted) that demonstrate the benefits of counseling interventions. They will also recognise and utilise techniques and tools derived from both positivist and constructivist approaches in a synergistic manner.

With increasing demand, and increased rigor in the entry standards for counseling psychologists, there will be increased training opportunities for counseling psychologists at universities. Progressive universities will look to draw upon existing strengths in clinical and organisational psychology to construct programs of study that might broadly equip students to work with acute problems (clinical) or proactive and ongoing cases (organisational,
vocational). Overall, we see that there will be more recognition of working with the person as a whole, necessitating less specialisation yet at the same time more depth of expertise supported by a sound evidence base.

Improvements in technology, an increasing evidence base, high quality outcome studies and cost–benefit analyses derived from these will be influential in persuading governments, employers, and private insurance companies to fund proactive counseling interventions in a range of areas including marriage preparation/relationship counseling, anger management, school bullying programs, multicultural counseling, career development, change management (societal and organisational), grief counseling, and emergency/trauma counseling to name but a few. Through such initiatives and technology, we envisage that there will be ready access to counseling by the disadvantaged and remote dwellers as well as those in the relatively wealthy urban regions.

If economic commentators and futurists are correct, then such counseling will take place against a backdrop of huge economic change in Australia driven by the predicted exponential rise in Asian economies. Consequently, we see that from necessity as well as theoretical and practice advances, there will be an increasing emphasis on dealing with change in a positive manner and that opportunity awareness will form a central part of that process. The developmental counseling need for cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity will also become more prominent.

In the future we see counseling psychologists working closely with allied professions in non-traditional areas. The continuing growth in behavioral finance as a discipline, which has been apparently driven mostly by economists and financial advisors to date, will have become a mainstream area of practice for counseling psychologists. Thus counseling psychology in the future needs to walk a tightrope, balancing the need to promulgate a clear professional delineation to make its work distinctly recognisable, at the same time applying and integrating its skills into areas outside of its professional ambit. This represents a major challenge that is not going to be easily met.

Finally, we believe that it is inevitable with the proliferation of non-qualified counselors in many different areas that there will be a move to rationalise the advising or counseling business, with the implementation of generic, but uniform minimum training standards at the graduate level that are legally enforceable. Such a move would benefit counseling psychologists who are already trained to a level in excess of any likely minimum standard, and therefore would benefit from the improved standards and reputation that should flow from such a move as well as benefit from being seen as some of the better qualified practitioners.

In summary, there are many reasons to be optimistic about the future of counseling psychology in Australia. There are both threats and opportunities over the next decade that will require Australian counseling psychologists
to navigate the complexities of change in creative ways not dissimilar to those of their clients.

REFERENCES


Counselling Psychology in Canada: Advancing Psychology for All

Richard A. Young*

University of British Columbia, Canada

Jennifer J. Nicol

University of Saskatchewan, Canada

Counselling psychology in Canada was examined using a SWOT analysis. Four strengths were identified: identity, paradigm, skill set, and education and training. Tensions within the first three of these strengths were also considered weaknesses. External opportunities for counselling psychology included changes in society, social diversity, and health. Among the threats to counselling psychology in Canada are the university context for training programmes, competition with other professional groups, and pressure from external influences on how to define counselling psychology practice. The vision for the future of counselling psychology in Canada is based on the principle of making psychology available to a wide range of the Canadian population through

* Address for correspondence: Richard A. Young, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education, University of British Columbia, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4, Canada. Email: richard.young@ubc.ca

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Charles Bujold with sections of this article.

1 The subtitle, ‘Advancing Psychology for All’, is the motto of the Canadian Psychological Association.
a variety of means. The International Association of Applied Psychology can work to enhance this area of professional psychology and can look to Canada for support and models in developing this field in other countries.

INTRODUCTION

Counselling psychology is a vital and unique domain of professional psychological practice in Canada. Its history from the 1950s, its anticipated future, and Canada’s particular socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts have created an approach to counselling psychology that both captures a Canadian distinctiveness and reflects the broader North American context of professional and academic psychology. It embodies the motto of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), *Advancing Psychology for All*: actively bringing psychology to the people of Canada by generating new knowledge and engaging in professional practice with an attention to inclusivity and diversity, holistic frameworks, and an appreciation of the challenges and actions of everyday life navigated across the lifespan.

Counselling psychology in Canada is a recognised specialty within the practice of professional psychology. For example, it is described by the College of Psychologists of Ontario (2006), the licensing body for psychologists in Canada’s most populous province, as:

Counselling Psychology is the fostering and improving of normal human functioning by helping people solve problems, make decisions and cope with stresses of everyday life. The work of Counselling Psychology is generally with reasonably well adjusted people. (http://www.cpo.on.ca/Registration/RegAreasOfPractice.htm)

While this description of counselling psychology reflects Canadian counselling psychologists’ perceptions of this field, the history of counselling psychology in Canada has not been limited to its association with psychology, as circumscribed by provincial psychology regulatory boards. Rather, as Hiebert and Uhlemann (1993) recognised and Lalonde (2004) reiterated, counselling psychology in Canada is rooted in two professional affiliations, counselling and psychology. Two factors have contributed to this overlap. First, it is not unlike parallel developments in the United States, and in that sense reflects the close connection between the developments of counselling psychology in these two countries. Second, with a population about one-tenth the size of the US population, the overlap between counselling and psychology as represented in counselling psychology is probably greater in Canada than in the United States. Historically, counselling psychology in Canada grew almost entirely out of the counselling profession.

This historical development presents two challenges in doing this SWOT analysis. First, our analysis of counselling psychology cannot be representative...
of the situation in Canada unless both counselling and psychology are recognised as contributing disciplines. Second, psychology in Canada is embedded historically and practically in the larger North American context. Thus, the state of counselling psychology in Canada cannot be seen as entirely independent of parallel developments in the United States.

As an area of professional practice and a domain of academic study and research, counselling psychology in Canada has both a history and an anticipated future. A SWOT analysis is helpful in unpacking its history and pointing to its future. In doing this analysis we have consulted a small number of salient documents included in the references and reflected on our own experiences as counselling psychologists in Canada. In addition, we have both chaired the Counselling Psychology section of the CPA.

A SWOT ANALYSIS OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY IN CANADA

We have chosen, in the tradition of SWOT analyses, to focus on a small number of the most salient factors in each of the quadrants. We also acknowledge the dynamic tension between strengths and weaknesses, and between opportunities and threats. From a different perspective, strengths in one area may engender corresponding weaknesses in others. Similarly, threats can become opportunities if adequately recognised and addressed.

Internal Strengths

Our review of counselling psychology has revealed four highly salient strengths: a rich identity, a growth-enhancing paradigm that recognises diversity, a strong skill set, and a high level of education and training.

Identity. We already have provided some of the background on the bifurcated identity of counselling psychologists in Canada. Hiebert and Uhlemann (1993) found that counselling psychologists are plagued by the question, “Are we counsellors or psychologists?” (p. 308). Graduate programmes in counselling psychology emerged from graduate programmes in counsellor education. In some cases, what was previously known as counselling has been simply re-identified as counselling psychology. Nonetheless, a distinct identity for counselling psychology is emerging in Canada. The Counselling Psychology section of the CPA has existed since 1986. The CPA accredits PhD programmes in Counselling Psychology. Provincial professional and regulatory bodies recognise counselling psychology as a specific area of psychology and counselling psychologists are regulated in all provinces and territories.

The identity of counselling psychology is enhanced by significant contributions to knowledge by counselling psychology researchers in Canadian
universities, including publications in the pre-eminent academic journals in this field. Two notable examples, among many that could be cited, are Long’s work on stress in the workplace (e.g. Morris & Long, 2002), and Greenberg’s emotionally-focused therapy (Greenberg, 2001).

The professional identity of counselling psychology is further enhanced by the generic and colloquial use of the term “counselling” in everyday life. It is not uncommon, for example, to hear media reports that refer to the need for, or recommendation of, counselling to address social and personal concerns.

Paradigm. Not unrelated to the issue of identity of counselling psychology in Canada are the paradigms or sets of practices that define this discipline. These paradigms are alluded to in the definition of counselling psychology provided by the College of Psychologists of Ontario (2006) when it refers to the domain of counselling psychology practice as “fostering and improving normal human functioning” (http://www.cpo.on.ca/Registration/RegAreasOfPractice.htm).

The focus on normal human functioning connects with several paradigms in psychology. The historical connections of counselling with the vocational guidance movement situated counselling psychology within a trait-factor matching model. Subsequently, a developmental perspective was adopted such that counselling is typically seen as based on developmental psychology, the counsellor helping clients with various transitions in the sequence of developmental stages. But, in more recent years, a number of other paradigms have augmented and extended the developmental approach. Specifically, feminist approaches (e.g. Cummings, 2000; Malone, 2000), cross-cultural perspectives as a third force in counselling and psychology (e.g. Arthur & Collins, 2005), holistic approaches (e.g. France, McCormick, & Rodriguez, 2004), and postmodern perspectives (e.g. Peavy, 1994) have resonated strongly with counselling psychologists. These paradigms serve to differentiate counselling psychology from models and approaches more oriented to psycho-pathology and work with clients suffering from mental illnesses.

These paradigmatic developments reflect, and are reflected by, uniquely Canadian factors. For example, Canada’s multicultural composition makes it one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world. The importance of cultural diversity in counselling psychology is evidenced in recent special issues of the Canadian Journal of Counselling (Arthur & Stewart, 2001; Ishiyama & Arvay, 2003).

Similarly, although Aboriginal peoples represent a small proportion of the Canadian population as a whole, their growth rate is higher than the national average. In provinces where the concerns and needs of Aboriginal peoples outweigh multicultural concerns, such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the paradigms that guide this profession can be responsive to these realities—realities that are embedded in holistic and spiritual understandings. The responsiveness of the counselling profession to Aboriginal peoples is demonstrated in a Canadian Journal of Counselling special issue (McCormick & Ishiyama, 2000).
Skill Set. Reflecting paradigms that are oriented toward fostering development in culturally diverse contexts, the skill set that counsellors bring to their work is a critical internal strength. This skill set is built around a therapeutic approach to human relations and extends to include specific skills that are unique to counselling psychology as well as skills held in common with other disciplines. Frequently counsellors are seen as having greater therapeutic capabilities, that is, interpersonal and process-oriented skills, than professionals in allied disciplines. Another skill domain that distinguishes counselling psychologists is their ability to work in the career and vocational areas. In addition, the impact of feminism and other critical perspectives has led counselling psychologists to an openness to extend their skills beyond what has been considered traditional counselling skills. For example, qualitative research and methods have been a particular strength of counselling psychology programmes in Canada. Rennie, Watson, and Monteiro (2000) found that the lion’s share of 44 Canadian qualitative researchers identified through their analysis of the PSYCINFO database were in counselling psychology programmes. They attributed this finding to the perception that counselling psychology in Canada seems less resistant to radical departures from accustomed research practices than other areas of psychology.

Education and Training. A clear strength of counselling psychology in Canada is the high level of training that is available and sought after. Four universities offer PhD programmes in Counselling Psychology accredited by either or both the CPA or the American Psychological Association (APA). The Canadian Counselling Association’s (CCA) website lists 30 public and two private universities as offering a master’s degree in counselling (CCA, 2006). These are variously identified as “counselling” or “counselling psychology”. The programmes in public universities are characterised by course heavy programmes compared to other academic master’s and PhD programmes, in part emulating the scientist-practitioner model of training characteristic of doctoral programmes. These programmes are typically well recognised within the universities in terms of academic appointments and rewards for academic achievement. The support of academic training programmes is further enhanced by national research funding through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and other federal agencies that support research in this field.

Internal Weaknesses

The internal weaknesses of counselling psychology are best identified as tensions with its identified strengths. Thus, we are able to single out weaknesses in the areas of identity, where questions are raised about where counselling
psychologists fit; practices that reflect a delimitation of the strong skill set; and shifting and contextualised paradigms that may lack foundation.

Identity. The identity of counselling psychology in Canada is weakened by the diffuse professional identity of counselling psychologists who work in different kinds of settings, with varied client groups, using a range of theories and practices. For example, Linden, Moseley, and Erskine (2005) described a high degree of similarity between counselling and clinical psychologists in Canada, particularly those in private practice. This observation implies that perhaps counselling psychology in Canada does not have a unique identity beyond the distinctions ascribed to it within university training programmes. However, although it is important to recognise that there are similarities between clinical and counselling psychologists, these similarities may be driven by the clinical psychology lobby whose numerical and historical influence in provincial regulatory boards and the CPA allows for very little differentiation between these two domains. To maintain its unique identity, counselling psychology will have to continue to focus on its differentiated knowledge and practice.

Although the Counselling Psychology section of the CPA has made gains since its founding in 1986, it does not constitute the primary “professional-identity” body for counselling psychologists in Canada. Its 175 members constitute 5.5 per cent of the total membership of the Canadian Psychological Association, certainly well below the total number of professionals working as counselling psychologists in Canada. The obvious question that arises here is what is the primary professional identity body for counselling psychologists in Canada? For many, it is the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA); for some both the CCA and the CPA, as they represent different identity needs; and probably for a small number, the CPA is their primary professional identity group.

The diffuse identity of counselling psychology in Canada is further compounded by language and other differences between Québec and the other provinces. While Canada is officially a bilingual and multicultural country, the development of counselling psychology in Québec (francophone) has not paralleled developments in anglophone Canada. For example, counselling psychology (psychologie de counseling) is not offered as a programme of studies in any of the four major French-language universities in Québec. However, professional guidance counsellors (Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d’orientation et des psychoéducateurs et psychoéducatrices du Québec) and psychologists (Ordre des psychologues du Québec) were viewed as separate but regulated professions from a time that predated the regulation of counsellors in other North American jurisdictions. Thus, guidance counselling has been a well-defined profession in Québec for a number of years. There are corresponding well-developed university programmes in guidance...
counselling (counseling d’orientation or l’orientation professionelle). Consequently, there does not appear to be the same development in French-speaking Canada to redefine counselling as counselling psychology as there has been in English-speaking Canada.

**Skill Set.** We have already identified the therapeutic approach to human relations as a defining skill set and strength of counselling psychologists in Canada. The corresponding weakness stems from the question of whether this skill set is so generic as to be readily appropriated by other professional and paraprofessional groups. Little clear differentiation between the clinical psychology and the counselling psychology training curricula further obliterates the distinctive skill set of counseling psychologists. Counselling psychology is well advised to tie its generic skill set to specific modalities of interventions and education such as training, supervision, vocational psychology, education, and therapeutic counselling.

**Paradigms.** Counselling psychology in Canada and elsewhere has often looked outward in search of a paradigm or framework to guide its practice. Initially, the psychology of individual differences provided that framework, then developmental and social psychology were identified as core paradigms for counselling psychology. More recently, multiculturalism and social justice have received attention as new frameworks for counselling psychology. The challenge for counselling psychology is to look at itself for its core paradigm, that is, to consider the action between the counsellor and the client as the critical and central factor in counselling psychology and to develop paradigms that reflect that reality (e.g. Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002).

**External Opportunities**

A scan of the external environment suggests many opportunities for counselling psychology in Canada. These opportunities can be grouped as changes in society, diversity, and health.

**Changes in Society.** The rapid rate of change in modern societies is taken for granted at the beginning of the 21st century. One way to represent this change is as a shift from a production-based to a knowledge-based economy. The knowledge-based economy embodies a complex interaction of technological developments, globalisation, political shifts, and other factors. Wealth-creating work has shifted from being physically based to knowledge based. This phenomenon of social change presents a two-pronged opportunity for counselling psychology. First, rapid change itself is a phenomenon that individuals, families, groups, institutions, and society in general both
create and respond to. How they create and respond to change has significant implications for counselling psychology. Second, there are specific changes in such diverse areas as technology, globalisation, the world of work, the knowledge-based economy, family life, gender, and spirituality, which present particular opportunities for counselling psychology. For example, Canadians have also changed their values over the last 20 years to a more postmodern, secular society, including dramatic increases in our valuing of care for others, moral permissiveness, and teaching children independence, and decreases in weekly church attendance (Boucher, 2004).

How individuals and groups respond to change is a growth area for counselling psychology. This discipline has had a history with related concepts such as transition and development, as well as with assisting persons with making the link between their own lives and the social context in which they live, for example, through vocational counselling. In addition to addressing specific changes, which seem legion, counselling psychology has the opportunity to develop models and approaches that address individual and group responses within the context of rapid social change. For example, technology, through on-line, telephone, and distance delivery, can offer increased access to counselling services for people living in remote locations with a lack of local services.

Diversity. Social policies and initiatives in Canada often reflect an effort to have interdependent parts of the society recognised for their diversity and uniqueness. Two examples are the Canadian multicultural policy which has existed since 1971 and the more recent legal recognition of same-sex marriage. Both cases present counselling psychology with opportunities to develop knowledge and interventions that reflect diversity and uniqueness. For example, one option is to assume the individual differences perspective (e.g. Bowman, 2000), in which important value-clusters are recognised, for example, individualism/collectivism, parental authority/independence, and expectations of entitlement/disenfranchisement. These value dimensions “provide a framework for identifying cultural factors affecting individuals seeking clinical help in a multicultural society” (p. 240). Similarly, a model such as the one proposed by Young, Valach, and Collin (2002) has the advantage of recognising that action is situated in a cultural field. The complexity of both counselling and clients’ lives suggests the salience of culture and the need of its significant recognition in counselling.

Health. As Hiebert and Uhlemann (1993) found in their survey of Canadian counselling psychologists, the focus of counselling psychologists’ work is largely on using a remedial model working largely in individual counselling and therapy. Prevention is espoused in counselling psychology but not practised, as Romano and Hage (2000) pointed out for counselling
psychology in the US. However, counselling psychology is well situated to respond to the recent emphasis in Canada on population health. The typical definition of population health, that is, “the capacity of people to adapt to, respond to, or control life’s challenges and changes” (Frankish, Green, Ratner, Olsen, & Larsen, 1996), reflects a perspective shared with counselling psychology. The key to population health is the recognition of health as a resource rather than a state “. . . which corresponds more to the notion of being able to pursue one’s goals, to acquire skills and education, and to grow” (Health Canada, 2006). The overlap with the aims of counselling psychology is significant. Although counselling psychology has traditionally had a role in the factors involved in population health, it has yet to capitalise on what is the broadest policy base for its practice in Canada.

Valach, Young, and Lynam (1996) addressed the challenge of translating policies about “population health” into practice. One shift they proposed is to re-conceptualise health-related processes. Population health is not just about analysing the social conditions of individual health. Rather, “the basic health processes are conceived in a dialogic, interpersonal, joint and supra-individual manner” (p. 2). This conceptualisation, which has research evidence in family health promotion projects (e.g. Young, Lynam, Valach, Novak, Brierton, & Christopher, 2000), is based on the consideration of the dialogic—a key component of the work of counselling psychologists.

External Threats

A number of factors in the external environment can be labeled as “threats” to counselling psychology in Canada. These include the university context for training programmes, competition with other professional groups, and pressure from external influences on how to define counselling psychology practice, which may be exacerbated through movements to interdisciplinary collaboration. But even these threats must be treated as challenges and opportunities for our discipline.

University Context. Paradoxically, the housing of virtually all Canadian counselling psychology training programmes in university faculties of education—which reflects the field’s historic roots in education and its distinguishing characteristics as a professional psychology, that is, developmental and strengths-based—poses an external threat in some cases because of the poorly perceived fit between counselling psychology and education. One focus of education programmes is on undergraduate teacher training for the K-12 school system, whereas counselling psychology programmes are graduate programmes for students who often end up working in community settings with adult populations. In addition to issues of vulnerability because of perceived fit, counselling psychology programmes are often at
odds with increased pressure from university administrators to admit more students, increase class sizes, increase thesis supervision loads, and get students through their studies expeditiously. Counselling psychology students have longer periods of study given the dual focus on both research and practice than many other students.

**Competition with Other Professional Groups.** Counselling psychologists must be able to work effectively with a range of other formal and informal disciplines and practitioners whose knowledge, practices, and client base overlap in various ways with our discipline. It is likely that the number of these associated disciplines and practitioners will proliferate. In addition, some of these disciplines will likely move toward more counselling approaches. For example, there is an historical legacy of social workers and nurses as counsellors in health care settings and, more recently, the appearance of professional coaches who seem to be successfully creating a niche market working with individuals who are highly motivated to identify and achieve personal goals.

**Autonomous Self-Definition.** Counselling psychology is also endangered by allowing our practice to be defined by others, whether these are employers, professional associations, or other stakeholders in the field of psychology. The tension arises between autonomous self-definition and the expectation that counselling psychologists will work in interdisciplinary teams in a wide range of settings. For example, in recent years, the movement in support of evidence-based practices has emerged as a significant force not only in professional psychology but in many professions whose work includes direct interventions with people, including teaching, medicine, nursing, and social work. In professional psychology in Canada, this movement has been supported by clinical psychologists in particular (Dobson & Craig, 1998). However, it has not been without controversy and criticism (e.g. Westen & Bradley, 2005).

Empirically supported treatment is a standard in counselling psychology (e.g. Wampold, Lichtenberg, & Waehler, 2002). In the development of accreditation guidelines and ethical codes, clinical and counselling psychology are often collapsed and empirically supported treatments are endorsed. However, the controversies that continue to surround this movement suggest a cautionary note with regard to counselling psychology for several reasons. First, counselling practice is not limited to focused treatments for specific psychiatric disorders. One needs to ask how far along the continuum between medicine, where the evidence-based practice movement began, and education does counselling lie. Clearly the latter is much less often considered as an intervention or a treatment. Second, there are important components of counselling that are beyond the range of technical competence...
including practical wisdom and the importance of the ability to act spontaneously. Third, epistemological differences between counselling as teleological, goal-directed action, and the findings of research studies using a causal-predictive framework are significant. Finally, as Westen and Bradley (2005) found, the either supported or unsupported dichotomy suggested by treatment studies does not account for nuanced views of treatment efficacy.

A VISION FOR COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY IN CANADA

Our vision for counselling psychology in Canada encompasses the CPA motto, advancing psychology for all, with which we began this article. The range of work in which counselling psychologists are involved, the diversity and inclusivity reflected in their models and approaches, and their focus on the task and challenges of everyday life suggest that counselling psychology is in a particularly good position to realise this vision. For example, the training of generic master's level counsellors embedded in university departments whose faculty identify as counselling psychologists provides one of the unique ways in which counselling psychology serves to unite counselling and psychology and advance psychology broadly within the Canadian society.

This vision of the future of counselling psychology sees it as a health discipline, but not exclusively as a health discipline. Counselling psychologists will continue to work in educational settings, in industry, and in government. They have important roles in the training and supervision of counsellors of all sorts, from rehabilitation counselling to genetic counselling. Counselling psychologists in Canada will be challenged with new developments in the discipline and in society generally, including incorporating spirituality and spiritual practices like mindfulness and meditation and integrating new developments in neuropsychology.

The challenge for counselling psychologists in Canada in the next ten years is to become more fully integrated in the professional and academic psychological community without losing our distinctiveness. This will involve both our more active participation in the CPA, its conferences and particularly its journals, and the CPA’s responsiveness to this need.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

The IAAP has made substantial contribution to counselling psychology worldwide through several sections that predate the establishment of the Counselling Psychology section. Notably, Donald Super, who received the posthumous award from the IAAP for his “recognized international impact in Applied Psychology”, represented the interests of counselling psychology in the Association and its divisions. With the development of counselling
psycology in many nations, the new Counselling Psychology section has substantial potential to contribute to the development of this discipline in Canada and worldwide.

One substantial contribution toward an international perspective for counselling psychology is to ensure that the executive of the section is international in its representation. Counselling psychology will also be enhanced if the editorial board of *Applied Psychology: An International Review* expands to include counselling psychologists and the journal itself addresses topics and encourages research methods reflective of the interests of counselling psychologists. One specific contribution is the publication of articles using qualitative methods, which have received attention and support in counselling psychology (e.g. Haverkamp, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2005).

The IAAP Counselling Psychology section can take up themes that are particularly salient in the international context. These include issues of social justice, globalisation, multicultural counselling, migration, and career in different contexts. The Section can play a role in assisting national psychological organisations to develop accreditation guidelines and procedures. It can also assist in identifying relevant and transparent professional standards in counselling psychology that universities can use in the development and enhancement of their programmes. It can also serve as an international clearinghouse for professional information from national associations and universities.

REFERENCES


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
Counseling Psychology in China

Zhi-Jin Hou*
Beijing Normal University, China

Naijian Zhang*
West Chester University of PA, USA

Introduction

Since the open-door policy initiated by the Chinese government in the late 1970s, Western ideas and institutions have been experimented with and adopted in China (Chang, Tong, Shi, & Zeng, 2005). This open-door policy of the past 28 years has not only strengthened the Chinese people economically, but it has also changed their life dramatically (Shek, 2006). Along with this life change, counseling psychology has seen light for its growth and development in China. In this article we will use the SWOT method (Leong & Savickas, 2006) to analyse the trends and issues of counseling psychology and consider possible future directions in China.

* Address for correspondence: Zhi-Jin Hou, Department of Psychology, Beijing Normal University, China. Email: zhijinhou@163.com or Naijian Zhang, Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology, West Chester University of PA, West Chester, PA 19383, USA. Email: nzhang@wcupa.edu

The authorship of this article is arranged in alphabetical order.

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
In China, the term counseling psychology has not been professionally well defined (Chang et al., 2005). Although counseling psychology has been accepted as a branch of psychology in concept, its identity still appears to be a puzzle for Chinese counseling professionals. It appears that counseling psychology and psychotherapy are usually conceptualised within the rubric of psychological helping. For example, counseling is often referred to as “xinli zixun” or counseling psychology as “zixun xinlixue” and psychotherapy as “xinli zhiliao”. “Xinli” means mental or psychological; “xinlixue” is psychology, while “zixun” means “seeking advice from”, and “zhiliao” means cure. “Zixun” is talking from the counselee’s side, but “zhiliao” originates from a counselor’s direction. However, it is difficult to differentiate these terms because the cross-cultural correspondence of the constructs of counseling psychology and psychotherapy in the Chinese helping profession remain indistinguishable (Chang et al., 2005). Consequently, the boundaries between counseling and psychotherapy are not well structured. People working in this helping profession vary in terms of training, experience, and duties. It is not only within the profession that confusion exists, but the function of counselors and therapists is misunderstood and ill-defined for the public (Qian, 1994). The public usually cannot differentiate a counselor from a therapist. Oftentimes, the Chinese believe if a person goes to a hospital for psychological issues this person must see a therapist (in Chinese, a therapist means a doctor who deals with mental health issues) and if a person goes to a university counseling center for psychological problems, this person is supposed to see a psychologist, the concept of which is usually the substitution of a counselor (Hou & Qian, 2005).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROFESSION: A BRIEF HISTORY

Counselors and psychotherapists in China usually work in four major institutions. Because counseling and psychotherapy in China were deeply rooted in medical science, most people who practice counseling and psychotherapy work in hospitals and they were originally medical doctors (Zhang, Li, & Yuan, 2001). As early as the 1930s, the training course for doctors in the Peking Union Medical College Hospital already included psychoanalysis (Qian, 2002). The first committee on mental health was the Medical Psychology Committee in the Chinese Psychological Society, which was created in 1979. In 1985, the Chinese Association for Mental Health (CAMH) was re-established. These two professional organisations are composed mainly of medical doctors. Moreover, because the Chinese government has required hospitals to provide services for outpatients with mental health issues, counseling and psychotherapy have flourished in the medical field in China. As a result of the Chinese government recognising counseling and psychotherapy within the hospital, the practice of counseling and psychotherapy has gained
in strength. The clients who visit hospitals are usually those who have severe mental problems. They are treated as patients, similar to those who have physical problems; and the therapists are identified as psychological doctors (xinli yisheng). This means that mental health issues are seen as mental diseases. However, this “medical model of counseling” practice has been criticised by some Chinese psychologists. For example, Wang (2005) characterised this type of counseling in hospitals as “language comfort plus anti-psychosis medicine” (p. 115).

The second group in this helping field works in the Chinese educational system. They are divided into two subgroups; one group functions in the higher education system such as colleges and universities, and the other serves in the Chinese school system such as elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Three sources constitute the first subgroup at colleges and universities. They are administrators who perform the role of political instructors to carry out political-and-thought education, graduate students from psychology programs, and medical doctors working in college and university clinics. The first two groups (e.g. administrators and graduate students in the psychology program) composed the major component of the helping profession in the higher education system. While university counseling centers are directed by the department of student affairs, it should be noted that the department of student affairs is affiliated with the political-and-thought education division in the Chinese Ministry of Education. All policies related to student counseling are made by this division. This tie of political education and counseling in China is a “marriage of convenience” (Leung, Guo, & Lam, 2000). Mental health education for students in China is actually a part of political-and-thought education.

At elementary school, middle school, and high school, counseling is usually substituted with “school guidance” which is officially designated for “mental health education” (Jiang, 2005b). This substitution of counseling with school guidance by Chinese officials may reflect different values and beliefs and has been questioned in the helping profession (Jiang, 2005a). Although the voice of criticism about substituting counseling with school guidance arises (e.g. Jiang, 2005b), mental health education has been taught at schools as a course like math and science. This growth of “School Counselors” could serve as a major force to the eventual identification of school counselors as a separate professional discipline.

In addition to those working in hospitals and within the educational system, a third group provides services to commercial companies or works in private practice. Although little information in research and literature can be found about the scope of services provided by this group, they deserve the public acknowledgement of their existence and contribution to the counseling profession and society in general. A certain number of counseling professionals in this group participated in some short-term counseling and psychotherapy
training programs offered by the helping professionals from Western countries (Shi, Sang, Li, Zhou, & Wang, 2005); others may study counseling according to the protocol of professional criteria for counselors issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (Ministry of Labor & Social Security, 2001).

The final group consists of volunteers. Volunteers who have been given some paraprofessional training typically provide counseling and crisis intervention through the telephone or internet (Palmer, 1997; Ribao, 1995). In a country such as China, with a large population and insufficient professionals, the paraprofessional service is of unique value (Hou, 2000).Hotlines have existed for more than ten years. While few in number, they have provided counseling and crisis interventions (Ribao, 1995; Xie & Weistein, 1996), developed a systematic training program, collected data for research, and effectively dialogued with helping professionals in Western countries (Gao, 2001; Palmer, 1997). Some counseling professionals have joined this group and are working as volunteer counselors and supervisors.

Although counseling has been practiced in China for a while, Chinese counseling professionals have neither a culturally integrated counseling theory accepted across the field nor established any formalised standards for practice. The good news is that clearly they believe that scientifically validated counseling and counseling psychology would benefit Chinese people in general and their current efforts would eventually result in the birth of counseling psychology in China.

**INTERNAL STRENGTHS OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN CHINA**

It is clear that the need for counseling services is strong and the potential for counseling to grow as an independent discipline is very high. The evidence above has shown that it seems that more people have engaged in the counseling profession in China now than they did before (Min, 2001, cited by Chang et al., 2005). Counseling psychology has a promising market in China. As China progresses in the process of transforming herself from a poor agricultural country to an industrial power, mental health services as a basic necessity in Chinese culture would be thriving.

The second strength or positive force for counseling psychology in China is the introduction of Western theories of counseling and psychotherapy and training for counseling practice (Qian, 2002). Many counseling and psychotherapy books written by authors from Western countries have been translated into Chinese and adopted by Chinese counseling scholars and practitioners (Hou & Qian, 2005). Quite a number of counseling psychologists and helping professionals have visited China and conducted workshops and provided Chinese counseling trainees with short- and long-term training. These counseling experts have come from the United States, Germany,
Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Argentina, the UK, Switzerland, and many other countries. In the late 1980s, many training activities arrived in mainland China. Among them, the German-Chinese Psychotherapy workshops were the most rigorous ones (Chang et al., 2005). They were organised by the German-Chinese Academy for Psychotherapy. The workshops were conducted during a period of three years from 1997 to 1999, two a year (ten full days each in spring and fall, respectively), a total of six workshops. These workshops were designed based on the European approaches of counseling and psychotherapy training. More than 100 Chinese professionals attended these workshops and most of them were leading professionals in their work (Haaß-Wiseegart, Wan, & Zhao, 1998). The training covered psychoanalytic psychotherapy, family therapy, hypnosis therapy, and behavioral group therapy. Lectures, role plays, case studies, and group discussions were employed in the training process. Approximately 20 German counseling professionals were involved in this training. After completing this counseling and psychotherapy training, those Chinese participants have been actively practicing and making a significant impact in the counseling field. Today, the German-Chinese Psychotherapy Training remains active. Another influential counseling training activity was conducted by Dr Meng-Ping Lam, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, at Beijing Normal University in 1998 (Fan, 1999). This was a one-off two-year training program and the first systematic counseling training for non-degree graduate students. This training focused on counseling, and the courses offered included basic statistics, research methodology, assessment, theories of counseling, introduction to counseling psychology, interviewing and communication skills, practicum, and career counseling theories and practice. Theories of personality, developmental psychology, and educational psychology were also included in the training. After the basic-level training was completed, advanced-level training followed. Those students who completed the basic-level training were qualified for the enrollment in the advanced-level training. Courses taught in the advanced training included counseling process and skills, group counseling, supervision, statistics and measurement, career counseling, personal growth as a counselor, practicum, and internship. The students had to do 16 to 20 hours course work and ten hours case work weekly for 40 weeks (two semesters). Today most of those who play the leading roles in the Chinese counseling and psychotherapy field came out of the two intensive short-term counseling training programs above. One example is that the editorial board of the Journal of Chinese Mental Health has organised a discussion forum in each issue since 2001, talking about issues in counseling and psychotherapy, and most authors in this column came out of these two short-term training programs.

Other theories and approaches covered by some of the counseling training conducted during the past five years in China include psychodrama,
transactional analysis, EMDR, play therapy, and NLP. Based on the training and theories and approaches covered in those short-term counseling courses listed above, it is apparent that Western theories of counseling and training have been embraced by Chinese counseling psychology and have benefited the Chinese people at large (Qian, 2002).

The third strength and positive force in support of the growth of Chinese counseling psychology field is attributed to the establishment of counseling and psychotherapy professional associations. The Chinese Association for Mental Health (CAMH) was re-established in 1985 (Chen, 2005) after a long suspension since 1936, and the first issue of the Journal of Chinese Mental Health was published in 1987. In 1990, the Committee of Counseling and Psychotherapy in CAMH was created; and in 1991, the Committee of Counseling College Students in CAMH was set up (Qian, 1994). These two committees related to counseling and psychotherapy have worked in collaboration with each other, and conducted meetings annually. The Committee of Clinical and Counseling Psychology in the Chinese Psychological Society was created in 2001 and the first national conference on counseling and psychotherapy was held in 2003 (Zeng, Zhao, & Zhu, 2003). The Chinese Psychological Society has brought all professionals in psychology together and attempted to construct a formal identity for the counseling profession from an organisational perspective. The establishment of the Division of Clinical and Counseling Psychology in the Chinese Psychological Society itself is a critical step for promoting counseling and counseling psychology in China. For instance, the Division has taken action for clinical and counseling professional registration which did not exist in China before. Also, drafting an ethics code for counseling professionals and accreditation standards for ongoing clinical and counseling programs is already in progress. Therefore, the creation of these associations and divisions related to counseling, psychotherapy, and counseling psychology has significantly impacted the development of counseling and counseling psychology in China.

A final force or factor lending increased strength to the Chinese counseling psychology field is the introduction and modification of assessment tools. Assessment tools such as the Chinese SCL-90, the Beck Depression Inventory (Chang et al., 2005), and the Chinese version of the MBTI (Osterlind, Miao, Sheng, & Chia, 2004) have become popular in China. The Chinese SCL-90 was one of the most popular tools in counseling and clinical research. Tang, Cheng, Yuan and Deng (1999) reviewed 169 studies which used the Chinese SCL-90 as one of their assessment tools. They found that the Chinese SCL-90 was broadly used with different Chinese populations such as school and college students, workers, soldiers, and hospital patients. The book Rating Scales for Mental Health by Wang, Wang, and Ma (1999) has included a significant number of assessment tools related to counseling and psychotherapy that have been translated into Chinese.
INTERNAL WEAKNESSES OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN CHINA

Since counseling psychology in China is new, the question of “how to train qualified counselors or counseling psychologists” has become a critical issue. A limitation to the provision of qualified training rests is the limited number of qualified educators and trainers (Jiang, 2005a). Although a couple of universities have started to create counseling psychology programs, most of them don’t have trainers with high-level degrees from professionally accredited training institutions. Some of them are even deficient in basic counseling psychology education. Not many educators and trainers hold master’s or doctoral degrees in counseling or clinical psychology because few Chinese colleges and universities offer degrees in these disciplines (Hou & Qian, 2005). One problem is that for the majority of psychology educators at colleges and universities the focus of their training has been on fundamentals and basic psychological information. They emphasise the reading of books and the knowledge of theories but lack the experience to teach application. Some trainers are much more practice-oriented, having significant hands-on experience, but possess inadequate knowledge of theories and research. Improving the quality of counselor educators or trainers and the situation of the supply of counseling programs falls short of the demand is a noteworthy challenge faced by the Chinese counseling profession.

Although a number of counseling and psychotherapy training programs have been initiated in the past ten years, most of them have been conducted in a short-term manner and the curriculum was not systematically designed. Some of the short-term training programs are driven more by economics, that is, they provide a quick/easy and profitable training, rather than concern over competency (Wang, 2005).

The limitations to quality training and qualified trainers render counseling supervision practically unobtainable. The limitation to counseling supervision is a second weakness and limitation to the development of counseling in China. Ethical standards (e.g. APA, 2003) dictate that practitioners receive appropriate supervision. However, few counseling professionals are qualified to offer clinical supervision in China, because they either don’t have a master’s or doctoral degree in counseling or possess inadequate counseling experience. Although quite a few short- and long-term counseling training programs have been offered in China, little supervision training was provided in those training programs. Others have identified the need to address this shortcoming (Li, 2004; Wang, 2005). A related issue to that of limited supervision is the lack of internship opportunities for those in training. All Chinese students attending graduate schools are required to write a thesis or a dissertation but not to complete an internship. Professors are discouraged from initiating any practicum activities with their students. Because of this limitation
of training, it is hard to choose an internship site. Psychology programs usually do not have lab or practicum courses because courses such as these are not part of the curriculum in graduate counseling programs.

Another defect is that there are no well-constructed, research-confirmed, and culturally accepted indigenous counseling theories for Chinese counselors and psychotherapists to work with their client population. The adoption of Western counseling theories merely stays at a superficial level. Many helping professionals “learn too little, create too much” (Jiang, 2005b). Leung and associates (2000) found that counselors who worked in higher education institutions didn’t have much enthusiasm for Western theories. In China, counseling is perceived as a talking treatment and an easy-to-learn subject, and such misperception of counseling has resulted in unprofessional scholarly activities in the field. For instance, some Chinese counseling professionals attempt to create their own theories or “Chinese style counseling method” before they thoroughly comprehend the principles and master the basic knowledge of counseling (Jiang, 2005b). They are used to creating an aboriginal counseling method as a camouflage and misuse the technique in their work. Others adopt Western counseling models without considering cultural differences. For example, some counselors think that Chinese people prefer direct to indirect counseling, so they give clients advice according to their own life experiences. Others demonstrate counseling on TV shows, often projecting an impression that just a one-hour counseling session can result in dramatic change and a counseling session is just like taking two tablets of Advil for a headache. This unprofessional practice could mislead the public and cause deficiencies for the profession, and eventually imperil the future of counseling psychology in China.

The absence of research is another limitation in the field of counseling in China. Although principles of conducting research have been introduced and discussed extensively (Meng, Hou, & Zhang, 2005), little research effort has been devoted to empirical studies about counseling. Because of inadequate systematic and formal training at colleges and universities, a significant number of short-term courses have been provided to Chinese counseling professionals. Due to the short-term nature of the training, the topic of research oftentimes is excluded. In addition, some counseling professionals only want to learn what can be used immediately such as counseling skills and techniques. As Leung et al. (2000) pointed out, “the danger of this practical stance is that counseling and psychotherapy could become a mixture of technique that is not theoretically grounded” (p. 97). The result of this tendency may bring about hunting for the dramatic effect of counseling without knowing the rationale for using such a dramatic method.

At least half of the participants in the study by Leung and colleagues (2000) expressed that they were confident about the outcome of their counseling. However, this high level of confidence was based solely on the counselor’s
belief without scientific grounding. Modification and application of Western counseling theories without research validation with the Chinese population may be unethical, do harm to clients and the profession, and consequently impede the development of counseling psychology in China.

A further hindrance to the dissemination of research is the limited number of professional journals in the field of counseling in China. Currently, there are few professional journals publishing counseling- and psychotherapy-related articles. These are journals of the Chinese Mental Health Association, for example, the Journal of Chinese Mental Health, the Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology and the Chinese Journal of Health Psychology. The Chinese Psychological Society does not have its own journal on counseling and psychotherapy. Therefore, voices in counseling psychology are not easily heard.

The fifth defect turns out to be the invisibility of career planning, vocational guidance, and measurement in the Chinese counseling and psychotherapy field. Although systematic ongoing counseling training programs have not been created in Chinese colleges and universities, a significant number of short- and long-term training workshops have been given elsewhere during the past 15 years (Chang et al., 2005). However, career counseling, vocational guidance, and measurement generally were not components in this training. Presently, Beijing University and Beijing Normal University are the only ones that offer career counseling courses in their master’s programs. The public have little comprehension of career counseling and view it as placement guidance. Some helping professionals claim to be career counselors because so few have any education or training on career counseling. This could become a major defect for the development of Chinese counseling psychology because career counseling is considered as one of the earliest forerunners of counseling and counseling psychology (Wright & Heppner, 1990).

The sixth defect lies in the areas of professional ethics and legislation. Currently there are no written ethical rules existing in the field of counseling and psychotherapy profession. Although the Chinese Psychological Society (CPS) and the Chinese Mental Health Association (CMHA) proposed their regulations of ethics code for practitioners in counseling and psychotherapy and professional certification for practitioners in counseling and psychotherapy in 1999 (Qian, 2002), the implementation of these rules has come to a dead-end. The challenge is that no legislation exists to enforce the professional standards. One could only imagine the problem with attempting to sanction a professional for unethical practice. The Chinese counseling and psychotherapy profession does not have an administrative body to monitor the behavior of counseling professionals because the professional organisations of counseling and psychotherapy in China such as the CPS and CMHA are not granted any authority by the Chinese government for accreditation or
certification. The central government leaves little room for professional governance and often takes a very different stand on professional issues from counseling professionals. For example, after the Chinese Ministry of Labor issued the protocol for counselor training and counseling certification with very low standards or requirements of qualification, many counseling professionals challenged its rationale (Jiang & Xia, 2005; Wang, 2005). Lack of professional freedom, autonomy, and involvement in legislation for counseling professionals would definitely encumber the growth of counseling psychology in China.

The final defect is the disparity between the severity of psychological problems brought by clients and the limited training and experience of the counselors and psychotherapists serving these clients. In recent years psychological problems among Chinese have become more prevalent and severe than they were before. At the Asia Pacific Neuro-Science Summit held in Beijing on 18 June 2005 over 200 mental health experts reported that more than 26 million Chinese have depression and less than 10 per cent seek help and 10 to 15 per cent of these people will end up killing themselves (Beijing Morning Daily, 2005, cited by the Chinese Newsnet, 19 June 2005). From December 2003 to May 2005 there were 17 college students including doctoral students who committed suicide within nine universities in Beijing (Chinese Newsnet, 1 July 2005). Moreover, a recent report from the Chinese Ministry of Health indicates that 250,000 people commit suicide each year in China, and suicide is the number one cause for death among Chinese people between the ages of 20 and 35 (Qi, 2005). Besides depressive disorders, there are also other psychological problems such as anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, hypochondriasis, personality disorders and many more among Chinese people (Shi et al., 2005). The situation of mental health issues in the Chinese population is serious, and the psychological problems are severe. However, counseling and psychotherapy training in China is insufficient to adequately address these problems. The majority of training is in workshop formats, and some of it is very much economically driven. It is apparent that China has an inadequate number of counselors and psychotherapists to meet the needs of its large population. Qualified counselors and psychotherapists in China are in remarkably short supply because of the problems in professional training (Chang et al., 2005). The question “how to train qualified counselors in a short period of time to meet the needs of the Chinese society” continues to be a challenge for the counseling and psychotherapy profession in China.

EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN CHINA

The remarkable social and economic changes in China during the last two decades have made the Chinese people realise the importance of mental
health. This awareness is significant and has presented an opportunity for the development of counseling psychology. Public awareness has resulted in a rising demand for counseling and psychotherapy services. For example, by 2001 the Shanghai Mental Health Center received an average of 120 clients each day, a 60 per cent increase from a decade before (Min, 2001, cited by Chang et al., 2005). Today, Chinese counselors work with clients not only in traditional work settings such as schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, and communities but also in organisations, correction facilities, and prisons. A recent estimate by Chinese officials indicated that counseling was conducted in 60 per cent of Chinese prisons (Chang et al., 2005). During the SARS crisis in 2003, counseling and psychotherapy received considerable attention and recognition from the public and the government because of the outstanding job performed by Chinese counselors and psychotherapists.

The massive needs of Chinese society for mental health services have inspired many individuals from diverse backgrounds to study counseling and psychotherapy. Enrollment in counseling programs at the present time has significantly increased, and those students who have graduated from counseling programs are more marketable than students who have graduated from many other programs (Z.H. Qiao, personal communication, 5 March 2006).

The Chinese government has given more attention to the mental health field than it did before. The Ministry of Education promulgated guidelines for school mental health education in 2002. In 2005, the Mental Health Education Advisory Committee for College and University Students was created. For the first time, the requirement for career development and planning on college and university campuses was written into government documentation. Although the Chinese government combines mental health and moral education for schools and institutions, its action has been encouraging and provided counseling professionals with a sense of hope for further development because the influence of the government on professional development is vital and very powerful in China.

The trend of globalisation has also presented an opportunity for the development of counseling psychology in China. Numerous counseling professional exchanges and dialogues with Western countries have occurred in recent years, and these exchanges are increasing with a larger scope and more in depth than they were before. For example, in 2004, the International Congress of Psychology was held in Beijing. The President and President-Elect of Division 16 of IAAP were both invited to attend the International Congress of Psychology in 2004 and to give presentations. The Past-President of Division 17 of APA was invited for a professional visit to Beijing and Nanjing in 2004. In 2005, the 4th Pan-Asia Pacific Conference on Mental Health was held in Shanghai. The President and President-Elect of NCDA were invited for a scholarly trip to Beijing, Shanghai, and Suzhou.

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
in 2006. Moreover, in 2008, the 5th World Congress for Psychotherapy will be held in Beijing (World Council for Psychotherapy, 2006). To date, a significant number of Chinese scholars and professionals in the counseling and psychotherapy field have participated in scores of professional events in other countries. In June 2005, a delegation from Mainland China was invited to attend the Conference of the European EMDR and Psychodrama Therapy in Belgium. In August 2005, a Chinese delegation attended the 4th World Congress for Psychotherapy in Argentina (Zhong, 2005). Two Chinese scholars were invited by Division 17 of the APA to a joint seminar introducing the current development of counseling in China at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2005. Chinese scholars and professionals in counseling have increasingly involved themselves in worldwide events and are playing an active role on the international stage of counseling psychology. These exchanges between international scholars and Chinese professionals in counseling have promoted mutual understanding between Chinese counseling professionals and counseling professionals from other countries, and facilitated the globalisation of counseling psychology. Also, such exchanges between Chinese counseling professionals and counseling professionals from other countries will certainly advance the development of counseling psychology in China.

EXTERNAL THREATS TO COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN CHINA

The first threat to the development of counseling psychology in China is the absence of counseling as a unique discipline with its own identity. The problem about having a recognised identity for counseling psychology lies inside the psychology field. In China, counseling psychology has not gained recognition from the psychology field (Wang, 2005). Faculty members at Chinese colleges and universities who are in charge of graduate training programs in the department of psychology are usually affiliated with the Chinese Psychological Society. Because counseling psychology is a branch of psychology, identity with psychology becomes a very important issue. Counselors and psychotherapists are often viewed as talkers and not taken seriously in the field of psychology in China. Counselors who work in college and university counseling centers are usually staff belonging to the student affairs department. They are not considered as professionals associated with psychology, especially those who do counseling but do not have psychology degrees or psychological training. Therefore, it is difficult for counselors to be recognised inside the Chinese psychology field.

The second threat is that some counseling training is very much economically driven. Pursuing financial benefits has led some program organisers to ignore research-based knowledge and skills but to offer whatever can make
money. The expression “a hundred flowers blooming” portrays a vivid picture of counseling in China. Training programs that are well advertised and networked oftentimes receive more attention and high participation despite being of low quality. When choosing training programs, few may give a second thought to what is actually offered during the training. In addition, fundamental skills of counseling are not well received among trainees.

The third threat is government involvement in the counseling profession. Although the Chinese government has made some favorable gestures towards the mental health profession, such as acknowledging the social burdens caused by mental health problems, bringing about some initiatives to improve access to counseling services, and conducting an educational campaign reducing the stigma of mental illness (Chang et al., 2005), the regulations it makes may do harm to the profession. For example, the Chinese Ministry of Labor and Social Security composed regulations of low standards for the counseling profession instead of a professional stance due to its personnel’s ignorance of applied psychology.

The final threat to counseling psychology comes from the public. Although counseling and psychotherapy have received more attention and recognition from the public than they did before, talking to a stranger with financial cost continues to be an unpopular idea. In Chinese culture, people usually solve their own problems among family members and friends. Seeking help from a professional counselor or psychotherapist indicates that a person has serious mental problems and has failed to resolve them within the support of family and friends. Furthermore, the person brings shame to his/her family and him/herself when he or she sees a counselor. Consequently, this person would be ridiculed and discriminated against at work and at home due to his/her mental illness. The expression “Don’t wash your dirty linen in public” retains its power among the Chinese, including highly educated individuals (Qian & Ma, 2002), and this type of public attitude presents a threat to counseling in China.

STRATEGIES FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN CHINA

The first step to take for the development of counseling psychology in China is to establish standards for college and university training programs. Only those counseling training programs that are carefully conceptualised to include the essential components of training from theory to observed practice and taught at an academic unit within a university (Leung et al., 2000) are given credit. The implementation of this strategy may move along with the effort of the Division of Clinical and Counseling Psychology in the Chinese Psychological Society, which held an open-door meeting discussing issues on training credentials and qualifications of counselors and therapists in January 2006. The general view on the formal training credentials among
counseling and psychotherapy professionals is reaching a consensus. The solidarity on this issue among counseling and psychotherapy professionals will make a significant impact on legislation and government regulations.

Establishing a professional ethics code for counselors and psychotherapists is also an urgent task that needs to be accomplished because such a code will (1) lay down the standards of integrity and professionalism for counselors, (2) clarify the nature of ethical responsibilities held in common by all counseling professionals, (3) establish principles that define ethical behavior and best practices of all counseling professionals, and (4) guide counselors and psychotherapists to construct a professional course of action that best serves those utilizing counseling services (ACA, 2005). It is expected that the Division of Clinical and Counseling Psychology of the Chinese Psychological Society will quickly put into effect an ethics code for counselors and psychotherapists.

The next strategy for the development of counseling psychology in China requires collaboration among different professional organisations in the mental health field. Disagreements on issues about counseling and the development of counseling and psychotherapy in China exist among helping professionals from different branches of psychology and working in different settings. Counseling professionals in China may follow the model of the collaboration of counseling psychology in the American Psychological Association (APA) and professional school counseling in the American Counseling Association (ACA) (Pope, 2004) to overcome the disagreements for true collaboration. Some constructive dialogues have occurred among counseling professionals from educational settings, medical settings, and community mental health services in the Division of Clinical and Counseling Psychology of the Chinese Psychological Society. These dialogues should occur regularly and continue until the common goal is reached. Another strategy to facilitate collaboration is to initiate practicum courses in counseling training programs at colleges and universities and to establish practicum and internship sites within hospitals, college and university counseling centers, and community mental health services. The practicum as a common task would benefit all sides and smooth the progress of understanding and collaboration among all.

Collaboration between Chinese counseling professionals and counseling professionals in other countries could also be an effective strategy. Counseling professionals in other countries could (1) share their experiences and lessons in the process of developing counseling psychology as a profession, (2) introduce the scientist-practitioner model to Chinese counseling professionals, and (3) help Chinese counseling professionals develop counseling psychology with an international perspective. For example, the German-Chinese Academy of Psychotherapy has already proposed a joint committee to set up curriculum standards for the Chinese counseling profession at their
first meeting of 2006 in Heidelberg. Joint effort like this should be geared toward collaboration between the Chinese counseling profession and Division 17 of APA, ACA, and the Division of Counseling Psychology of IAAP. Increasing exchanges between counseling psychology departments in the American colleges and universities and psychology departments at Chinese colleges and universities could also enhance the development of counseling psychology in China. However, any teaching and training conducted by counseling professionals from Western countries in the process of the collaboration should be culturally sensitive because Western counseling models generally emphasise individualism and the promotion of self, which may be inappropriate for the Chinese culture that generally emphasises collectivism and the community (Gerstein & Ægisdóttir, 2005).

Finally, the Chinese media can be helpful in the process of developing counseling psychology in China. The Chinese public’s attitude toward seeking professional help has not been positive (Chiu, 2004). Educational campaigns reducing the stigma of mental health via the mass media could assist Chinese people to change their attitude toward seeking professional psychological help since the media are the most effective channel to reach a wide range of people within a very short period of time. The possible formats may be interviews with counseling professionals and educational programs about mental health issues, counselling, and how counselling services can be used in daily life.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN CHINA AND ITS ROLE INTERNATIONALLY**

As proposed by Gerstein and Ægisdóttir (2005), research exploring psychological constructs and theories outside a US framework needs to be undertaken. To answer this call, the Chinese counseling professionals could definitely take an active role to initiate collaborative research projects with counseling professionals in the US. The Division of Counseling Psychology of IAAP has assumed a leading role in the process of this collaboration by organising this special issue of an international review of counseling psychology. Research teams should be formed between the Chinese counseling professionals and counseling professionals from other countries to investigate the indigenous behaviors, values, and attitudes in Chinese culture as well as cultures of other countries and also to explore the universal issues in counseling psychology. Discovering the “skeleton of the universal healing factor” and “the flesh of cultural knowledge” (Fisher, Jome, & Atkinson, 1998) would certainly promote the development of counseling psychology in China.

Most Chinese counseling professionals have difficulty publishing their work in international journals because of inadequate proficiency in English. This could result in the voicelessness of Chinese counseling professionals in
the international field of counseling psychology. Division 17 of APA and the Division of Counseling Psychology in IAAP may take an initiative to form research teams collaborating with Chinese researchers in counseling in a mentoring fashion. Meanwhile, discussions on cross-cultural issues could begin within the collaborative research teams. This interactive process can be reciprocally beneficial and promote mutual understanding and “provide mental health scholars a chance to explore and learn how mental health professionals and persons worldwide respond to unique social, cultural and political forces that shape a person’s well-being, an individual’s help seeking practices, and characteristics of an entire society” (Gerstein and Ægisdóttir, 2005, p. 98).

Finally, to globalise counseling psychology, we suggest that the IAAP’s Division of Counseling Psychology could create a credential criterion committee to facilitate the development of counseling psychology internationally and ensure the standard of the profession worldwide. The committee should include representatives from different countries and design a webpage in different languages. This would be a step in the direction of extending the multicultural focus in counseling beyond a US perspective (Gerstein & Ægisdóttir, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Based on the SWOT analysis of counseling psychology in China, the authors conclude that counseling and psychotherapy as a profession and professional discipline in China is in its early formative stages. Although a culturally based systematic paradigm of Chinese counseling has not been accredited, a step has been taken in that direction. Counseling psychology as a discipline has not been credited in China, yet the seed of counseling psychology has been planted in rich soil. Collaboration on research and training between Chinese counseling professionals and counseling professionals worldwide is imperative to facilitate the growth of counseling psychology in China. It is our hope that counseling professionals in the US and other countries may become actively involved in this international effort and make a commitment to extend the multicultural focus in counseling beyond a US and European perspective.

REFERENCES


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


Fan, F.M. (1999). From the experiences of Hong Kong and Japan to see the professional approach of counseling in China. Social Psychology Study, 4, 37–42.


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


Counseling Psychology in Hong Kong: A Germinating Discipline

S. Alvin Leung*
*The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Charles C. Chan
Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

Trisha Leahy
Hong Kong Sports Institute, Hong Kong

Cet article décrit la psychologie du counseling comme discipline émergente à Hong Kong. L’analyse SWOT a été utilisée pour examiner les forces et les faiblesses internes, les opportunités et les menaces externes de cette profession. A partir de cette matrice, des questions stratégiques relatives à l’accroissement et au développement de la psychologie du counseling sont identifiées et discutées. Une vision de la psychologie du counseling à Hong Kong dans la prochaine décennie est présentée.

This article describes the emerging counseling psychology discipline in Hong Kong. A SWOT analysis was used to examine internal strengths, internal weaknesses, external opportunities, and external threats confronting the counseling psychology profession. Through this process a number of strategic issues central to the growth and development of counseling psychology are identified and discussed. A vision of the counseling psychology discipline in Hong Kong for the next decade is presented.

INTRODUCTION

In Hong Kong, counseling psychology is a psychological specialisation that is in a formative stage of development. For decades, the field of mental health in Hong Kong has been occupied by social workers, clinical and educational psychologists, and there is not much professional space left for other related disciplines, such as counseling or counseling psychology,

* Address for correspondence: S. Alvin Leung, Department of Educational Psychology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong SAR, China. Email: smleung@cuhk.edu.hk

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
which are less established yet are aspiring to enter the field (S.A. Leung, 1999, 2003a). Counseling psychology is not included in the Hong Kong government’s occupational structure and there are few career opportunities in publicly-funded organisations (including government and publicly-funded non-governmental organisations). Consequently, counseling psychologists often have to adopt multiple professional identities so that they can obtain career positions in mental health-related professional fields. In the private sector, there are fewer barriers for counseling psychologists, yet they still find themselves having to explain who they are and how they are different from their more established counterparts such as social workers and clinical psychologists. In Hong Kong, the terms counseling and counseling psychology are not yet clearly differentiated in the public and professional discourse. Consequently, counseling psychology in Hong Kong is still viewed as simply the process of counseling. In other words, it is perceived more as an array of “intervention strategies” grounded in psychology and shared by mental health and educational professionals, rather than as an independent discipline.

In this article, we describe, examine, and analyse the development of counseling psychology in Hong Kong using a SWOT analysis. From our perspectives and experiences as counseling psychologists in academic, therapeutic, and service administration settings, we propose to identify existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to its development, both internally and externally. Through this process, we want to accomplish two major goals. First, we want to identify and discuss opportunities for counseling psychology to grow and make a difference utilising its core strengths and competencies. Second, we want to discuss how weaknesses and threats can be dealt with strategically and be transformed into possibilities for counseling psychology. Overall, we want to identify the next steps that counseling psychology should take in order to become a more cohesive and visible mental health discipline that is relevant to the public, and connected to the counseling psychology discipline worldwide.

**STRENGTHS OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN HONG KONG**

Counseling psychology is an emerging discipline in Hong Kong consisting of individuals who have been trained in a broad range of specialties within the psychology and counseling tradition. Many counseling psychologists are professionals with multicultural and cross-cultural experience because they were trained in different parts of the world, including the United States (US), Canada, Europe, and Australia. Some of them were trained in counseling psychology, others were trained in counseling, social work, and different psychological specialties, yet they are attracted to the counseling psychology discipline because of its diverse theoretical and applied ingredients. Counseling
psychologists work in different settings: schools, universities, health-care, social services, and business. They provide a service to clients with a wide spectrum of needs, and they conduct research that has direction implications to theory and practice.

The Hong Kong Psychological Society (HKPS) is the professional body representing psychologists. The HKPS has four professional divisions, the newest being the Division of Counseling Psychology, which was formally established on 10 June 2006. The other three divisions are clinical, educational, and industrial/organisational. The formation of the Division of Counseling Psychology represents the work of a core group of professionals within the HKPS in academia, therapeutic practice, and service administration who have identified themselves as counseling psychologists. They want to offer counseling psychology as an alternative professional pathway and identity to professionals in the community with training in counseling and psychology, especially those who do not fit into the rather narrow Hong Kong mainstream context of traditional clinical, educational (school psychology in the US), and industrial-organisational psychology. The formation of a division of counseling psychology within the HKPS is central to the consolidation of its professional identity on a number of levels. From the perspective of the public, this will result in increased awareness of the diversity of pathways to help-seeking and servicing. Within the broad arena of mental health, counseling psychologists will have a formal platform from which to contribute to social policy issues and to the strategic development of academic training of the profession.

The new division of counseling psychology has attempted to take on the difficult task of constructing a consensus definition of counseling psychology. Arriving at such a definition has taken substantial time and energy given the diverse orientations and training represented in the group. There were two elements central to the construction of this definition. First, it had to be inclusive in the sense that the definition is acceptable to a diverse group of individuals providing a wide spectrum of counseling and psychotherapeutic service in multiple settings. Second, this definition had to capture the core philosophical and theoretical beliefs guiding the diverse practice of these professionals. The initial consensus definition which has taken reference from similar professional bodies internationally is as follows: “Counseling Psychology is understood as the application of psychological knowledge, psychotherapeutic skills and professional judgment to facilitate enhanced human functioning and quality of life.”

While this definition may still be open to more refined revision, a number of guiding philosophic assumptions are shared by many counseling psychologists. First, in working with diverse populations and service settings, counseling psychologists are more likely to use a growth and strength oriented perspective grounded in psychotherapeutic and developmental frameworks (e.g. Lopez,
Magyar, Petersen, Ryder, Krieshok, O’Byrne, Lichtenberg, & Fry, 2006) rather than medical oriented models emphasising deficits and abnormality.

Second, counseling psychologists pay special attention to the influence of contexts and systems on individual behavior, and are inclined to intervene at both the individual and system levels in order to maximise the effectiveness of their intervention (e.g. Walsh, Galassi, Murphy, & Park-Taylor, 2003).

Third, counseling psychologists recognise the importance of preventive and developmental interventions (e.g. Vera, 2000), especially in schools, universities, and social service settings where such programs are needed to facilitate the development and maturation of individuals at varying life stages. Whereas counseling psychologists cannot always be clearly distinguished from other mental health professionals such as clinical and educational psychologists and social workers because there are substantial overlaps in core theories and methods of intervention, the above philosophical beliefs are somewhat unique to counseling psychologists in Hong Kong.

In practice, many counseling psychologists are engaged in the delivery of educational, counseling, and psychotherapeutic interventions in various settings. We believe that counseling psychologists have a number of core competencies, including (1) competencies in building counseling and psychotherapeutic alliances with clients utilising micro-counseling and psychotherapeutic strategies, especially those that are appropriate in a Chinese cultural context; (2) competencies in understanding, influencing, and structuring interlocking contextual systems germane to clients (e.g. family and school in Chinese contexts); and (3) competencies in the delivery of preventive, developmental, educational, and psychotherapeutic interventions targeting individuals and relevant life systems (e.g. specific educational systems in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland). At the same time, due to the scientist-practitioner training that they have received (e.g. Howard, 1986; Stoltenberg, Pace, Kashubeck, Biever, Patterson, & Welch, 2000), many counseling psychologists are competent in conducting research, and are actively engaged in conducting research studies on a variety of topics central to the counseling psychology discipline, especially research studies that have implications in the local context. Counseling psychology has yet to develop a set of formal professional standards, but these core competencies and beliefs can serve as the foundation of future standards.

Since counseling psychologists are not yet a recognised professional group within the Hong Kong occupational structure as defined by the government credentialing system and civil service recruitment policy and practice, the counseling psychology market is still narrow at this point. This means agencies and organisations within the Hong Kong government structure are likely to have very few positions specified for counseling psychologists. However, there is still plenty of room for counseling psychologists within the educational, university, and private sector in which recruitment policies
are not as restricted. In fact, there have always been positions filled by qualified persons trained in counseling psychology. For example, schools and universities recruit counseling psychologists as student counselors, private agencies and some publicly funded non-governmental organisations also hire counseling psychologists in various professional roles (e.g. hospice care, high performance sport). Counseling psychologists have also set up their own private practice clinics in the community since there is no legislative restriction at this point on mental health-related private practice. In a Chinese society in which seeking psychiatric help is considered a stigma, there is actually a tendency for individuals to seek help from non-psychiatric channels (e.g. schools, university counseling services, and private practice clinics) where counseling psychologists are playing an important role.

WEAKNESSES OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN HONG KONG

Counseling psychology in Hong Kong is an emerging discipline facing a number of threats and weaknesses internal to the profession. There is a lack of clear professional identity, leading to low cohesion among members of the profession. At this point, counseling psychology is not a “mainstream” psychological discipline and members of the profession are scattered in different career positions. The professional energies of counseling psychologists are also consumed by having to take on multiple professional identities as they might be hired in their organisations primarily as social workers, counselors, or clinical psychologists (because there are few formal positions as counseling psychologists). Perhaps due to the lack of a strong professional identity, counseling psychologists have not, historically, worked together closely as a professional group to establish and enhance a clear professional presence in the mental health sector in Hong Kong. The lack of professional cohesion and collaboration is a somewhat embarrassing reality deserving special self-reflection among counseling psychologists. It is only recently that counseling psychologists have finally come together to form a division of counseling psychology within the HKPS.

There are few opportunities for formal counseling psychology training in Hong Kong. In the past decade, there has been an increase in counseling-related training in Hong Kong but none of these training programs are formally called counseling psychology training programs. The only exception is a Doctor of Education in counseling psychology offered by the Faculty of Education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Whereas this program is still ongoing, because of resource limitations the number of students who have received training is still very low (so far only three students have graduated, and several students are at the dissertation stage). The under-provision of local training in counseling psychology means that aspiring counseling...
There is a lack of post-degree (or post-qualification) training for counseling psychologists, especially post-degree training experience with sufficient supervision that can meet international standards (e.g. C.C. Chan, 2004). There is a need for post-degree supervision for two reasons. As part of their continual growth and development, many counseling psychologists are interested in accessing supervision so they can improve on their skills. Although there is currently no counselor or counseling psychologist credentialing system in Hong Kong, some counseling psychologists are interested in obtaining certification or licensure from overseas countries. As part of these credentialing systems, there is often a requirement for post-degree supervised practice. Counseling psychologists who need to accumulate post-degree practical experience to qualify for certification in overseas professional organisations have trouble getting their supervision hours in Hong Kong because there is a lack of qualified supervisors. In general, there has been little training in supervision among mental health professionals in Hong Kong (Tsui, 2004).

The development of a coherent body of specifically identified counseling psychology research in Hong Kong is at an early stage. Research studies related to counseling and psychotherapy in Hong Kong are somewhat scattered and disjointed, and the discipline is slow in accumulating a body of empirical evidence to guide theory-building and practice. Since most of the counseling psychologists are trained in the Euro-American tradition, their research and practice are influenced by the literature in these regions, and it is only in the last decade that researchers have begun to work on indigenous psychological theory and research studies that are grounded in the specific cultural context of Hong Kong and neighboring Chinese regions (e.g. Bond, 1996; Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2006).

The above weaknesses do not constitute immutable realities. As a unified professional group, counseling psychologists will be in a much more powerful position to inform the public about counseling psychology. Some counseling psychologists are faculty members of universities and strategic alliances have the potential to open up avenues to develop counseling psychology training programs both at the postgraduate and post-degree levels. Improvement in public recognition and increases in training opportunities are instrumental in the formation of a healthy professional identity.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN HONG KONG

Several developments in the past decade appeared to be favorable to the development of the counseling psychology profession. First, the education system of Hong Kong has been undergoing a wave of reforms, and in the
process there has been an increase in awareness that counseling and guidance services are critical to students’ development (Gysbers, 2000). There has been a gradual increase in funding from the government to support counseling and guidance programs, especially in elementary schools. Also, Hong Kong schools are transitioning into an “inclusive educational model” and students with an array of special behavior, emotional, and learning difficulties are mainstreamed into regular classes. There is a demand for counseling psychology professionals who can help teachers manage these students so they can learn effectively in the classroom (Policy fails . . . , 2006).

Another facet of change in the education system in Hong Kong is the rapid increase in the number of educational institutions offering associate degrees (Chong, 2006). These institutions offer two-year general and specialised programs leading to an associate degree, which many young people, who cannot otherwise gain entrance to local universities, use as a stepping stone to pursue post-secondary education (e.g. to complete the remaining two years of university education locally or overseas). These students constitute a potential client group as they negotiate the sometimes challenging transition from high school or workplace into associate degree institutions. In addition, many students have to make important decisions related to education and career as they move on to complete their university education or to a career. Career and life planning is an important dimension in associate degree institutions. Career counseling and guidance as well as career assessment are strongly needed in this setting to help students to make an adaptive and successful transition into the world of work, and, for the younger students, into adulthood (Blustein, Juntunen, & Worthington, 2000; S.A. Leung, 2002).

A further aspect of external opportunity is related to cross-cultural interaction and counseling psychology. Since colonial days, Hong Kong has been a major international city where different cultures meet. Intercultural relationships and interactions have always been a concern in social, education, and business sectors. Hong Kong has always been a culturally diverse city with a sizable minority population, most notably individuals originating from South and Southeast Asia. Since the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong to the Chinese mainland, there has been an increase in immigrants to Hong Kong from the Chinese mainland, and many immigrant families and children experience difficulties in adjustment and acculturation. There is a strong need for counseling psychology professionals to work with immigrant individuals and families, to serve as advocates and speak for their well-being, to help children adapt into the Hong Kong educational systems, and to help adults with economic hardships to find relevant career and employment opportunities (S.A. Leung & Chen, 2004).

National and regional crises such as the SARS epidemic in 2002, the tsunami tragedy in South Asia in 2003, and the documented risk of an avian
flu pandemic in Asia and globally have triggered existential anxieties among people in Hong Kong. It is not yet empirically clear whether increasing risks for epidemic and natural disasters have resulted in a higher incidence of psychological disorders and mental health concerns in Hong Kong. However, community impact research from the SARS outbreak indicates that deadly epidemics can have a devastating social, economic, and psychological impact on a community where the outbreak occurred (Lau, Yang, Pang, Tsui, Wong, & Wing, 2005; Hong Kong SAR Government, 2003; Wu, Chan, & Ma, 2005). In many ways, the SARS epidemic traumatised the entire Hong Kong community, generating a host of negative emotions including fear, uncertainty, anger, and sadness, and resulting in residual foreboding as to when the next epidemic might strike (Lau et al., 2005). In trying to increase control over uncertainties, there has been a social movement toward health and fitness to increase physical resilience to counter threats to public health (Hong Kong Sports Development Board, 2004; So, Ko, Yuan, Lam, & Louie, 2004). Exercise and living a healthy lifestyle have become increasingly popular among people from all walks of life. Apparently, there is a need and opportunities for counseling psychologists to deal with the psychological distress resulting from public-health concerns and uncertainties.

The growth and development of counseling psychology in different parts of the world, including in mainland China, is a source of external strength (Leong & Blustein, 2000; S.A. Leung, Guo, & Lam, 2000). In the global context, the call for the internationalisation and globalisation of counseling psychology (such as in the US) has led to increased contacts and exchanges among counseling psychologists worldwide. Counseling psychology is also growing rapidly in mainland China, in schools, universities, and in the community (e.g. S.A. Leung et al., 2000). Whereas systematic academic training in counseling and psychotherapy is still not widespread, a system of licensing clinical and counseling professionals, including psychological counselors and career counselors, is already in place. The growth of counseling psychology around the world and in neighboring mainland China should serve as a stimulus for counseling psychology in Hong Kong, and should provide the much needed energy and resources for the discipline to grow and develop in a healthy direction.

THREATS TO COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN HONG KONG

A major external threat to the development of counseling psychology is the lack of public recognition and acceptance. Indeed, the public is simply not aware of what counseling psychology is, what counseling psychologists do, and what exactly is the distinction among the overlapping psychological, counseling, and social service disciplines. Government-funded organisations cannot hire counseling psychologists because counseling psychology is not
included in the formal professional structure. Counseling psychology cannot grow as a professional discipline until the public is more aware of what it can offer in terms of both science and practice.

As we review the external environment more closely, it is clear that counseling psychologists are sharing the social service and mental health arenas with multiple professional groups, including but not limited to counselors, social workers, clinical psychologists, and educational psychologists. There are indeed overlaps in the professional activities carried out by these various professional groups. For example, all of these groups make use of a psychotherapeutic process to work with clients, moving through the assessment, conceptualisation, goal setting, and treatment stages of counseling. They use similar theoretical approaches and skills in working with clients, using both individual and group formats. In varying degrees, these professionals are not confined to traditional remedial intervention, and are engaged in other modes of intervention that are educational and developmental in nature. Interestingly, development, education, and prevention have traditionally been the domains of counseling psychologists (e.g. Heppner, Casas, Carter, & Stone, 2000; Whiteley, 1984).

In order to more fully understand the external environment influencing the development of counseling psychology, we want to briefly examine the professional status of four mental health-related groups: social workers, clinical psychologists, educational psychologists, and counselors. The future development of counseling psychology has to do with the characteristics of its external environment, and more specifically, with how these groups are functioning, their strengths and weaknesses. From a strategic development point of view, the counseling psychology profession in Hong Kong could avoid moving into areas that are well catered for by other professional groups, and instead consider entering into areas where a service gap can be identified or where other groups are less well equipped to function as effectively as counseling psychologists.

Social workers in Hong Kong constitute a professional group backed by a statutory registration system. Perhaps due to their early entrance into Hong Kong’s mental health arena, social workers have generally been regarded as the professional group best equipped to provide counseling to the general population. Currently, social workers provide counseling services to individuals in a variety of settings, such as in schools, family and youth centers, rehabilitation agencies, and service centers for the elderly (S. Cheung & Chi, 1996). The Mental Health Ordinance of 1989 granted “approved social workers” (i.e. social workers who have received training and have experience working in mental health settings) the legal status to respond to psychiatric emergencies, including the involuntary admission of patients into mental hospitals for observation and treatment (K. Chan, 1996). However, counseling skills and psychological interventions may not be the major
strengths of social workers because their training at the undergraduate level has to encompass a broad array of social service and system issues (S. Cheung & Chi, 1996). Many social workers are aware of this limitation and are therefore seeking postgraduate-level training specialising in counseling. However, given the diverse roles that social workers have to play in the social service sector, social workers are unlikely to provide the full spectrum of counseling service demanded by the community.

On another front, clinical psychologists and educational psychologists are charged with providing services to individuals with special mental, emotional, and/or learning needs. At the present, there is a society-based registration system (by the HKPS) for clinical and educational psychologists and plans for statutory registration of all practicing psychologists are under way. The number of clinical psychologists in Hong Kong is rather small. As of early 2006, the number of registered clinical psychologists on the HKPS register was 221. Most local clinical psychologists in Hong Kong receive their training through master’s degree programs offered by two of the more established universities, namely the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Most clinical psychologists work in government (e.g. social service branch departments and bureaus such as the Social Welfare Department, Department of Health, Correctional Services Department, and the Education and Manpower Bureau), in hospitals under the Hospital Authority, and in educational settings (D.W. Chan & Lee, 1995a; R.W.S. Chan & Tang, 1996). Since clinical psychologists are considered to be much more expensive than social workers in terms of service cost, they are often used as second-level consultants. The small number of clinical psychologists in Hong Kong cannot fully accommodate the mental needs of individuals, and there are opportunities for counseling psychologists to play an important role.

Educational psychologists work in educational settings (mostly in elementary and secondary schools). Similar to clinical psychologists, educational psychologists are usually trained at the master’s degree level, and their responsibilities include consultations with teachers and assessment of school children with various learning and behavioral difficulties (D.W. Chan & Lee, 1995a, 1995b). They spend most of their professional time conducting individual therapy and assessment for children, adolescents, and adults.

Counselors are the closest “ally” to counseling psychologists. Similar to counseling psychologists, counselors are not yet a recognised professional group within the civil service structure, yet they have a longer history, and they enjoy wider social recognition as a helping profession in educational and social service contexts (see Educators’ Social Action Council, 1980; T.T. Leung, 1988; S.A. Leung, 1999). Counselors have their own professional body (the Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association). There are now a number of master’s-level training programs in counseling offered
by universities in Hong Kong, as well as by overseas universities using distance-learning modes. Students of these programs are social workers, teachers, and other human service professionals (e.g. nurses), who would like to strengthen their counseling skills in their work settings. Counselors work in schools and community agencies, and in private practice, often with multiple professional identities (e.g. teachers as counselors).

In summary, the above analysis suggests that counseling psychologists are facing a tough external reality: a social service sector with several established professional groups historically dominating public awareness, and expectations of help-seeking pathways and service provision models. In addition, Hong Kong has also seen a recent trend of reduced public spending on social services, including mental health services. Public awareness and acceptance of the counseling psychology profession as a common help-seeking resource is weak.

ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC ISSUES FACING COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN HONG KONG

Using Strengths to Meet Emerging Opportunities

Based on our analysis of opportunities and contextual characteristics, we would like to highlight a number of areas in which the counseling psychology profession can grow and further develop, utilising its core strengths and competencies. In addition, we believe these areas lead to strategic directions that can strengthen the standing and influence of counseling psychology as an independent, visible psychological discipline in Hong Kong.

First, the SWOT analysis above suggests that counseling psychology is at a somewhat disadvantaged position in comparison to its counterpart professional groups who are already well established within their own “sphere of influence”. It is true that counseling psychologists have not been “legislated” by the government to do a certain task or to work with a specific population, which is the case for social workers, clinical and educational psychologists, and psychiatrists. Yet, this can also be perceived as a positive factor because, without the burden of specific public mandates, counseling psychologists have the freedom to meet the diverse social needs and challenges, and forge new ways of collaborating with counterpart professionals to add value to the mental health service sector. For example, there are many individuals who are experiencing a broad range of developmental, experiential, and transitional issues (as opposed to issues involving psychopathology), and whose needs are not being met by the traditional service providers (e.g. clinical psychologists), for whom counseling psychologists can offer a service utilising their counseling skills and expertise in psychological intervention. Through looking at the professional realities from a proactive
perspective, counseling psychology can begin to maximise its strengths and optimise the diverse opportunities provided in Hong Kong.

Second, there are many needs and opportunities within the education system, and counseling psychologists can make use of their expertise in developmental and preventive intervention to make a difference there. School is a huge “life theatre” where all the key mental health providers converge, and there seem to be space and roles for all the groups to collaborate and exercise their expertise. Counseling psychologists can respond to needs in school settings in at least four ways:

1. Counseling psychologists can take an active role in teacher training, utilising their knowledge in developmental and psychotherapeutic frameworks and their skills in counseling interventions. In Hong Kong, the education system adopts a “whole-school approach” to student development and guidance, and all the teachers are expected to take on a guidance or pastoral role in their interaction with students (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2004). Counseling psychologists can engage in training teachers with counseling skills and strategies, and in developing and implementing group and school-wide comprehensive guidance programs, including the delivery of a guidance curriculum.

2. Counseling psychologists can participate in counseling and guidance programs in schools as consultants and supervisors (Gysbers, 2000). Counseling psychologists can provide much needed supervision to school social workers and counseling teachers, to strengthen their skills in working with students and parents.

3. Counseling psychologists can take an active role as researchers to examine counseling-related concerns and issues that are salient in school settings. The research skills of counseling psychologists are critical to schools as there is a high demand for evidence-based intervention and action research projects investigating the impact of comprehensive guidance programs (Gysbers, 2000).

4. An important strength of some counseling psychologists is in the area of career and life planning. There is a strong need in school settings to help young people make decisions regarding educational and career plans (S.A. Leung, 2002). Whereas teachers are more likely to work with students on career development issues, counseling psychologists can serve as trainers, consultants, and supervisors, and help teachers and school counseling professionals to design individualised career interventions for students.

Third, many counseling psychologists in Hong Kong received their training in overseas institutions, and they were strongly influenced by the multicultural perspective that was an important component of their professional training programs. Consequently, they are most suited to provide counseling or
other psychotherapeutic interventions to individuals and families who are members of minority and disadvantaged groups, and to serve as their advocates. From a research and training perspective, counseling psychologists can conduct studies on the cross-cultural application of counseling psychology in local contexts, and as they gain opportunities to offer formal training in counseling psychology, a cross-cultural perspective can become a cornerstone of such training programs.

Hong Kong is a major international city in which cross-cultural contact and interaction is a key aspect of its routine business activities. Many business professionals have to travel to overseas locations, as well as meet clients from all over the world. Counseling psychology can assist business organisations and collaborate with organisational psychologists to develop programs and interventions to help company employees to improve their ability to communicate cross-culturally, and to prepare employees and their families to adapt to overseas assignments. Meanwhile, counseling psychologists in Hong Kong can collaborate with counseling psychologists worldwide to address issues related to the cross-cultural application of counseling theories and practice, taking advantage of the internationalisation movement in counseling psychology that is under way in regions where the discipline has a stronger foundation (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003; S.A. Leung, 2003b).

Fourth, counseling psychologists have an important role to play in addressing issues related to existential anxieties and uncertainties, and in promoting healthy living through physical and psychological strategies (Harris & Thoresen, 2003). Through the use of therapeutic and educational strategies, grounded in developmental, positive, and trauma psychology theory and research, counseling psychologists can help individuals cope with past trauma and future uncertainties through remedial, developmental, and preventive interventions. The increasing risk for epidemic outbreaks in Hong Kong and surrounding regions means that counseling professionals have to be ready to join forces with health professionals to provide psychological assistance and service to potential victims and their families, to assist health-care providers to deal with their own experience of trauma as they respond to epidemic emergencies. There are also opportunities and demand for counseling professionals to collaborate with other professionals, such as dieticians and exercise professionals, in assisting individuals to make health-promoting lifestyle decisions, so that they are more resilient to uncertainties and public health threats.

Transforming Weaknesses and Threats into Possibilities

We are able to identify several themes from our review of the internal weaknesses and external threats to counseling psychology in Hong Kong. The internal weaknesses and external threats are inter-related, encompassing
issues of professional identity and public recognition, relationships with other mental health service providers, training and supervision, as well as research agendas. We believe we can strategically transform weaknesses and threats into possibilities and opportunities.

First, the lack of a strong counseling psychology identity is a big threat to the profession. There is nothing more important than establishing a professional identity that is indigenous to counseling psychologists in Hong Kong. Since counseling psychologists in Hong Kong come from rather diverse backgrounds and training orientations, it has been rather difficult to arrive at a consensus on issues such as a definition of counseling psychology, and core beliefs and intervention strategies that are unique to counseling psychology. However, there is a need to sustain the current momentum of collegial and reflexive dialogues on these important issues, and to continue to work to strengthen much needed mutual understanding and acknowledgement of commonalities in theory, practice, and research. Without this, it will be very difficult to develop the cohesiveness that is needed to establish and maintain a unique identity for the counseling psychology profession in Hong Kong. Overall, we believe that a number of measures can be taken to develop the professional counseling psychology identity in Hong Kong, including:

1. The systematic development and maturation of the newly established division of counseling psychology within the HKPS will be a key factor in establishing a permanent and visible professional identity for counseling psychology.

2. Sustained efforts are needed to increase public awareness and recognition of the scope of services of counseling psychologists and the profession’s potential contribution to Hong Kong society. This can be done through various scholarly and media channels such as papers in local academic journals, newspaper articles, and counseling psychology websites, through which the science and practice of counseling psychology can be introduced. It is equally important for counseling psychologists to be more visible in the community. Through the provision of service, teaching, training, and research, the public will become more aware of counseling psychology as a viable psychological discipline.

3. There should be efforts to increase career opportunities for counseling psychologists, through advocating for the establishment of counseling psychology positions in government and other public and private organisations. Developing these positions will consolidate the legitimacy of counseling psychology at the structural level.

4. Counseling psychologists in Hong Kong should make good use of the international counseling psychology network to enlist help in service, training, and collaborative research (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003). The
global counseling psychology network and that of our neighboring counterparts in mainland China can also become an asset in the argument for the legitimacy of a counseling psychology discipline in Hong Kong. Through increased international interactions and collaboration, the importance and unique contribution that counseling psychology can bring as a psychological discipline will become visible to all stakeholders in the mental health, education and related community sectors.

Second, counseling psychologists need to establish a collaborative relationship with other mental health providers in Hong Kong. Since counseling psychology as a profession is more or less a “newcomer”, the profession as a whole needs to strategically position itself relative to counterparts in other related disciplines in the current resource-constrained, social services environment in Hong Kong. It is therefore important for the professional body representing counseling psychologists to have regular dialogues with other mental health service provider groups, to identify ways that counseling psychology can use its unique strengths to complement the strengths and efforts of others, and how within the total servicing landscape, they can contribute to Hong Kong society and meet local needs. Maximising collaboration is the key to transforming threats into strengths, and will result in a professional environment beneficial to all stakeholders. In order to establish a strong counseling psychology professional identity, counseling psychology should continue to consolidate and refine its scientific, theoretical, and applied foundations through collaboration with other local helping professionals.

Third, the SWOT analysis pointed to the under-provision of local postgraduate training in counseling psychology. Counseling psychology cannot take root and grow in the local soil unless there exists professional training in counseling psychology that meets local and international standards. Developing postgraduate-level programs at local universities is a logical solution, but there are issues related to resources, program structure, student in-take, and teaching staff that have to be considered and resolved. Whereas concerns related to resources and program content can be resolved through systematic planning and organisation management, the lack of local teaching staff is a problem that cannot be resolved quickly. There needs to be a core group of scholars/practitioners in counseling psychology who have the capacity and competence to take on the necessary teaching, research, and service tasks required at universities. Developing counseling psychologists with such competence should be a priority for the entire profession.

Fourth, the SWOT analysis also revealed that counseling psychology in Hong Kong is strongly influenced by theories and practice in the Euro-American tradition, especially because many counseling psychologists are trained in overseas regions. There is a need to produce a body of literature and research in counseling that is grounded in the local Chinese setting.
maturation of counseling psychology worldwide depends on the simultaneous development of theory and practice that are indigenous and global in nature (S.A. Leung, 2003b). We are encouraged that many researchers in Hong Kong and in other Chinese communities are moving in that direction (e.g. F.M. Cheung, S.F. Cheung, Wada, & Zhang, 2003; Yang, 2006). In addition, as counseling psychology further matures as a professional discipline, it has to develop research areas that could be claimed as its specialisation. For example, vocational psychology, counseling process, and multicultural counseling are often core research areas within counseling psychology (e.g. Heppner et al., 2000). To make an impact on counseling psychology locally and worldwide, counseling psychology research in Hong Kong has to develop its own themes and areas of excellence.

A VISION FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN HONG KONG

As we conclude the SWOT analysis, we would like to highlight our vision for counseling psychology in Hong Kong in the next decade, using the following statement: We envision that counseling psychology will germinate and develop into a major psychological discipline in Hong Kong, with members united in a cohesive professional body with a progressive agenda to serve the public, to collaborate with other professionals to improve the well-being and mental health of individuals, to develop indigenous theory and practice, to train future generations of counseling psychologists, to connect with the counseling psychology community worldwide, and to contribute to the development of counseling psychology in Chinese societies and around the world.

REFERENCES


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


Hong Kong Sports Development Board (2004). *The millennium study: Phase 2*. (Available from the Hong Kong Sports Institute, 25 Yuen Wo Road, Shatin, Hong Kong SAR.)


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


Counselling Psychology in India: At the Confluence of Two Traditions

Gideon Arulmani*

The Promise Foundation, Bangalore, India

Counselling needs in the Indian context emerge against the background of tremendous social change. In addition, the last ten years of economic reform have enhanced the pace of these changes and further transformed life styles. Counselling services are poorly defined and presently anyone at all with little or no training can offer these services. Available counselling services are largely based on Western approaches to psychology. These approaches have been widely criticised as not being relevant to the Indian cultural context. A relevant and culturally valid counselling psychology therefore has remained a fledgling discipline. Psychological thought is not new to India, and ancient traditions present ideas and constructs that are rich in possibilities for application. This paper examines the Western and the traditional Indian approaches and proposes that these approaches could together inform the development of a psychology of counselling that is empirically sound and culturally relevant to the Indian context.

INTRODUCTION

Counselling as a specialised service offered by a trained professional did not exist in India until very recently. This does not mean that counselling was

* Address for correspondence: Gideon Arulmani, The Promise Foundation, 346/2, 1 A Main, Koramangala 8th Block, Bangalore—560 095, India. Email: promise@vsnl.com

© 2007 The Author. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
not available. All that is termed as “counselling” today was embedded within a complex support system of social relationships. The ancient guru–shishya (teacher–disciple) parampara (tradition) epitomises this relationship within which the guru (or elder) carried the responsibility of “forming” and “shaping” the lives of students. Over the centuries the central position of this venerable institution has gradually been eroded and lost. Today, elder and young person, parent and child, teacher and student are equally at a loss when faced with the bewildering changes that have swept across this ancient land. A review of the development and current status of counselling psychology in India must be located within a discourse about the wider philosophic issues that undergird psychology as a discipline. In particular, this discourse must refer to the contributions of Western psychology, with its scientific orientation, and traditional Indian psychology, with its intuitive and experience-based approach. This paper begins with an overview of these deliberations and will be followed by a discussion of how counselling psychology could be enriched and made relevant not only to the Indian context but to the discipline as a whole.

WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIA

Psychology until the latter part of the 19th century was subsumed under the far-reaching branches of philosophy, and psychologists lived in the borderland between metaphysics and science. Psychology found its independence from philosophy when Wilhelm Wundt through his psychological laboratory in Leipzig was able to demonstrate that human behaviour could indeed be the subject matter of empiricism. Psychology committed itself in a very fundamental manner to the position that assertions that have no empirical consequences, are not characterised by regularity of cause and effect, and are not verifiable or objectively replicable, in effect, fall outside its purview. Psychology actively sought to distinguish itself from theology and metaphysics by adopting the inductive process of scientific reasoning based on the objective verification of facts through experimentation and unbiased observation. Psychology thereby separated itself from its earlier preoccupation with the “soul” and committed itself instead to the study of “behaviour”.

Western, academic psychology or “mainstream” psychology was introduced to India about 75 years ago and at the last count, 63 universities were listed as offering degrees in psychology, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. While this is indicative of a substantial growth in quantitative terms, the usefulness of psychology to the Indian context has not been clearly evident and the discipline has not advanced in India as it has in the Western world. One of the reasons cited for this apparent lassitude and lack of relevance is that the practice of modern psychology in India has remained
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIA

71

tied to the apron strings of the West. Research has by and large been replicative and practice quite often seems disconnected from felt needs. In one of his reviews the late Durganand Sinha, a well-known Indian psychologist, pointed out that very little originality has been displayed and that Indian research has added hardly anything to the body of psychological knowledge (Sinha, 1993). While this situation has changed to some extent over the recent past, psychology in India has still not found its Indian roots and at best has remained a poor copy of Western psychology, showing little relevance to the social realities that prevail in the country. Accusing the West of being domineering has become routine and these arguments have not gone much beyond vehement rhetoric. There is a further, perhaps deeper question which is related to the philosophic framework to which Western psychology is committed. The logical and empirical approach fits well in a culture that is itself founded on materialistic individualism. It would be naïve to discount the contributions from Western psychology that have emerged from the contexts in which it was born. The question is whether the same approach would “take” in a different soil. A purely empirical method may not be suited to a collectivistic, developing world culture that has its roots in an intuitive and experiential approach to reality. This philosophic mismatch might lie at the heart of the failures of which modern psychology in India is accused. And this brings us to the second overarching theme of this paper, namely, traditional Indian psychology.

MANO VIDYA: TRADITIONAL INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY

This part of the paper requires us to step back at least 2,000 years in time, to the detailed and sophisticated articulations in ancient Indian texts that pertain to the mind, behaviour, emotions, perception, cognitions, personality, traits, and a host of such psychological constructs. Psychology is not new to Indian thought, and ancient Indian writings both in the Vedic and Buddhist literature are replete with sophisticated psychological concepts and systems that provide clear evidence for the existence of a traditional Indian psychology or Mano (mind) Vidya (knowledge). A number of these psychological concepts and intervention techniques bear a startling resemblance to ideas put forth by modern Western psychology and yet predate these efforts by two millennia. Given below are illustrations of ancient Indian psychological concepts that have a direct bearing on counselling.

Some of the earliest ideas pertaining to developmental stages, for example, are described by the Ashrama system. Taking a life-span approach, this ancient description provides guidelines for the discharging of specific duties and occupational roles as one progresses through the stages of life. The production of wealth and the pursuit of personal prosperity are described
as a life duty. The crucial point to be noted is that these activities are described as belonging to a certain stage in the course of the individual’s growth and development. The preoccupation with personal gain and personal pleasures is expected to wane after its purpose is served. Living life to the full is described as having other targets and objectives. The individual is expected to pass through and grow beyond material and physical desires and move toward the realisation of other, higher, spiritual aspects of the self (see Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004, for a review). The *Triguna* theory described in 600 BC could well be described as a three-factor description of personality types, according to which the human personality comprises three *gunas* or qualities—*sattva, rajas, and tamas*. This formed the basis for guiding young people toward occupational roles for which they were suited, echoing what we would call career counselling today (see Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004, for a review). The Bhagavad Gita which was written around 200 BC is central to the Hindu scriptures. This writing is a description of interaction between a confused and anxious military leader, Arjuna, and his spiritual mentor, Lord Krishna, and provides perhaps one of the earliest illustrations of the effect of cognitions on emotions and behaviour and subsequently describes how counselling could reorient a person to deal effectively with life tasks (see Kuppuswamy, 1985, for a review). Psychosomatics forms a significant portion of the Ayurvedic (Indian traditional medicine) approach to healing with detailed descriptions of how emotions are linked to both physical illnesses and psychological disturbances (see Ajaya, 1983, for a review). This glimpse into India’s ancient past makes it abundantly clear that a vibrant psychological tradition had developed in parallel with Western efforts within the same field. The task before us now is to briefly examine the philosophic underpinnings upon which traditional Indian psychology rests. This section of the discussion will draw extensively from a brilliant exposition presented by Matthijs Cornelissen in the National Academy of Psychology’s 12th Annual Conference in India (Cornelissen, 2001).

Western psychology has taken the empirical and objective approach and worked strenuously at moving away from theology, metaphysics, and subjective experience. In contrast, traditional Indian psychology has taken a diametrically opposite course. Subjective experience and intuition are given primacy over objective observations and measurements. In the same manner that Western psychology is committed to the deployment of techniques to make valid and reliable objective observations, the Indian tradition has developed a wide variety of methods to sharpen the quality and reliability of inner, subjective observations. These methods are many and vary across schools of thought. But at the core, they rest on a “particular combination of concentration and detachment, leading to an attentive, one would almost say, ‘objective’, inner silence” (Cornelissen, 2001, p. 5).
COUNSELLING NEEDS: THE INDIAN CONTEXT

While the controversies between Indian and Western approaches rage in the theoretical sphere, the need for counselling services has grown to levels of great urgency in India. Counselling needs in India manifest themselves within a particularly dynamic social, cultural, and economic ethos. I present an excerpt from my case notes that illustrates the many challenges that face counselling psychology in India.

This was an interaction in Kannada (a local vernacular) with the parents of a 23-year-old girl working in the Information Technology Enables Services (ITES) sector in Bangalore (an Indian city that has become well known for its computer industry). This was an agricultural family, about 300 kilometres from Bangalore. They were referred by a general practitioner to whom they had gone seeking help. Her parents’ complaints, and a source of great distress for them, was that she had cut herself off from her family, was disrespectful, and did not want to interact with her family anymore. Given below are excerpts from my initial interactions with her parents (reconstructed from case notes).

**Father:** We are from a small town. We wanted to educate our daughter. She was a good student and we wanted her to become an engineer. But she did not get a place in a prestigious college. So we sent her to Bangalore for a Bachelor’s degree in Science. She was fine during her college years. After college she got a computer job. We were very happy. But our happiness was short lived.

**Mother:** She is a city girl. But that is fine. We sent her to the city and that is what is expected. But we are sad and afraid now, because she feels ashamed of us.

**Counsellor:** What makes you feel she is ashamed of you?

**Mother:** She does not come home or even write any letters. So we decided to visit her workplace. We found her office with great difficulty. It is a great, tall building made with glass. When we saw it we were happy. I thought she must be too busy to come home.

**Counsellor:** How did she change?

**Father:** We went inside and asked for her. The secretary was very rude. She told us to speak in English. I don’t know English. But the security guard helped us. He told us that she is working now and cannot be called outside. We decided to wait till her break time. At about 7.30 p.m. they called her outside.

**Mother:** When I saw her I did not even recognise her. She has cut her hair. She had long black hair. Now it is short and she has put some colour in her hair. That also is alright. But her dress was
too bad. She was wearing tight jeans and a tight blouse. It is not the way decent girls dress.

Father: What made us very sad is that she was so angry with us. She shouted at us. She told us not to come to her office. She said she has a different life now and is happy she is not in the village anymore. I also got angry and ordered her to come home at once. She just turned and walked off.

Counsellor: Are you able to understand why she behaved like this?

Mother: No. All I can see is that she has changed. How will we manage her future? How will we get her married? No good boy in our caste will accept a girl like this.

Father: She has become arrogant and indecent. It is all because of this Bangalore City. How can she shout at us in public? Even the security guard there was more courteous to us.

Counsellor: Have you tried to contact her again?

Mother: We have her phone number. So we tried to call her. She said not to call her since she was too busy. She told us to go back and leave her alone.

Father: What should we do now? We have to take her back. Should we make a police complaint?

This case study provides an example of the complexities that surround counselling needs in modern India. A closer analysis of this example reveals that a number of psychological and cultural processes are in operation. The break-up of the joint family, the collectivistic nature of family organisation, the overtones of caste-based social stratification, gender issues and the special considerations that attend urban–rural migration are all factors embedded in the distraught statements made by this mother, father, and their daughter.

This case study also brings in the economic dimension. A decade of economic reforms has pushed India towards becoming one of the world’s fastest growing economies. This in turn has enhanced the pace of social change and given counselling needs a new complexion. On the surface it appears as if the country is experiencing unprecedented development. A closer look reveals, however, that “development” can be a double-edged sword—benefiting a few but exploiting a large number only for the “cheap labour” they offer. It will not be long before the fall-out of a rapidly globalising world that is increasingly coming under the control of the free market economy will also arrive at the doorstep of the counsellor practising in India.

The question that surfaces at this point is how prepared is the Indian counselling fraternity to meet this urgent and massive need? The answer is a disturbing one. Our recently concluded survey (WORCC-IRS; Arulmani & Nag, 2006) in 12 different Indian regions reaching a sample of over 7,000
young people revealed that less than 10 per cent of this sample had access to any form of counselling. We found in our interactions with 26 colleges located in different parts of the country, that only six of the lecturers who were in charge of career counselling had a background in behavioural science. Only three were trained in counselling (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004). Similar findings have also been reported by the few other studies available (e.g. Bhatnagar & Gupta, 1999). This is the reality and it is this reality that counsellors, be they of traditional Indian or Western persuasion, must address.

In keeping with the structure of this special issue of the *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, we move now to an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats that characterise counselling psychology in the Indian context.

As might be clear from the foregoing discussion, capturing the status of counselling in India within a SWOT framework is somewhat difficult. I therefore take the liberty of allowing a fair degree of overlap between the SWOT categories in the following analysis.

**STRENGTHS**

**Organisational Structures and Policy Action**

The importance of counselling (particularly with reference to vocational guidance) has been emphasised in India from as early as 1938 when the Acharya Narendra Dev Committee underlined the importance of guidance in education. Various commissions (e.g. The Mudaliar Commission, 1952; the Kothari Education Commission, 1964–66; the National Policies on Education, 1986 and 1992) have subsequently made strong recommendations for the formalisation of counselling services at a national level.

Guidance and counselling services seem to have been at their zenith in India during 1960s and the 1970s. Services were coordinated by the Central Bureau of Educational and Vocational Guidance (CBEVG) which worked through a national network of state bureaus of guidance. Bhatnagar (1997), in her review, points out that during this period new guidance activities and programmes were launched, development of literature and guidance tools and techniques was taken up, and publication of guidance newsletters, journals and articles was at its peak. Professional development programmes were carried out by the All India Vocational and Educational Guidance Association (AIVEGA). Guidance and counselling were considered to be new and emerging forces that were vitally important to the education system.

Gradually, however, the interest in guidance and counselling began to dwindle during the late 1980s and early 1990s. As per the last estimate, formal counselling services were available only in 9 per cent of schools in India (Bhatnagar, 1997). Further evidence of this decline in interest is seen...
in the number of research studies available for review. While approximately 160 studies were identified between 1974 and 1987, barely 13 studies were identified for the period between 1988 and 1992 (Bhatnagar, 1997). Two decades seem to have slipped by with little active work in the area of guidance and counselling in India.

In the recent past, however, there seems to have been a rekindling of interest as illustrated by two important national reviews that emphasised the importance of counselling. The Working Group on Adolescence for the 10th Five Year Plan has made strong recommendations for policy action to support counselling services that meet the needs of adolescents (Report of the Working Group on Adolescence for the 10th Five-Year Plan, 2001, pp. 39–40). Similarly, the Government of India’s national curriculum review in 2005 identified counselling services as being a sharply felt need within the school sector (Position Paper of the National Focus Group on Work and Education, 2005, p. 48).

The school sector has underlined counselling as an important and urgently felt need and has made the necessary policy provisions. The Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE), which is one of the largest education Boards in the country, in its 2001 national conference resolved that it would be mandatory for all of its schools to have trained school counsellors. This led to the establishment of a telephone helpline manned by about 40 principals of CBSE schools and trained counsellors. The service is supported by an online manual for CBSE tele-counsellors (www.cbse.nic.in/helpline2006.pdf).

Training Structures for Professional Development

Training opportunities for counselling skills are available through the university system and through the private initiatives of voluntary organisations and human resource development firms. A wide variety of courses have become available over the last few years that range from full-time postgraduate degree programmes to certificates and diplomas. Postgraduate degrees are offered by only a small number (approximately 10 to 12) of university departments of psychology, education, and social work. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), a premier Government of India organisation, offers a one-year postgraduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling. These are government-accredited courses that lead to a Master’s degree/diploma in counselling after a two-year period of study. Private organisations also offer postgraduate diplomas and certificates in specific branches of counselling. Certificate courses in counselling are also available through the distance education mode.

Efforts have been directed toward the development of contextually relevant curricula for counsellor training. Of interest is the formulation of
a curriculum for a Master’s degree in Holistic Counselling that has been accredited by Bangalore University. A unique feature of the programme is that one of its course objectives is “to sensitise the learners to the possibilities and availability of alternate methods of healing with focus on indigenous and culturally accepted/practiced therapeutic methods” (Extract from course objectives, MSc Holistic Counselling). Course content includes developing skills to use yoga, reiki, acupressure, and meditation as counselling techniques.

Professional Associations

India has quite a large number of professional bodies and associations of psychology. The most well known are the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists, the Indian Psychological Association, the Indian Academy of Applied Psychologists, the National Academy of Psychology, and the Indian Psychoanalytical Society. Most of these associations publish their own journals (e.g. *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *Journal of the Indian Association of Applied Psychology*). They also hold annual conferences. Particularly noteworthy was the National Academy of Psychology’s 12th Annual Conference with the theme: Psychology in India: Past, Present and Future. Key issues related to indigenisation of psychology were raised during these deliberations.

WEAKNESSES

Poor Conceptual Clarity

As discussed at length in the first section of this paper, psychology in India has been excessively dependent on Western psychology. Although significant resources were directed toward research, the relevance of counselling to the Indian social and cultural context does not seem to have been the focus of this research. The attempt seems to have been to adopt (or at best adapt) Western concepts with little or no consideration for “discovering” new approaches and validating them for the Indian situation. India has not as yet defined the parameters for counsellor qualifications. An alarming trend seen as a result is that “counselling” is a term that is loosely used. In India, a counselling service could be offered by anyone at all. Quite often, well-intentioned individuals and social service clubs who are “interested in helping others” assume the role of counsellors. In the school/college context, this is a responsibility often carried by the teacher or lecturer who is deputed to be the student welfare officer.

The nature and scope of counselling itself seems to remain poorly understood. Courses in rehabilitation, career guidance, marital problems, HIV/AIDS,
school mental health, or life skills all fall under the rubric of “counselling”. The response to the tsunami that hit South India in 2004 provides a stark example. Great efforts were directed toward providing counselling services to the victims who were devastated by the loss of their loved ones, livelihoods, and possessions. Many dozens of counselling centres were set up. Our interactions with a number of those who were “working with the victims” revealed that most of them were not trained and very few had even heard about the psychological consequences of grief and the human response to loss.

Organisational Structures: Inadequately Optimised

An evaluation of the organisational structure described above reveals that government-sponsored guidance bureaus have not been able to make much headway—the reasons cited being the paucity of funds and the lukewarm attitude towards counselling on the part of state educational authorities (Bhatnagar & Gupta, 1999). While organisational arrangements have provided for structures (e.g. Guidance Bureaus at the State and Central levels) and positions (e.g. Vocational Guidance Officers), through which at least some form of counselling could be rendered, these cadres have fallen into disuse. Although systems for service delivery have been set up, little has been done to optimise their effective operation.

The services of private organisations, however, are restricted to specific geographical areas and have not been able to expand their services to a national scale. Furthermore, these services are concentrated almost exclusively in the cities and most often target the higher economic status groups. The counselling needs of people from rural or less privileged backgrounds are poorly understood and most often left unaddressed. While an organisational structure for career counselling does exist in India, its scope seems to be quite limited.

Training Structures: Not in Step with Contextual Realities

An evaluation of existing curricula reveals that while a variety of theories are presented, very little has emerged in terms of Indian models for counselling. A common complaint is that most courses are highly theoretical. Except in a few cases (example cited above), existing programmes for counsellor training are poor replications of concepts that have originated in Western cultures. They offer a fairly effective deepening of trainees’ knowledge of counselling but do very little to enhance their skill literacy for the effective delivery of counselling services. The availability of courses in counselling psychology is quite limited. Going by the number of courses presently on offer, it seems that approximately 1,200 to 1,500 counsellors are trained.
annually. There is almost no monitoring of the quality of counsellor training. An individual who has gone through a three-day “counselling skills workshop” could call herself a counsellor, just as easily as someone else who has gone through a two-year programme.

**Psychometric Approach**

The approach to counselling in India has been predominantly psychometric in orientation. While such an approach poses its own controversies, the nature of psychometric research itself has been inconsistent, sporadic, and unsystematic. As Bhatnagar (1997) points out, most of the tests seem to have been prepared by individuals for their specific purposes and very few tests were developed by institutions with the rigour of psychological test development. Proper validity studies, establishing reliability, and preparation of norms were not undertaken. This approach continues to influence counselling orientations and the emphasis quite often seems to be more on gathering data about the client rather than gathering data in order to support or help the client.

The weaknesses of the counselling service in India were well summarised by Dave when she observed that “the entire technical work in the area appears to be raw in terms of unclarified concepts, inadequately trained counsellors and haphazardly planned programmes” (Dave, 1974). Although this observation was made three decades ago, the situation remains more or less unchanged even today.

**OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS**

A survey that we conducted in 1993 elicited the responses of 78 heads of schools to the following statement: “Would your school benefit from professional counselling services other than what is already provided by the teacher?” In 1993, a mere 5 per cent of school heads agreed that counselling was an important service. When the same individuals were surveyed seven years later in the year 2000, 95 per cent agreed that counselling was not only important and essential but an urgently required service. The nature of economic and cultural change in India has led to a tremendous groundswell in the demand for counselling services over the last decade. This is the single most important opportunity that presents itself to the counselling movement in India. An equally powerful threat, however, is that the Indian counselling service is still at great risk of remaining estranged from contextual realities. Counselling psychology in India is in urgent need of a theoretical framework which would guide research and practice. The great opportunity that presents itself to the Indian counselling fraternity is to _discover_ a fresh and relevant psychology of counselling.
TRADITIONAL INDIAN AND WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY:
A MATRIX FOR DISCOVERY

Situated in the realms of theory and high philosophy, the first part of this paper presented the salient features of two forms of psychological thought that have emerged in India from within two entirely different philosophic orientations. On the ground, the Indian reality demands a psychology of counselling that is relevant, culturally validated, and dynamic enough to accommodate the great variations that compose the Indian situation. We have at hand two great sources that could support this enterprise, namely, the traditional Indian and the Western approaches to psychology. A simplistic approach would be to reject one in favour of the other. This might be an easier approach and less fraught with pitfalls. To my mind, such a rejection would rob counselling psychology of the wisdom and experience of an entire body of knowledge. I would instead take a leaf out of the Eastern traditions and search for the golden mean in a spirit of equanimity. I do believe that the greatest opportunity that lies before us is to delve into these great traditions to discover a new way forward for counselling in India. Some of the key issues that surround this possibility are discussed below.

The argument that Western psychology is materialistic to the point of reducing human beings to mere objects is perhaps true of the purest form of behaviourism and in that sense is a dated one. There have been revolutions within Western psychology that have critiqued this position and psychology has moved on to less mechanistic standpoints. The humanistic school, for example, takes a holistic view of the human being and reinstates the human individual to a position of primacy. The fact remains, however, that Western psychology is strongly rooted in materialistic individualism. These leanings may help retain its relevance to the western context, but may diminish its importance to the more collectivistic contexts of the east.

It appears to me, however, that the rigour and unbiased objectivity that logical positivism has brought into Western psychology is one of its salient strengths. The fact that its epistemology is “outward looking”, seeking to approach knowledge using the tools of reasoning and experimentation does not make it wrong. In fact it is such an approach that provides the opportunity to separate fact from superstition. Having said this, it must be stated that when Western psychologists see theirs as the only approach and are dismissive of methods and systems that have emerged from non-Western contexts, difficulties begin to rise. It is vital that Western psychology recognises that “materialist reductionism is a puritan view; it clears out superstition, but in the end it sterilizes and leaves one with a bare, severely diminished remnant of reality” (Cornelissen, 2001).

Turning to the traditional Indian approach, it is important to understand that the spirituality it describes is not intended to push the individual into

an “other worldly” framework. This approach describes a way of life that seamlessly combines the temporal and metaphysical, the material and spiritual. In fact traditional Indian psychology encourages a vigorous engagement with life. It is important to note that these ideas are not merely empty exhortations. Traditional Indian psychology offers a repertoire of practical techniques that facilitate the individual’s journey through the stages of life.

A critical weakness of traditional Indian psychology is that it is distant from the comprehension of the common man. Times have changed and today’s life styles are dramatically different. The case study presented above illustrates some of these changes. A key challenge before the Indian psychologist is to bring these concepts into the grasp of Indians living in the here and now. Failing this, the incorporation of concepts from Indian psychology into a contemporary counselling framework could be written off as being irrelevant to modern life. A further threat to the traditional position is the myriad concepts and constructs that are put forth by the various schools of thought and the complex interactions between them. These interrelationships need to be articulated much more clearly. There also seems to be a lack of consistency and precision in the interpretation of concepts across writers. Descriptions of the term “consciousness” (a concept central to traditional Indian psychology) as a cognitive function, an emotion or a state of being by different writers illustrates this point. Further, some of the concepts of traditional Indian thought do not seem to be in synchrony with contemporary findings. Ideas for example that the seat of the mind is between the Siras (head) and Thalu (hard palate) or in the heart are essentially a throwback to a time when it was not necessary for conjecture to be supported by evidence. Ideas such as these must be re-examined and reinterpreted. There is an urgent need to develop a contemporary vocabulary for the expression of these ancient concepts. Restraint must be exercised when claims are made. Assertions, for example, that the first Indian civilisation is 1,900 million years old (see Thapar & Witzel, 2006, for critique) serve only to give cause for scepticism.

The opportunity that presents itself is not for the creation of an Indian or Western form of counselling. The danger here is to accord primacy to a certain concept simply because of the school to which it belongs. The three-factor description of personality based on three gunas (traits), for example, has been used to develop the Vedic Personality Inventory (Wolf, 1998). Similarly, there is now a concerted effort to develop psychological instruments based on concepts from traditional Indian psychology. If the motivation behind the construction of these instruments does not go beyond the fact that they are just based on an Indian theory then nothing more has been achieved than the addition of yet another set of tests to the vast numbers that already exist. The task before us is not merely to raise the status of one form of psychology by directing attention and resources toward it. Instead

the urgent requirement is to work toward developing a form of counselling that draws from these different traditions with the final objective of being relevant in a complex and changing world.

REFERENCES


A Perspective on Counseling Psychology in Japan: Toward a Lifespan Approach

Agnes Mieko Watanabe-Muraoka*
University of Tsukuba, Japan

INTRODUCTION

Conducting this SWOT analysis of counseling psychology accelerated my discussions with colleagues and the president of the Japanese Association for Counseling Science about the future of counseling psychology in Japan. These discussions began several years ago when I became impatient with the chaotic circumstances of the counseling profession in our society. I have also waited until the time was ripe to identify the raison d’être as well as the possibilities for advancing the discipline of counseling psychology in Japan. It was with great pleasure that that my colleagues and I worked to construct a clear vision for the discipline of counseling psychology in Japan along with strategies to implement this vision in our university during the next few years.

* Address for correspondence: Agnes Mieko Watanabe-Muraoka, Career Center, University of Tsukuba, 1-1-1, Tennoudai, Tsukubashi, Ibaraki-ken, Japan. Email: mkwatanabe@sec.tsukuba.ac.jp

© 2007 The Author. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
Before presenting the SWOT analysis, I provide a context for it by explaining the circumstances of counseling psychology that are particular to Japan. It was in the early 1950s that counseling psychology was introduced to Japanese academic circles by American counseling psychologists. Since then, many Japanese have studied counseling in American universities and institutes. Quite a few publications have been translated from English into Japanese and they have been read by many Japanese professionals. During the intervening years, however, counseling psychology has never established its status as a distinct discipline in psychology and therefore no systematic counseling psychology or counselor education programs have ever been offered by the Japanese universities.

The more popular and familiar the words counseling and counselor have become within Japanese society, the more the confusion about their meaning has deepened and expanded. It should be indicated that this chaotic situation had been left as it was for 50 years, until the beginning of the 21st century. In 2002, the President of the Japanese Association of Counseling Science formally commissioned a special committee whose mission was to deal with the conceptualisation of counseling and to officially declare the definition to the members of the Association as well as to the public (Tagami & Ozawa, 2005). After reviewing references of the American Psychological Association (1984) and my book entitled Counseling Psychology (Watanabe-Muraoka, 1996), the committee presented an interim report in 2003 and a tentative definition appeared in the President’s keynote speech at the 37th Annual Conference of the Association, in 2004. In his definition, he characterised counseling psychology as a scientific function conducted through a human relationship in which the client is fully respected by the counselor. Furthermore, he identified three major goals of counseling psychology as (a) promoting human development based on the approaches of lifespan development and career development, (b) preventing problems, and (c) helping to solve practical problems (Tagami & Ozawa, 2005). However, counseling psychology itself was not formally defined by his committee.

The book entitled Counseling Psychology (Watanabe-Muraoka, 1996) has won recognition by scholars, editors, and practitioners as a cornerstone for the counseling profession in Japan, in part because it was the first professional publication to clarify the authenticity of counseling psychology as a discipline and to precisely define the terms counseling and counselor. The second edition of this book (Watanabe-Muraoka, 2002) emphasised that the profession of counseling psychology in Japan faces a critical turning point regarding whether counseling will survive and be appreciated as a unique profession in Japan or will be forgotten and disappear in the next
decade. An important element in its continued growth is the need to more fully conceptualise and professionalise counseling psychology in Japan. A possible way forward in this regard might be to introduce American and British definitions of counseling psychology and how they practice it.

As part of this endeavor, Watanabe (2002) reviewed professional publications written by Japanese psychologists and professionals in neighboring fields to clarify how the term counseling has been defined and what it connotes. As a result, various definitions and connotations were tentatively categorised with the following five meanings:

(a) Counseling is synonymous with the word psychotherapy (e.g. Ogawa, 1995); counselor is synonymous with psychotherapist.
(b) Counseling means a treatment of one-to-one communication used by human service professionals such as social workers and nurses.
(c) Counseling means a good and warm human relationship in any situation. The phrase counseling mind was coined by a school superintendent about 30 years ago. It is very popular in Japan and is easily confused with counseling itself. The phrase counseling mind connotes an attitude that values human relationships and the motivation to develop human relationships (Kokubu, 1986).
(d) Counseling means the non-directive behavior of “just listening” and accepting what the other person says while not giving advice or information.
(e) Counseling means the technique of resolving another person’s mental problems through giving advice or information.

In the process of this survey, it was noted that the term counseling psychology scarcely appeared in Japanese publications about counseling.

WEAKNESSES

Because counseling psychology has not yet been accepted as a distinct specialty within psychology, training programs have not been offered in any Japanese university. Therefore, a section about strengths is not included in this article. It should be clear that the major internal weakness is its underdevelopment as an independent psychological profession. Watanabe and Herr (1980) once analysed the reasons why counseling psychology had never taken root in Japanese society, despite the fact that a variety of theories and techniques in counseling have been brought to Japan primarily from the United States and have been utilised by Japanese psychologists. During the last ten years, the situation of counseling psychology has not improved despite the efforts of the President of the professional organisation indicated above. The prolonged conceptual confusion seems to have produced a chaotic situation and stalled any advances in establishing counseling psychology as
a distinct discipline. So, the two major internal weaknesses of counseling psychology in Japan are the lack of an indigenous conceptualisation of counseling and little effort to promote the professionalisation of counseling psychology.

The lack of effort toward the professionalisation of counseling psychology coincides with the absence of systematic training programs in Japanese universities. Currently, one or two courses entitled “counseling” or “introduction to counseling psychology” are found in clinical psychology programs. The lack of university leadership seems to be attributable to the absence of psychologists who have both a thorough knowledge of counseling psychology and extensive experience in Japanese society. This means that there are not counseling psychologists who could take responsibility as reality-oriented policy-makers. This weakness is not easily addressed because of the pervasive attitude among Japanese psychologists who are skeptical about social change as well as newly emerging disciplines.

A second challenge to the professionalisation of counseling psychology in Japan may be found in the characteristics of the Japanese Association of Counseling Sciences which has been recognised as the only professional organisation since 1968. Its membership is still open to individuals and groups who are engaged in any kind of “caring” and “human service” work without any special qualifications.

Given this context, it is not difficult to understand the confusion and apprehension concerning counseling psychology in Japan. Several other problems which were indicated as factors exacerbating this confusion in 1980 (Watanabe & Herr, 1980) remain today. They are as follows:

1. Counseling psychology and clinical psychology have not been differentiated. Most professors who teach counseling or call themselves counselor educators are clinical psychologists. Further, more than half of the 30 board members of the professional organisation mentioned above maintain dual identities as both counselor educators and clinical psychologists, and they prefer this ambiguous dual identity to either the integration or differentiation of the dual identities.
2. Those psychologists who are involved with counselor education or counseling practice tend to identify counseling with one specific approach or technique. They frequently find it difficult to accept other approaches.
3. Rogers’ early conception of a non-directive approach introduced to Japanese psychology in the 1960s has remained the dominant influence in constructing the image of counseling in Japanese society. This situation promulgates the view that counselors are good listeners who never initiate problem-solving but rather wait for clients to make decisions when they are ready. Counselors who are trained in this model tend to confine themselves to listening to and accepting students or...
employees or clients but not engaging actively in other interventions such as psychological assessment, information dissemination, advising, career planning, and other techniques. Because of the expense of such a practice and the perceived lack of substance in the approach, administrators in business sectors and in educational institutes, as well as school teachers and career center workers, have tended to evaluate counselors as unnecessary or useless. Currently, in various settings counseling is being replaced with the newer technique entitled coaching. The Japan Ministry of Welfare and Labor decided to introduce a new title “career consultant” as a substitute for the title “career counselor” for professionals who help clients with difficulties in career choice, planning, and adjustment. This transpired because the majority of policy-makers viewed counselors as merely non-directive listeners.

4. Because most “counselor educators” in Japan are therapy-oriented, they believe that counselors should concentrate on the inner world of the individual and focus on intrapsychic conflicts. They tend to ignore personal problems that are related to environmental change and life transitions. The issues of “career” and “work–family conflict” are traditional examples which they regard as out-dated and inappropriate topics for counseling psychologists.

While these internal weaknesses in counseling circles have not been overcome, it is noteworthy that the developmental approach to human services is beginning to be recognised as a promising future orientation by those applied psychologists who have been influenced by health psychology and positive psychology. These colleagues are striving to position the developmental model and positive psychology methods at the center of counseling psychology in Japan.

**EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES**

It seems to be apparent that the scientific and professional efforts, drastic and rapid socioeconomic developments, and demographic changes of the past ten years in Japan may stimulate the advancement of counseling psychology as a discipline. The environmental changes have not yet made substantial impacts on employment and management policies in the business-industrial sector but they have fostered the diversification of individual value systems along with more individual variation in behavioral and life patterns. With the bursting of the economic bubble, in particular, Japanese society experienced the loss of old certainties and began to seek new directions and effective approaches which would contribute to the well-being of people now living in a society pressured by increasing unpredictability and rapid changes. The environmental changes which the Japanese people have
experienced for the past ten years resemble the historical situation that gave birth to counseling psychology in the United States as explained by Leona Tyler (1961).

Several important changes in Japanese society provide external opportunities to respond to the needs of individuals and to advance counseling psychology as a professional discipline in applied psychology. Japanese society has begun to move in new directions. For example, there appears to be a transition from traditional values toward individualistic values, from certainty to uncertainty, from careers in organisations to careers out of organisations, from decision-making by the group or organisation toward decision-making by the individual, from personnel management based on the lifetime employment and the seniority system toward diversification of the employment contract. Such dramatic social changes require that individuals be equipped with competencies such as taking personal responsibility for decision-making and managing their own careers as well as coping with stressful situations and adapting to an unpredictable future.

New legislation and policies have eliminated various barriers and expanded freedom of choice. Two policies should be specifically identified as external opportunities for the advancement of counseling psychology. The first policy is the Employment Security Law, Amendment of 1999. This amendment approved the sharing of employment-exchange with the Public Employment Security Offices and fee-charging profit agencies. It presents an external opportunity to create the demand for career counseling. The second policy change involves the enactment of new legislation and policies to promote the formation of a gender-equal society. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1986, its Amendment in 1997, the Child-Care Leave Law in 1992, and policies related to gender equality have changed many women’s value systems and way of life. For instance, the female career life has been extended to more jobs and a longer period of time in the labor force, and working patterns as well as life patterns have been diversifying. At the same time new psychological stressors such as work–family conflict as well as a lack of career maturity and responsibility to construct one’s own career have begun to afflict women. This situation has created a great need for specific programs and trained professionals to assist women in their career development and work–family balance.

Other social trends related to establishing counseling psychology as an important discipline in Japan should be noted. First, there has been a move to advocate for career education at all levels of education from elementary school to the university. Second, there has been an increase in suicide, mental illness, and maladjustment among employees aged 35 to 55. Third, there has been an increase in the jobless and the non-worker syndrome among young adults.

These societal changes and social trends have prompted a growing interest in “counselor as change agent” and the need to conceptualise models and
methods of counseling that fit Japanese society. Clearly, Japanese society could benefit from the orientations and strategies of counseling psychology. Until recently the problem-oriented and treatment-based orientations have been considered the best models to help individuals address problematic situations. However, many people in Japan have begun to question whether this traditional orientation is the best way to address contemporary challenges. In this atmosphere, the concept of “counselor as change agent” and an image of a counselor as one who “proactively acts on people as well as environment” (Watanabe & Herr, 2001) have attracted Japanese counseling practitioners who work in educational and business sectors. It is also noteworthy that psychiatrists have begun to respect the professionally trained career counselors as professional partners. They realise that professionally trained career-oriented counselors treat patients from a quite different perspective, one from which they help patients learn adaptive competencies for handling environmental challenges. Personnel managers in business have also become interested in the concept of career adaptability and in facilitating lifespan career development to complement employee-assistance functions that are largely remedial in nature.

As a recent external opportunity, it should be noted that an increasing number of workers in the business and education sectors have realised the distinction between counseling and psychotherapy such that the former mainly treats problems of daily living while the latter treats mental illness. Donald Super’s (1955) seminal article entitled “Transition: From vocational guidance to counseling psychology” is greatly appreciated and highly valued by counselors in Japan who are really concerned with the impact of social changes on individual life and society. The following part of his article especially captures their interest:

Counseling psychology is also concerned with handicapped, abnormal, or maladjusted persons, but in a way which is different from that which has characterized clinical psychology. Clinical psychology has typically been concerned . . . with the abnormalities even of normal persons . . . . Counseling psychology concerns itself with hygiology, with the normalities even of the abnormal person, with developing personal and social resources and adaptive tendencies so that the individual can be assisted in making more effective use of them. (p. 5)

THREATS TO COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

The strongest threat to the emergence of counseling psychology in Japan is the unvoiced resistance from professors and trainers who have intentionally ignored the differentiation of counseling psychology from clinical psychology. They prefer to regard counseling as a technique of psychotherapy. A second line of resistance to the professionalisation of counseling psychology is
presented by paraprofessionals who lack graduate degrees in any field of psychology yet use the occupational title of counselor. To be clear, it should be mentioned that not all applied psychologists and paraprofessionals stand against the advancement of counseling psychology.

CONCLUSION AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

In concluding this analysis, I recall a special issue of *The Counseling Psychologist* entitled “Counseling psychology in the year 2000”. In that issue, Osipow (1980) wondered if we might not be called counseling psychologists in the 21st century, and suspected that counseling psychologists would still be looking for an identity. In contrast, Thompson (1980) predicted that “counseling psychologists with their history of dealing with the normal, everyday reality problems of the entire spectrum of age and level of adjustment will have an increasingly important role to play... professional training in counseling will be the best preparation for the role” (1980, p. 22). Further, Zytowski (1985) mentioned that opportunities would continue to exist, and new directions in business, industry, and health would emerge to make counseling a vital force well into the 21st century.

The circumstances of counseling psychology in Japan today are actualising the predictions of Thompson and Zytowski. And the time has come to devote effort to defining the identity of counseling psychologists rather than to keep looking for it. Therefore, I propose for Japan a discipline of lifespan developmental counseling psychology. This new name connotes the following conceptual elements. First, development-oriented counseling psychology reflects the fact that in Japan social trends seem to be inevitably moving toward the need for a developmental orientation rather than a treatment orientation (Herr & Cramer, 1996). Unfortunately, counseling psychologists in Japan must face the reality that those professionals who assert the need for a development orientation have not acknowledged counseling psychology as the specialty with a 100-year history. Second, the title implies an integration between personal counseling and career counseling. Third, it includes a systematic application of distinctively psychological understanding, based on empirical research about the counseling process (Clarkson, 1998). Fourth, it is proactive as well as reactive toward the individual and social changes in socioeconomic, political, and cultural forces influencing human beings.

In order to develop the counseling psychology discipline in Japan, we must remember that Rogers’ very early conception of non-directive counseling has penetrated too deeply throughout Japanese society to alter it in just a few years. To change the image of counseling will require both time and effort. To establish counseling psychology as a separate discipline will require constructing five-year graduate programs which provide systematically
organised education. Publicising the content as well as rationale of such programs will accelerate the conceptualisation and professionalisation of counseling psychology in Japan. Graduates from such programs will become the best missionaries for advancing counseling psychology in Japan. Fortunately, faculty members with backgrounds in clinical, health, developmental, community, and social psychology as well as counseling psychologists have already started the process of the reconstruction of our entire university under the social pressure of education reform. Initially, the project sought to identify and educate policy-makers about the meaning of applied psychology as a human service profession. My colleagues agreed with my proposal to present “lifespan developmental counseling psychology” as a discipline focused on life design and life role counseling (Savickas, 1993) for every individual. If successful, this discipline will provide a comprehensive, holistic approach. Some colleagues still hesitate to include the term counseling, believing that not using it would create a fresh and positive impression for the public. I have agreed with the approach of not using the word “counseling” for now.

REFERENCES


Current Status and Prospects of Korean Counseling Psychology: Research, Clinical Training, and Job Placement

Young Seok Seo  
Konkuk University, South Korea  
Dong Min Kim*  
Chung-Ang University, South Korea  
Dong-il Kim  
Seoul National University, South Korea

En Corée, la psychologie du counseling s’est développée régulièrement au cours des six dernières décennies. Au cours de ce développement, divers problèmes sont apparus en provenance aussi bien de l’intérieur que de l’extérieur de la discipline. Dans cet article, nous survolons rapidement l’histoire de la psychologie du counseling coréenne et analysons ses forces et ses faiblesses internes, ainsi que les opportunités et les menaces en provenance de l’environnement. Cette analyse SWOT a été focalisée sur trois thèmes majeurs de la discipline, la recherche, le soutien clinique et l’orientation professionnelle. En conclusion, on esquisse un projet pour la psychologie du counseling en Corée.

Counseling psychology in Korea has been steadily growing in the past six decades. Along with its growth, various issues have emerged from the inside of the field as well as from the outside. In this article, we briefly review the history of Korean counseling psychology and then discuss internal strengths and weaknesses of the field and external opportunities and threats that the field is facing. This SWOT analysis was centered on three major themes of the discipline: i.e. research, clinical training, and job placement. Finally, a vision for counseling psychology in Korea is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of the Western model of counseling by American delegates of education in the 1950s, Korean counseling psychology has

* Address for correspondence: Dong Min Kim, Department of Education, Chung-Ang University, 221 Heukseog-dong, Dongjak-Gu, Seoul, Korea. Email: dminkim@cau.ac.kr

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
struggled to define its own identity in an ever-changing and competitive environment. Counseling psychology, initially housed in the Division of Clinical Psychology, achieved its independence and created a separate division within the Korean Psychological Association (KPA) in 1987. Since the creation of the Division, the field has witnessed tremendous growth in many aspects. The number of those who want to study counseling psychology as well as the number of counseling programs and faculty positions have increased exponentially during the last few decades. The division now has roughly 5,000 members and publishes a professional journal, the *Korean Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Therefore, it can arguably be said that counseling psychology in Korea has been established as a mainstream psychological discipline over the past half-century.

In addition, the places where counselors work have become more diverse than before, as the public's demand for mental health services has increased and diversified. Graduates of counseling programs now occupy positions in various settings including leading companies such as Samsung, LG, and POSCO, local youth counseling centers, and educational settings. Indeed, this expansion of work settings truly indicates enhanced recognition of the utility of counseling services by Korean society. However, this increased status and use of counseling psychology does not guarantee corresponding growth in the quality of the field.

In the following sections, we will be analysing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that we believe Korean counseling psychology has. This SWOT analysis will be centered on three major themes of the discipline, i.e. research, clinical training, and job placement. We hope that once the analysis is done, we will be able to figure out the ways in which we can make use of our internal strengths and external opportunities to overcome our internal weaknesses and external threats, consolidating counseling psychology in Korea as a more viable and competitive mental health discipline in Korean society.

**INTERNAL STRENGTHS OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN KOREA**

Korean counseling psychology has many strengths and vitalities. Above all, Korean counseling psychologists have put much emphasis on conducting research that has direct implications to counseling theory and practice. Since 1988, the Korean Counseling Psychological Association has published the *Korean Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy (KJCP)*, which is regarded as the flagship journal for counseling psychology in Korea.

To get some insight into the areas of research that Korean counseling psychologists have been interested in, we conducted a content analysis of the research published in the *KJCP*. We believe that articles published in
journals such as the KJCP not only reflect the vision, interests, and objectives of the editors and editorial staff, but also mirror the core values and assumptions about human nature that are the foundation of the professional identity of Korean counseling psychologists. Further, the historical analysis of articles published in the KJCP can provide an objective documentation of the longitudinal progress and growth of counseling psychology in Korea.

To identify the major content areas and patterns of publication in the KJCP, a total of 32 journals containing 350 articles were reviewed. The period covered by the current analysis ranges from 1988 (Vol. 1) to 2005 (Vol. 17). (The KJCP did not issue publications in 1991.) In performing this analysis, we followed the frame of content analysis employed by Buboltz, Miller, and Williams (1999). Instead of their 14 categories, we decided to code the articles into the following 12 content categories: outcome, process, process-outcome, counselor training and supervision, attitudes and beliefs about counselors and counseling services, personality and adjustment, academic achievement and vocational behavior, development and evaluation of tests and measures, research methods and statistics, research reviews, theoretical articles, and miscellaneous. After each article was placed into one of the content categories, the following methodological characteristics were also recorded: (a) sample used (e.g. college students, counselors, etc.) and (b) sex composition of sample.

It was found that the number of issues and articles published in the KJCP has more than doubled during the last five years. Two hundred and fifty-five articles have been published since the year 2000. This dramatic increase in the number of publications is mainly due to the fact that the KJCP started publishing multiple journals from the year 2000. Given that publications in the KJCP must pass the review of editors and editorial boards to ensure that articles meet professional standards for relevance, ethics, and scholarship, this increase surely indicates that Korean counseling psychologists are competent in conducting research. It also suggests that Korean counseling psychologists deem research to be a crucial aspect of their professional identity.

Another positive aspect of the current findings is that most of the theoretical articles have been published since the year 1999. Interestingly, these articles have similarities in that they question the applicability of the counseling theories and skills that originated in Western countries and cultures to the Korean population. This reflects an awareness among individual authors, the editor, and the discipline of Korean counseling psychology of the need to consider cultural issues and further develop theories and skills that are more in tune with specific experiences of the Korean public. In addition, 65 per cent of authors in articles reporting gender characteristics have used samples including both genders. The use of mixed-gender samples suggests that the field is cognisant of the potential impact of gender differences on counseling psychology’s practice, theory, and research.
Pertaining to the clinical training aspect, the certification system of the Korean Counseling Psychological Association (KCPA) deserves to be regarded as an asset to Korean counseling psychology. Currently, the certification board and its certification criteria demand a relatively high level of training and competence. The certification board requires the candidates who pass the written exam to submit documented evidence of competence including the names and qualifications of their clinical supervisors, total hours of clinical supervision, the names and hours of attended workshops, seminars, and case conferences, total number of case presentations, total hours of individual and group counseling, and total hours of test administration and interpretation. Work samples including audiotapes and transcriptions of counseling sessions are also required. We believe that this rigorous certification system has produced quality counselors, which may have resulted in the public’s growing awareness of the utility and effectiveness of counseling.

While Korean counseling psychology has achieved visible growth, accountability issues are now emerging as a high priority. One of these issues is ethics of professional conduct. The idea that ethics should be treated as a critical area of consideration in professional conduct is not new among the members affiliated with this field. In 2003, professional ethics codes, which resemble those of the American Psychological Association (APA) in many aspects, were promulgated by the KCPA. The KCPA certification board not only identifies counseling ethics as one of the core competences that applicants for certification should demonstrate throughout the training period, but it also requires ethics as a subject matter that they should pass on the certification exam. Further, the KCPA launched its ethics committee, and the authority attached to the committee was strong enough to expel two certified counseling psychologists for violating the ethics code that prohibits sexual relationships with clients. One visible change incurred by these cases was that instructors began to mention ethical issues as relevant topics for their courses.

With regard to job placement, Korean counseling psychologists have made substantial efforts to establish a visible professional presence and to create career positions at various service settings, which deserves to be considered one of their strengths. University counseling centers have traditionally been considered the primary choice for graduates of counseling psychology programs. An increasing number of graduates are now finding their positions in diverse work settings. Youth counseling centers are the most preferred. For the last two decades, youth counseling centers have been successively founded across the country as part of a national project initiated by the Korea Youth Counseling Institute (KYCI) which develops nation-wide policies regarding youth counseling. Local youth counseling centers (16 hub centers and 136 local centers) provide counseling services primarily to adolescents at risk and their families. Hub centers play the role of developing and supplying intervention programs and strategies as well as administrative
assistance to the local centers. Local centers are the frontline agencies that deliver intervention services to the target populations.

**INTERNAL WEAKNESSES OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN KOREA**

The content analysis of the research published in the *KJCP* revealed that Korean counseling psychologists have been actively engaged in conducting studies on a variety of topics. However, some areas have received a large amount of attention among Korean counseling psychologists, while other areas have been relatively neglected. The principal areas of research activities and publications in the *KJCP* were personality and adjustment (27%), outcome (13%), academic achievement and vocational behavior (9%), and development and evaluation of tests and measures (9%). The overall ranks of the top four content categories have remained consistent over the observed time span. Altogether, studies in these four categories account for 59 per cent of the articles, while the other eight content categories comprised the remaining 41 per cent of the articles published in the *KJCP* between 1988 and 2005. Of the publications relatively less studied, 4 per cent were accounted for by theoretical articles, 4 per cent by attitudes and beliefs on counselors and counseling services, and 1 per cent by research methods and statistics. These findings suggest the necessity to increase the diversity of counseling psychology research in Korea.

It should be noted that college students were the most frequently used sample across the years (39%), followed by nonclinical adults (27%), counselor trainees and counselors (18%), and clients (10%). It may be unfair to criticise Korean counseling psychologists for using college student samples in their research, as this is a group of research participants used by counseling psychologists in Western countries. However, diversification of research practices may aid in promoting the ideal notion that counseling psychologists are oriented toward practicing with and researching individuals across the whole life span in various settings.

Despite the relatively rigorous credentialing system of the KCPA, we do not have an agreed-upon training model. A well-established training model such as the scientist-practitioner model would help identify the core characteristics that all trainees should acquire through their training. Moreover, without an agreed-upon model of training, the mass production of counselors who are heterogeneous in terms of knowledge, attitude, and competence may result. Currently, the KCPA board requires candidates for the credential to hold an advanced degree with a major study in a counseling-related field, to meet supervised experience requirements, and to achieve a passing score on written exams. However, the board does not specify semester or quarter hour requirements nor content area requirements.
Recently, some counseling psychologists have argued for the need to set up a formal training model (e.g., Ahn, 2003; Lee, 1996; Lee & Kim, 2002). For instance, Lee (1996) argued that one cannot justify claiming the high competence of graduates to the public if the content and quality of training vary widely from program to program. Indeed, Lee’s data implied that graduates of different training programs differed in terms of the amount and areas of clinical training they received as well as the amount of knowledge in the basic areas of psychology. The programs surveyed varied widely in the minimum number of courses required and the topics covered by the curriculum.

In a similar vein, there is lack of practicum and internship opportunities for counseling psychology graduate students, particularly for doctoral students. Most graduate programs do not incorporate practicum and internship components into their curriculum. Most students are forced to exert tremendous efforts to obtain practicum and internship opportunities outside of their academic programs, which is usually a financial burden on them. Therefore, the level of frustration the students feel in this process is very high and is likely to become worse with the increase in the number of trainees and a shortage of training sites. Moreover, given that currently there is no authorized accrediting system for counselor training sites, the kind and quality of clinical training cannot be systematically monitored or controlled, which is problematic. Therefore, one urgent agenda for the certification board is to urge training programs to incorporate clinical training components within their curriculum and further to set up internal or affiliated training facilities in which they can train their own students.

It should also be noted that even if the KCPA promulgated its ethics codes, few academic programs offer counseling ethics as a separate, formal course. Two to three hours of class discussion on ethical issues during the entire course of their clinical training would not be enough to prepare most counseling trainees for handling future complex ethical dilemmas. Furthermore, given their areas of expertise and the amount of ethics training, most instructors are not qualified to teach all relevant aspects of ethical issues. Thus, ethics training need to be implemented in a way that ethical principles and their applications are covered in a separate, stand-alone course using a variety of methods that blend theory and application.

EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN KOREA

Recent developments within and outside the discipline appear to be advantageous to counseling psychologists. First, the number of counseling psychologists who set up their own clinics in the community is increasing. According to the data by COUNPIA, a company running a counseling-related
portal website, as of the year 2003 there were 92 private counseling centers across the country (Kim & Lee, 2004). Since there is no legislative restriction at this point on mental health-related private practice except prescribing psychiatric medicine, more counseling psychologists are expected to pursue this professional pathway. Also, business firms whose counseling facilities provide individual, career, and group counseling services for their employees and family members are now attracting more counselors. Given the number of potential clients, counseling in the business sector is one of the most promising areas.

Religious organisations and churches also hire professional counseling psychologists in an effort to extend their educational and counseling services to the general public. Other societal arenas such as the military and court systems are now planning to hire professional counselors to take care of the mental health of soldiers and to help couples who are considering divorce.

Meanwhile, other areas have recently drawn Korean counselors’ attention, and these can be viewed as opportunities for them to make major contributions to society. One of the areas is internet addiction (IA), which refers to excessive use of the internet at a level that interferes with social, occupational, and school functioning. Korea is developing as one of the fast growing IT powers, and adverse side effects are being observed among some internet users (e.g. excessive and dysfunctional use of internet, internet gambling). Fortunately, the Korean government as well as the public regards counseling psychology as the discipline having expertise in developing and implementing intervention programs for those addicted to internet-related activities. Indeed, it is counseling psychologists that have published the majority of research in this area and have developed most of the intervention programs currently available in Korea. Further, the National Youth Commission (NYC) asked counseling psychologists to develop and implement an IA counselor training program. We believe we will have further chances to contribute and thereby to win heightened status in this area.

A further aspect of external opportunity is related to the steady influx of North Korean refugees and foreign laborers. Many North Korean refugees are reported to have difficulties with their adjustment to life in South Korea, and some of them experience severe psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety and depression (Keum, Joo, Kim, Kim, & Lee, 2005). Foreign laborers, who occupy so-called 3-D (dirty, difficult, and dangerous) jobs in Korea, are undoubtedly undergoing prejudice and discrimination against them as well as struggling to adjust themselves to the alien Korean culture. This environment gives great potential for Korean counseling psychologists in that on the system level they are advocates for the disadvantaged who can intervene to bring about changes that are more permanent for refugees and
laborers, as well as on the individual level they can help them to cope with their personal and vocational concerns. As the number of North Korean refugees and international laborers is expected to increase in the upcoming years, it is very likely that counseling psychologists will be called upon to serve these populations.

**EXTERNAL THREATS TO COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN KOREA**

Korean counseling psychology is now facing a reality not easy to deal with. Counseling psychologists are competing for limited positions with professionals from other disciplines such as social work and clinical psychology. Also, they are now being asked to extend their roles and even identities so that they perform somewhat alien tasks that have been considered out of their domain.

Social workers may be the strongest competitor of counselors, for which there are at least three reasons. First, the work of social workers is highly compatible with the recent demands from the Korean government. Since the beginning, the current government has placed top priority on providing social services for those with low socioeconomic status, particularly those who have not been properly cared for due to unduly strict applications of the social welfare laws and regulations. In actuality, what social workers do accords well with what the government demands, i.e. reaching out to such populations and providing them with hands-on services. Second, social workers are socially visible. Due to their practical approach to mental health and their widespread presence in Korean society, they are well recognised and accepted by the public. Further, social workers have been actively involved in the policy-making processes either in the government ministries or the legislature. As a result, social workers have achieved their legal status as a major service provider in the large-scale government funded projects. Third, the number of social workers trained and experienced in counseling has been increasing. Counseling skills and psychological interventions have not been considered as core areas of their specialties, but social work programs are now beginning to offer counseling courses at the undergraduate level as well as the graduate level. Furthermore, an increasing number of social workers are now seeking counseling credentials without changing their identity as a social worker, which is a threat to counseling psychologists. In sum, social workers are in a better position to meet recent societal demands.

Under the circumstances that emphasise outreach and hands-on services, counseling psychologists are now being asked to extend their roles to meet new demands from society. For instance, the National Youth Commission recently launched a special project called Community Youth Safety Net...
(CYS-Net). CYS-Net aims to create a social safety net particularly for the adolescents considered at-risk who are mostly from families of low socio-economic status. This project asks counseling psychologists to perform the roles that have been traditionally perceived as those of other helping professionals such as social workers. Under this project, counseling psychologists are required to reach out to target clients to provide practical assistance which can bring quick solutions and visible outcomes. Indeed, most counseling psychologists are resistant to this pressure from the government, and thus this is an obvious threat to those who want to stick to traditional roles of counseling psychologists. Unless counseling psychologists accommodate to these new roles and take initiatives on this project, however, it is very likely that counseling psychology will lose a good opportunity to extend its professional role, thereby allowing other mental health professional groups to take over the positions counseling psychologists have taken up over the past two decades. It is time to find wise ways to balance maintaining our unique identity and adjusting ourselves to these demands.

In addition, clinical psychologists, who used to work in hospitals with expertise in psychological testing and diagnosis, appear to be trying to expand their sphere of influence. With the increasing number of clinical psychologists but limited positions in hospitals, clinical psychologists are now making alternative career paths (e.g. opening their private clinics and providing psychotherapeutic or counseling services to their clients). At this time the overlap in professional practice between clinical psychology and counseling psychology is restricted to the area of psychotherapy. However, given that the boundary between psychotherapy and counseling has become blurred and that the terms are often used interchangeably, the overflow of clinical psychologists into counseling psychologists’ unique practice areas is predictable. The problem is that there are possibilities that they are engaged in the modes of intervention that have traditionally been considered the domains of counseling psychologists, i.e. developmental and preventive in nature. This can be a threat to counseling psychologists.

Other psychologists such as social psychologists and developmental psychologists also claim their qualifications as practitioners for some populations (e.g. criminals at the correction centers, infants and children). Traditionally, the positions that are designed to serve these populations have been filled mostly by counseling psychologists. Under the circumstances that other psychology disciplines are claiming their expertise with these populations and are giving credentials to their graduates who go through a certain level of training, competition seem to be unavoidable. Counseling psychologists may have to give up the privileges that they have enjoyed unless they consolidate the legitimacy of counseling psychology by proving that they have unique specialties and competences in serving these populations.

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
USING STRENGTHS TO TRANSFORM WEAKNESSES AND THREATS INTO POSSIBILITIES

The current SWOT analysis revealed that counseling psychology in Korea has been established as a mainstream psychological discipline which has a professional body representing counseling psychologists, that counseling psychologists have been actively involved in and are competent with conducting research, and that it has a relatively rigorous counselor credentialing system. These internal strengths of Korean counseling psychology have brought about the increased demand for counseling psychologists in Korean society. However, counseling psychologists have made relatively less effort at and paid less attention to establishing an agreed-upon training model and setting up clinical training programs that offer practicum and internship opportunities for their students. These internal weaknesses must be interrelated with the external threats that counseling psychology in Korea is now facing.

Recently, there has arisen criticism from within and outside of the discipline that counseling psychologists have kept their presence to themselves. In comparison with the amount of internal effort to consolidate their identity within the psychology academia, counseling psychologists have taken a relatively passive stance in informing the public and policy-makers of their professional presence and the effectiveness of their services. This may be one of the reasons why counseling psychologists are now being asked to take somewhat alien roles in unfamiliar settings by the government and other public organisations that do not have clear ideas of what counseling psychologists do and where the boundaries lie between different mental health professional groups. In these days, policy-makers and government officials ask counseling psychologists to locate and reach out to potential clients placed at risk, bringing fast and tangible outcomes. These external requests are considered as being awkward by most counseling psychologists who are familiar with more traditional roles and activities (e.g. seeing clients in their office). We believe Korean counseling psychologists will be able to rise to and even transform these challenges into opportunities. The current SWOT analysis revealed that counseling psychologists have been productive and competent in conducting research on a variety of counseling issues, proving the effectiveness of their services. The urgent agenda is to develop counseling techniques and intervention strategies that are readily applicable and permeable to target populations, as well as to hold a more assertive stance in informing those concerned (e.g. policy-makers) of our presence and the efficacy of our professional activities.

In addition, with increased numbers of students and affiliated members, the discipline is confronted with the task of creating more career opportunities. Given the current constrained work settings and overlaps in theory and practice, counseling psychologists have to compete with other mental
health professionals for limited positions. Under these circumstances, counseling psychologists may have to strategically collaborate with other mental health professional groups to develop and create career opportunities for all stakeholders by advocating for the establishment of positions in government and other public organisations. One of the arenas in which we may work together is schools. During the past decades, social workers have made a lot of effort to enter into the school system, and counseling psychologists are now exploring ways to create positions in schools, especially in middle and high schools. On the one hand, there is a demand for mental health professionals who can help teachers to manage their students due to the growing number of students with emotional, behavioral, and learning difficulties. On the other hand, however, there is resistance among school teachers to accepting those whose primary role is not teaching. Given this atmosphere, counseling psychologists can join forces with social workers to inform the need for mental health professionals in school and further to create professional positions for them. In the process of working together with social workers, areas of excellence and competencies of counseling psychologists will become visible.

As the number of professionals has increased, the professional identity of counseling psychologists seems to have become somewhat blurred. Currently, counseling psychologists come from diverse backgrounds and training orientations, which makes it difficult to arrive at a consensus of who counseling psychologists are and what they do. Of course, it can be argued that the identity of counseling psychologists has expanded and encompassed more diverse aspects of professional activities and orientations. The identity of a certain professional group can change as the need of the stakeholders within the profession as well as society changes. On the other hand, continued efforts are needed to develop cohesiveness among counseling psychologists so that we establish and maintain a unique identity for the counseling psychology profession in Korea.

A VISION FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN KOREA

Counseling psychology in Korea appears to be in a dilemma, i.e. protecting its existing practice domains or accommodating nontraditional roles and activities into its sphere. Korean counseling psychologists seem to have not yet reached an agreement on which direction to pursue in the future. Yet they may not have to decide. From our standpoint, the issue is not a matter of choice. We believe that for the maturation of the discipline, we need to pursue both directions (i.e. maintaining our unique identities and taking a more adaptive and flexible stance), as an infant needs both a mother as a home base and the freedom to explore the environment. On the one hand, counseling psychologists need to make fully organised efforts such as lobbying
policy-makers and legislators in the interests of the profession. On the other hand, counseling psychologists need to adopt the role of an agent of change who can make a difference in all human affairs, whether they deliver psychological interventions or a more hands-on approach and whether they attempt to bring about changes on the individual level or on the system level. What is urgently needed is an agreement on the foci of lobbying and strategic plans to explore potential areas of practice and move in that direction. Here, the IAAP’s new Division of Counseling Psychology can help Korea and other countries that have similar issues by providing opportunities to share experiences with and to learn lessons from each other.

REFERENCES

Perspectives on Counseling Psychology:
Portugal at a Glance

M. Eduarda Duarte*
University of Lisbon, Portugal

M. Paula Paixão
University of Coimbra, Portugal

M. Rosário Lima
University of Lisbon, Portugal

Les auteurs décrivent le statut actuel et réfléchissent à l’avenir possible de la psychologie du counseling au Portugal, cela à partir de ses forces, de ses faiblesses, de ses opportunités et de ce qui la menace. Le counseling est de plus en plus une aide proactive au développement individuel, plutôt qu’une solution aux situations problématiques. Dans ces conditions, l’une des orientations possibles de la psychologie du counseling est le traitement de la diversité des approches théoriques et techniques pour mettre au point des méthodes d’intervention communes. Les défis que rencontreront prochainement les psychologues du counseling sont analysés à partir des demandes universitaires et autres, la qualité des services et la nécessité d’une réglementation officielle. On propose enfin des recommandations relatives à l’avenir de la psychologie du counseling.

Based on an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats the authors discuss the current status and possible future directions for counseling psychology in Portugal. Counseling is increasingly being viewed as a proactive support to individual development, rather than as a remedial solution to problem situations. In this environment, pursuing diversity in theoretical and technical approaches to find common intervention methodologies is one possible direction for counseling psychology. The challenges encountered by counseling psychologists in the near future are analysed relative to academic and other demands, the quality of the services, and the need for statutory regulation. Recommendations pertaining to the construction of the future for counseling psychology are proposed.

* Address for correspondence: M. Eduarda Duarte, The University of Lisbon, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Alameda da Universidade, P-1649-013, Lisbon, Portugal. Email: mecduarte@netcabo.pt
INTRODUCTION

Aconselhamento is the Portuguese word for counseling. Frequently, counseling has an adjective added, such as “educational counseling” (aconselhamento educacional), family counseling (aconselhamento familiar), or career counseling (aconselhamento de carreira). Counseling is also closely connected with guidance. Coaching, advising, and tutoring each use counseling procedures as well. In short, counseling is a term used in Portugal to describe any process during which a psychologist listens to an individual and then intervenes to identify the client’s ongoing concerns, and to reduce psychological problems. Counseling psychological interventions can be planned either at the individual or group level, taking into account or not the systemic perspective (Patton & McMahon, 1999). Counseling activities are typically conducted in educational, health, training, and employment settings. The counseling psychologist acts, in general, as a multidisciplinary intervention program manager who fosters psychosocial identity construction (Chen, 2003; Vondracek & Porfeli, 2002). Thus counseling promotes goal-setting and offers positive models to build human strengths and optimal functioning (Frazier, Lee, & Steger, 2006).

In Portugal, counseling is viewed as a process that activates personal agency and self-determination to enhance the client’s internal resources and help them to view the social context as more controllable, predictable, and permeable to creative challenges (Cox & Klinger, 2004). The main role of the counseling psychologist is to activate individuals’ or clients’ “transformational” potential by using goal-directed procedures (Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). These procedures address the work role along with all the other life roles and reinforce the importance of developing positive attitudes and competencies (Snyder, Feldman, Shorey, & Rand, 2002). Consequently, the design of counseling interventions is, both by their nature and function, mostly preventive and promotional, encompassing a set of strategies and techniques (e.g. interviews, the administration of assessment techniques) to facilitate personal development and help individuals to face proactively ecological transitions, either normative or not, involving developmental risks (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Keys, Bemak, Carpenter, & King-Sears, 1998).

The process of counseling is usually designated as individual psychological consulting related to personal, social, vocational, or academic themes. This developmental, dynamic, and systemic model supporting counseling interventions in educational and employment contexts is endorsed by the Basic Law of the Education System (Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo) (1986) and by the law that officially created the Psychological and Guidance Services within the Educational System (Serviços de Psicologia e Orientação) (1991), and also by the successive revisions of the National Employment Plan (Plano Nacional de Emprego) (2004).
THE SWOT ANALYSES

Internal Strengths

Formally, it is possible to distinguish between Career Guidance and Counseling Services (Serviços de Orientação e Aconselhamento de Carreira) and Psychotherapy and Counseling Services (Serviços de Psicoterapia e Aconselhamento/Apoio Psicológico) (Duarte & Paixão, 1997). In general, career services address educational and vocational guidance and counseling, with particular attention to personal/social issues. Career services organise their main psychological interventions into four major fields: assessment of psychological processes; promotion of vocational development (e.g. one-to-one and group counseling, and the provision of relevant information); identification and prevention of career problems; and facilitation of cognitive and emotional development. Psychotherapy and counseling services essentially address individuals with psychological and/or psychiatric dysfunctions. The main goals of these services are: providing individual and/or group therapy to psychologically disturbed individuals (e.g. with depressive and anxiety disorders, sexual disorders, or eating disorders), and referring to specialised services individuals who display severe psychiatric disorders or addictive behaviors.

Counseling psychologists are usually trained in graduate programs that offer a master’s degree in psychology. This training is rooted in a strong theoretical framework aiming to articulate developmental and systemic approaches to guidance and counseling with dynamic models for comprehending and facilitating psychosocial development (Cole & Siegel, 2003; Paixão, 2004). Career counselors usually work with adolescents, emerging adults, and adults who face important life transitions, whether normative or not. A counseling service is provided in schools (elementary, secondary, higher education) and in employment contexts, particularly at offices of the National Institute for Employment which are located throughout the country.

Counseling psychologists basically adopt a psychological support approach in designing counseling interventions. These practices should be preventive; however, on many occasions remedial assistance is required. The core competencies revolve around four thematic dimensions: (a) the dynamic of psychological assessment, favoring the subjects’ meaning of their endeavors; (b) the active promotion of core psychological processes and attributes, by means of several prevention and developmental actions, and more intensively with individuals facing important transition moments, such as critical career changes; (c) the identification and prevention of potentially dysfunctional psychosocial behaviors; and (d) the promotion of academic achievement in a context where academic failure is conceived of as being a result of the interaction of personal, interpersonal and institutional factors, and not as a consequence of individual “handicaps” (Paixão, 2004).
During the last two decades of the 20th century there was an intensive recruitment of counseling professionals by schools (elementary and secondary) and by employers in the public sector, with the private sector also recruiting a few counseling psychologists. At college and university levels, Portugal during the last few years developed and consolidated counseling services throughout the country. In fact, the idea that the development of college and university students must be psychosocially supported gained wide acceptance. Several initiatives have in the meantime taken place, such as seminars, national scientific meetings, and the publication of thematic journal issues (e.g. *Psicologia*, 2000). The increase of formal contacts among college and university services aimed to promote social support and psychological counseling (*Rede de Serviços de Apoio Psicológico no Ensino Superior*, 2004) fostered and encouraged the production and distribution of technical and scientific papers and reports. An increasing number of both master’s theses and doctoral dissertations at major Portuguese universities, focusing either on counseling programs, vocational counseling issues, like strategies for the transitions, or even psychosocial themes, like counseling for the enhancement of social skills for disadvantaged adolescents, also indicate the increasing importance of counseling psychology in Portugal.

There is a public demand for counseling, especially from adolescents, college and university students, and, lately, employed and unemployed adults. The global economy and rapid technological changes along with the emergence of new markets have provided new opportunities and enlarged available choices. These cultural developments and changing social patterns also prompted new alternatives and approaches in the counseling domain. An example of this is the provision of special counseling facilities for international students prompted by the importance and impact of the European Erasmus and Socrates European Union programs, which promote the mobility of students and researchers within the European Union political space (*Erasmus/Socrates Programs*, 2006). All universities created support programs, first restricted to practical information (application procedures, housing, and financial support), and later enlarged to help students cope with academic, social, personal, and vocational concern. Another example relates to new markets. The workforce in Portugal became increasingly culturally diverse, with ethnic minorities coming from former Portuguese colonies in Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Cape Vert, Guinea), and Asia (East Timor), and from Eastern countries such as the Ukraine, and from South America, especially Brazil (*Instituto Nacional de Estatística*, 2003). The Portuguese Diaspora now has a counterpart: the shift from a country of just emigrants to a country of immigrants as well, and these in increasing numbers. Some regulatory measures are already in preparation to prevent disruption of educational and employment opportunities. Counseling assistance to immigrant populations, including, for instance, prevention programs,
health promotion services, and career counseling services, can play an important role.

Counseling psychology graduate and advanced training follow the scientist-practitioner model. These programs develop students’ capabilities to provide scientifically supported interventions and to themselves engage in life-long learning and continual improvement. The training programs now focus on reading and research concerning variables, and processes that have been shown to foster optimal functioning among both individuals and groups. Self-efficacy and a variety of conative variables, subjective well-being and satisfaction, personal and life projects, the transition between nuclear ecocontexts (Paixão, Leitão, Borges, & Miguel, 2004) must be taken into account. Diversity and multiculturalism are also important issues that are addressed by counseling psychology training programs.

Internal Weaknesses

The absence of a professional association, or even a sound and widely recognised scientific society to recruit counseling psychologists and to regulate the scope of their practice is one serious limitation. The lack of statutory regulation clearly encourages other professionals to engage in counseling activities for which they have received no proper training. The work they do can reduce in the public eye the credibility of counseling psychologists. Nevertheless, positive developments can be observed, and we can expect in the near future the official recognition of a Portuguese Counselors’ Association.

Another limitation of counseling psychology relates to the progressive decrease in the recruitment of counseling professionals, which is mainly due to economic and financial restrictions. A general lack of investment in the scientific, technical, and vocational improvement of counseling professionals inhibits the career progression of individuals, and imposes serious restraints on the development of counseling psychology as a discipline. Articulated and systematic training initiatives are virtually non-existent, provoking demotivation (and even burnout) among some counseling psychologists. A few counseling psychologists do respond, however, to the increased societal needs and demands. They do their best to cope with dramatic changes in Portuguese society.

This situation led to a reinforcement of the remedial dimension in counseling services. Both institutions and professionals are “forced” to select the most problematic or dysfunctional cases, thus adopting an individually oriented psychotherapeutic approach to psychosocial interventions. This reality immediately raises two important questions, and reinforces two problems. First, counseling psychologists in Portugal seem to be facing strong and pervasive obstacles in “making the leap” from the focus on counseling as a set of unconnected services, to counseling as a systematic, developmental,
and comprehensive intervention program unified by scientific strategies and technical problems (Vera & Reese, 2000). Second, an increasing number of psychotherapeutic interventions are implemented, but not in connection with the developmental aims and goals of the institutions in which they take place or with the academic and professional training of the specialists who conduct those interventions. The mixed role may engage the counselor in a boundary confusion or even unprofessionalism.

Another internal weakness concerns information and communication technologies, and the integration of information technology. Initiatives in the elaboration and dissemination of computer-assisted assessment and guidance systems are poor. The constitution of inter-university research teams dedicated to fostering the use of new technologies for “counseling in cyberspace and the counseling computer” (James & Gilliland, 2003, p. 416) is strongly desired, but just that.

An effort was made in higher education to move from isolated institutional initiatives to coordinated national, regional, or even local strategic plans. So far, professionals working in these services vary in number as well as in graduate training, and are not usually integrated in multidisciplinary teams providing psychosocial support along the higher education system. The result is a predominantly remedial approach focusing on the treatment of dysfunctions or behavioral problems (in some cases, even psychiatric disorders). As a consequence, intervention is restricted and isolated. In some universities counseling interventions are subsumed within the social or the psycho-pedagogical services. For example, at the University of Coimbra, counseling services in close collaboration with the social services began to focus on disabled students and students coming from the former Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia (East Timor). At the University of Lisbon, the first steps were taken to launch a new integrated counseling service with educational, pedagogical, and existing social services.

External Opportunities

Some favorable situations have recently appeared, so the current situation differs from the one reported to the FEDORA project on New Skills for Vocational Guidance in Higher Education (Duarte & Paixão, 1997, 1998). There has been an increase in regular meetings among researchers and specialists where they discuss counseling psychology issues and themes such as life-span development and the use of information technology in career counseling. The participation of Portuguese researchers working in educational and employment settings within international associations, specialised networks, and research projects (Duarte & Paixão, 1998) has expanded research and practice. The implementation of the Bologna Declaration (Bologna Process, 1999) appears to offer opportunities to renew graduate and advanced
training in counseling psychology. The social patterns, the integration of expatriates into Portuguese society, and the side effects of globalisation represent new opportunities, and demand adjustments in counseling psychology. The next step would be to reframe counseling psychology as an organised and articulated set of strategies designed within the dominant and emergent scientific models such as Savickas’ (2004) theory of career construction; Smith’s (2006) strength-based model for counseling at-risk youth; and James and Gilliland’s (2003) expanded eight-stage systematic counseling model. The challenge is to answer the most important and pressing questions asked by several agents in important life domains. Counseling psychology is a psychology of life construction (Duarte, in press). To build a more proactive and realistic view of education, training, and employability, counseling is a set of tools to help reduce social inequalities and foster equal opportunities in accessing educational, health, cultural, and employment services. Counseling is a procedure to create a sense of shared citizenship. In short, counseling psychology is a set of tools for the promotion of psychosocial development (Guichard, 2003). In the coming decade counseling psychology may become the nuclear domain in the field of positive psychology (Seligman, 2002) as it creates concern, provides control, arouses curiosity, increases trust, and facilitates compromise and engagement in roles that are personally meaningful and socially relevant (Savickas, 2003).

External Threats

Unfavorable situations may be explained by making two or three main points. The first one comes from the practitioners who lack appropriate qualifications. The field of counseling psychology, because it may encompass a variety of interventions, is “invaded” by non-specialists that lack adequate graduate and advanced training. An example of such a situation is located in the practice of career counseling where some interventions (both individual and group) are performed by school teachers without any preparation for that kind of work. Another unfavorable situation that counselors must solve is the regulation and inspection of professional practice. This kind of action has to be reinforced by legislation, and controlled by a professional association. Connected with this issue are training guidelines. In our view, legislation must mandate that counselors are postgraduate professionals in counseling psychology.
concentrate on thoroughly revising the organisation and functioning of postgraduate, advanced training, and master’s and doctoral programs. This is especially important at a moment when the higher education system is being fundamentally restructured because of the Bologna Process in Portugal. Also, the concentration on organising broad and thematic meetings about critical counseling issues in the main life contexts, calling on the participation of both decision-makers and potential clients, is important to draw the attention of political structures.

We should build on our well-articulated and systematic positive and growth fostering conceptual and intervention models: lifelong learning, counseling, and guidance. Promotional, developmental, preventive, and remedial approaches should be clearly operationalised and translated into specific goals, tasks, and duties for both healthy and at-risk individuals and groups across the life cycle. The identification and delimitation of the professional profile required to perform these complex and highly demanding specialised tasks must be enforced in a way that discourages, and even punishes, incompetent actors. We should restructure our a-theoretical, isolated, and quite often remedial practices into a new service. One example is the necessity of creating a new service in higher education, one that improves collaboration with those provided in employment contexts. A second example would be to forge links with psychologists from related and complementary fields (Lima & Gouveia, 2003) to explore how organisations socialise newcomers and then build employee competencies.

Also, we should work to improve the quality of the services provided through the definition of goals, practice guidelines, and assessment devices. Another aspect is the design of new and innovative counseling interventions focusing on providing support to victims of crises and natural disasters. For example, these interventions could support and assist the victims of large summer fires, or families of traffic accident victims. We should be able to rely on the regulating power of a professional entity, or a recognised scientific association, to find effective ways to cope with the decrease in recruitment and training investment of motivated and competent counselors for schools and employment settings. Statutory regulation may be needed to overcome problematic situations that have a pervasive negative impact, such as school drop-outs.

The early and systematic introduction of information technology (IT) in counselors’ graduate and advanced training and practice should foster models and interventions available for individuals and groups of all ages and life conditions, mainly through e-learning and e-counseling that use high quality procedures, and respect both accepted ethical and assessment standards (Sampson, Carr, Makela, Arkin, Minvielle, & Vernick, 2003). Overall, counseling psychology should promote the fundamental principle of a democratic society, that is, equal access to opportunities for all citizens regardless of sex, religion, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN PORTUGAL

The authors subscribe to the following definition of counseling psychology: the psychological specialty that focuses on models and methods for fostering clients’ subjective well-being as well as strengthening the problem-solving and decision-making skills they need to resolve normative or sporadic crises.

Viewed this way, counseling psychology can also be conceptualised as a core domain of positive psychology because it focuses on optimal functioning and human strengths in nuclear life contexts, such as family, personal relations, school, work, and community. In short, counseling psychology is concerned with the promotion of the growth potential individuals have in healthy contexts, as well as with the prevention of the main dysfunctions both at the individual and the environmental levels, and with decreasing or limiting their negative impact whenever prevention fails (Lopez, Magyar-Moe, Petersen, Ryder, Krieshok, O’Byrne, Lichtenberg, & Fry, 2006; Smith, 2006).

Taking into account this mission and related goals, counseling psychology encompasses a broad set of intervention strategies, focusing either directly or indirectly on promotional and psycho-educational issues with preventive orientation yet never forgetting urgent remedial interventions as required by crises and disaster situations.

To serve their mission and accomplish their goals, counseling psychologists must receive specialised and advanced training in theoretical, preventive, intervention, assessment, and ethical issues.

FINAL REMARKS

The IAAP’s new Division of Counseling Psychology can promote this field in Portugal by:

1. Helping to identify and disseminate the cross-national aims of counseling psychology that represent consensual, universal, and convergent conceptualisations of counseling psychology.
2. Work to close the gap between counseling theories and practice.
3. Create an inventory of the knowledge that is fundamental to the long-term viability of the counseling field.
4. Develop a framework for discussing key concerns related to counseling (methods, techniques, ethical, and evaluation and assessment procedures).
5. Frame the dimensions of counseling by listing its basic tenets and then write the skills and standards required for its competent practice.
6. Promote links with European Institutions such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
7. Facilitate full participation of counseling psychologists from Portugal in the professional associations of counseling psychologists in other countries.

8. Increase the visibility and accountability of counseling through a website free of charge, in the official European Union languages.

9. Encourage the participation of Portuguese researchers in international projects or through the dissemination of meritorious theoretical, methodological, and practical reports containing suggestions for future work.

10. Foster the growth of research and the demand for evidence-based practice and its evaluation.

REFERENCES


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


Counseling Psychology in France: A Paradoxical Situation

Jean-Luc Bernaud,* Valérie Cohen-Scali and Jean Guichard

INETOP, Laboratoire de psychologie de l’orientation, Paris, France

Quelles sont les spécificités de la situation française concernant le counseling? Après avoir évoqué les termes utilisés en France, pour qualifier ces pratiques et leur origine, les auteurs exposent une situation qualifiée de paradoxale tant sur le plan des professionnels impliqués dans le counseling que de la recherche. En effet, alors que les besoins en accompagnement sont nombreux et croissants, les professionnels œuvrant dans le champ du counseling présentent des pratiques très diversifiées et des profils hétérogènes et ne semblent pas pouvoir être rassemblés en un groupe professionnel unique. Par ailleurs, si les recherches françaises relevant du champ du counseling commencent à se développer (en particulier pour le counseling de carrière), elles tendent à s’appuyer sur des écoles de pensée séparées les unes des autres. C’est pourquoi on ne peut pas établir l’existence en France d’une psychologie du conseil en tant que telle. Une telle situation apparaît insatisfaisante (notamment en ce qui concerne la qualité de certaines pratiques et le développement d’une spécialisation professionnelle cohérente semble souhaitable). La conclusion présente quelques pistes pour y parvenir.

What are the specificities of the French situation regarding counseling? After explaining some of the expressions used in France to qualify counseling practices and their origins, the authors present a situation that they consider paradoxical, both in terms of the counselors themselves and the research carried out in this field. Indeed, while the need to “accompany” populations is vast and on the increase, French counselors develop very different practices, have very heterogeneous profiles, and do not seem to form a unified professional group. Although research in this field is increasing (more particularly for career counseling), it appears to be based on different and separate schools of thought. For these reasons, it is not possible to establish the existence of a “counseling psychology” in France. Such a situation could be considered to be far from satisfactory (notably regarding the quality of certain interventions, and also where the development of a coherent professional specialisation is concerned). Some means to achieve this goal are outlined in the conclusion.

* Address for correspondence: Jean-Luc Bernaud, INETOP, Laboratoire de psychologie de l’orientation, 41 rue Gay Lussac, 75005 Paris, France. Email: bernaud.jl@wanadoo.fr

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
INTRODUCTION

In France, counseling is a professional domain that has undergone considerable developments throughout the last two decades. This growth stems from a difficult economic and social situation that has generated in individuals many questions about themselves and their future. However, counselors who intervene today in the varied spheres of daily life (education, healthcare, vocational guidance, occupational integration, social work, business, family, personal life, etc.), have very heterogeneous practices, different professional levels and don’t feel that they belong to the same professional family. For these counselors there is no common education or training program that teaches them the basic skills of their profession. In addition, the models or methods that they refer to do not appear to come from the same fields.

How can this be? How can this professional field be unified? And, what would be the advantages of such a unified structure? To try to bring some answers to these questions three avenues will be explored. The first one is the meaning of the word “counseling” in French. The notions associated with this word are not well known or are misunderstood. The second explores counseling practices: we will attempt to understand why, up to now, these interventions—that are today in France so diverse and varied—don’t contribute to forming a unified domain. The third avenue is that of research, education, and training: they appear to be as diverse as the interventions themselves. In conclusion, we will indicate why it is desirable to emerge from the present situation and create a coherent profession. Finally, some means to achieve these goals are outlined.

1. COUNSELING: A TERM NOT WELL KNOWN OR MISUNDERSTOOD IN FRENCH

The expression “counseling psychology” in France is assumed to make reference to a relatively well-circumscribed domain. However, is it really the case? As Blanchard highlighted (2000), the term counseling does not have a strict equivalent in French; the nearest translation is “conseil”, which literally means advice. Danvers (1988, p. 102) defines the concept as follows: “Advice is non-directive information which is imparted by one person to another in such a way that he/she can only benefit from it after having forgotten the counselor and the need for advice itself.” In one of the rare French publications written from a counseling perspective, Lhotellier (2001) associated advice with the act of “holding council” (i.e. “taking action after deliberation”).

However, other terms exist in the French language to talk about the concept of counseling. For over five decades, the term used to describe the action of giving advice in the field of school and career guidance was
consultation. This term, taken from the medical field, suggests an exchange between expert and layman. In 1959 Super wrote an article in French entitled “Counseling techniques and interview interpretation” (Les techniques du conseil et l’analyse des interviews) and was one of the first to introduce explicit references to counseling. In the business world, the English concept coaching is common and has been used for several years. It refers to personal development activities which enable employees to achieve their full potential, build their strengths and skills, individually or as a team. In the fields of social work, healthcare and education, the term “to accompany” (or to “support”) is used to define a relationship based on assistance of a psychological nature. Support here refers to “situations in which there is a principal actor who, in one way or another, is supported, protected, respected, assisted and developed in order to achieve his/her goal” (Le Bouèdec, 2002, p. 14).

Finally, sometimes the English term “counseling” is used, without being translated into French. In this instance, the term refers more specifically (but not exclusively) to the humanistic psychology movement of Carl Rogers, whose influence only appeared in France from the 1970s onwards. However, the word counseling, as it is used in French, differs from the English meaning. In France counseling is often used to describe assistance aimed at “ordinary” people with quite “average” problems to solve and which is fundamentally different to psychotherapy. It is “characterised by a focus on ‘normal’ people, taking into account their personal development during a challenging situation, drawing on existing strengths and integrating the dynamic between the person and his/her surrounding environment” (Paul, 2002, p. 45).

This variety of French terms used to refer to counseling and to “accompanying people”, along with the clear differentiation between psychotherapy and counseling, has given rise in France to a dispersion of different support practices offered to people which, in an English-speaking country, would be included under the general spectrum of counseling. As Tourette-Turgis (1996, p. 25) explained: “the transversal nature of counseling methods is confusing to a French public accustomed to categorising from a monodisciplinary and mono-referential point of view. For the French, counseling is far removed from the idea of therapy.” As we will see, this has major consequences for counselors’ professional situations in France.

2. ESTABLISHING A PROFESSIONAL FIELD

In France, the professional practice of accompanying someone (or counseling/supporting) is heterogeneous. These practices were developed within France, to a large extent, from the 1970s onwards, marked by an economic stagnation which led to a significant rise in unemployment and equally to an increasingly precarious situation for many individuals. In this context,
certain counseling activities evolved and others appeared for the first time in order to respond to new demands. These changes took place within five areas: education, occupational integration, social work, health, and business, and took different forms. In some cases, the “support” function grew rapidly, in others it declined and in others still, the function was subjected to reorganisation. The short overview that follows highlights this and underlines, in addition, the emergence of new counseling experts.

2.1 Counseling in Education

In the field of education, the counseling function developed in a twofold manner. First, there was a growth in the number of career counselors in schools: their numbers doubled between 1970 and 1980. This change is linked, on the one hand, to an increase in the number of pupils attending school and, on the other hand, to a redefinition of their job role. Initially, these counselors acted as a bridge between school and apprenticeship. With the advent of a complex school system, these “vocational experts” were encouraged, in a short space of time, to become “educational agents: facilitating information and dialogue as regards school and career choices” (Danvers, 1988, p. 73). Their title also changed to “career counselors”. Their practices “were twofold: on the one hand, they were giving expert advice (based on an individual psychological assessment often using psychometric tests) and on the other, they were counselors aiming to develop a person’s own ability for self-guidance” (Danvers, 1988). However, from the 1990s onwards, other professionals became increasingly more important in the field of vocational guidance in schools: head teachers, chief supervisors, and school librarians.

Career counselors subsequently developed into “school and career-counseling psychologists” (known as COP in France: Conseillers d’Orientation Psychologues). There are approximately 5,000 of them in total. These psychologists divide their activity between “career counseling and information centers” where they provide a service to all populations and several high schools dealing with requirements from pupils. In the career counseling and information centers, they primarily carry out career counseling, with or without tools, followed by assistance with information retrieval, psychological tests, and group workshops. They also provide information for groups on training courses and occupations in general. In schools, they primarily work with pupils: providing information in class, facilitating groups, preparing or following up periods of work experience, organising meetings between pupils and professionals and attending staff meetings (Cohen-Scali, 2003). A career counseling psychologist’s field of activity has undergone significant change. The number of individual and collective psychological tests being carried out has fallen considerably in favor of individual interviews. The
latter have doubled over the last 20 years. Career counseling psychologists are now confronted with “more extensive timetables, more fragmented activities and less time spent on school premises” (Bargas, Denquin, Kedadouche, Perillier, Mathieu, Matringe, Renaudineau, Robert, & Sellier, 2005, p. 49). They are obliged to accommodate an increasing number of pupils, to respond to requests from young people who are no longer in education and have few qualifications, and, at the same time, they have to develop partnerships with other institutions (Cohen-Scali & Kokosowski, 2003). The consequence is a decline in counseling practices and an increase in “short interviews”, in particular during the initial contact stage (Zarka, 2000).

2.2 Occupational Integration and Adult Careers

The field of occupational integration and adult career counseling developed considerably with the increase in unemployment at the end of the 1970s. Its aim is to provide assistance to early school leavers without qualifications and seeking employment and those wishing to change careers. The professionals who constitute this field offer help in the form of training, work placements, or employment to people with diverse profiles: school-leavers without qualifications, the long-term unemployed, immigrant workers, housewives wishing to get back into the workplace, and those already in paid employment, etc. (Dubar, 1998).

Various organisations (for example, the Association for Adult Vocational Training—Association pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes: AFPA—and the National Employment Agency—Agence Nationale Pour l’Emploi: ANPE) were established during the 1960s to deal with the populations mentioned above and have expanded over the last 40 years. As a result, there are almost 20,000 employment advisors currently working for the ANPE. These counselors are specialised in working with adult job seekers and are located in 862 local agencies throughout France. They inform and advise job seekers, from age 25 onwards, about their career, occupational integration, job seeking and recruitment. They are responsible for working with individuals who are seeking occupational reinsertion by planning and implementing different reinsertion programs and training courses destined to lead them towards permanent employment (Foret, 1992). They use tools and methods often developed inside the organisation. They must also work in coordination with their colleagues in other agencies, in particular with the centers that manage unemployment benefits.

From 1982 onwards, associative organisations were set up (backed by public funds) specifically targeting young people between 16 and 25 years who leave school with few or no qualifications: local integration centers for young people called missions locales (ML) and Permanences d’accueil d’Information et d’orientation (PAIO). Today, approximatively 6,300 occupational
integration professionals work in these 357 Missions Locales and 244 PAIO. The aim of these organisations—of which the number of employees fluctuates between five and more than 80—is to help young people overcome difficulties, which could be barriers to their occupational and social integration. These occupational integration counselors meet with, update, guide, and accompany young people by helping them build up a personalised program that will enable them to get back onto the labor market. These counselors perceive themselves, however, as being at the crossroads of several professions (employment counselors, social workers, trainers, psychologists). They see themselves as “network links” or “air traffic controllers” (Gélot & Nivolle, 2000). As regulation of their work procedures is limited and their activities are not closely monitored, these counselors are free to develop their personal mode of involvement and their professional practices as they see fit.

Two laws passed in 1991 and 1992 introduced a new support practice in the field of career counseling: the “Competencies Elicitation Career Counseling” (in French: Bilan de Compétences) intended for job seekers or those already in paid employment. This skills appraisal method aims to enable an individual to analyse his/her professional and personal skills, aptitudes, and incentives and also to identify an appropriate training program or professional project (Joras, 1995). The whole session takes 24 hours (usually spread over six half-days). It can be carried out at an approved center with specially trained career counselors who very often have a background in psychology. This specially trained counselor must provide individuals with the means to help them make decisions concerning career development, to accompany them along the way, to provide them with a framework and methods by which they can progress by themselves, to reassure them and to help them gain confidence (Lemoine, 2002).

Today, the field of occupational and social inclusion and career counseling remains extremely heterogeneous, in both the practices used and the profile of the professionals involved. However, it is in this field that we can observe the highest number and the most methodical counseling practices.

2.3 Counseling in the Field of Social Work

Social work professionals develop an approach, based on the tradition of case work, that involves individual psychosocial assistance and counseling. In the 1970s, the increase in and the diversification of requests for social assistance resulted in a transformation of the role of social workers, which led to a crisis in the profession during the 1990s (Cohen-Scali, Kokosowski, Portelli, & Wittorski, 1994). Traditional social work professions (family social workers, youth workers, etc.) were increasingly in demand to intervene in different population groups and areas and gradually moved away from the core function of their profession, which was essentially to assist and counsel...
individuals. In parallel, new professionals (local development agents, social coordinators, etc.; Chopart, 2000) emerged in this field, within the framework of new policies, using different methods, piloting collective projects, and setting up programs which targeted wider groups (Autès, 1999). Individual support roles, traditionally reserved for professionals in social work, tended to be restricted to specific situations or were carried out by other professionals (couple counselors, for example) managing specific cases.

2.4 Counseling in the Healthcare Field

The counseling function has existed for many years in the healthcare field, especially among populations being treated for substance abuse withdrawal (for example, members of the Alcoholics Anonymous Association). Counseling increased to a large extent from the 1980s onwards. This can be partly linked to the precariousness of living conditions and the fragile make-up of the individuals confronted with serious illnesses or difficult events. According to Tourette-Turgis (1996), the AIDS epidemic also contributed to this development due to the fact that many support groups, associations, and care centers, dedicated to helping, defending, and accompanying patients, were established. In addition, the practice of counseling and support also developed within the framework of post-traumatic treatment (terrorism, accidents, for example), and among specific populations (such as refugees, war victims, etc.).

2.5 Counseling in Business

Within companies (we are referring here to commercial companies as opposed to other professional domains mentioned earlier, which belong more to the non-commercial sector), programs which focused on supporting employees developed later, during the 1990s. The counseling function grew within the framework of career management, often existing at the corporate level of human resources within large companies. This new function is linked to the development of a more qualitative framework of human resource management. It is also linked to the importance attached to practices being more personalised, actions more individualised, monitoring potential, and ensuring skills are kept up to date (Peretti, 2003). It aims in particular to help employees whose career paths prove increasingly uncertain and chaotic. The counseling function in business includes “professional coaching” (of which the French association was created in 1996). We describe this in the paragraphs that follow.

2.6 The “Neo-Counselors”

The expression “Neo-Counselors” refers to a miscellaneous group of counseling experts that is difficult to define with precision, because no research
exists in this field. These counselors respond to requests for assistance outside
the framework of service levels offered by the counseling groups mentioned
earlier. Their services are paid for directly by the user (as opposed to the
majority of counselors who work within a public service organisation or the
confines of a company). We can organise these experts into three groups.

Experts in the first group are interested in “personal development”. Their
aim is to empower individuals, whether that involves leading them to “self-
actualisation” in general, or achievement in a particular field. The aim of
personal development can be spiritual. It can involve the quest for a certain
plenitude or happiness, by deepening one’s self-awareness. Personal develop-
ment is also based on increasing skills and improving individual perform-
ances in specific fields: gaining confidence or honing public speaking skills
for example, improving leadership qualities, acquiring negotiating skills, etc.
These counselors generally have private practices or they belong to specialised
agencies and offer varied services such as counseling, psychometric testing,
long-distance coaching via the Internet, group workshops (on self-assertion,
for example) or individual interviews.

The second group includes experts specialised in executive support. They
are generally called “coaches”. We can count up to 2,000 professionals who
provide coaching services in France today. The coach offers “to accompany
the coachee based on his/her professional needs aiming to develop potential
and know-how” (Arrivé, 2003, p. 128). This process can also apply to teams.
The coach generally works in a company at the request of senior manage-
ment. Some also operate outside the company to help executives who are
having difficulties in their professional life.

The third group includes experts in the psycho-pedagogical field. They
work primarily with pupils in response to increasing requests by parents,
anxious about their children’s future. They have various job titles: educa-
tional psychologist, school mentor, tutor, etc.

3. COUNSELORS: ESTABLISHING A PROFESSIONAL
IDENTITY

Some key points can be highlighted from this short overview. First, we must
stress the numerical importance of the professionals concerned. There exist
in France today several tens of thousands of counselors (not forgetting to
add to that figure other professionals, for whom counseling is not their core
profession, for example, nurses, teachers, youth workers, etc., but who are
often required to practice counseling activities on a more or less formal
basis). We should also note the diversity of the institutions in which coun-
seling professionals carry out their work. The large majority of them work
in the civil service. In a centralised country like France, that means that
these professionals report to different government ministries, either directly

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
or by means of an intermediary structure ("agencies" or "associations") managed by a ministry. These reporting lines have major consequences on their professional identity. They perceive themselves primarily as being part of a specific structure rather than as actual "counselors". In addition, certain counselors have what may appear to be enviable working conditions, whereas others may have precarious positions with part-time contracts. Their educational background is also extremely varied; from a course content point of view to the level of qualifications attained. Only a small number of counselors have received training in the profession in which they practice. The majority are educated to higher degree level—in general they hold a master’s degree in social sciences, psychology in particular. In addition they have sometimes had specific in-house training—often brief and linked to the institutions in which they work. There are also counselors whose training can be summed up by various facilitation techniques learned on the job, or a training course in human resources run by a business school, or the acquisition of certain techniques such as transactional analysis, Neuro Linguistic Programming, etc. whose credibility has sometimes been questioned.

4. COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY: INSTITUTING A THEORETICAL FIELD

These various counselors, whose professional identities are heterogeneous, cannot find their unity via a common reference to a structured body of knowledge. The equivalent of textbooks by authors such as McLeod (1993), Woolfe and Dryden (1996), or Brown and Lent (2000)—to quote just a few—do not exist in French. Some researchers, such as Lecomte and Guillon (2000), have been able to affirm that neither is there a French equivalent of "counseling psychology". Although this latter assertion is not lacking in truth, we feel it is wise to moderate this stance. Indeed, as we will see below, situations differ as regards either personal development counseling or career counseling.

4.1 Personal Counseling Psychology

As in many other countries, the foundation of counseling in France is linked to Carl Rogers’ contribution, whose work was partially translated into French during the 1960s (Rogers, 1962, 1968). His research had a significant impact in the field of social sciences, during a time of social unrest, which was generated by the events of May 1968 and marked by the rejection of authoritarianism. Several authors have since contributed to the reputation—and the extension—of Rogers’ work within France, for example: Pagès (1965), Lhotellier (1973), Mucchielli (1983), and de Peretti (1997, 2004). In the 1980s and 1990s, other currents of thought enrich this emerging French counseling psychology as indicated by the publication, in 1989, of a
special edition of the French Association for Vocational Counselors Bulletin. It focused on the “career counseling interview” and referred to several theories, such as Paul Watzlawick’s paradox approach, Eric Bern’s transactional analysis, and Gestalt psychology.

At the same time, the practice of career counseling interviews became an object of research. Innovative contributions aimed to stipulate “how questions should be formulated” and identify norms and barriers that could influence the dialogical dimension of the interview situation. Four major references may be mentioned here: research carried out by Blanchet (1985) on the processes at stake during interviews, Ghiglione’s (1986) communication theory, Vermersch’s (2000) analytical interview, and analysis of the consultant’s requests by Zarka (2000).

Over the last decade, several articles have been published, many relating to the importance of “support” for specific minority groups: socially excluded or social minority populations affected by poor social and economic factors (Leplatre, 2002), young people with few qualifications, those with disabilities or those who are out of work, etc. As mentioned in the introduction, “accompanying” or “supporting” therefore became a key concept (a sort of French equivalent for “counseling”), even if, as Paul (2003) claimed, it is a rather more nebulous concept, with a variety of differences and implications in the social, healthcare, employment, and educational fields.

Many articles—bordering on the field of psychotherapy—treat the issue of accompanying populations in difficulty, crisis, or rupture. Most of them refer to psychoanalysis. However, a growing interest in healthcare psychology and cognitive therapies may be witnessed. Several articles are devoted to counseling interventions for health problems in different domains: the needs of the elderly (Verdon, 2000), work-related stress (Castro, 1995), and stress related to serious illness (Hekmi Boulet, 1998). Some of these papers deal with the issue of counseling’s effects. Thus, Santiago Delefosse (2001) observed that the psychological support offered brings about many benefits in the way care is provided and Bruchon-Schweitzer and Quintard (2001) concluded that support plays a central part in the healing process. A number of authors refer back to “unusual” currents of thought in order to counsel certain populations. For example, Chudzik (2001) suggests referring to various moral judgment theories in order to accompany delinquent teenagers.

In this emergent field, the major contribution is undoubtedly the works of Tourette-Turgis (1996, 1997), author of the only French publications that include “counseling” in their title. The fields of application that they illustrate relate to people affected by the AIDS virus (using an assistance model before and after diagnosis; Funck-Brentano & Costagliola, 1998) and those who have been affected by severe trauma. In France an increase in victimology issues can be observed in this field (Rudetzki, 2003; Damiani & Bailly, 2001), due to terrorist attacks, wars, or violence in the home or workplace, for example.

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
Beyond the healthcare field, the field of education offers research in counseling, although it appears to be less structured (the following observation seems to support this statement: in France “educational psychologists”, working exclusively with elementary school pupils, exist but this profession doesn’t identify itself within the referential framework of “counseling”). Mallet and Paty (1999) carried out research in managing violence and incivilities in school. From a different perspective, Vrignaud, Bonora, and Dreux (2005) explored the question of accompanying the exceptionally gifted. In addition, specialists in education sciences (Carré & Caspar, 1999) highlight that teaching situations also necessitate further actions such as tutoring, monitoring, and managing crisis situations.

In concluding this brief overview of a selection of French research into counseling, we can make three assertions. First, a certain history already exists in this field (over three decades). Emerging and related research is far from insignificant and there is a definite increase in the volume of work produced during the latter period. The second assertion is that the various research does not appear to fit into an established theoretical field, in as much that the different reference models do not really allow for debate and discussion and that research in one field does not appear to have been discussed in the light of other fields. This second observation can undoubtedly be explained by a third assertion: the French tradition tends to regard counseling as a “peripheral” approach to treat personal difficulties, the central ones being the systemic or psychoanalytic psychotherapies and, more recently in France, the cognitivo-behavioral ones. Counseling is sometimes scorned—and even absent from some mental healthcare manuals—at times presented as a simple “quick-fix remedy” (Netchnine, 2001) for stress, violence, or crisis situations; its preventative and development roles being neglected. One of the signs of the “peripheral” position of counseling can be observed by the manner in which the French media have represented epistemological and ideological debates regarding a legal proposal aiming to regulate the psychotherapist profession. Discussion is based essentially around the value of psychoanalysis as opposed to other methods. Counseling is never mentioned. It appears that certain associations such as the French Association for Person-Centered Psychotherapy (www.afp-acp.com) or the French Association for Counseling (www.geocities.com/afcacp) are not only struggling to gain public recognition but also to play a key role in research and practice development in general.

4.2 Career Counseling Psychology

The situation is different with regard to “career counseling”. Articles relating to “counseling” and forms of “advice” or “counseling consultations” can be found from as early as the 1970s and 1980s in specialised (Bulletin de...
l’Association des Conseillers d’Orientation Psychologues de France: the French Association of School and Career Counselors Bulletin) or scientific (L’Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle: School and Vocational Guidance) French journals in this field, with, in particular, a significant article by Zarka (1977) introducing counseling psychology. In addition, a handbook exists entitled Psychologie de l’Orientation (School and Career Development and Counseling) (Guichard & Huteau, 2001), which reviews leading French and international works in this field.

However, it was not until the 1990s that counseling models gained a notable place in the field of career development. In this respect the special edition of L’Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle on counseling, coordinated by Blanchard (2000), constitutes a major contribution. This publication signals a key element in a movement that began approximately two decades earlier. Historically, the French body of vocational counselors organised itself (in the 1930s) by establishing a link with a sub-discipline of psychology—differential psychology (which was also being structured at the same time)—from which they borrowed fundamental concepts (aptitudes, interests, values, etc.) and methods (vocational interview technique) (Huteau & Lautrey, 1979). The emerging reference to “counseling” relates to a considerably different conceptual field: that of competencies, self-efficacy, personal development, coping strategies, transitions, planning future projects, self-construction, etc. Certain concepts—such as interests—remain, but they are nevertheless conceptualised in a significantly different way (as Savickas, 2005, observed in the United States).

An important part of French research relates more particularly to career development and identity construction. Certain research has focused on the French adaptation of—or debate surrounding—international theories or models such as Bandura’s social cognitive theory (Français & Botteman, 2002), Gottfredson’s theory (Munoz-Sastre, 1994), vocational interests (Vrignaud & Bernaud, 2005), processes at stake during career decision-making (Forner & Vrignaud, 1996), to name just a few. Further research focuses more specifically on making plans for the future during adolescence. Guichard (1993)—based on Bourdieu’s habitus theory and field of research (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992)—underlined the role of actions, interactions, and interlocutions in structured contexts (the “social fields”, such as the one which constitutes a school system) in the construction of certain self-representations and surrounding plans for the future. Dumora (1990) highlighted—in what is considered particularly insightful qualitative research—the progressive development of various processes of reflection and rationalisation, making it possible for teenagers to define the future they desire. Marro (1998) identified how teenagers sometimes perceived gender-related occupations as well as the role these perceptions played in their vocational choices. Guichard (2001, 2005) proposed a synthesis of

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
sociological, cognitive, dynamic, and semiotic approaches aiming to account for the process of the construction of identity.

Other studies concern more specifically the area of career counseling. Researchers observe what is at stake in the client requests or complaints, in the dialogical relationship and in the interaction between the counselor and client. A few examples of some of these studies’ conclusions may be mentioned here: preferences for career counseling methods appear to be structured around three principal dimensions; they can be explained by individual and psychosocial factors (Bernaud & Caron, 2004). Research into exploring careers and commitment behaviors—as regards individual counseling programs—has highlighted influences of (1) the parent–child attachment (Vignoli, Croity-Belz, Chapeland, De Philippis, & Garcia, 2005), (2) participation in preliminary tasks (Guillon, Dosnon, Esteve, & Gosling, 2004) or of (3) individual and contextual factors (Bernaud & Bideault, 2005).

Research that focuses more specifically on the processes involved in counseling sessions is limited: many articles are of a prescriptive nature. This is the case, for example, for considerations on career counseling interview styles by Beaudouin, Blanchard, and Soncarrieu (2004) and by Bernaud (2005), or the life narrative approach in counseling (Francequin, 1995), or the psychosocial dimensions of counseling interviews (Chabrol, 2000). Some research into the effects of certain intervention patterns can nevertheless be found; for example, those of counselor self-disclosure (Bernaud & Leblond, 2005) or of feedback on personality tests results (Boy, 2005; Portnoi, Guichard, & Lallemand, 2003). The effects of the “Competencies Elicitation Career Counseling” were largely investigated in studies using applied research methodology. They reveal positive results in terms of self-concept development, building an occupational project, and developing the ability to shape one’s own career (Ferrieux, 1995; Bernaud, Gaudron, & Lemoine, 2006; Vonthron & Lagabrielle, 2003; Saint-Jean, Mias, & Bataille, 2003).

In conclusion, it appears that French research in career counseling clearly reflects a certain number of concerns that can also be found at an international level. Nevertheless French specificities can be characterised in a three-fold way. First, there is a limited amount of experimental research—and research in social interactions—in the counseling process itself, in favor of more qualitative work. Second, French research expresses a strong interest in concepts such as project and identity. Finally, it tends to be centered on teenagers rather than adults.

**CONCLUSION**

The situation that we have briefly outlined in this article is paradoxical. We mentioned earlier that there are—and have been for several decades—a significant number of counselors in France. This number has been increasing...
rapidly over recent years. It should continue to increase in the years to come taking into account societal changes and, in particular, the emphasis put on individuals’ responsibility for the direction of their life, in a society context where precariousness is on the increase (cf. Cingolani, 2005). In addition, we noted that French research and studies that can be related to counseling psychology are far from negligible.

However, we cannot clearly identify, in France today, a sub-division of psychology and call it “counseling psychology”. This is due to three specific reasons. First, the various counselors concerned do not consider that they belong to the same professional group. Often, they do not even consider that they belong to the same professional sub-group, as the attitude of counselors in the field of vocational and career counseling demonstrates. Second, theoretical research and currents and related counseling activities do not form a specific “field”, i.e. a structure characterised by certain stakes and inciting debate as regards theoretical models and practical interventions. Moreover, “counseling psychology” is not a university course in its own right, as it is in other countries, the United States in particular. At present, the situation fluctuates between polite ignorance and open conflict (that certain media report with voracity). Finally, the number of counselors who have been given valid training in this field is not only low, but it is not on the increase. Thus, a counselor who carries out the “Competencies Elicitation Career Counseling”, mentioned earlier, is not required to have any specific qualifications in counseling psychology. This is also the case for those who work in the field of occupational integration of young people, just as it is for the whole group of “neo-counselors” referred to earlier. This phenomenon is all the more alarming when we consider that evaluation of the quality of service offered is rare or non-existent (Lacroix, 2004; Bargas et al., 2005). We can therefore conclude that the current situation of counseling psychology in France is problematic.

This situation is also particularly unstable. This is firstly due to two related political reasons: a decrease in state involvement on one hand and the construction of Europe on the other. For several decades, the large majority of counselors in France were employed by the state and reported to various ministries (which, as we mentioned earlier, was also a barrier to establishing a single professional identity). However, this resulted in clearly defined qualifications, recruitment processes, career conditions, monitoring of activities, etc. for these professionals. Today, more and more counselors work in local communities, associations, or private companies, without any regulating authority (as regards their professionalism, recruitment, evaluation of the level of service offered, etc.). Professional counseling associations do not play any significant role in this respect. At the same time, the construction of Europe forces the member states to work together to close the gap on standards (as clearly shown, for example, by the recent reform of the
university system). As a result, France is gradually being confronted by considerably different models (coming mainly, as regards counseling, from northern European countries, such as the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, etc.). An adjustment will undoubtedly occur. Another factor contributing to this unstable situation concerns recent questions about the quality and the effectiveness of the services offered. These questions—sometimes debated in the media—are more and more frequent and concern the various types of counselors previously mentioned (see for example, Lacroix, 2004; Bargas et al., 2005; Castra, 2003). A Bill aiming to regulate the psychotherapy profession is in progress.

The consequences of this instability are difficult to foresee. It is possible to affirm, however, that if counselors wish to influence changes, they need to organise themselves into a structured and recognisable professional group, with clear reference to a set of theoretical models and practices constituting an object of debate and research, namely, a counseling psychology. As we have noted, a similar phenomenon already happened in this domain in France during the 1930s, when the body of Vocational Counselors organised themselves into a distinct professional group in connection with the launch of “differential psychology”. Work sociologists have shown that such a reciprocal structuring of a professional body and of a knowledge domain is not exceptional (Boltanski, 1982). Associations can play a crucial role in this process by bringing together experts, trainers, teachers, researchers, and academics. This is why setting up a powerful French association of counseling psychologists (beyond the particularities of certain counseling sub-groups) appears to be a quasi-necessary condition to the success of such an enterprise. To encourage a structuring of the counseling field from the top appears indeed to be a major issue. Otherwise, there is a serious risk that local counseling practices will take hold; which in turn could be more likely to cater to political or economic matters than to scientific topics or even ethical considerations. If such a unified professional association could gain credibility (and support from governmental authorities) by the year 2010, some beneficial effects could be foreseen, notably, effects revolving around the current debates and the structures of professional networks in the counseling domain.

Such an association could take action in different directions. First, it could focus on strengthening international connections. With the exception of the IAEVG (the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance), French researchers do not appear to be as active as other nationalities in important counseling associations—Division 17 of the APA (American Psychological Association), Division 16 of the IAAP (International Association of Applied Psychology), the European Association for Counseling, IAC (International Association of Counselling), etc. It would therefore be constructive to build relationships and contribute to comparative
work, in particular with regard to policies and delivery services, initial and ongoing training, research organisations, etc.

Second, development could relate to research in its dual theoretical and empirical dimension. During scientific debate it seems particularly necessary to draw on various theoretical frameworks so that in France “counseling” remains no longer a vague notion, suggesting Rogers’ theory. It needs to be consistent with a set of clearly identified and transverse theories relating to various fields or “objects” of research. In this respect the aim is clear: limit the development of implicit counseling stemming from more or less reliable practices, giving way to counseling activities grounded in well-documented and de-compartmentalised research (translating foreign manuals or publishing equivalent textbooks in French could contribute to such an objective). Empirical research around key counseling questions should be encouraged. Indeed, research in France is often too segmented: synthesis works—meta-analyses or intercultural investigations (in subjects such as effectiveness of intervention methods or processes involved in counseling interventions)—are scarce. An increase in empirical studies could also have a positive effect and allow comparisons with other countries and the incorporation of French data into international research. In this respect, it seems of major importance to convince the authorities who finance research contracts (ministries of work or health, national agencies for research, etc.) that counseling schemes (that sometimes look costly; for example, those intended for the social integration of school drop-outs) with studies of their effectiveness (and of the processes and factors that determine it) can be accompanied by research programs to better understand the processes at stake and the regulators of efficiency.

Finally, this development could involve the practitioners and their professional activities. The teaching of “counseling psychology” in universities should be encouraged. In this respect, it would undoubtedly be useful to examine existing teaching programs in France. However, counseling activities cannot be grounded only on initial training (which is primarily conceptual and methodological). Ongoing training and supervision of counselors should also be developed. These professionals express the need for regular assistance in analysing their practices so as to gain precious insights into them and develop them, thanks to this external view. A “supervision culture” (currently non-existent except for psychotherapists) in counseling should be created. As regards ongoing training, its organisation and structure could be improved by linking it to reference frames of competencies that would allow it to define its major pedagogical contents. A first priority, in the next two years for example, could be to develop a certified academic curriculum and diplomas for the field of counseling. Indeed, a system of diplomas would be easy to realise and would form a solid base for the development of professional training and the construction of a professional identity.
A systematic quality control approach to counseling activities and services should be initiated. Such approaches are not frequent in France, except for the “Competencies Elicitation Career Counseling”. Regulation applies only to the professional use of the title of psychologist. Few regulations can be observed as regards the professional activities of counseling. When it comes to evaluating services and activities, accreditation procedures by external experts appear to give the best guarantees. Such procedures make it possible to simultaneously take into account the level of qualifications, experience, and activity of the professionals, as well as the overall quality of the organisation in which they work (with respect to legal frameworks, standards of premises, materials means, team organisation, partnership, tools and methods, etc.). To conclude, let us note that counseling is an innovating and constantly changing world. New questions and approaches are regularly appearing (some recent examples concern distance counseling, e-learning counseling, coaching in companies, retirement preparation, validating skills and experience, skills management, affirmative practices with lesbian and gay clients, etc.); such emerging interventions require control, formalisation, and evaluation.

REFERENCES


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.


Transforming a Past into a Future: Counseling Psychology in South Africa

Mark B. Watson* and Paul Fouche

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

A review of SWOT analyses written for other journals (e.g. the special issue of the Journal of Vocational Behavior, volume 59, 2001) reveals that most authors commence their analysis with a cautionary note. So it is with the present authors who are of the opinion that an initial SWOT analysis of the analysis itself is required. There are quantitative and qualitative issues that need to be acknowledged in this regard. In terms of the former, there is the

* Address for correspondence: Mark B. Watson, Department of Psychology, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Box 77 000, Port Elizabeth, 6031, South Africa. Email: mark.watson@nmmu.ac.za

The authors would like to acknowledge the insightful comments of the President of the Psychological Society of South Africa, Professor Cheryl Foxcroft.
question of how extensive and inclusive the analysis is. Much has been written and debated on psychology as a profession in South Africa but, with the exception of one seminal article (Leach, Akhurst, & Basson, 2003), there has been little written about the specific professional category of counseling psychology. Given that counseling psychology represents a substantial group of registered psychologists in South Africa (Leach et al., 2003; van der Westhuysen, 1996a), what has been written about psychology in general needs to be carefully considered by this particular professional category. Most of this writing has understandably focused on the negative history of psychology in South Africa. Our past has been more closely scrutinised than our present or future, and the SWOT analysis will reveal this trend. There is also a quantitative issue in the survey findings with its sample size of 19 practising and in-training counseling psychologists. However, this number would meet the editors’ suggestion for collecting ideas from a small group of colleagues.

There are qualitative issues as well. A SWOT analysis defines clear categories for discussion and this introduces an element of subjectivity. The Zulu-speaking people of South Africa have a saying ‘akubuyelwa nganxanye kungemanzi’, which translated means that people never see the same thing in the same light. Thus, a strength can be viewed as a potential weakness, a threat as an opportunity, depending on one’s perspective and how the identified issue is addressed.

This SWOT analysis examines the literature on and by the counseling psychology profession in South Africa, as well as the viewpoints of counseling psychologists and those in training. A survey asked participants for biographical information and their perceptions in each of the defined categories of the SWOT analysis, as well as providing the opportunity for general comments. Participants were evenly distributed across gender, represented five of South Africa’s nine provinces and four of the 11 official languages. One-third were postgraduate students and the remainder counseling psychologists in the public service, private practice, and/or academia.

The goal of the analysis is to seek a convergent vision for counseling psychology from an analysis of divergent perspectives. Such convergence seems a necessary goal given South Africa’s political, socioeconomic, and racially divergent past. The starting point for the analysis is a contextual understanding of the history of counseling psychology in South Africa, a history that reflects the political and racial history of the country (Foster, 2004; Leach et al., 2003) and that illustrates a negative past but a more positive, transitional present and future. Foster (2004) has noted the lack of resistance from the inception of South African psychology to racism and to apartheid as an institutionalised form of racism. Indeed, the psychological profession has been accused of reinforcing and serving the political ideologies of white minority rule. This was particularly the case for counseling psychology.
psychology which was established as a professional category in order to better serve the needs of the Afrikaner national government (Leach et al., 2003). In addressing the needs of a minority, white, Afrikaner, and predominantly male population, counseling psychology remained inaccessible for most of the last century to the majority of South Africans. However, institutionalised racial and language policies served not only to reinforce the nationalist government. They also fragmented the counseling psychology profession, a minority of whom were opposed to such ideologies (Leach et al., 2003). It is only in the last two decades that the history of racism and oppression and the consequent need for a more proactive role in educational and social issues have been addressed (de la Rey & Ipser, 2004).

It is not only the national context which has impacted on the development of counseling psychology in South Africa. The practice, assessment, and research of the profession in this country largely reflect an American influence. Painter and Terre Blanche (2004) have noted the indiscriminate importation and adaptation of measures and techniques by South African psychologists. Some authors have reflected that professional concerns in South Africa are similar to those in America (Leach et al., 2003), although with qualitative differences. Others have queried the appropriateness of international counseling models and assessment tools for use in the South African context (Stead & Watson, 1998, 2002, 2006). Given this contextual history, there have been consistent calls in recent literature for the profession to address issues such as relevancy and advocacy and for psychologists to demonstrate greater social responsiveness by becoming activists (de la Rey & Ipser, 2004; Foster, 2004). The SWOT analysis that follows reflects the fact that the inherent weaknesses and critical challenges that counseling psychology face in South Africa are largely embedded within this historical context.

**INTERNAL STRENGTHS**

The counseling psychology profession in South Africa has several strengths. The profession is grounded in both theory and research and it brings this foundation to the issues that it needs to face in the present reality and for its future. There is a strong developmental psychology foundation to counseling psychology (van der Westhuysen, 1998) and the profession demonstrates the use of a diversity of counseling models (Schoeman & Van der Walt, 2001; Van Niekerk, 1992). Counseling psychologists have also been active in research and, more recently, have focused on critical issues that affect all South Africans such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Leach et al., 2003).

A strength of the counseling psychology profession can also be found in its objectives as stated in its constitution (Counselling Division of the Psychological Society of South Africa, 2005). Three of these objectives provide
the profession with clear visionary goals that would help redress some of its inherent weaknesses. One objective calls for relevant, accessible and affordable services that are efficient and effective for individual and group contexts and for the diversity of communities evident in South Africa. Two other objectives call for the promotion of the profession through improving its relationships with other registered categories of psychologist, as well as other professions, organisations, and the public at large.

There has also been an attempt to address the issue of the relevance of the counseling profession in South Africa. De la Rey and Ipser (2004) state that most professional categories of psychology have focused on becoming more socially responsive, defining this responsiveness largely in terms of responses to government initiatives aimed at promoting social and economic development. In addition, since 1994 there has been a conscious attempt to change the demographic profile of postgraduate students selected for training. As will be evident in the following section, such attempts also need to be critically evaluated.

Content theming the survey responses reveals that most participants emphasise the general foundations and practice of the counseling profession as internal strengths. In terms of the former, participants point to the positive focus of counseling psychology as a profession, with its emphasis on health, well-being, and a solution focus. In terms of the latter, several participants referred to counseling psychologists’ focus on daily life adjustment issues such as coping in the workplace and in interpersonal relationships. There was also an emphasis on the counseling process as being skills based and “down to earth”. These perspectives seem to indicate that counseling psychologists consider their profession well equipped to assist with the realities of living in a transforming society.

**INTERNAL WEAKNESSES**

Commentary on South African counseling psychology’s weaknesses is largely focused on issues of relevance, whether in terms of the profession’s identity, training, research, or sociopolitical position in what has been termed the new South Africa. The identity of the profession seems to be in as transitional a state as the country itself. Thus, van der Westhuysen (1998) believes that the counseling psychology profession is in a diffuse state and he wonders whether it is committed to the definitional identity it has created. In support of his viewpoint, van der Westhuysen argues that the training of counseling psychologists is too enmeshed with that of clinical psychologists.

There are other weaknesses which are inherent in counseling psychology training models, one of which is their over-reliance on white, Western, Protestant theories. There has been a call for alternative theoretical models and de la Rey and Ipser (2004) have lamented the lack of innovative and unique
South African theories. Similarly, Stead and Watson (2006) have argued for a process of indigenisation in counseling theory development in South Africa. A further identified weakness in the training of counseling and other categories of psychologists is that it continues to reflect a predominant white, minority membership. De la Rey and Ipser (2004) estimate that only 18 per cent of psychologists whose group membership is known are black.

Counseling psychology suffers from the same skewed research base that most psychological research in South Africa evidences. Macleod’s (2004) review of psychological research in South Africa points to several issues in this regard that are not unique to the counseling profession, nor indeed to South Africa. One issue is the predominance of quantitative research methodologies and the consequent lack of alternative research methodologies that would allow for a more systemic exploration of individuals in relation to the sociopolitical and cultural contexts that impact on their lives. This weakness has been identified in international SWOT analyses as well (Subich, 2001). Another weakness is the fragmented focus of much of the research conducted, what Tinsley (2001) has referred to as research dabbling. This is a consequence of both the diversity and the traditional nature of most South African research topics which have focused on assessment, psychotherapy, and stress (Macleod, 2004), and it negates the establishment of comprehensive databases that can inform professional practice.

A further weakness of psychological research in South Africa lies in its skewed sample base. Macleod’s (2004) recent review, which includes research conducted by counseling psychologists, reveals that, despite approximately half of the South African population living in rural contexts and below the national poverty line, 66 per cent of psychological research has been conducted on urban and middle-class samples. This skewed research focus reinforces the perception of elitism that has dogged the profession’s history. Exacerbating the skewed research sample base is the fact that less than 18 per cent of research has focused on children and adolescents, despite over 40 per cent of the South African population being under the age of 20 years. The latter weakness has also been identified in international SWOT analyses (e.g. Gottfredson, 2001). The weaknesses inherent in South African psychological research have led to questions of relevance. Macleod (2004), for instance, points to the low percentage of articles that have focused on the critical issue of race and racism and concludes that psychology as a profession has largely avoided critical issues facing South Africans.

Another identified weakness centers on counseling psychology’s stance in relation to the sociopolitical context in which it needs to function. Counseling psychology has been criticised both for its historical lack of political neutrality (van der Westhuysen, 1996b) and its present studious avoidance of politics (Painter & Terre Blanche, 2004). In this regard, Painter and Terre Blanche (2004) refer to “the politics of scientific neutrality and neutral...
professionalism” (p. 523), indicating that to choose neutrality is a political stance in itself. Even the more recent debate on the relevance of psychology in South Africa has been labeled as too cautious and too introspective.

Finally, the present authors would like to consider what Tinsley (2001) refers to as pundits (i.e. those who assume the role of critic) as a weakness that the field of counseling psychology in South Africa faces. It has been both necessary and critical for the counseling psychology profession to be subjected to critical analysis. Indeed, given the profession’s history there has been much to criticize. However, there is a potential weakness if the exploration of counseling psychology’s past is not balanced with practical, proactive suggestions that will take the discipline forward into its future. Compounding this situation is that what has been suggested to date seems to be of a more theoretical than an applied nature.

The responses from the survey reflect exclusively on the identity and management of the counseling psychology profession. Several participants mention the lack of confidence and integrity in the profession’s status. The profession is also seen as lacking integration and “passion”. Some attribute this to a lack of leadership with vision and the absence of regular meetings that would allow the profession to define its role more clearly in South Africa. It is of interest that no participant referred to the knowledge base within which the profession trains, i.e. the theories used, the skills taught, and the research promoted. Nor was there explicit mention of issues of relevancy and advocacy.

**EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES**

To the present authors the line between external opportunities and threats seems the fuzziest of the SWOT categories. Identified threats to the profession may also be presented as opportunities awaiting activation. Failure to activate opportunities may result in the perpetuation of a threat. While the next section describes external threats in terms of present realities facing the profession, this section describes more broadly future possibilities that would help the profession to grow.

Several authors have identified ways in which the counseling profession can contribute to the transformational climate evident in South Africa. Shortly after the democratisation of South Africa, van der Westhuysen (1996a) suggested that the counseling psychology profession could effectively develop and link counseling programs to the governmental Reconstruction and Development Program that was designed to redress the negative consequences of apartheid. Van der Westhuysen argued that counseling psychology’s inherent focus on developing the potential of individuals would serve it well in such an enterprise. Both the victims and perpetrators of apartheid were identified by van der Westhuysen (1996b) in a subsequent publication

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
as needing assistance in establishing and building healthy social lives. There has been little literature published since this call to indicate what attempts have been made in this regard. Nevertheless, Leach et al. (2003) have argued that the counseling psychology profession is exceptionally well positioned to contribute towards the individual and societal growth that the demise of apartheid has stimulated. They believe that the counseling psychology profession has unrealised potential in this regard.

Such suggestions provide the counseling psychology profession with an opportunity to become more proactive and indeed activist both socially and politically at this critical transformative stage in South Africa’s history. As a macro-systemic challenge these suggestions also provide the profession with an opportunity to redefine and clarify the issue of relevance. De la Rey and Ipser (2004) have called for the relevance debate to be more inclusive than its present emphasis on race and gender issues. They suggest that relevance also needs to be considered in relation to theory, to research, and to training. The latter issue in particular calls for greater cultural diversity in the postgraduate students selected for training as counseling psychologists. In addition, there is little written on the issue of continuing education. Given the weaknesses already identified in the training models for counseling psychology, there is a need to upgrade the skills and knowledge of practitioners in this professional field of psychology, particularly in relation to understanding and meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse clientele.

The relevance and appropriateness of the theoretical frameworks within which the counseling profession trains and practises have been consistently criticised in the literature. Here, too, is an opportunity for theoretical innovation and renovation. Macleod (2004) calls for the promotion of theory development in South Africa given the over-commitment to counseling theories emanating from more Western, higher-income countries. Stead and Watson (2006) have suggested, in this regard, an indigenisation process that would lead to theory innovation. Others have called for renovation that, at the very least, leads to a more critical, contextual adoption of theories that question their applicability and limitations. To do this, counseling psychologists would have to consider how theory, and indeed research, translates into the reality of their practice. This would enable South African psychologists to contribute towards theory development not only in their own country but at a more global level as well (Macleod, 2004).

Several authors have identified interdisciplinary interaction as an opportunity for counseling and other categories of the psychology profession. There are at least two ways that such interaction could occur. Leach et al. (2003) suggest that psychologists need to prove their viability to other professions and the community at large by addressing what they term the social ills that the country presently faces. De la Rey and Ipser (2004) see
interaction also in a reverse direction and argue that knowledge and technological development in other disciplines provides an opportunity to gain new insight into problems that have been the traditional prerogative of the counseling psychology profession.

There is a need for a cautionary note in the discussion of the opportunities facing the counseling psychology profession. A focus on opportunities understandably raises the expectations of what a profession could be and do. Both De la Rey and Ipser (2004) and Painter and Terre Blanche (2004) emphasise the point that transforming the profession and making it more socially relevant takes time. They call for realism in this regard and caution that the time line between knowledge production and research and its impact on society at large may take longer than societal/community expectations of this process. Painter and Terre Blanche (2004) indicate that it may have been easier to identify the wrongs of the profession than to right them when they state that “the rehabilitation of psychology generally proved more difficult than bringing in the initial guilty verdict” (p. 525). This argument reflects an inherent tension on a more macro level where South Africa’s transformation process battles to meet real and often desperate needs that have accumulated over many decades.

The survey findings overlap with several external opportunities identified in the literature. An opportunity for counseling psychologists to be social and human rights advocates was identified, as well as the possibility of providing assistance to several governmental services such as the defense and police forces. The latter services have recognised personnel issues such as stress and suicide. Several suggestions were made in terms of upgrading the training of counseling psychologists. Among these were the need for training in psychofortology (i.e. the science of psychological strengths), wellness counseling, capacity building in the workplace, and exploring the impact of technology (e.g. the use of IPODS) on relationships and personality development. Implied in several of the opportunities identified was the need for the counseling profession to become more relevant. None of the participants suggested the need identified in the literature for the counseling profession to focus on interdisciplinary interaction.

EXTERNAL THREATS

Mindful of the fact that a threat may be viewed as an opportunity waiting to be activated, there nevertheless appear to be several real issues threatening the counseling psychology profession at present. Leach et al. (2003) have identified external threats that, in the present authors’ opinion, could be themed around three issues: the professional status of counseling psychology; the potential isolation of the profession; and macro-systemic issues that will impact on its service delivery.
All categories of psychology in South Africa are governed by a professional board which legislates and defines the different professions. Similar to international concerns in this regard (e.g. Fouad, 2001) is the blurring of the professional boundaries between clinical and counseling psychology. This situation has arisen for several reasons. In the first instance, both the general public and other interdisciplinary professionals seem to lack an understanding of the difference between the two professions. Exacerbating this lack of understanding has been the trend to combine the training of clinical and counseling psychologists at least at the master’s entry year, on the one hand, and the call to consolidate the limited psychological resources that are available, on the other hand (Van der Westhuysen, 1998). The professional status of counseling psychology is also threatened by its Cinderella status in relation to clinical psychology. Leach et al. (2003) describe the historical bias that has long been evident towards clinical psychology in South Africa and note that this is reflective of the international situation as well.

A more recent development that may threaten the counseling profession has been the introduction of a lower-level counselor category, that of the registered counselor. This professional category involves the pursuit of a four-year bachelor’s degree in counseling psychology which includes a practicum internship placement. Thereafter a student can register with the Health Professions Council of South Africa as a registered counselor. The argument for introducing such a category is strong for there is clearly a need to provide psychological services at a more basic level. It is also true that this professional category has clearly defined itself with limited professional practice parameters. Nevertheless, the introduction of this lower-level category has not allayed concern, similar to that expressed internationally (e.g. Fouad, 2001), about the gradual devolvement of the profession to less-qualified individuals. The profession may also be threatened by “life coaches” and lay counselors, the latter having formed their own counseling society.

The potential isolation of the counseling profession from the general public and other professional disciplines represents another external threat. For instance, there has been concern raised about the need for counseling psychology, on the one hand, and its lack of utility, the lack of understanding about what it represents, and even a mistrust about the profession, on the other hand (Leach et al., 2003). Further isolating the counseling profession is a language barrier, with the majority of counseling psychologists not speaking the languages of the majority population. Another potential threat to the isolation of the counseling profession is the lack of clarity among allied professions of what counseling psychology represents. The present SWOT analysis indicates that counseling psychology is a parochial profession, with little in the literature indicating an interdisciplinary professional networking.

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
Finally, given South Africa’s history and its present transitional state, counseling psychology, along with all other professional disciplines, is threatened by macro-systemic issues. These issues have been discussed in depth in the literature, but one example needs special mention within the confines of the present SWOT analysis, that of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There are opportunities for the counseling profession in helping to confront this pandemic but there are also realities that the profession will have to face. The sheer scale of the problem means that there will be severe human, social, and economic consequences that all will have to confront. South Africa has the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world and yet it finds itself in the lowest quartile for health provision globally (Leach et al., 2003). The implications of this situation on service delivery will be considerable. Projections indicate that by the year 2008, 500,000 individuals may die from AIDS every year, and that the average life expectancy will drop to 40 years. This would have a significant economic, political, and social impact on the country (AIDS Foundation of South Africa, 2004). It is in this altered societal domain of socioeconomic instability, with its resultant impact on family life and work functioning, that counseling psychology will have a role to play.

The survey results reflect the three literature themes identified earlier by the authors. A predominant concern was the external threat to the counseling profession that was posed by lay counselors (such as youth workers and church ministers), the new category of registered counselors (with their lack of in-depth and specialised expertise), and other professional categories such as psychiatrists. The potential isolation of the counseling profession was also identified, with several participants referring to the public ignorance of their profession. Several of the external threats identified in the survey related to the third theme of macro-environmental issues. Participants expressed concern about the availability of jobs, the effects of affirmative action employment policies, and the lack of payment from medical aid membership schemes for services rendered. There was no mention of the possible impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

FUTURE VISION

While the authors are aware of the need to avoid becoming pundits, there is clearly a need to take the profession forward. Different themes emerged from the literature and the survey but all of them envision a transformed identity for the counseling psychology profession in South Africa. There has been a consistent call for an identity that will reflect a more internally cohesive professional body and a more externally acknowledged profession. A logical starting point for a discussion of a future vision is the national division for the counseling psychology profession’s own clear, articulated
vision. Three of its objectives have been identified earlier in the section on internal strengths. These objectives consist of key visionary terms such as “relevant”, “affordable”, “accessible”, and “diverse communities”, all of which capture much of what has been called for by the literature and by counseling psychologists themselves. Yet the SWOT analysis indicates that this vision remains more a statement of intent than the basis for a plan of action. The present analysis suggests that vision is needed in two interrelated areas: on a micro level within the profession and on a macro level within South Africa.

In terms of the micro level, survey participants call for a profession that is more integrated, less parochial and that holds regular indabas (a meeting together of people) in order to take the profession forward. The vision of a profession that is more assertive in its social advocacy was considered by participants as enhancing the status of the profession, an issue identified by participants and the literature. In this regard, the parent body for all psychology divisions, the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), has become increasingly proactive and has called for its divisions to do likewise (C. Foxcroft, personal communication, 29 March 2006). The call for greater professional integration could create greater confidence in the profession at a time when the profession is perceived as being under threat from lower levels of trained and lay counselors. Such professional integration seems more imperative when one considers that the lower-level trained registered counselors will in the near future form their own division within PsySSA (C. Foxcroft, personal communication, 29 March 2006). This could well provide an opportunity for the two divisions to interact over definitional issues. The vision for a more integrated and articulate profession would also help address the identity confusion that the profession struggles with in terms of the public and other professionals’ perceptions.

A vision for a more integrated counseling profession should also address theoretical and research issues. It is clear from the literature and from the survey participants that the counseling models and research foci of the profession need to become more compatible with the realities of the macro environment. Again, a practical and proactive step would be to convene the profession on a more regular basis so that it can consider a meta-theoretical and research agenda. Diversity is a key reality of life in South Africa and the present authors do not subscribe to a prescription of counseling models and research focus. Nevertheless, the profession is critically understaffed in relation to the broader population and its pressing sociopolitical needs. There needs to be a vision that will find a balance between diversity and fragmentation and an integrated profession should address this issue in order to create a vision that will realistically address the macro context within which it practises.

Thus, a future vision needs to meet the challenges of the present macro South African context. Much lauded for its peaceful sociopolitical transition,
South Africa remains a society in transformation. This presents challenges for professions that must attempt to remain relevant against a background of rapid change. Reading the survey findings, one senses signs of “transformational burnout”, the potential for the profession to become reactive rather than creative about its future. There is a need for the profession to have a vision that will address critical sociopolitical challenges, such as the low number of black South Africans registering within the profession, as well as macro challenges, such as the need to accommodate the technological society that we now practise in. Part of this vision would require better international networking, particularly with other nations that face issues that seem endemic to developing, transitional societies. Here there may well be a role for the new international Division of Counseling Psychology in creating international *indabas* that seek solutions for less Westernised countries. The newly constituted Division of Counseling Psychology within the International Association of Applied Psychology would do well to link with the South African counseling psychology division through its parent body (PsySSA) which has forged many links with international societies since the democratisation of South Africa.

**REFERENCES**


Internationalising Counseling Psychology in the United States: A SWOT Analysis

Frederick T.L. Leong*
Michigan State University, USA

Mark M. Leach
University of Southern Mississippi, USA

Dans le respect des exigences de cette édition spéciale, cet article présente une analyse SWOT du domaine de la psychologie du counseling aux États-Unis. Après un bref survol historique, on passe à la description du contexte des tentatives récentes d’internationalisation de la psychologie du counseling aux États-Unis au sein du mouvement multiculturel. Le premier plaidoyer en faveur du multiculturel initié par la division de psychologie du counseling de l’American Psychological Association est certainement l’un de ses points forts. L’ajout du multiculturel international au multiculturel local semble être une évolution naturelle pour le domaine et ouvre un ensemble de nouvelles perspectives. On peut citer, comme voie prometteuse, notre préoccupation récente pour la justice sociale, autre champ majeur d’investigation et d’intervention. Cependant, le domaine de la psychologie du counseling reste menacé comme le montre notre statut de «rejeton» de la psychologie clinique. On fait remarquer par la même occasion qu’une part de nos faiblesses est due à notre incapacité d’exploiter certaines de nos activités de première importance telles que la réinsertion, la prévention ou la psychologie positive. Des soucis plus récents ont porté sur le déclin organisationnel avec la fermeture d’un nombre important de formations de premier plan en psychologie du counseling. Les raisons de ces disparitions sont toujours sujettes à débat.

Consistent with the framework recommended for this special issue, the current article provides a SWOT analysis of the field of counseling psychology within the United States. Beginning with a brief overview of the history of the field, the current analysis moves on to contextualise the recent attempts to internationalise counseling psychology in the United States within the multiculturalism movement. The early advocacy of multiculturalism undertaken by the Division of Counseling Psychology within the American Psychological Association is certainly one of its strengths. The movement to add international multiculturalism to domestic multiculturalism appears to be a natural transition for the

* Address for correspondence: Frederick T.L. Leong, Department of Psychology, Psychology Building, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, USA. Email: fleong@msu.edu

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
field and provides a new set of opportunities. Other opportunities for the field include our recent attention to social justice as another core area of inquiry and intervention. Yet, the field of counseling psychology continues to experience threats as it relates to our “step-child” status vis-a-vis clinical psychology. At the same time, it was noted that part of the weakness of our field has been our failure to capitalise on some of our areas of emphasis such as rehabilitation, prevention, and positive psychology. More recent concerns have centered around organisational decline with the closure of a significant number of the leading counseling psychology training programs in the country. The meaning of these closures continues to be debated.

Counseling psychology (CPY) is emerging as a global field, though presently there are only a handful of countries with counseling psychology specialties. Other countries include counseling psychology but may not have it as a formalised, legalised sub-area within applied psychology. For example, Leung (2003) discussed counseling psychology as a profession in Hong Kong though no specialty area is currently designated. A number of authors (e.g. Barak & Golan, 2000; Leach, Akhurst, & Basson, 2003; Leung, Guo, & Lam, 2000) have recently written about counseling psychology in a variety of countries, and the purpose of this article is to examine the future of internationalising counseling psychology from a United States perspective.

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE UNITED STATES

The field currently has over 70 APA-accredited programs nationally, which is a long way from the first programs beginning in the early 1950s. Counseling psychology grew from an amalgamation of specialties, though the two most prominent were the vocational counseling movement and the counseling movement. After World War II there was a need for returning soldiers to find work and careers reflective of their interests and goals. Vocational counselors were willing to assist at this critical time in the economic development of the country. At the same time there was a need for increased counseling in general, and with greater need for validated treatments.

In order to consider oneself a psychologist, a doctoral degree is required, though there are individual state laws where a master’s level individual can be considered a psychologist for job-specific purposes. Graduates of all but three of the 70-plus APA-accredited programs obtain a PhD degree, with the other three earning a PsyD degree. These three programs accept limited numbers of students and structure their programs in similar fashion to PhD programs, but emphasise practice to a greater degree than most PhD programs. Regardless of degree, graduates are licensable in all 50 states. Historically, clinical psychology and counseling psychology practiced within

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied Psychology.
fairly well-defined areas, with clinical psychologists focusing on pathology and the medical model and counseling psychologists emphasising vocational issues and “healthy” individuals having difficulties in problems of living. There has been increased blurring of the specialty areas over the past few decades, with counseling and clinical psychologists working and applying interventions in similar environments. There are still some distinctions (e.g. clinical psychologists are still more likely to work in hospitals) though these seem to be diminishing over time. Training differences still occur, with counseling and clinical psychology training programs emphasising different areas and researching different constructs, and many of the differences include philosophical approaches to treatment and research. Counseling psychology has recently become interested in global approaches to treatment and research, though the extent of interest varies, which will be discussed further below.

It has been long established that culturally encapsulated assumptions are embedded within Western, US-based psychological theories and practices. All theories have cultural assumptions contained within them, but US psychology has historically relied on these theories to explain a wide range of psychological phenomena, with concomitant and alleged cross-cultural validity, without considering the worldviews from whence they came. Because of the encapsulation these theories do predict behaviors for a large portion of the US population, but have neglected other segments of the population. However, over the past 20 years there has been a shift toward multiculturally sensitive models that incorporate flexible worldviews that attempt to include all individuals and groups in society. These theories and models reduce the inherent ethnocentric bias in decision-making associated with traditional models (Pedersen & Leong, 1997). Research is currently being conducted on a wide variety of psychological phenomena that assess the validity of culturally appropriate psychological constructs across various individual identities.

Interest in the internationalisation of counseling psychology within the US has increased over the past five years. For example, recent special issues on internationalising counseling psychology in high impact journals (e.g. *The Counseling Psychologist; Journal of Vocational Behavior*) have emerged (e.g. Leong & Ponterotto, 2003), while other applied journals related to counseling psychology, such as the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, have focused on the application of much-studied US constructs to the international domain.

In business and industrial/organisational psychology circles, analyses can be conducted that examine both the internal and external environment as part of strategic planning. In other words, what is the state of affairs within a particular organisation or a field, in this case, counseling psychology? The analytic strategy called SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and trends) allows an organisation the opportunity to match its resources and
abilities to the environment in which it operates. For the purpose of this article it allows the specialty area (counseling psychology) to examine its own system and determine the likelihood that it can increase its global vision. SWOT is a tool that assists with decision-making and strategising in a variety of areas within the field. Using a business analogy, for example, consider a company that produces, markets, and ships a technological product. Its strengths may include a unique market share within a specified geographic area and the fact that its workers are pleased with their salaries and health benefits. Weaknesses may include its limited geographic shipping mobility without incurring significant costs through outsourcing, a small marketing team, and that larger competitors are beginning to attract overseas markets for greater expansion. Opportunities may include the ability to merge one area of the company with a large shipping company and hire a youth-oriented marketing firm to increase market share, as the trend is to move toward more global youth markets.

This article will be organised in the four SWOT areas based on recent articles (e.g. Leong & Blustein, 2000; Leong & Santiago-Rivera, 1999) discussing the internationalisation of counseling psychology. Information from each article will be distributed to one of the four SWOT categories, and will be summarised in this article. Readers will notice overlap among some of the content areas as they are not orthogonal, and some information may actually be contained in two or more areas because it can be placed into, for example, a strength and a weakness area, simultaneously.

**STRENGTHS**

The Society of Counseling Psychology (Division 17 of the American Psychological Association [APA]) has the second largest membership within APA, behind clinical psychology, though there is some concern about dwindling membership in the near future because fewer new counseling psychologists are becoming associated with Division 17. In the US, counseling psychology training programs are generalist programs, meaning that students receive broad training in a variety of areas. Certain specialised courses or experiences may be included in programs but students are not trained as specialists such as neuropsychologists or forensic psychologists. Counseling psychologists serve the general public and work in a wide range of areas such as business, academia, industry, and the government, and in agencies such as community mental health, the Veteran’s Administration, private practice, and various hospitals.

As outlined by Gelso and Fretz (1992) counseling psychology focuses on a developmental philosophical perspective with the addition of an emphasis on strengths, person–environment fit, relatively brief interventions, commitment to prevention, vocational issues, the scientific approach to psychology,
and individual and cultural diversity, both nationally and internationally. For example, there has been recent increased emphasis on social justice issues, emphasising strengths, equality for all individuals, and prevention efforts (Toporek, Gerstein, Fouad, Roysircar, & Israel, 2005). Many of these philosophies have been exported to other countries and have been included in the development of their own counseling psychology programs.

As indicated earlier, counseling psychology grew from and has become the premier field for vocational assessment and counseling. With the growth of private industries taking over much of the vocational assessment role, counseling psychology has not been as practically prominent in this area as in years past, though we still lead the field on a broad array of vocational research studies. Consistent with Gelso and Fretz (1992), our competencies also include multiculturalism, with much of the empirical literature on multicultural competence embedded with counseling psychology professional journals.

There has been some discussion as to whether our field has a clear, strategic direction, and what market we are targeting, largely based on to whom one talks. Many members of the executive committees and many training directors believe that the field should continue in its mission highlighting the philosophical perspectives above. Many others working in the community view counseling psychology as a generalist training model but often change their interests, receive additional training, or assume a job title more in line with another subfield (e.g. clinical, neuropsychology). Our market is broad given the generalist training and recent trend analyses of the stability of training programs has received mixed results (e.g. Blustein, Goodyear, & Perry, 2005). For example, Leong and Leach (2005) discussed the loss of many prominent counseling psychology training programs over the past decade, while adding new CPY programs from universities that are not of the same national standing. Additionally, recent changes in national ranking systems have shut out counseling psychology programs. Program reputation notwithstanding, our market is large and counseling psychologists are embedded in most mental health arenas.

Counseling psychology in the United States is slowly moving toward a global vision. Three recent presidents of Division 17 of the American Psychological Association (APA) have emphasised or included globalisation as their theme. Dr Louise Douce presented internationalisation as her theme, followed by Dr Puncky Heppner who carried and formalised the theme. For example, Dr Heppner organised a special task group charged with internationalising a wide variety of areas within the division. Because of his emphasis, SCP increased its international liaison representation, devised international lists of counseling organisations and individuals, moved toward greater incorporation of international information in coursework, and expanded the breadth of the field. International affiliates can join Division 17 for only
US$17 a year, which includes a journal, newsletters, and other information. Joining the division has now become less prohibitive in terms of cost for the majority of the world. The current president, Dr Roberta Nutt, has continued the work begun by previous presidents.

It is evident that counseling psychologists and the field itself are becoming more active and involved in international issues. Two issues of *The Counseling Psychologist (TCP)* in the past five years have devoted Major Contribution space to the internationalisation of counseling psychology, and the journal continues to have an International Forum section devoted to counseling psychology issues globally. SCP have become partners with the newly developed Division 16 (Counseling Psychology) of the International Association of Applied Psychology. More individual counseling psychologists are connecting with the Office of International Affairs of the American Psychological Association (APA). There seems to be an understanding of the inevitable movement toward globalising the field, and the *zeitgeist* is slowly changing. There is greater understanding that the current state of the field is ethnocentric and psychologically emic, and that counseling psychology in the US may not be the “state of the art”. Greater interest in expanding our knowledge from research, clinical, and organisational perspectives is increasing and more counseling psychologists are delving into international collaboration. Fortunately this movement has been occurring, though currently by only a few dozen individuals.

**WEAKNESSES**

**Housing and Work Settings**

Some have questioned the future of counseling psychology. While Division 17 maintains the second largest number of members of all APA divisions, many new graduates begin their careers identifying as SCP members but it appears that they switch their identity to another area after a few years. Counseling psychologists typically work in a variety of agencies, and many who work in medical settings will be called clinical psychologists, or those who work for the Veteran’s Administration may engage in forensic psychology and identify that way. Maintaining a CPY identity may become a growing concern within the division over the next ten years, particularly since some of the research-oriented programs have recently closed (Blustein et al., 2005).

One of the primary philosophies embedded within counseling psychology is a developmental approach, and historically counseling psychology programs appeared to fit well into colleges of education on university campuses. To this day all but approximately 15 counseling psychology programs are housed in colleges of education, with the rest in departments of psychology. Anecdotal evidence indicates that those housed in colleges of education are
often under threat of closure because they must constantly justify their relevance when many education deans and other administrators focus on a K–12 (kindergarten–12th grade) mentality. Programs often have to modify their training courses to fit with the vision of the education college. Programs in psychology departments often have to justify their existence because historically counseling psychology grew from education roots while clinical psychology has historically been involved in psychology departments. Counseling psychology programs are often considered the “step-child” of clinical psychology and given less credence, or as financially redundant with clinical psychology. Thus, counseling psychology programs are often in a struggle to find and maintain a home.

Where programs are housed may also help define the professional identity of the individual, often because outside forces understand counseling as a subfield of psychology but not as a field within colleges of education. Counseling psychology has always had more of an identity crisis than other specialty areas within psychology. Multiple conferences over the decades (e.g. Boulder, Greystone, Georgia) have focused on identity, though the most recent counseling psychology conference in Houston decided to focus on other areas.

Counteracting Forces

Unfortunately, the field needs to overcome its myopic history, as expounded upon by Leong and Santiago-Rivera (1999). These authors outline six counteracting forces to the expansion of multiculturalism, and by extension, internationalism, in the US; ethnocentrism, false consensus effects, attraction-selection-attrition framework, psychological reactance, beliefs versus values, and conformity. First, counseling psychology has been ethnocentric and Anglocentric historically, limiting the generalisability and validity of the field itself. Ethnocentrism limits our vision because it consists of using one’s own culture as the standard when assessing others. For example, little is understood about mental health issues of recent immigrants and their relationship to both home culture and US culture, or what has been accomplished has focused on broad differences among groups. Ethnocentrism leads to increased cultural stereotypes and distance between cultural groups. Rather than reach out across cultures there has been a history of researchers and clinicians acting independently instead of collaboratively. In order to both expand the field and not be perceived externally as irrelevant and potentially obsolete, it is hoped that counseling psychologists will begin to merge with other national and international researchers examining a wide range of international issues. As indicated above, there is movement toward this mentality but the strides have been small thus far.

Second, the false-consensus effect states that we all perceive our own behaviors as typical given similar circumstances and events (Fiske & Taylor,
Humans tend to seek out others with similar attitudes, values, and behaviors, reinforcing that they are correct in their evaluations. This mentality again limits understanding of the necessity to examine other cultural groups to determine the validity of a variety of psychological phenomena across cultures. Third, Schneider’s Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework argues that organisations first attract like-minded individuals, select like-minded individuals, and allow non-like-minded individuals to leave, creating a homogeneous organisation resistant to change. Organisations such as these are not healthy and tend to maintain a myopic perspective, limiting possible outside opportunities. Compared with other divisions, the International Psychology (Division 52) division of APA is relatively new, having grown in part from a belief that APA needed to expand its boundaries and perspectives.

Fourth, Brehm and Brehm (1981) argued that humans counter threats perceived as leading to a loss of freedoms, a motivational force called psychological reactance. Change means modifying established ways of doing business which is difficult to admit and even more difficult to accomplish. Fifth, Leong and Santiago-Rivera (1999) indicated that beliefs and values differ; the former being conceptions of what we believe to be true and the latter being what is desired. The field often meshes the two which leads to a values-belief fallacy, or the idea that individuals operate as if their values are their beliefs. Values are hierarchical and by extension, beliefs become hierarchical. These beliefs become very resistant to change. Finally, the idea of conformity is engrained in most, if not all, cultures. Conformity maintains that individuals are motivated to assume the majority attitude (Devine, Hamilton, & Ostrom, 1994). These six forces have a longstanding history within US psychology, and while many counseling psychologists have become more involved in multiculturalism and internationalism, old philosophies are difficult to change.

### Journals

Researchers in counseling psychology have a long history of studying a wide variety of counseling and vocational issues, and are generally prolific. Three of the counseling psychology journals have very high impact rankings and are often read by others outside of counseling psychology. It is hoped that researchers will include more international research that can be published in these journals. However, there are competing philosophical perspectives that must be overcome. United States psychology has historically stemmed from a logical positivist tradition and counseling psychology is no different. Publishing in some of the top journals often requires strict experimental designs with a writing style that is inconsistent with many researchers outside the US. In recent years counseling psychology has begun to focus on
expanding its research designs to include others such as qualitative and mixed-methods. Discussions must take place on the controls placed on many US designs and their meaning for international collaboration. Recently, Dr Robert Carter, editor of *The Counseling Psychologist*, proposed a mentoring program for international colleagues wishing to submit their work to the journal but still in need of assistance to achieve a US style of writing and research.

Most US counseling psychologists do not express a serious interest in international psychological issues and are not currently knowledgeable about research in other countries. Many universities fail to carry journals from other continents (often due to cost issues), many academic counseling psychologists fail to receive the same benefits for publishing in international journals, and most US psychologists are not multilingual, unlike our overseas colleagues.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

**Social Justice**

Shifts in population and social movements present new opportunities. Counseling psychologists can be at the forefront of accepting some of the uncertainties of immigration. New worldviews, new expectations, and new opportunities abound for those interested in understanding and helping others adjust to new surroundings. Research assessing immigration issues has increased significantly over the past ten years, and recent immigration summit meetings validate this growth. These summits focus on the role of counseling psychology offering assistance in its broadest sense for immigrants, including its role in political, social, educational, and business settings. Additionally, CPY has been at the forefront of the incorporation of new research, training models, and interventions within the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered/questioning (GLBTQ) movement. A significant number of prominent researchers in CPY are GLBTQ and they have led the charge for future counseling psychologists to continue working toward social equality and justice. The social justice movement grew out of a 2001 counseling psychology conference in Houston and has been incorporated into multiple training programs, and multiple counseling-related books have emphasised justice issues.

The social justice movement stemmed from an initial strength and continuing opportunity of counseling psychology, that of the multicultural movement. Multiculturalism and diversity within the US have been a focus area for the past quarter century, though the past 15 years have shown the most growth. Underlying multiculturalism is a value of equality and justice. Multicultural competence has become a mantra in practically all training
programs and recent discussions within SCP have included difficult topics such as what training programs should do with students unwilling or unable to accept diversity as a counseling psychology value. With its emphasis on multicultural issues and social justice (Toporek et al., 2005), these areas are fruitful to pursue and it seems like a natural, continued opportunity for counseling psychology to grow. With values such as justice, it is not difficult to make the leap from US diversity to international diversity.

Increasing Visibility

Recently, the American Psychological Association (APA) passed a resolution aiming to increase the visibility of psychology globally, with numerous divisions focusing on internationalising their subfields. It would be false to assume that since the APA passed the resolution, then psychology itself will now become more global. Psychology is currently global. However, the APA, along with divisions such as Division 17 (Counseling Psychology), has begun to focus its attention on increasing international collaboration, to determine the validity of a variety of psychological constructs. We are finally beginning to see beyond the “false consensus effect”, or the idea that our own behavior is typical and thus, universal.

Division 52 (International Psychology) has initiated a mentoring program to exchange information and potentially assist colleagues attempting to publish in top US journals but whose first language is not English. The Office of International Affairs is working in conjunction with other areas of APA to globalise the field. Multiple opportunities are available once members begin to increase their knowledge of APA’s recent emphases. It is clear that increased collaboration across national organisations is needed for psychology as a whole to gain better acceptance in communities internationally. Perhaps an increase of mutual exchanges of liaisons across international organisations such as the International Association of Applied Psychology and the International Union of Psychological Sciences can be accomplished.

Counseling psychology programs are also beginning to increase their international focus. More faculty members emphasise research collaboration, include international issues in coursework, host colleagues at their home institution, and have contracts drawn up with universities in other countries to initiate exchange programs. Opportunities abound in a number of research areas. For example, there are increasing online research opportunities given the advent of free or low-cost programs such as SurveyMonkey. Increased use of these programs allows researchers from all over the world to conduct survey research. Division 16 of the International Association of Applied Psychology and Division 17 of APA have the potential for numerous collaborative projects designed to mutually assist each other, and other authors in this special issue have outlined areas that may become fruitful over time.
Instructors have greater opportunities to incorporate international perspectives on counseling psychology in their courses. The recent TCP articles focusing on the need for greater international worldviews within the field add to our collective knowledge base. Additionally, there are numerous US-based psychological organisations that have broad appeal and membership from multiple countries. Collaboration becomes easier once shared interests are known.

Possible Near Future Changes

Counseling psychology, along with other applied areas, will be undergoing possible changes over the next 20 years with regard to training. First, the APA has recently passed a motion on the need for postdoctoral training to meet requirements for licensure. The crux of the motion is that a full-time equivalent position will not be necessary to obtain licensure, but that two years of full-time equivalency, regardless of when they are acquired, will be required. Training programs may be forced to change their focus to include more applied work earlier in their programs, though it is too early to determine the full extent of the motion. States must decide to change their licensing laws before any of these changes can occur, which may take decades.

Second, the future may see more international internship opportunities. Leach (2005) discussed the current availability of international internship opportunities but said that more could be accomplished through various psychological organisations. With its focus on health and social justice, counseling psychology would seem to be a natural fit with international internship programs. The same is true for CPY programs; APA has recently begun considering assisting with the creation of an international body that may oversee accreditation on a global level. Perhaps CPY can become involved with the creation of international programs through the IAAP or other international organisations, though discussions are at the very early stages.

Finally, increasing special journal issues on internationalising fields (e.g. vocational psychology) and publishing in international journals will become the norm. Many departments have begun to consider some international journals as respectable, unlike others that still maintain an ethnocentric bias toward US journals. It would be interesting to determine the extent to which counseling psychologists currently publish in international journals and whether that was their first publishing outlet choice.

Changes in technology and methodological and statistical procedures present new opportunities. The growth of online research studies increases our knowledge and research output potential. As indicated earlier, by using online, inexpensive, web-based programs such as surveymonkey.com and others, greater diversity of participants by counseling psychologists can occur, adding validity to our research. Recent articles on newer quantitative
methodologies (e.g. structural equation modeling; see Martens, 2005) and statistical procedures have offered counseling psychologists the opportunity to design more integrated studies that allow for greater understanding of a variety of psychological phenomena under investigation. For example, there has been a recent increase in the number of mediation models investigated, allowing for a more finessed understanding of psychological phenomena. Similarly, counseling psychologists have become increasingly more tolerant and knowledgeable of qualitative designs, largely growing from the multicultural movement. These designs allow for greater depth of constructs often not found through quantitative designs. Mixed-method designs (see Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005) are becoming progressively popular, though they are still in their infancy in counseling psychology.

As evidenced by calls from recent Division 17 presidents to globalise counseling psychology, there are a multitude of trends in the field. First, counseling psychologists must increase their international worldview, as there is an inevitable global movement in all fields. The American Psychological Association recently passed a resolution pushing for psychology to become known worldwide and to become better integrated into agencies globally, which includes business, industry, education, government, and the military. Often, the authors have encountered colleagues who want to become more involved with international research and experiences but do not know how to go about it. Leach (2006) presented some tips on increasing international collaboration.

Expanding our Worldview Lenses

Consistent with the inevitable global expansion there will be increased exposure to differing worldviews and cultural lenses. In order to increase the validity of various psychological constructs that counseling psychologists study it is imperative that multiple philosophical frameworks be used to fully understand the generalisability into other cultures. The trend has begun to assess, critique, and evaluate research based on multiple cultural lenses. As mentioned earlier our Western therapeutic theories of change have been critiqued for being ethnocentric and Eurocentric (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003; Leong & Santiago-Rivera, 1999). While many counseling psychologists have been at the forefront of the movement toward increasing indigenous treatments and assessing the degree to which Western models are applicable with non-Western clients, the same can be said with importing non-Western models. More research is needed to determine the degree to which our theories apply with various international cultures, and vice-versa. For example, due to economic circumstances US-founded theories of career development have been criticised in South Africa as being decontextualised and unrealistic (Stead & Watson, 2002), while numerous papers over the
years at conferences and in journal articles have discussed the need for
greater inclusion of a variety of treatment approaches that can be imported
into the US. Most of what we currently know about theories developed in
North America is derived from North American culture, and even within
North America, white, middle-class culture. It is clear that if theories are
ever to gain respect globally and evidence change with a variety of cultural
groups then more international research is needed.

Training Issues

Some universities have begun to increase their emphasis on international
students and international research in programs, particularly graduate pro-
gams. The same is true for counseling psychology programs. Through
international collaboration and contacts faculty are creating contracts with
universities in other countries to have students apply to their programs,
exchange students for a semester, offer short-term courses in other coun-
tries, and include international research papers in most courses. Papers from
international journals can be fairly easily accessed at most universities
whether the library has the journal or not. The overarching purpose is to
offer students an opportunity to view psychological constructs from an
international perspective. Faculty are beginning to make more connections
with international colleagues, particularly if they belong to international
organisations. A good place to begin can also be the counseling psychology
division of the International Association of Applied Psychology. Overall, it
is predicted that over the next ten years counseling psychology will move with
greater intent toward increased collaboration with counseling psychologists
globally. Increased research opportunities, along with increased applied
training opportunities, will become available.

THREATS

Due to US licensure laws and other organisations, there are a number of fields
engaging in similar activities, at least to many external observers. Counseling
psychology has had a long history of justifying itself as a separate entity
from clinical psychology, and is often considered the step-child of clinical
psychology. Recent research indicates that there is significant overlap
among the jobs that clinical and counseling psychologists obtain (Beutler &
Fisher, 1994), and much of the distinction may be more academic than
practical. Philosophical differences and training differences often separate
the two fields, though practically it is difficult to discern the nuances between
the two. Additionally, there has been a recent explosion of programs and
graduates of PsyD (Doctor of Psychology) programs. Often, these programs
bring in more money to a university than a PhD in counseling psychology

© 2007 The Authors. Journal compilation © 2007 International Association of Applied
Psychology.
program, lending themselves to increased attention from money-strapped universities. Graduates also vie for the same internships as counseling psychology graduates, flooding the market and confusing the boundaries between the degrees for the general public.

There are multiple influences that threaten the future of counseling psychology. First, Blustein, Goodyear, and Perry (2005) discussed the history of academic counseling psychology programs and their resultant fate in some cases. The number of counseling psychology programs has increased over the past 25 years, from approximately 40 to almost 75. However, there have been recent closures and mergers of some of the more prominent Carnegie-I (research-focused) university programs nationally, while increasing the number of programs in less prominent universities. Discussions within SCP have revolved around future research emphases within counseling psychology in addition to applied training. Programs with strong research emphases are often likely to receive more external grant funding which decreases expenditures that universities must give to programs. With the national explosive growth of PsyD programs which often focus less on research and graduate significant numbers of students, concerns abound as to the future of counseling psychology itself. Counseling psychology has always had difficulty solidifying its identity, and when other types of programs and fields threaten it, it becomes harder to justify its existence. It is highly unlikely that these concerns will lead to a significant reduction of counseling psychology programs in favor of PsyD or clinical psychology programs in the short run, but it is an issue sometimes discussed within the field.

Other fields also threaten counseling psychology, though on a different level. In the US master’s level graduates can practice independently, and typically charge less than a psychologist. Insurance companies are almost equally likely to pay a master’s level clinician as they would a psychologist, depending on the state and the insurance company. Therefore, though training as a psychologist is obviously more extensive than a master’s level clinician, it has become difficult to justify to third-party payers that the therapeutic outcome will be significantly improved given the adjustment in payment. Similarly, master’s level social work programs and marriage and family programs offer applied training and engage in similar direct service delivery. The majority of clinicians in the US have a master’s degree only across a host of fields.

Analysis of Strategic Issues Facing Counseling Psychology in the United States

Counseling psychology in the US should keep focusing on issues related to its philosophies: diversity and social justice, prevention, developmental
issues, and vocational influences on the individual. First, counseling psychology has become a leader in the diversity field, namely US multiculturalism broadly defined. Over the past 20 years counseling psychology has been strongly influenced by the growing population and immigration changes, and researchers, academicians, and clinicians have followed suit. Journals have sprung up across sub-areas devoted solely to diversity, including ethnicity, GLBTQ, and religious issues. Division 45 (Ethnic Minority) of the American Psychological Association has a significant percentage of counseling psychologists among its membership. With this emphasis SCP should also focus its attention on international issues, something it is beginning to accomplish with its recent development of a Section in Formation (SIF) on the internationalisation of counseling psychology. Sharing of research interests across countries examining the other focused areas listed above, for example, could add significantly to more valid outcomes. Consistent with the diversity emphasis is the emphasis on social justice. Recent interest in this area has been thriving and it would be fairly easy for our international colleagues and us to collaborate on important social justice issues.

Second, counseling psychology has always been founded on prevention, though the number of studies related to this area is small given the limited amount of federal funding and difficulty in measuring positive outcomes. Nonetheless, given the rising threat of various health concerns, trauma, and violence, for example, future focus could assist in the prevention of these global threats. Similar to prevention, the field has also lost its early advantage in the field of rehabilitation psychology. Third, counseling psychology has always included a developmental perspective in its approach to training and treatments. Models from counseling psychologists that have gained prominence include racial identity, vocational identity development, and internalised heterosexism, to name only a few. The importance of examining change over time has been largely influential in the development of new research and clinical ideas. Finally, the field should continue to focus on vocational issues. New models will have to be developed to understand and predict the quickly changing, diverse, and growing vocational field. For example, the second author spent a semester in South Africa and literature there indicated that the Holland model would be inappropriate for use with the majority of the population because of cultural and economic differences. Though challenges are evident it is hoped that counseling psychologists will continue creative activities to examine vocational development from a broader context.

Counseling psychologists need to attend to threats in a more proactive manner than previously encountered. One threat includes the closure of many prominent academic programs. Counseling psychologists have traditionally done a mediocre job at best in marketing themselves and advocating for the field. More research with clinical implications should be conducted
in prominent journals. One notable exception is *The Counseling Psychologist*, which often includes clinical implications for their major contribution sections. This journal has led the field for years and has consistently hovered in the top ten applied journals over the past ten years. It was recently ranked at number two, an incredibly prestigious ranking. Only through real behavioral outcomes will other fields such as medicine and government agencies take counseling psychology seriously.

In sum, counseling psychology has had a short history but a rapidly growing present and future on internationalising the field. Only recently has US psychology in general been less myopic in its approach to a broad range of psychological approaches and phenomena. It is expected that with articles in special issues such as *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, and growing presentations on counseling psychology at international conferences, then counseling psychology and counseling psychologists will continue to collaborate in order to make this field a truly international field.

REFERENCES


Internationalisation of Counseling Psychology: Constructing Cross-National Consensus and Collaboration

Mark L. Savickas*

Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine, Rootstown, USA

INTRODUCTION

To signal the formation of the Division of Counseling Psychology in the International Association of Applied Psychology as well as to foster its development, the authors in this special issue on International Perspectives on Counseling Psychology have described the current status of counseling psychology in their countries and suggested how the discipline might be...
advanced in the coming years. The authors, each leading proponents of counseling psychology in their own countries, have discussed the challenges faced by counseling psychologists and suggested possibilities for advancing the discipline. Their SWOT analyses propose numerous possibilities for building an action agenda for Division 16. However, there are more possibilities than can be pursued by a new Division with limited resources. Distilling multiple possibilities into a few common themes may suggest a realistic and meaningful way forward in building Division 16. Thus as I studied the articles, I strove to identify a few critical themes that could be converted into a set of objectives that might chart the Division’s immediate future.

Of course, the selected themes and implicit objectives require wide discussion and modification before they can be reformulated into a strategic plan for the Division. At this point, I identify selected themes only to prompt discussion and debate within Division 16. Each counseling psychologist who reads the articles in this special issue will settle on their own list of themes. I seek only to initiate a dialogue among Division 16 members by highlighting four themes that could eventually become objectives in a strategic plan. The themes deal with (a) defining counseling psychology from an international perspective, (b) crystallising a cross-national professional identity, (c) encouraging construction of indigenous models, methods, and materials, and (d) promoting international collaboration.

DEFINING COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Division 16 can assume leadership in attempting to construct a definition of counseling psychology that spans countries and serves the international community. In some countries, counseling psychology seems already to be tightly defined and explicitly understood. For example, in Hong Kong “counseling psychology is understood as the application of psychological knowledge, psychotherapeutic skills and professional judgment to facilitate enhanced human functioning and quality of life” (Leung, Chan, & Leahy, this issue). In Canada, “counselling psychology is the fostering and improving of normal human functioning by helping people solve problems, make decisions, and cope with stresses of everyday life” (Young & Nicol, this issue). In other countries, counseling psychology is loosely defined and implicitly understood. For example, in South Africa counseling psychology is described as having a positive focus with an emphasis on health, well-being, and problem-solving (Watson & Fouche, this issue).

While the authors in this special issue present a range of definitions, with varying degree of explicitness, they all seem to share the root conception that counseling psychology concentrates on the daily life adjustment issues faced by reasonably well-adjusted people, particularly as they cope with
career transitions and personal development. Jennifer Nicol and Richard Young, the President of Division 16, extracted the essential meaning of this modern conception of counseling psychology by writing that ultimately counseling psychologists assist individuals to link their lives to the social context in which they live. Young’s deduction raises awareness that the complexity of postmodern life has increased the salience of culture issues for counseling psychology. Making choices and adaptations is difficult enough for individuals who live in stable cultures and communities. They are required to adapt to predictable circumstances and travel well-worn paths. The adaptive difficulties increase for individuals who live in less stable cultures and communities. They must construct and manage a self in a medium of transforming life trajectories and emerging career pathways.

Division 16 might consider establishing a task force to define, from an international vista, what counseling psychology is. They could attempt to articulate a cross-national conception of counseling psychology that is consensual and convergent. The international view would consist of multiple perspectives on the same issues and ensure that the definition of counseling psychology used by IAAP has both depth of meaning and breadth of usefulness. A consensual and convergent definition would ease the emergence and foster the development of counseling psychology in countries where it is a fledgling discipline. Of course a full definition of anything requires also stating what it is not, which in this case raises the issue of professional identity.

CRYSTALLISE A CROSS-NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Part of the difficulty in crystallising a coherent professional identity for the discipline of counseling psychology across countries, and even within some countries, is stating what it is not. A majority of the panelists indicated that counseling psychologists present a diffuse identity because they engage in a wide range of activities with varied client groups across diverse life situations in different kinds of settings using a range of theories and techniques. This multiform activity presents both a strength and a weakness in crystallising a professional identity, especially within the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP). On the one hand, multiform activities increase the vitality and attractiveness of the discipline for its practitioners. On the other hand, multiform activities cause vagueness about what counseling psychologists share in common. Within counseling psychology, it is considered a strength to be a generalist, yet applied and professional psychologists in other sub-disciplines strive to be specialists. In a sense, counseling psychology’s specialty is generality. As Division 16 moves forward within IAAP and around the globe, it needs to balance the roles of generalist and
specialist in promulgating a clear professional delineation that makes its work distinctly recognisable to clients and colleagues yet does not constrain the innovation and creativity for which it is known.

This role balancing represents a major challenge that is not easily met because the adjective “counseling” is used to denote the discipline of “counseling psychology”. Several authors in this special issue raised the concern that the use of “counseling” as an adjective has been and continues to be problematic in identity crystallisation. Actually, some counseling psychologists have thought the name a mistake, starting with the President of the Counseling Psychology Division (17) in the American Psychological Association when the Division first took that name (Scott, 1980, p. 35). In India, counseling is performed by many different disciplines. In Japan, counseling is viewed as a technique of Rogerian psychotherapy. Thus some colleagues in Japan are considering the use of “lifespan developmental psychology” rather than “counseling” to conceptualise and professionalise counseling psychology as a distinct discipline. One wonders if part of the success of the new profession of “life coaching” can be attributed to its name. In Hong Kong, counseling is viewed as an intervention strategy grounded in psychology yet shared by mental health and educational professionals. In France, some view counseling psychology as a peripheral approach to treating personal difficulties (Bernaud, Cohen-Scali, & Guichard, this issue). In short, many mental health specialists view counseling as a process used by clinical, organisation, and school psychologists, and by social workers. Turning what they view as a generic technique into an independent discipline is fraught with difficulties for Division 16.

Making the task of crystallising a coherent identity among members of Division 16, within IAAP, and across nations even more difficult is the general lack of a reasonably distinct evidence base. As noted by Young and Nicol (this issue), counseling psychology has often looked to other disciplines and specialties in search of a paradigm to guide its practice. They briefly recount the history of how counseling psychology adopted frameworks first from the psychology of individual differences, then from developmental psychology, later from social psychology, and now from multiculturalism and social justice. They encourage counseling psychologists in Division 16 to concentrate on the action between counselor and client in formulating and articulating its core paradigm. Following such a path would emphasise counseling psychologists’ unique contributions to counseling process research. Such an emphasis on process issues could be augmented by attention to content issues that have been unique to counseling psychology such as fostering human development through work and relationships.

Division 16 might consider establishing a task force to examine how counseling psychologists across the globe can explain who they are and how they differ from their more established counterparts such as social workers.
and clinical psychologists. Such explanations need to be addressed, differentially, to both colleagues in the helping professions and to the public who may benefit from counseling psychology interventions. In many countries, the public has no idea how counseling psychology differs from clinical psychology. Willingness to consult a counseling psychologist is at issue, especially for individuals who do not know what counseling psychologists do.

Several authors in this special issue have suggested that a specific path toward cross-national identity crystallisation is to assist national psychological organisations produce accreditation guidelines and procedures as well as relevant and transparent professional standards. Such work could aid universities to initiate or enhance their programs.

ENCOURAGING INDIGENOUS MODELS, METHODS, AND MATERIALS

While in need of a consistent definition and a coherent professional identity, counseling psychology cannot be the same in every country. As Arulmani (this issue) indicated, counseling psychology must not be “tied to the apron strings of the West”, which would only serve to disconnect it from the social realities and specific needs in each country. It seems unlikely that empirical methods from North America can be easily adopted in cultures that have more intuitive and experiential practices. To flourish internationally, counseling psychology cannot be viewed primarily as a Western specialty rooted in logical positivism. To advance counseling psychology around the globe, Division 16 must formulate and implement strategies that facilitate development of indigenous psychological theory and research that are grounded in the specific cultural context where they are practiced. This work might begin by building an international data base that describes models and methods that have been used successfully in particular contexts and specific circumstances. Along with encouraging the construction of indigenous models, methods, and materials, Division 16 should support the expansion outside the West of training opportunities for new professionals. Many of the leaders of counseling psychology in the countries included in this special issue have been trained in the Euro-American tradition. If not actually trained in the West, their research and practice have been strongly influenced by the literature from these regions. The production of indigenous theories and techniques must be accompanied by arranging opportunities for professionals to be trained in their use by the experts who constructed them.

PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Needless to say, indigenous development does not mean isolation. Globalisation of the economy and continued internationalisation of counseling

psychology has led to increased contacts and exchanges among counseling psychologists worldwide. Promoting interaction among counseling psychologists around the globe is a core mission of IAAP and its Division 16. To accelerate this interaction among counseling psychologists, Division 16 could form a task force to advance the virtual community that is emerging. Using technology, a coordinating committee could prompt members of the Division to coalesce into developmental relationships that advance professional practice, share mutual interests, and promote collaborative research. The recent foray into the international dimensions of Counseling Psychology within the United States as described by Leong and Leach (this issue) may serve as one promising source of support for this movement towards increasing international collaboration.

Globalisation has presented new opportunities and challenges for counseling psychology. Rapid change is a phenomenon to which individuals, families, groups, institutions, and societies must adapt. Counseling psychologists exist in part because of their prior success in helping individuals and communities manage transitions. As Pryor and Bright (this issue) suggest, a great challenge for counseling psychologists in the coming decade is to assist individuals and communities “embrace and enjoy change as much as they continue to embrace stability and predictability”. Counseling psychology traces its roots to the first decade of the 20th century when the vocational guidance movement helped immigrants and migrants from farms to factories adapt to the modern industrial era. In the first decade of the 21st century, counseling psychologists can lead the way in helping world workers and the global community adapt to the postmodern information era. In this regard, it may be possible to organise international networks of practitioners and researchers to collaborate in addressing issues raised by the global economy and the restructuring of the world’s workforce along with the migration and change it continues to occasion.

Of course, there are other topics around which Division 16 could build virtual communities. Thus, the Division might consider actually forming a few select special interest groups that concentrate on a particular topic of wide concern and thus actively promote the continued internationalisation of counseling psychology. These virtual communities could concentrate on issues of social justice, multicultural counseling, migration, and career in different contexts.

CONCLUSION

By describing counseling psychology in their own countries and how Division 16 might be useful, the authors in this special issue on International Perspectives on Counseling Psychology have explicitly prepared the ground on which to build Division 16 and implicitly offered a preliminary blueprint
for its architecture. Their ideas should now prompt discussion and dialogue among Division 16 members with the goal of formulating a strategic plan for how Division 16 will contribute to the international advancement of counseling psychology. Based on their insights and inspiration, the strategic plan may include efforts to define counseling psychology from an international perspective, crystallise a cross-national professional identity, encourage construction of indigenous models, methods, and materials, and promote international collaboration.

REFERENCES