COUNSELING AND THE FUTURE: Some Views of Editorial Board Members

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During the AFGA Annual Convention the Editorial Board of the Journal had a lively discussion regarding the future of counseling. Afterwards we all agreed that we should have taped it. I then invited those present as well as others on the Board to react in a brief statement to the question, What should we be doing? The question did not refer to AFGA leadership as such, but rather to the profession itself.

Since I have expressed my views often in editorials (see the June 1981 issue, "On Sailing the Titanic") I will not repeat them here. But for readers who are interested and concerned with our future, here are six views.

Now, WHAT DO YOU THINK? We will gladly print your opinions.

James R. Barclay

ON CREATING OUR FUTURE

Focusing on the future and related implications for our profession would seem to be an essential concern of AFGA. The exponential rate of change has brought the consequences of decisions and events into our lives and the lives of our clients at a far more rapid rate than in the past. The profession is being greatly influenced by current political decisions. Those same decisions as well as other decisions on the local and global levels are influencing the future of our clients. It is imperative to recognize the inevitability of change for both our profession and our clients. Thus, it seems essential for us to place a primary emphasis on the exploration of alternatives for the design of preferred futures. This proactive initiative would seem to be appropriate for the profession as a whole, for the role of the counselor, and for the client in living with change.

If we are to respond to human needs it may be necessary to create alternative formats/systems to meet those needs. As one source of funding is decreased our challenge will be the acquisition of alternative support systems. If block grants are awarded to the states the profession will need to be ready with justification for support. If communities wish to continue with human service programs, it may be necessary for the communities to provide the financial support. If private business wishes to maximize its profit and human resources, it may be necessary to support human services. If human compassion exists, alternatives for financial support will likely be possible. Beyond access to funding, it may be necessary to change systems for delivering services. If we possess rigid role definitions within our profession the flexibility for designing new delivery systems may not be present. If we function from the goal of meeting human needs we may be sufficiently creative to meet those needs.

An understanding of the rate of change and issues related to future living will likely impact the credibility of our profession as well. In career counseling it is essential that our clients examine emerging occupations and understand the nature of functional skill categories that have high probability for transcending change. Examination of current occupational titles is insufficient when clients will reach the peak of their career in the year 2001. Our clients are desperately in need of skills for transcending change and confidence for designing preferred personal and societal futures. Individuals who lack these characteristics are all too often the same persons we see in crisis counseling.

In summary, it would seem that we as a profession might greatly benefit from an increasing emphasis on the creation of preferred futures for the meeting of human needs. The diversity within AFGA is an excellent resource for the exploration of alternatives. Our challenge rests in our ability to work interdependently among ourselves and with society, as well as with our clients, to proactively influence tomorrow.

Beverly M. Brown
IDENTITY CRISIS

"When you're neither fish or fowl, try walking."
— an Old North Carolina saying

APGA's present dilemma stems from a lack of identity. We simply do not know collectively if we are a part of what has traditionally been thought of as guidance (poetically referred to in this essay as "fish") or what has emerged vigorously in the last 20 years, counseling psychology (in this essay called "fowl"). As a profession, it has been difficult for us not to identify ourselves as one or the other. With this difficulty has come confusion, stumbling, and seemingly a lack of direction. It has been especially noteworthy that as a body we have not been able to achieve a consensus regarding a new name for ourselves. We shuffle, but we do not move forward very much.

In the meantime, there are those who do. Counseling psychology has taken flight. More and more, it closes itself to the possibility of recognizing standard APGA training programs as a part of its tradition. Another related discipline in the counseling field, marriage and family therapy, has also developed rapidly in the past 10 years and now nests by itself under the protection of federal recognition. APGA may be able to partially unite with this body, but the time for doing so is now.

Traditional areas of speciality for APGA (e.g., school counseling) are shrinking, much like the lakes in summer. Those trying to swim in such waters may find more mud than satisfaction. Guidance areas are not growing because of saturation, population shifts, and overproduction of programs producing people in this area.

Thus, the dilemma. If you do not fly (like counseling psychology) or swim in the traditional territorial water of a matured profession (like school counseling), what is left? My cue in responding to this crisis comes in thinking of the old North Carolina saying quoted earlier. I suggest, like the saying, that we try walking. By walking I mean that we search for the uniqueness that is within the 40,000 member body. While we may not be in perfect health as an organization, we are far from breathing our last. The secret, I think, in a walking identity strategy is to realize we may fall on our face occasionally.

Clearly, APGA needs a new name. We have a proud tradition, but the name that we presently wear does not reflect a walking organization. Names can help give purpose and meaning. We need the strength generated by such a change. We also need new universal counseling heroes/heroinés. The able leadership of the national defense era has aged. It still provides a great resource from which to draw, but the profession needs new role models for today. The past must be incorporated more into the present with theory and paradigm building a part of the process. Finally, there is the need to recognize a lack of leadership and direction on our part may be partially due to our lack of metaphors. Bodies do not become strong without the play and vision provided by metaphorical thinking. If we are an organization that walks, are we presently on all fours (as in childhood), striding on both feet (as in adulthood), or in need of a cane (as in aging)? And what about running? Are we capable of sprinting after counseling prizes (e.g., geriatric counseling, holistic health counseling) of the future, or will we just plod along? The answer awaits the imagined thinking of an old body seeking a new identity.

Samuel T. Gladding

WORRISOME ISSUES

As both Dr. Smith and I argued last meeting, we seem increasingly in danger of losing a collective sense of identity. Psychology has become a rallying point for many of us. However, for those of us who have not adopted that identity, there seems to be increasingly little to hold us together. One manifestation of this is in our moves for program accreditation. Even though ACES and APGA have developed an inclusive accreditation process, subgroups within the organization have either developed or begun the development of their own discrete accreditation procedures. Thus, the rehab folks have accreditation by CDA, a joint process from ACA, NASPA, et al. have very recently developed guidelines for the accreditation of college student personnel programs; the AMHCA folks (through their national "academy")—I can never remember its initials—are now proposing their own accreditation. To justify having their own accreditation procedures, each group will be forced to highlight its own uniquenesses rather than any common bonds it shares with other counseling groups.

My wish is that we would all acknowledge our common historical roots and espouse a common philosophy of working with essentially normal people to help them through their developmental hurdles and with their problems of living. The AMHCA folks are the most clear case in point of those who refuse to embrace such a common purpose. Their new training standards argue for "interdisciplinary" training of professionals who are more clinically oriented than clinical psychologists now are—to the extent that they succeed, they will have trained generic mental health professionals who have no shared sense of identity with any of the established mental health professions; they will be neither fish nor fowl.

Related to this is my concern about a common language to describe our models and activities. It is true that many of us—perhaps most of us—argue that our mission is primarily "developmental." However, I wonder if our consensus on this is more apparent than real—whether many of us have not attached our own idiosyncratic meaning to it. But even to the extent that we have consensus, we have at least three different frameworks for explaining our developmental thrust: the community mental health model (as I argued for in my June 1976 P&GC article); the school guidance model; and, the college student personnel folks' student development perspective. While I believe all three of these models share a common philosophy of human development and service delivery, it is difficult to readily see that, since they are couched in different terminology and written of in different APA journals (note that an essential function of the P&GC is that of being a central forum for our diverse groups so that such similarities can be more easily discerned).

Also in the vein of a common language: I am concerned that the term interdisciplinary has two distinct meanings among us. When Aubrey talks of it, he seems to be meaning that we should draw from the breadth of the behavioral sciences; when others talk of interdisciplinary, they mean that we should allow or encourage students to be trained by professionals from related mental health disciplines.

I recognize that APGA is an organization of primarily master level practitioners. However, during the 12 years I have been professionally involved with the organization, there seems to have been a noticeable drop in what I would characterize as intellectual vitality. This has been manifested most clearly in two areas:

1. Publications. While it is true that such APA journals as the Journal of Counseling Psychology often focus on seemingly esoteric issues with no ready professional applicability, our own journals too often contain ideas which have been warmed over and repackaged—having been initially published in the journals of other professional organizations. This comment is not intended to take away from the real contributions made in our journals by a handful of our membership; only to lament that a little of what psychologists publish is in that category of meaningful contributions.

2. Leadership. In the not-too-distant past, the leaders of our organization were individuals who had made conceptual and/or practical contributions to our field and who had conse-
quently been rewarded with leadership positions. Too many of our organization's leaders (i.e., elected officers) seem now to be politicians who, in Robert Carkhuff's memorable phrase, "haven't earned the right" to lead us.

Finally, I am concerned that our organization be resourceful enough and flexible enough to meet new challenges from an increasingly conservative population. These challenges are not only apparent in threats to funding, but in overt public outrages about our commitment to "humanism" and our involvement in such areas as values clarification and moral development (see enclosure).

These several issues are certainly not exhaustive of those I perceive our organization needing to face. However, they are among the ones I see as most worrisome.

Rodney K. Goodyear

COUNSELING AND PUBLIC ISSUES

We live in violent times. Well, you say, our past is characterized by violence and we must accept it as one facet of the human condition. You may be right, but must we accept it as a natural given? My response is that if we believe in the basic concepts of our profession, we are not growing, developing, nor actualizing if we permit abhorrent behavior to continue and to receive or capture our attention in the way it has. By highlighting inappropriate behavior (inappropriate to a particular society) in the media, a society responds emotionally and assertively to the demands for short-term solutions. For example, the governor of the State of California, in responding to the increasing crime rate and the cries of the populace to do something about it, has requested additional taxes to be levied in order to employ more police and to build more prisons. At the same time he has proposed an education budget, significantly below current legislative formulas, which provides only for a minimum increase— not enough to match the increase of costs due to inflation. Should his budget proposal be accepted, it will cause further reductions in society's most effective institution preparing for an educated citizenry. It is a matter of remediation with little or no thought of prevention. A result of such action may well be to continue to put Band-Aids on ills only to find the internal disease producing more sores. It is sheer folly to consider only short-term solutions for symptoms and not provide for long-term actions to treat the causes of those symptoms.

As a profession, we are one of several repositories of objective data about the growth and development of human behavior, the knowledge of the inhibitors of optimum behavior, and the means to eradicate or lessen those inhibitors. If we believe that we do have effective answers to some of society's ills, based on our collective research, then we need to share that information with public policymakers. If we believe that effective school guidance programs, staffed by professionally trained counselors, can produce a less violent society, then it is essential that the profession continue to stress the need that the public must support elementary and secondary guidance and counseling. If our research indicates that certain methods, strategies, or programs do make a difference, then we need to make sure that public policy is shaped to include provisions for these positive activities.

Our profession is involved in the legislative process. We are supportive of specific bills that may benefit society as a whole as well as our profession. We actively work against those bills that may be detrimental to the society and to our profession. That is not enough. Each member of our profession should personally offer to serve as a research consultant to a particular legislator or public official, keeping that person continually informed about the findings of our research regarding the improvement of individual and societal behavior. At least once a year we should meet with our contact person on an informal basis to review the advances made in our research and to answer any questions he or she asks about recent happenings in our field. Periodically, we should send to our contact brief (not more than 100 words) summaries of what current research has to say about the improvement of the human condition. We can no longer keep ourselves outside the circle surrounding the development of future public policies. We must enter the arena confident that we have something to offer to those who do battle for us in creating a desirable, less violent world. We owe it to our sons and daughters and to future generations.

Donald G. Hays

THE FUTURE OF THE COUNSELING PROFESSION: THREE ISSUES

There are several issues that the counseling profession must successfully resolve in order to set directions for a positive future. I will address three of these, all of which have strong implications for counseling leadership.

Issue #1—Accountability, Role, and Function

Although this certainly is not a new issue, professional indecision is and will continue to plague future development of counseling programs. In an era of declining resources, there will be a resurgence of interest regarding the manner in which resources are allocated and accounted for. In order for the counseling profession to compete in the struggle for available resources, we must be able to clearly demonstrate that counselors make a positive difference, and that resources used to support counseling services are best used in this manner rather than for other types of programs and services. I am not at all sure that we have the necessary data to support the validity of counseling in the clear, objective manner that will be required by local, state, and federal governmental bodies. Research in this area is compounded by the obvious fact that it is almost impossible to emerge in an advantageous position in the accountability process if counseling personnel do not have a clearly defined mission. This mission simply has not emerged over the history of our profession and will continue as one of our most pressing problems in the future.

Issue #2—De-emphasis of Developmental Counseling

Over the last two decades leadership of the counseling profession has sold the developmental counseling approach to practitioners, counselors, educators, and counselors-in-training. Over and over again one heard: "Counselors deal with normal people who experience normal, developmental problems." During the last few years it has become increasingly clear to me that the developmental concept, although theoretically sound, is not politically expedient, nor is it what the public expects when allocating resources to support guidance and counseling programs. Most people (students, teachers, and parents) go to counselors because they have major problems that they are unable to solve themselves.

P.L. 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) also challenges the developmental counseling emphasis. Under this act, counseling can be prescribed as part of an overall treatment/educational program for handicapped students. In fact, counseling could be the only service prescribed in an IEP. Counselors steeped in the developmental approach are simply not adequately prepared to provide extensive, treatment-oriented counseling services for handicapped children and their parents. It is my view that the school and agency counselor of the future must be proficient with crisis and treatment-oriented counseling procedures as a top service priority, while still recognizing the developmental nature of human learning, behavior, and decision making. Many of the components of developmental counseling and guidance can be rather easily integrated into the school curriculum through career and psychological education, and thus be delivered by teachers.
ISSUE #3–CONSOLIDATION OF SUPPORT SERVICE PROVIDERS IN THE SCHOOLS

In this era of limited resources and declining enrollments, one has to ask the question of whether several different kinds of student support service providers are really necessary. Could some support services be combined and more efficiently delivered by a new type of professional? If one supports my previous premises regarding de-emphasis of developmental counseling and the consequences of the continuing problem of role definition and accountability, then one has to question whether school support services are appropriately organized and delivered. It is obvious that we are at a point in time when school administrators and the public are looking for ways to consolidate programs and services. School psychologists and school counselors have much in common, as well as a few clearly defined differences. It seems to me that the future of counseling/psychological services in the schools exists in the areas of treatment-orientated clinical counseling, diagnostic assessment, consultation, and career services. If this is accurate, then the best possible combination of skills might be a blend of those possessed by school counselors and school psychologists. A professional trained in the skills of the counselor and the school psychologist would be in an ideal position to provide the clinical counseling, diagnostic, consultation, and career services for both handicapped and non-handicapped students.

The future prospect of having professionals who provide both counseling and school psychological services is not simply a figment of my imagination. At the same time that school counselor positions are being eliminated as a result of budget cuts and declining enrollments, school psychologists are being hired in increasing numbers at the secondary level. It is not unrealistic to suspect that this is occurring because the most pressing needs at the secondary level are not for developmental counseling, but for crisis-oriented intervention, diagnostic assessment, and student support services for the handicapped. Recognizing this, the Delegate Assembly of the National Association of School Psychologists recently unanimously endorsed the development of professionals in “vocational school psychology.” In reality, the vocational school psychologist is one who is trained in both career counseling and school psychology, with a special emphasis on the provision of career development services to the handicapped at secondary and postsecondary levels. Several universities have already initiated training programs in vocational school psychology that utilize the expertise of both counselor educators and trainers of school psychologists. The decade of the 1980s will see an increase in this type of professional. Leadership in both school counseling and school psychology will be required to work in much closer cooperation than in the past to prepare such professionals. The development of professionals who provide both school counseling and school psychological services may also assist in the resolution of various role, function, and accountability issues that have plagued both groups over the years.

Thomas H. Hohneshil

APGA: Crisis in Membership and Mission

The pursuit of licensure and related interests such as listing in registers of health service providers, private practice, and third-party payments has impacted the APGA membership as no other issue during the past decade. Unsure of their professional future, counselors have begun to invest their money, time, and energy in organizations that hold the best promises of enhancing their credentialing needs. The result has been an increase in the number of individuals who turn from APGA and seek greater involvement in the American Psychological Association and even the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Formerly loyal members in APGA are asking, “What can APGA do for me?” The question is obviously an appropriate one for the membership to voice when they take notice that scores of past leaders in APGA no longer show for the annual conventions. If the captains abandon the old ship to find harbor in Division 17 of APA or elsewhere, the rest of the crew surely must doubt the usefulness of the Association.

The APGA Board of Directors has acted to help the Association to adapt to the changing climate in the helping professions. Special actions include the establishment of training criteria and accrediting procedures for counselor education programs, the decision to implement a national register of certified professional counselors, and the initiation of a name change with balloting to be conducted in October 1981. Yet, these efforts appear pale and unpalatable to many counselors and therapists when they examine them along side APA training and credentialing criteria. A name change will do little or nothing to improve the identity of the Association, and especially so if the options remain limited to the current proposals. The accreditation of counselor education training programs appears to be an exercise in vanity. I surmise that only a small handful of persons have any interest in the accrediting process. The idea of a national register makes sense as a proactive measure to give a possible toehold to counselors on the mental health turf.

Instead of burying themselves with the dubious accreditation of counselor education programs, the directors of these programs would do best to develop APA quality training opportunities for their students. Dialogue with many colleagues across the country reveals regret, and sometimes resentment, that directors of programs in which they trained have been so reticent, indeed negligent, to discern the trends and take action to develop bona fide counseling psychology programs before the 5-year retroactive provision expires. Some students began to sense the need to make changes 10 years ago, but professors and department heads were too concerned with perpetuating the counselor education model. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of persons trained in such programs are paying the price in the ’80s in their search for psychological credentialing.

It is my hunch that APGA will become the organizational home predominantly of masters level professional counselors. Members with the doctorate will consist more and more of those who represent the old counselor education vanguard and individuals whose interests lie in either the educational/vocational or student personnel areas of training and helping. Persons who seek to pursue careers in mental health will continue in larger proportions to earn the PhD in APA approved training programs and subsequently identify with various divisions in APA. Until the credentialing game and rules of the market place change substantially, the conscientious young PhD has no reasonable alternative.

It all boils down to this predictably controversial proposal. The APGA Board of Directors will probably lead wisely if they make masters level training and credentialing of counselors the primary mission of the Association. They should leave the preparation, certification, and registration of doctoral level mental health providers as the responsibility of the American Psychological Association. It simply does not make economic sense for APGA to seek to duplicate everything APA does. Another thing, sooner or later someone must declare that a glut of mass-produced and licensed counselors is hardly definitive of professional competence. Therefore, the APGA leaders should heed the hint of the numerical need for counselors and to articulate more definitively the objectives and necessity of licensure.

Darrell Smith

The PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE JOURNAL