

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Counseling psychology in the United States of America

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ABSTRACT *The profession of counseling psychology in the United States of America has evolved and developed over the last six decades. The current article provides a brief historical overview and highlights counseling psychology's emergence in the US with particular attention to the influences surrounding the birth of counseling psychology in the 1950s. A review of major developments in counseling psychology in the US is provided along with a discussion of the current definition and description of the field; philosophy; licensure, registration and certification; professional organizations; and international linkages.*

Introduction

Counseling psychology in the United States of America reflects historical and professional developments over a period of six decades. Several major works have appeared that have provided extensive and detailed accounts of the history of counseling psychology in the US (Heppner *et al.*, 2000; Whiteley, 1980, 1984). The current article provides a brief historical overview and highlights counseling psychology's emergence in the US and focuses primarily on counseling psychology's development as a profession. A review of some of the major developments in counseling psychology in the US is presented along with a brief discussion of the current definition and description of the field; philosophy; licensure, registration and certification; professional organizations; and international linkages.

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History of counseling psychology in the United States of America

Origins

In describing the origins of counseling psychology in the US, Donald Super (1955) reported that rather suddenly in 1951, a new job title, counseling psychologist, and a new field of psychology, counseling psychology, were born in the US. This origination was actually the result of the convergence of many unique historical, social, political, and professional influences and developments during the first half of the 20th century. Whiteley (1984) described five primary historical roots of counseling psychology: (1) the work of Frank Parsons (1909) and the development of the vocational guidance movement; (2) the mental hygiene movement of the early 20th century; (3) psychometrics and the study of individual differences; (4) the emergence of counseling and psychotherapy from non-medical and non-psychoanalytic approaches, especially the seminal influence of Carl Rogers' classic work, *Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1942); and (5) social and economic developments in the US before, during and after World War II. After the war, millions of veterans returned home and many faced personal and vocational adjustment concerns. With the post-war responsibility of the US Veterans Administration (VA) to provide comprehensive services for veterans, the ground was fertile for the emergence and growth of counseling psychology.

Accompanying these historical influences during the first part of the 20th century, organized psychology in the US was developing and maturing. The American Psychological Association (APA), the principal organization of psychologists in the US, was founded by G. Stanley Hall in July of 1892. Over the first 40 years of the 20th century different professional interest groups, with a principal focus on basic research or applied practice, developed within and outside of APA (Dewsbury, 1999). In 1937 the American Association of Applied Psychology (AAAP) was formed when the clinical section within APA dissolved and combined with the Association of Consulting Psychologists (ACP) that had been established in 1931. The AAAP began with four sections: clinical, consulting, educational, and industrial psychology (Benjamin *et al.*, 2003). The beginning of World War II, and accompanying efforts to coordinate psychological services for the US, highlighted difficulties presented by the absence of a single unifying organization for psychologists. Consequently, efforts were made to unify psychology into a single professional organization and the AAAP and APA merged and officially reorganized on September 6, 1945 (Dewsbury, 1999). While the original purpose of APA was to advance psychology as a science, the reorganized APA had the stated goal "to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting human welfare" (Wolfe, 1946, p. 3). A vital ingredient of this merger and restructuring was the joint emphasis on science and practice, and the planned divisions within APA intended to support diverse interest groups within the organization (Dewsbury, 1999).

In 1944, the Joint Constitutional Committee of APA and AAAP surveyed American Psychologists and inquired about interest in 19 possible divisions for APA, with the opportunity to write in the names of additional divisions not already listed. Responses from 3680 psychologists ranked clinical psychology first and personnel psychology second. With the merger of the two organizations and the reorganization of APA in 1945, Division 17, Personnel and Guidance Psychologists, was formed based on the

combination of interest in personnel psychology and write-in interest for guidance (Doll, 1946). During the early formative period of Division 17, leaders of the Division began to use the term “Counseling” instead of “Personnel” and when the initial by-laws were adopted the title became the Division of Counseling and Guidance (Scott, 1980).

Clinical psychology

The 1940s witnessed major developments in training for clinical psychology that set the stage for counseling psychology in the early 1950s. Prior to the reorganization of APA, concerns had been expressed about the training and preparation of clinical psychologists. In 1941 the AAAP Committee on the Training of Clinical Psychologists met and subsequently published a report focused on the training of clinical psychologists (Shakow, 1942). The AAAP report called for a four-year Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program of study including a systematic foundation in psychology, courses in medical science required for clinical work, psychometric and therapeutic practices, internship, and dissertation. Although some members of the AAAP Committee had envisioned a broader view of professional psychology training that included other areas of psychology, e.g., industrial or educational (Baker and Benjamin, 2000), Shakow (1942) acknowledged in a footnote that the proposed training model was inclined towards psychopathology representative of psychiatric hospitals but suggested the model was adaptable to other fields in psychology. In 1944, the Subcommittee on Graduate Internship Training, with representatives from the AAAP and APA and chaired by David Shakow, prepared a report (Shakow *et al.*, 1945) that recommended the doctoral degree as the standard of training for clinical psychology.

Following the war, the US Public Health Service (USPHS) and the VA appropriated funds for the training of professional psychologists, and in 1947 requested APA's assistance in setting training standards for professional psychologists (Baker and Benjamin, 2000). The Committee on Training in Clinical Psychology (CTCP) of APA was established in 1947 and given the tasks of recommending a program of training in clinical psychology, establishing institutional training standards and accrediting doctoral training programs. The CPTC issued a 1947 report including recommendations for graduate training in clinical psychology (APA, 1947). By 1948, APA had begun visiting and evaluating programs in clinical psychology, and by 1949 the CTCP had accredited 43 doctoral programs (Baker and Benjamin, 2000). The CPTC noted that excellent progress had been made in clinical psychology training when compared to what students had received just ten years prior. However, the CPTC also observed that there was an overemphasis on clinical techniques at the expense of training in psychological theory and research methodology. Interestingly, the CPTC also reported a rather narrow focus of the scope of clinical psychology training in which the practice was primarily limited to psychiatric hospitals and clinics dealing with more seriously disturbed patients (APA, 1949). In 1949, the USPHS and APA hosted a 15-day conference on Graduate Education in Clinical Psychology, the Boulder Conference, that recommended training for clinical psychology include equal emphasis on research and practice and established the scientist-practitioner model or “Boulder model” of training.

VA influence

The VA played a seminal role in the development of clinical and counseling psychology in the US. In 1946, the VA initiated a large national training and employment program for clinical psychologists (Miller, 1946). This program established four-year paid traineeships in VA hospitals for students working on their Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees in clinical psychology. Miller indicated that the number of potential psychologist positions in the VA exceeded the total number of all qualified psychologists in the US. Pepinsky (1984) reported that by 1950 discussions were taking place between the VA and representatives of APA's Division 12 (Clinical) and 17 (Counseling and Guidance) to create new positions for psychologists in medical settings, outside the traditional clinical settings focused on treatment of psychopathology. Pepinsky reported that if the Division of Counseling and Guidance could implement similar standards of training and practice established by clinical psychology then new positions in these settings were feasible. This VA influence seemed to be a critical factor in setting the stage for counseling psychology in the US. The reorganization of APA, the developments in clinical psychology in the US in the late 1940s and the role of the VA are important historical factors in the emergence of counseling psychology as a specialty in the US and place in context counseling psychology's subsequent identity struggles in the US. Before counseling psychology had even been formally named in the US, clinical psychology had approved training standards at the doctoral level, received accreditation from APA for 43 doctoral programs in clinical psychology, and established the scientist-practitioner training model for clinical psychology at the Boulder conference in 1949.

1950s

Division 17, Counseling and Guidance, sponsored the Northwestern Conference on the Training of Counseling Psychologists, held in August of 1951 at Northwestern University. The terms "counseling psychology" and "counseling psychologist" were introduced for the first time at this conference (Super, 1955). In addition, conference participants prepared descriptions of the role and functions of counseling psychologists, recommended training counseling psychologists at the doctoral level, made recommendations concerning practicum and research training along with core content areas of study for the doctorate in counseling psychology (APA, 1952a, b), and initiated the Division 17 name change to the Division of Counseling Psychology. The initial doctoral training report (APA, 1952a) recommended that graduate training for counseling psychology include basic core knowledge and techniques familiar to all psychologists and emphasized that research training was essential for all counseling psychologists. In effect, the report embraced the importance of both science and practice in training. Regarding the role and functions of counseling psychologists, the report specified:

The professional goal of the counseling psychologist is to foster the psychological development of the individual. This includes all people on the adjustment continuum from those who function at tolerable levels of adequacy to those suffering from more severe psychological disturbances. The counseling psychologist will spend the bulk of his time with individuals within the normal

range, but his training should qualify him to work in some degree with individuals at any level of psychological adjustment. Counseling stresses the positive and preventative. (APA, 1952a, p. 175)

The report noted that with counseling psychology's emphasis on facilitating optimal personal development, it was anticipated that educational settings would be a central home for counseling psychology. However, other appropriate settings for counseling psychologists included business and industry, hospitals, community agencies, vocational guidance centers, and rehabilitation agencies.

The prominent influence of the VA on these developments appears unmistakable considering the sequence of events. Division 17's reports and recommendations concerning standards of doctoral training and practicum training for counseling psychologists developed at the Northwestern Conference in August of 1951 (APA, 1952a, b) were published in the June 1952 issue of the *American Psychologist*. By September of 1952 the VA had announced a new program for training counseling psychologists and requested APA to provide a list of universities qualified to offer doctoral training in counseling psychology. The APA Council provided the VA with an initial interim list of universities temporarily approved in time for the 1952–1953 academic year (Moore and Bouthilet, 1952).

Other early milestones of the 1950s included the creation of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (*JCP*) by a small group of counseling psychologists (Wrenn, 1966). Milton E. Hahn, Harold G. Seashore, Donald E. Super and C. Gilbert Wrenn originated the idea for the journal in the fall of 1952 and *JCP* was first published in 1954. *JCP* evolved into the foremost empirical research journal for counseling psychology in the US. In 1955, the American Board of (Examiners in) Professional Psychology (ABPP) changed the title of the original diploma specialty area of "Counseling and Guidance" to "Counseling Psychology" (APA, 1956). Then, in 1956 the report of the Division 17 Committee on Definition "Counseling Psychology as a Specialty" was published (APA, 1956).

1960s

Almost as soon as the specialty of counseling psychology was established in the US, it experienced a life-threatening identity crisis. In 1959, the Education and Training Board of APA considered eliminating counseling psychology as a recognized and approved specialty (Blocher, 2000) and requested a special report on the status of counseling psychology (Berg *et al.*, 1980). The report was extremely critical of the status of counseling psychology and had as a primary focus an unfavorable comparison of counseling psychology with clinical psychology. One suggested solution to the concerns was the fusion of counseling psychology and clinical psychology doctoral level training. Although this report was not published at the time, it was submitted to the Division 17 Executive Board which appointed a committee to prepare its own special report on the status of counseling psychology (Tyler *et al.*, 1980) and this latter report was much more favorable. Pepinsky (1984) later indicated the context of this perilous identity crisis was related to jurisdictional disputes over entitlements in the late 1950s between clinical and counseling psychology. Since clinical psychology was better established, counseling

psychology was more vulnerable. Nonetheless, these events focused a spotlight on the status and identity of counseling psychology among Division 17 leadership and set the stage for the second national conference on counseling psychology in the US, the Greyston Conference of 1964.

The Greyston Conference, sponsored by the Division of Counseling Psychology of APA in 1964, had the goal of helping APA, Division 17 boards and committees, university departments and internship centers interested in the professional training of counseling psychologists through an examination of relevant issues and formulation of recommendations for improvement (Thompson and Super, 1964). Sixty invited participants from around the US included representatives from 21 of the 24 APA accredited doctoral programs in counseling psychology in the US, employers of counseling psychologists, and training agencies. Conference formats included paper presentations by leaders in the field, discussion groups, and seven to nine member commissions that worked on statements and recommendations concerning training issues.

The final conference report included specific recommendations for counseling psychologists, Division 17, APA, universities offering graduate degrees in psychology, practicum and internship agencies, employers, and agencies supporting training. These recommendations included positive steps each could take to advance the quality of, and support for, the professional training of counseling psychologists and affirmation of counseling psychology as a profession. Thompson and Super (1964) also summarized several important issues discussed during the conference including counseling psychology identity, support from national organizations and universities, and support received for the profession in psychology versus educational settings. Although Thompson and Super described official support and understanding from APA and other national organizations for counseling psychology's nature and role as unclear and ambivalent, they affirmed "Counseling psychologists are no longer a group of people in search of a professional identity, but rather a group, some members of which have identity problems. The problems of role and function are not completely solved, but most counseling psychologists have a sense of being, of establishment and of involvement" (p. 27). Thompson and Super concluded that the themes of unity and diversity within counseling psychology were present throughout the conference. They went on to suggest that the future of counseling psychology was dependent upon counseling psychology's ability to "derive strength from variety and to achieve unity in diversity" (p. 26).

Several other significant events also occurred in the late 1960s that contributed to firmly establish counseling psychology in the US. In 1967, APA purchased and assumed publication of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. In 1968, as a project for the Professional Affairs Committee of the Division of Counseling Psychology of APA, Jordaan *et al.* (1968) authored and published a booklet on counseling psychologists directed toward the public. Whiteley (1984) observed that this was the most comprehensive statement of definition on counseling psychology published up until that time. In addition to research, teaching and administration, Jordaan *et al.* specified three complementary practice roles for counseling psychologists: remedial/rehabilitative, preventive, and educative and developmental. In 1969, John Whiteley founded the journal, *The Counseling Psychologist (TCP)*, with the support of Division 17 of APA.

TCP utilized a special format whereby single issues would focus on a single topic with major contribution papers followed by reaction papers. *TCP* continues today to serve as the official journal of Division 17. By the early 1970s, counseling psychology had two major journals that served as keystones for counseling psychology in the US.

1970s and 1980s

Although counseling psychology was firmly established in the US by the early 1970s, counseling psychology's identity and professional roles remained a focus of attention and discussion during subsequent decades (Fretz and Simon, 1992; Kagan *et al.*, 1988; Sprinthall, 1990; Tyler, 1992; Watkins, 1983; Whiteley and Fretz, 1980). Counseling psychology continued to evolve and develop during the 1970s and 1980s in response to social, professional, and cultural changes within the US. Increasingly, more emphasis was placed on the identity of counseling psychologists as health service providers in psychology. With the appearance of expanded health insurance coverage for mental health services in the late 1960s there was increased interest in psychology licensure.

Early psychology licensing laws in the US in the 1950s and 1960s had very broad criteria for licensure. In 1974, the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP), at the request of APA, founded the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology (NR) (Wellner, 1984). In the 1970s, conferences by APA and the NR resulted in the recommendation for more restrictive educational requirements for licensure as a psychologist in the US (Gelso and Fretz, 2001). In particular, by January 1, 1978 individuals applying to be listed in the NR were expected to be licensed or certified by the State Board of Examiners of Psychology at the independent level of psychology practice and to have a doctoral degree in psychology from a regionally accredited institution. Although flexibility was allowed in terms of the location of training programs, e.g., Psychology Departments, Colleges of Education, professional schools, etc., graduate programs were expected to have psychology in their title and to have the goal of training professional psychologists (Wellner, 1984). Programs that were previously acceptable for credentialing as a psychologist, in that they had been considered "primarily psychological" or "equivalent to psychology", e.g., guidance and counseling, were no longer acceptable for credentialing as a psychologist for the NR (Wellner, 1984).

During the 1980s, many additional counseling psychology programs were established and accredited; and frequently these programs were former counseling and guidance programs located in Colleges of Education. The number of APA accredited doctoral counseling psychology programs in the US ranged from 24 in 1964, at the time of the Greyston conference, to 21 in 1971. The number increased to 27 in 1980, 44 in 1985, 59 in 1990, 67 in 1995, and 72 in 2003. As mental health care became an increasingly important part of health care in the US in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and as legislation secured psychologists' right to provide reimbursable health care services independently, counseling psychologists became more interested in private practice. In a large national survey of Division 17 members conducted in

1985, Watkins *et al.* (1986) found that 22% identified primarily with private practice, a figure considerably higher than found from prior surveys. The increased emphasis of counseling psychologists as health care providers seemed to contribute to a greater focus within counseling psychology on the remedial role; and was accompanied by expressions of concern that the important unique contributions of counseling psychology would be lost (Sprinthall, 1990; Tyler, 1992).

Counseling psychology's third national conference in the US was planned and held in Atlanta, GA in 1987. The conference was held amid the context of several important issues facing counseling psychology in the mid-1980s, including reorganization issues within APA, anticipated national conferences on internship and graduate training in psychology, proposed revisions to APA accreditation standards, and proposals for model psychology licensure laws. Five major areas were identified as primary foci for the conference: public image, professional practice in various settings, training and accreditation, research, and organizational and political issues in counseling psychology. Each focus area formed a work group that had a chairperson, five to nine invited presenters and a group of 20 to 50 participants. Each group developed position statements, recommendations and action plans that were published in the July 1988 issue of *The Counseling Psychologist* (Weissberg *et al.*, 1988).

Important themes of the conference were affirmation of the value of the scientist-practitioner/scientist-professional model and the traditional strengths of counseling psychology including prevention, life-span development, vocational development and skill-building, along with calls for innovative and non-traditional functions (Rude *et al.*, 1988). Other important themes that influenced counseling psychology over the next decade included the clear affirmation of the importance of culture, ethnicity, gender, and diversity. The practice group noted "the importance of viewing people and their behavior in a contextual manner because psychology itself exists in a sociocultural context influenced by variables of culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and social historical perspective" (Kagan *et al.*, 1988, p. 351). They also recommended that counseling psychology consider ways to improve social conditions and intervene on a personal or institutional level when social or organizational factors operate in an oppressive manner (Kagan *et al.*, 1988). Concomitantly, the training and accreditation group emphasized integrating cultural, ethnicity, gender, and diversity throughout the training of counseling psychologists (Meara *et al.*, 1988). The research group called for more research in all areas of multi- and cross-cultural counseling psychology (Gelso *et al.*, 1988). The organizational and political group also made recommendations to examine organizational problems with under-representation in Division 17 governance and problems in the area of ethnic and cultural diversity.

Multiculturalism

The 1950s and 1960s social movements in the US, including the civil rights movement, desegregation, voting rights, employment practices, the Vietnam War and the women's movement, brought attention to the ongoing neglect, rights, and needs of those who were not part of the majority culture. Prior to the middle of the 20th century, American psychology was primarily a white male, experimentally oriented academic discipline

(Albee, 2003). Psychology in the US, along with other disciplines and institutions, was criticized for a long history of neglect in addressing issues affecting people from traditionally underrepresented groups (Baker, 2003). African American psychologists and women were among the first groups to demand that psychology be more responsive to the needs of underrepresented groups (Albee, 2003; Baker, 2003; Marecek *et al.*, 2003). Issues raised by the new emerging discipline of Black Psychology in the 1970s and the Vail Conference of 1973 (Korman, 1974) highlighted the importance of professional training congruent with the needs of culturally diverse and underserved populations.

Developments in the 1980s and the 1990s reflected the emergence of multiculturalism and diversity as a prominent feature of counseling psychology in the US. In 1986, the APA Committee on Accreditation included cultural diversity as a component of effective training (APA, 1986). Heppner *et al.* (2000) provided an excellent summary and integration of the various social, cultural, economic and governmental forces influencing counseling psychology as it matured through the later part of the 20th century and also highlighted the importance of multiculturalism and diversity to counseling psychology in the US.

According to Gelso and Fretz (2001), most counseling psychologists in the US had little contact with racial minorities until desegregation of schools and colleges occurred in the 1950s. Subsequently, enhanced contact highlighted more limited effectiveness in working with culturally diverse clients. Early voices in counseling psychology heralding the importance of culture and diversity in the 1960s included Samler (1964). In a paper presented at the Greyston Conference he implored counseling psychologists to get involved in social economic issues that had the do with the “dignity and security of man” (p. 67). However, prior to the 1980s, the curriculum in counseling psychology doctoral programs focusing on multiculturalism and diversity was very limited (Gelso and Fretz, 2001; Hills and Strozier, 1992).

With the US becoming an increasingly diverse society, and with the continued legacies of the social and civil rights movements of the 1960s, issues of diversity and multiculturalism gradually emerged in the 1970s and became increasingly prominent professionally in the 1980s and 1990s. Within the context of professional psychology in the US and the events taking place within APA, counseling psychology seemed to develop as a recognized leader in addressing multicultural concerns and helping establish practice guidelines and competencies related to professional practice with diverse clients (Gelso and Fretz, 2001). In 1970, Division 17 established the Ad Hoc Committee on Women, which became a model of advocacy followed by other APA Divisions (Meara and Myers, 1999) and contributed the “Principles concerning the counseling and therapy of women” (Principles, 1979) that were subsequently endorsed by other divisions of APA.

Heppner *et al.* (2000) chronicled many other structural, organizational and committee developments that took place within APA in response to the concerns about the limited number of racial/ethnic minority psychologists and students and concerns about major social issues and diversity issues such as racism and sexism. Milestones among these included the establishment of: the Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility and Psychology (BSERP) in 1971; the Committee on Women in Psychology and Division 35, Psychology of Women, in 1973; the APA Minority Fellowship Program in 1974;

the Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs in 1979; Division 44, the Society for the Psychological Study of Gay and Lesbian Issues, in 1980; and the Board of Ethnic Minority Affairs (BEMA) in 1981.

In 1982, under the leadership of Derald Wing Sue, the Education and Training Committee of Division 17 published an influential position paper on cross-cultural counseling competencies. Highlighting the history of oppression, discrimination, and racism experienced by minorities in the US and acknowledging the barriers to effective counseling and therapy created by institutional racism, Sue *et al.* (1982) proposed specific cross-cultural competencies and recommended that the APA adopt cross-cultural counseling and therapy competencies into its accreditation criteria (Sue *et al.*, 1982). In subsequent years these guidelines were revised and operationalized (Arredondo *et al.*, 1996) and served as the cornerstone for the APA guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice and organizational change prepared by a joint task force of Division 17 and The Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues, Division 45 of APA, that were published 21 years later by the organization (APA, 2003).

The 1980s saw additional organizational developments within APA, including the Committee on Disability and Handicaps, in 1985, and Division 45, The Society for the Study of Ethnic Minority Issues, in 1987. The 1992 revised APA ethics code (APA, 1992) established ethical principles of respect, non-discrimination and competence in providing services to diverse clients. Moreover, an increased emphasis on the integration of cultural differences and diversity was considered in the revised APA accreditation guidelines in 1995 (Heppner *et al.*, 2000).

During the 1980s, counseling psychologists also advocated for increased diversity in research paradigms for their field. Critiques about the appropriateness and applicability of the positivistic paradigm for human problems and counseling psychology (Howard, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1984), concerns about the limited use and involvement of practitioners in research (Gelso, 1979), and dissatisfaction with the relevance of counseling psychology research for professional practice (Goldman, 1976) were associated with calls for alternate research paradigms that extended beyond the traditional positivistic paradigm associated with the physical sciences (Howard, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1984). Increasingly, counseling psychologists recommended the inclusion and teaching of alternate research paradigms, including qualitative research methods in counseling psychology (Hill and Gronsky, 1984; Hoshmand, 1989; Howard, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1984). The Research Group at the Atlanta National Conference recommended that all methodologies and investigative styles be encouraged (Gelso *et al.*, 1988). Morrow and Smith (2000) observed that throughout the 1990s *The Counseling Psychologist* and the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* gradually published increasing numbers of qualitative investigations. Morrow and Smith (2000) observed that the expansion of counseling psychology's research methodology in this direction reflected an increasing pluralism in the theories and practices of counseling psychology.

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