

[**Special Issue: *Training Issues in Counseling Psychology***]

Guest Editors' Introduction

Susan H. Gere & Lisa Tsoi Hoshmand

Lesley University

As guest editors of this special issue, we wish to first explain why we decided to focus on certain training issues in counseling psychology when others have written about what seem pertinent to the field at this time (e.g., Miville et al., 2009; Shen Miller, Forrest, & Elman, 2009). The individual articles in this current issue, especially the first two, thematically emphasize the important relationship between the personal and the professional in counseling psychology training. In spite of the reservations about bringing the personal into professional lives and practitioner training, we believe that the personal is critically important in the development of the counseling practitioner, and that challenging aspects of counseling practice such as dealing with cultural diversity or trauma work involve an in-depth examination and understanding of the personal. Behnke (2008) points out that the spirit of our ethical codes “invites us to move beyond reading the code as a list of obligations and prohibitions to a more subtle and nuanced consideration of the relationship between our personal and work lives.”

The first article by Reinkraut, Motulsky, and Ritchie (2009, this issue) focuses on the concept of “self as instrument,” which the authors

define as the “intentional and disciplined use by the counselor of his or her ‘experience, identity, relational skills, moral awareness, knowledge and wisdom in the service of the therapeutic benefit of the client.’” This focus on reflexivity and reflective self-inquiry is emphasized subsequently in the article on teaching about multicultural competence and classroom practice (Llera, Saleem, Roffman, & Dass-Brailsford, 2009, this issue) and also in the article on training for trauma psychology practice (Gere, Dass-Brailsford, & Hoshmand, 2009, this issue). The centrality of personal development and trainee transformation is illustrated by the second article by Lam and Chan (2009, this issue) with an empirical study of the significance of mentoring relationships for the professional development and personal growth of counseling practitioner. Clearly, the type of mentoring that a trainee receives impacts professional life in the long run as it can have significant meanings for the identity development of the individual involved. These authors also pointed to the need for empirical research on cultural differences in the values and expectations that define and shape mentoring relationships.

We regard this collection of articles as addressing what have not been given sufficient attention in the counseling psychology literature or the discussion of professional training in related fields. Due to the scientist-practitioner model of training followed by many psychology programs, especially at the doctoral level of education, the personal development of the professional in many instances has been given a lower priority relative to technical competence. It is our hope that this current special issue will help to call attention to a neglected area, and encourage counseling psychology educators to have more open discussion of issues related to the personal in the developing professional. Rather than having only guidelines prohibiting inappropriate intrusions of the personal, we need shared wisdom on appropriate considerations of the personal in professional training and practice.

Although much has been written about cultural competence and diversity training, we feel that it is a subject with many issues worth discussing. Hence, the third article by Llera et al. (2009, this issue) revisits the seminal ideas behind the critical pedagogy needed for this challenging area of training. The authors further discuss the complexities involved in implementing such teaching. In view of the fact that classroom cultures and codes of behavior also vary across teaching institutions and countries, we wonder whether and how pedagogy associated with a liberation ideology may be perceived in other settings and cultural and political environments.

We have included the last article on trauma psychology curriculum (Gere et al., 2009, this issue) due to the heightened interest in the trauma field and the need to prepare counseling practitioners for trauma work. This area of training allows us to point to what more is needed besides imparting evidence-based knowledge of counseling practice. Personal and cultural issues loom large in histories of trauma and responses to trauma. The preparation for trauma practice involves a particularly skilled understanding of training issues for counseling psychology that integrates knowledge of how traumatic material affects trainees.

Many of our authors here write from their experience as faculty members in the Lesley University Counseling and Psychology Program in which integration of the personal with the professional is foundational. This program has had a unique history and environment that enable the faculty to maintain a consistent philosophy of training over time, with a high degree of transparency of training intentions. It is important to note that the authors do not simply speak out of personal conviction, but from observation of the effects of their training approach and ongoing feedback from students. In our knowledge as current and former directors of the program, many of the assertions have been supported by formal student outcome assessments and periodic program reviews. Certainly,

such assessment and evaluation need to be an essential part of any consideration of training approaches and the related issues.

There are no doubt many topical issues of training that we have not addressed in this special issue, such as the internationalization of counseling psychology, and how to bridge training gaps across geographical, economic, and social divides. We hope that others will be stimulated by the discourse presented here, and will contribute in ways that we have not done so.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to the journal editor for giving us the opportunity to develop this special issue, and to all the authors for their collaborative work with us.

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