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ABSTRACT

Just as couples must find ways of celebrating their individual talents within their union, so must counseling find ways of defining the marriage of counseling and scholarship while supporting the diverse talents of each counselor. This paper explores the broad context of scholarship in ways that celebrates individual talents and moves towards a definition of the profession that sets it apart from other helping professions. It suggests that one way to find the perfect blend between scholarship and counselor education is to establish a working mission statement that is accepting, inclusive, and encourages faculty and student growth. This paper serves as a means to open dialogue on the changing facets of the school counselor's professional role. (Author)

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Scholarship and Counseling:

A Perfect Marriage?

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Abstract

Just as couples must define their marriage and find ways of celebrating their talents within the parameters of their marriage, so must counseling find creative new ways of defining the marriage of counseling and scholarship while supporting the rich and diverse talents of our counselors. This paper explores a broader context of scholarship that can define counseling in ways that celebrate the unique talents of individuals within our profession while moving us toward defining our profession in unique ways that set us apart from other helping professions.

The Blending of Scholarship and Counseling:

A Perfect Marriage?

What is a perfect marriage? The answer to that question is probably as varied as the number of married couples in the U.S. However, there are a couple of key ingredients that most of us would agree dish up a perfect marriage. First, a couple must agree on how they define their perfect marriage and how they define themselves within the context of that marriage. That definition may be rooted in their history as well as their hopes for the future.

Second, married couples bring a mosaic of talents to their perfect marriage. Perhaps they have a talent for handling more complex issues of marriage such as in-laws. Or perhaps they have individual talents that must be nurtured and brought to fruition in realms that expand outside the marriage while clearly impacting the level of joy, satisfaction and sense of accomplishment they feel within the marriage.

Just as the perfect couple must define their marriage and find ways of celebrating their talents within the parameters of their marriage, so must the field of counseling find creative new ways of defining counseling and scholarship while supporting the rich and diverse talents of its counselors. A key factor may be the way in which we view scholarship. Some individuals view research as synonymous with research (West, Bubenzer, Brooks & Hackney, 1995); others view scholarship in broader terms (Boyer, 1990). This paper will discuss how embracing a broader definition of scholarship can provide a framework for celebrating the unique talents of individuals within our profession while moving us toward defining our profession in unique ways that set us apart from other helping professions.

Defining Counseling

Many counselors feel that gaining a distinct identity from other helping professions is a necessary part of the movement toward public recognition and validation of our profession. In fact, Hanna and Bemak (1997) suggest that the survival of counseling as a profession may hinge on successfully carving out this identity. A brief look at the history of counseling reveals the roots of this dilemma.

Counseling has a long affiliation with psychology that dates back to 1946 when the Division of Counseling and Guidance—often called Division 17—was founded by the American Psychological Association (APA). Many of the founders of Division 17 were also members of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA). In 1952 Division 17 joined with these two organizations to form a separate entity that eventually became today's American Counseling Association (Hanna & Bemak, 1997). Although the beginnings of counseling are clearly rooted in the field of psychology, a psychology licensure is frequently seen as the mark of superiority over counseling. The holder of a psychology license is rewarded by increased financial status and more options for practice and professional prestige. Given these advantages, some counselor education programs encourage their doctoral students to become licensed as psychologists in states where the counseling and psychology programs are viewed as equivalent. This practice has led psychology programs to view counselor education programs as “backdoor” or “bootleg” programs (Hanna & Bemak, 1997).

Indeed, in a study of counseling doctoral graduates, Zimpfer (1996) found that membership in ACA among doctoral degree holders had declined, while membership in APA had increased. Parallel to this discovery was that there was a greater increase in these graduates

holding a psychology license than a counseling license. “If our students practice effective counseling yet identify themselves as psychologists they enhance the reputation of psychology at our expense” (Ritchie, 1994, as cited in Hanna & Bemak, 1997). This is just one illustration of the many political battles between counseling and psychology.

Many individuals have attempted to isolate the nuances that set counseling apart from other helping professions, yet Hanna and Bemak (1997) believe those attempts have been fruitless. They suggest that the difficulty in may be related to a lack of knowledge base in theory and research that differentiates counseling from other helping professions. Indeed, in a cursory look at the research and theory articles in the *Journal of Counseling and Development* these writers found that a large percentage of the articles cite references from other helping professions. In contrast, few journal articles in psychology cite counseling references.

Moreover, Zimpfer’s (1996) research found that fewer doctoral graduates are publishing and presenting than ever before. With more than half of doctoral graduates in counseling moving into private practice, we are losing the rich clinical experience they might offer our profession. Communication between counselor educators and practitioners is waning.

Given these circumstances, counseling education finds itself in a dilemma. There are no clear parameters that set counseling apart as unique from other helping professions and many counselors appear to be “jumping ship.” How then, can we define scholarship in the context of counseling if we cannot define counseling? Zimpfer (1996) challenges the ACA, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) and the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) to increase efforts to define and promote the counseling profession by holding expectations that doctoral graduates become actively involved in the counseling profession, share their insights and findings through

publications or presentations, and seek counseling credentialing while moving to become advocates of the profession. Clearly, we must find a framework that provides a unique identity for counseling while encouraging talented counselors to work within the profession and share their unique insights and findings.

A Framework for Defining Counseling

Boyer (1990) believes we must find creative ways of responding to new realities both within and outside the educational setting. He proposes a system of scholarship that values traditional positivist ideologies while bridging theory and practice, connecting ideologies across disciplines, and communicating knowledge effectively to students. Boyer's four categories of knowledge provide a viable framework for changing the face of counseling as we know it today.

The scholarship of discovery. Hanna and Bemak (1997) highlight the importance of developing a knowledge base in theory and research that provides a unique identity for counseling. Boyer (1990) agrees that we must continue to contribute to the base of human knowledge through scholarly investigation—the scholarship of discovery. By promoting the scholarship of discovery, counselors can contribute to the intellectual climate of their university or college while building a knowledge base that is unique to the field of counseling and improves quality of care for our clients. Sexton (1997) and his associates view this as a synergistic relationship in which “practitioners would view research as a necessary clinical aid, educators would use models with empirical support as the basis of curricular decisions, and researchers would understand and inquire into relevant clinical questions” (p. 140).

The scholarship of integration. Hanna and Bemak (1997) suggest that ideas from other disciplines can serve to spawn new theories and counseling approaches. For example, 2,500 years ago Buddhist monks practiced such interventions as desensitization, self-monitoring,

changing and stopping our thoughts, and imagery. We have much to learn from others. Boyer (1990) echoes this call for making connections across disciplines. He proposes that the scholarship of integration would underscore the need for scholars to begin placing isolated facts into new and different perspectives. Through the scholarship of integration the field of counseling can interpret what we already know in ways that could lead to a new identity for the counseling profession.

The scholarship of application. Zimpfer's (1996) finding that only a small portion of counseling doctoral graduates aspire to teach leads one to question whether a practitioner-orientated doctorate should be considered. However, integration of Boyer's (1990) scholarship of application into counselor education program would eliminate this need. Boyer proposes upholding the value of scholarly service, theory and practice interact in such a way that each renews and revitalizes the other. It is vital that the counseling profession find ways to nurture and support counselors who wish to continue to practice while attending to other areas of scholarship.

The scholarship of teaching. By adding Boyer's (1990) fourth, and final theory, the framework for moving counseling into new and exciting dimensions is complete. Zimpfer, (1996) warns that the increase in counselors seeking practice over teaching, coupled with the decrease in presenting and publishing forms a chasm between academics and practice that could be devastating to our profession. Through the validation of the scholarly enterprise of teaching we can breathe new life and vitality into the profession of teaching so that practitioners can see that it is inspired teaching that keeps the counseling profession alive.

To achieve its quest for a unique identity, public recognition, and the professional status counselors deserve, we must embrace a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar. By

uniting scholarship and counseling through Boyer's (1990) four categories—the scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching we can begin the work of forming a perfect union.

Talent: The Tie That Bonds

Boyer's (1990) idea of breathing new life into scholarship by celebrating the four scholarships of discovery, integration, application and teaching is only a pipe dream if we cannot find creative ways of celebrating—and rewarding—talented counselors in an equitable way across all scholarships. We must cultivate their talents in ways that offer a sense of joy, satisfaction, self-fulfillment, and accomplishment. In so doing, our counseling education programs can become powerful centers of growth and excitement. Boyer suggests that in addition to the four categories of scholarship, we must make use of creativity contracts. It is through the creativity contract that counseling education can carve out a unique identity by valuing and supporting counselors. It is a means through which counselors can define goals for professional growth and excellence in the counseling profession.

In many doctoral counseling programs, students establish contracts with their doctoral committee that establishes areas of personal interest they wish to pursue during the course of their education. They may seek to pursue their interests in ways that parallel the four categories of scholarship. Through the scholarship of discovery, they may contract with their committee to conduct research. Through the scholarship of integration, they may choose to complete interdisciplinary coursework that seeks to build a larger, more comprehensive understanding and knowledge base. Through the scholarship of application, they may contract to work in a clinical setting of special interest to them, bridging together clinical and educational settings. Through the scholarship of teaching, they may become teaching assistants or co-teach with faculty in their

program. As doctoral students learn and grow in their profession, their doctoral committee eventually becomes a committee of peers who evaluates their worthiness to hold the title of Ph.D.

Creativity contracts might be envisioned for doctoral-level counselors in much the same way—the goal being to sustain the joy and productivity of our counselors across a lifetime through the acknowledgement of their diverse talents. Through the creativity contract, the life of our counselors can be renewed and counseling can establish a unique identity rooted in scholarship.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Establishing a framework upon which to build a new future for counseling is only the beginning step toward establishing the perfect union between scholarship and counseling. In a perfect marriage, there are times that naturally move us to evaluate the effectiveness of a perfect marriage. Those can be sad times—funerals, illness, or financial difficulties. Or they can be happy times—purchasing a new home, the birth of our first child, our wedding anniversary. Individuals in perfect marriages take time to reminisce about and evaluate the past while setting their sights on new dreams and goals for the future. Similarly, counselor education must set aside regular times to review the marriage between scholarship and counseling—to find effective ways of celebrating and evaluating our past while setting goals and dreams for the future.

And what about the backdrop of a perfect marriage? We must agree negotiate logistics such as where we want to live. Big city? Small rural community? Somewhere in between? We should have agreements regarding children. Are we going to have them? If so, when and how many? And, how do our extended families fit into all this? Likewise, we must begin serious dialogue regarding how scholarship in the context of counseling takes place against the unique

and different backdrops of our individual educational settings and communities. How can we best take advantage of our particular setting? Do we want our programs to expand and grow? Or do we believe a small, intimate setting provides the best environment based on the goals of our faculty and students? Moreover, how do we see ourselves in relation to other counseling programs in a global counseling community?

Finally, and maybe of greatest importance in the perfect marriage, is agreeing on our values, our priorities, our spiritual base—those things that lie at the core of who we are individually and together—breathing life into our perfect marriage and making it a unique, living, changing entity. Perhaps a key factor in finding the perfect marriage between scholarship and counselor education is establishing our basic values through a working, living mission statement that has meaning for our faculty and students alike. How will each of our programs define its mission in a way that is accepting, inclusive, and encourages faculty and student growth?

Conclusion

Just as a couple must agree on the definition a perfect marriage and how they define themselves within that marriage, counseling also faces the difficult task of defining itself among the helping professions. Just as married couples learn to celebrate their unique talents both within the marriage and outside of the marriage, counseling must find creative ways of celebrating the talents of its counselors in traditional settings and nontraditional settings. This paper proposes that key to achieving our goals as a profession is redefining scholarship in ways that consequently define our profession in fresh and unique ways. This discussion is in no way all conclusive. It is meant to begin a dialogue by presenting new ways of thinking for the future.

Let us take the first step toward encouraging new ideas and integrative thinking by using this discussion as a springboard to redefine counseling as we know it today.

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