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The Relevance of Counseling Psychology in Addressing Major Social Issues

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I am honored and humbled to have been selected as the Editor of *The Counseling Psychologist (TCP)*. In this, the first issue formally published under my editorship, I have much to convey to you. I will start by introducing you to the editorial team. Next, I will present my vision for the journal, highlight some important areas of inquiry, and discuss the journal structure. I will close with information for authors and acknowledgments of the work of past editors.

The work of the journal requires a strong editorial team. I am pleased to introduce Associate Editors Cindy L. Juntunen, Michael Mobley, and Michael J. Scheel. All of us have been handling manuscripts since mid-October 2012 and are indebted to the Editorial Board members who have helped us and will continue to assist in the process of manuscript review. In 2014, we are joined by 40 Editorial Board members and dozens of ad hoc reviewers whose diverse perspectives and backgrounds will enrich our work. We express our thanks to all.

Journal Foci

I envision the success of the journal as a critical factor in demonstrating the value that counseling psychology as a field can contribute to research, practice, and training across fields. In this effort, I have identified three foci for the journal:

1. Address critical societal issues and trends related to individual, interpersonal, and community well-being. It is important that we continue to make clear the value that our research and frameworks in counseling psychology bring to the task of addressing these issues. Similarly, it will be important for the journal to continue to serve as a vehicle to convey how counseling psychologists' skills, knowledge, values, and

- perspectives can contribute to the larger task of addressing these societal issues and trends.
2. Maintain and expand our scholarly contributions to allied fields, consistent with current trends promoting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. This will include expanding and presenting our research in such a way that our influence is visible across fields that share our goals.
 3. Preserve *TCP*'s role of documenting philosophical perspectives, conceptual shifts, and historical events within the field.

Address Critical Societal Issues and Trends Related to Individual, Interpersonal, and Community Well-Being

The first goal is based on the premise that counseling psychology's educational, developmental, preventive, multicultural, and social justice foundations make us uniquely poised to address established societal patterns and emerging trends not only in the United States but also abroad. There are several areas of inquiry that are important for us to address as a field in this unique historical and social context. These include health promotion, immigration, the well-being of children, youth, and families, and leadership. Specifically, we need to focus on the role of counseling psychologists within various models of health care delivery such as integrative health care and telemental health; on the issues brought about by immigration, including strategies for the provision of services in other languages to effectively serve those with limited English proficiency; on the application of knowledge to prevent mental health disorders and promote well-being in children, youth, families, and communities; on the use of community-based and innovative approaches to promote social justice; and on the continued development of leaders and leadership perspectives within the field.

One societal trend is the health care system's movement toward an integrative health model. As counseling psychologists, we should pay close attention to the opportunities available to us in this transition. What are some roles for counseling psychologists in that context? How can we best work in interdisciplinary settings? How can we make our contributions indispensable in those settings? How can we train counseling psychologists to work effectively in these areas? Thus, I would like to see the journal as a forum to disseminate the latest research, provide novel conceptualizations, and offer innovative applications to address issues such as these. Attention to cutting-edge issues and our potential roles to promote health and well-being will allow us to enhance our relevance as a field and as professionals.

Another example of an area that is critical for us to address is health disparities, which refers to differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups in the United States (National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2010). For almost 20 years, I have worked to address mental health and cancer disparities in Latina/o populations. Health disparities are noteworthy because they are largely determined by factors that are modifiable. In a landmark book authored by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 2003, *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*, some of these modifiable factors were summarized and brought to light. They include access to quality health care, health literacy, patient-provider communication, cultural factors, environmental conditions, and direct and indirect consequences of discrimination, among others. In a more recent report, the IOM (2012) sought to assess the progress made as a result of the increased awareness about health disparities at the beginning of the 21st century. The themes that ran through their discussions were telling, and include (a) the persistence of health disparities, (b) the awareness that discrimination is not a thing of the past and can have deleterious effects on physical and mental health outcomes, (c) the fact that community environmental conditions play a role in health disparities, and (d) the need to address more effectively issues of prevention and cultural competence.

The potential contributions of counseling psychologists to the amelioration of health disparities are clear. For example, we can advocate for changes in the health care system that provide better access to quality care. We can help individuals be more resilient in the face of discrimination, or better yet, try to change social and community factors that result in oppression and discrimination, and contribute to health disparities, in the first place. We can also use our expertise on prevention, education, and multicultural issues to increase individuals' health literacy with respect to preventive exams and physical conditions. In addition, we can assist our clients in the development of career paths that will afford them stable financial futures and good health insurance.

In addressing the range of important societal issues and trends, it is critical that we continue to strive for excellence in our methodological choices, that we anchor our work within the discipline by building on previous research and frameworks developed by counseling psychologists, and that we are ever vigilant about providing implications for practice as well as research in published articles. I envision the journal as a relevant source of information for scholars who work across a wide range of settings, including academia, counseling centers, private practice, research centers, schools, and medical settings, to name a few.

Maintain and Expand Our Scholarly Contributions to Allied Fields

The second goal relates to the value our scholarship can provide to our peers in this era of burgeoning interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. It is critical that as counseling psychologists, we ensure the reach of our scholarship to allied fields that share our goals. We need to convey to other scholars how critical our research and conceptualizations are to their work and how valuable their perspectives are to ours. As counseling psychologists, we can do this by referencing scholarship produced in other fields, using our frameworks to extend the work of scholars in these fields, and using their frameworks to extend our work. We cannot afford to speak only to ourselves, and the best science is not accomplished in academic silos.

Preserve TCP's Role of Documenting Philosophical Perspectives, Conceptual Shifts, and Historical Events Within the Field

My third goal relates to *TCP's* critical role of documenting philosophical perspectives, conceptual shifts, and historical events within the field. This is a key task for the journal to accomplish because it serves to strengthen our identity; informs the membership about current happenings; assists us in teaching students and socializing them to our field; and facilitates our reflection upon who we are, where we have been, and where we want to go. In this effort, *TCP* will continue to feature empirically-based articles on our latest research, as well as conceptual articles proposing new frameworks or novel perspectives. Historical events will continue to be documented through (a) the Legacies and Traditions Forum, (b) a section dedicated to the Society of Counseling Psychology (SCP) awards (January issue), (c) a section listing SCP members active in governance at the American Psychological Association (APA; 2010; January issue), (d) the publication of the Presidential Address (January issue), and (e) the publication of the Leona Tyler Award Address (May issue).

The Nuts and Bolts

To achieve this vision, I plan to engage in the following:

- Continue the trend of increasing the space available for regular research articles by lowering the number of issues dedicated to Major Contributions. An examination of the most cited articles in *TCP* shows that typically only one article within a Major Contribution is most

cited. Reactions and rejoinders are not among the most cited articles. Thus, the need to publish scholarship is evident, but the benefit of packaging many submissions as a Major Contribution is not so clear. I would like to prioritize Major Contributions that convey timely perspectives on critical societal issues and trends, cutting-edge training needs, and methodological innovations. Reactions and rejoinders would be used to hold a scholarly dialogue about issues that elicit divergent perspectives. I would be happy to discuss ideas that authors may have for a Major Contribution and help them shape their work for greater impact, broader applicability, and interdisciplinary appeal. I will also dedicate special issues to topics that warrant focused attention in our field. Currently, we are working on two special issues, one on non-traditional teaching methods that promote social justice, and another on applications of positive psychology. Future issues will address other timely topics such as the role of counseling psychologists in telemental health, integrative health care, and leadership. My goal through these initiatives is to maintain and strengthen the influence of counseling psychology as a field, also with the hope that they will result in a higher impact factor for the journal.

- The International Forum, originally started by Bruce Fretz, will continue with Meifen Wei as the Forum Editor. I am delighted that Meifen has agreed to take on this role. The focus of the forum will be to promote the work of scholars engaged in professional practice within an international setting and highlight cross-cultural research. Thus, all submissions that include international samples will be handled through this Forum.
- The Legacies and Traditions Forum, originally started by Punccky Heppner, will continue with Helen Neville as the Forum Editor. I am delighted, as well, that Helen has agreed to take on this role. The Forum will continue to serve as a historical record of the personal and professional lives of counseling psychologists who have shaped our field.
- I will continue to emphasize multicultural issues in counseling psychology, although I am discontinuing the Around the Winter Roundtable Forum due to the low number of submissions in recent years. Presenters at the Winter Roundtable are always welcome to submit manuscripts related to the work they have presented in that venue. It is clear that today, there are many more publication outlets for multicultural topics than there were when the forum was created, which naturally will result in a lower number of submissions to *TCP* through this mechanism.

- With regard to a focus on practice, I am discontinuing the Practice Forum also due to the low level of submissions in recent years. However, I am committed to enhancing *TCP*'s relevance to practitioners by (a) encouraging submissions on practice issues, (b) making a concerted effort to include more practitioners on our Editorial Board, and (c) ensuring that manuscripts accepted for publication include clear implications for practice, as appropriate. Thus, although I am discontinuing the Practice Forum, I welcome and encourage future submissions focused on issues relevant to practice and plan to infuse issues of practice throughout the journal.

Authors who are interested in submitting manuscripts should consult our instructions on the SAGE *TCP* website (<http://tcp.sagepub.com>). Also, feel free to contact us with questions you may have at tcp.miami@miami.edu. In preparing your manuscript, please ensure that you have complied with the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 2010) in your work and that you adhere specifically to ethical issues related to the publication process (see Standard 8: Research and Publication).

Acknowledgments

I embark on the task of editing the journal with excitement and humility. I would like to acknowledge those who came before me and who have generously dedicated years of effort to develop one of the premier journals in counseling psychology. *TCP* was first published in 1969, and its editors have included John Whiteley (1969-1984), Bruce Fretz (1985-1990), Gerald Stone (1991-1996), P. Puncy Heppner (1997-2002), Robert Carter (2003-2007), and Nadya Fouad (2008-2013). I am deeply indebted to Nadya and her editorial office staff, Ashley Kies and Sara Jo Heiser, whose support during the editorial transition has been invaluable.

In conclusion, I envision *TCP* as a key factor in the continued strength, relevance, and influence of counseling psychology. As Editor, I will endeavor to be a gatekeeper of scholarship and will espouse high standards for publication. I look forward to working with you.

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