

# changes ahead! implications of the Vail Conference

ALLEN E. IVEY

JEAN R. LEPPALUOTO

Allen E. Ivey is Professor of Humanistic Applications, School of Education, University of Massachusetts—Amherst. Jean R. Leppaluoto is Associate Provost and Associate Professor of Psychology at the same institution.

*Counseling practice is heavily influenced by psychological models. The summer 1973 conference at Vail, Colorado, examined the role of the applied psychologist. The recommendations of this conference are new and powerful and are likely to reverberate throughout the helping professions. The authors, both of whom were delegates to that conference, discuss major conference recommendations and their implications for professional counseling practice.*

Where can the counseling practitioner of today find guidelines for action in a changing world? One key source of innovative guidance for future helping roles is the 1973 Vail Conference on professional psychology. This conference could polarize American psychology and, by implication, those who practice within the confines of APGA. What we hope, however, is that the important and sometimes radically different recommendations of this conference will result in substantial changes in our professional training and practice in the not-too-distant future.

We present in this article some of the key recommendations of the Vail Conference; undoubtedly they can and will change both counselor education and counseling practice. But first we wish to consider the relationship between psychological models and counseling models. Training and practice in counseling and guidance are based heavily on conceptual frameworks developed by

psychologists. Although some people, particularly those in college student personnel, are well aware of the importance of sociological, anthropological, and political data, the predominant practices of APGA members are rooted in psychological theories and knowledge.

Our best-known professional models (Ellis, Rogers, Skinner) are psychologists. Our counseling training programs are modeled predominantly after clinical and counseling psychology models. The professional practice of the school counselor, at least in idealized terms, most closely resembles that of the clinical or community psychologist practitioner.

Counselor training programs have been heavily influenced by the Greyston Conference on counseling psychology (Thompson & Super 1964), which in turn basically endorsed another APA report produced twelve years earlier (American Psychological Association 1952). The essence of the earlier report was that the counseling psychologist is a

practitioner and a scientist. The 1949 Boulder Conference on clinical psychology (Raimy 1950) clearly affirmed the scientist-practitioner model, which since then has become virtually the gospel for both clinical and counseling psychology.

The impact of these conferences on the professional practice of guidance in the U.S. cannot be overemphasized: The scientist-practitioner model dominates our training programs. The present status quo in training and practice has been criticized (Carkhuff 1972b; Ivey 1970, 1973), and the *PERSONNEL AND GUIDANCE JOURNAL*, under its present editor, represents a battleground between those oriented to professional statements that are twenty years old and those who desire a new approach.

### THE VAIL CONFERENCE

A new view of helper roles may be emerging. In the summer of 1973 the National Institute of Mental Health and the American Psychological Association held a new type of conference on the future of applied psychology. One hundred invited participants plus about fifty observers from governmental agencies and related professional organizations comprised the conference personnel. For the first time substantial numbers of women, minority group members, and consumers of services were represented. Former conferences had included mostly department heads and deans, directors of clinical programs, and nationally known authors and researchers; these groups were represented at Vail, but they did not predominate.

The recommendations of this conference are staggering in their complexity and scope. Depending on the reader's point of view, the recommendations may appear to represent the future direction of helping, may seem naively optimistic, or may even seem destructive. Nonetheless, after the initial reactions have been

recorded, those who seek to change their existing patterns of training will for the first time have a serious set of recommendations that endorse, even demand, change. No longer can the department head or dean say, "We can't go out on a limb by ourselves. Other people aren't doing it." The limb has been built by this conference. The issue is whether this new movement will develop and grow or whether it will wither and die.

### SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no attempt here to abstract the full complexity of the Vail Conference. Perhaps these selected recommendations will encourage APGA members to obtain the preliminary APA report

---

**"The recommendations of this conference are staggering in their complexity and scope. For the first time there is a serious set of recommendations that endorse, even demand, change."**

---

(Korman 1974) and start serious discussion of the conference recommendations and their implications. The following quotations from the Vail recommendations are taken verbatim from the conference's mimeographed working papers, which were voted by the participants. The Korman report is a preliminary statement distilling these recommendations; a later publication will detail the specific guidelines in considerably more detail.

#### Awareness of Value Issues

*"Professional psychology training programs at all levels (continuing professional development, doctoral, masters, bachelors, pre-bachelors) should provide information on the potential political nature of the practice of psychology. This does not imply that a 'right'*

*answer is to be suggested; rather the very serious implications of practice on society become part of the awareness of every psychologist."*

This recommendation went on to state that information on the distribution of wealth in America (Gans 1972); the impact of therapy on individuals in society (Halleck 1971; Szasz 1961); and the importance of consciousness-raising in race relations, the women's movement, and the men's movement are important parts of any professional's training program and practice. We therefore need to be sure that our attitudes and values enhance society; we cannot blindly mold a society that is not responsive to all people.

Counseling, for the most part, has avoided these tough issues. Our prime value stance has been that "it is nice to be nice." When issues have become complex, we have been told to become "objective" social scientists or "detached" helpers. It has become easy to study society, and in our inaction we have failed to be aware that this inaction is designed to maintain the status quo. This recommendation makes it clear that we must develop new experiences that assist the student and the teacher to explore their impact on society. Counseling on a one-to-one basis is no longer adequate to meet today's problems. In fact, it often supports inequities and fails to deal with basic causal factors.

The following resolution shows that the conference attenders were cognizant of the need for professionals to "own" their value positions:

*"Because of the inequitable distribution of psychological services we should urge the providers to redistribute their efforts through the following means:*

*a. University departments, faculty and students should get involved in unserved publics by providing the services needed as a part of the training programs.*

*b. Department programs which make specific efforts to meet the needs of underserved*

*groups and geographical areas should merit priority of funds available from granting agencies."*

Too often the counselor has worked with the economically advantaged college-bound. One of the major challenges is whether or not we can effectively serve those whose background is different from our own.

### **Human and Cultural Diversity**

*"The provision of professional services to persons of culturally diverse backgrounds by persons not competent in understanding and providing professional services to such groups shall be considered unethical. . . . It shall be equally unethical to deny such persons professional services because the present staff is inadequately prepared. . . . It shall be the obligation of all service agencies to employ competent persons or to provide continuing education for the present staff to meet the service needs of the culturally diverse populations it serves."*

This recommendation is perhaps the most powerful and important statement of the entire conference. In plain language it means that if you are of the predominantly white male power structure, you do not necessarily have the key to a rich and full life for those coming from different backgrounds. We should encourage alternative life styles, suggesting more options than the stereotypic male and female sex roles allow (Lepaluoto, Engin & Fodor 1973).

This resolution means that we must recognize that white middle-class values may be right for some but that other value systems can operate effectively for others. The counselor therefore needs to be aware of the potential for psychological imperialism by untrained persons who think they are capable of working with diverse human groups (Carkhuff 1972a). If this recommendation is taken seriously, it means that all psychologists, counselors, teachers, and professors who wish to work with people different from themselves need to deal with issues of

personal and institutional oppression in regard to race, sex, religion, age, and ethnic prejudice. They then need to develop expertise in and skills for working with these groups, which means that the consumers of these skills should be heavily involved in training professionals in these areas.

Participation by consumers in the control and distribution of psychological services appeared as a strong recommendation from numerous task groups. The spirit of these recommendations is that client populations ought to be involved in helping determine what is "done to them" by professionals; and clients should be equal and active participants in evaluating the effectiveness of professionals who deliver these services.

*"The public should be incorporated into the evaluation process. A mechanism is needed for incorporating community and public objectives. The aim is to produce change, not merely to set standards."*

Implementation of this concept requires real, not advisory, participation by students, rehabilitation clients, employment counselors, and other client populations in the development and evaluation of guidance and personnel services.

#### **The Scientist-Practitioner Model**

*"The development of psychological science has sufficiently matured to justify creation of explicit professional programs, in addition to programs for training scientists and scientist-professionals."*

This resolution may have the deepest impact on the profession, because the burden of being both a scientist and a professional has been lying heavily on faculty members in counselor training programs. Stories of expert counselor/therapists who fail to obtain tenure due to lack of research or publication are legion. People's status as professionals tends to depend more on what they write

than on what they do—an unusual case in which words speak louder than actions! Fully following this recommendation would cause substantial status changes for practicing helpers.

An emphasis on theory as opposed to practice appears in our curriculums. Those involved in clinical training or applied practice are clearly seen as having lower status in training departments than those who are more research-centered. The major implication of this recommendation to include professional training as a legitimate alternative to the scientist-professional model may be a means of changing the reward system, including both the financial and status benefits. This in turn may open the way to more experimentation, relevance, and variety in our training programs.

#### **Individual Vs. Program Accreditation**

For the most part, typical content issues of training programs (courses, practicum, etc.) as represented by the Grey-ston or Boulder conferences were not considered. However, one recommendation relating to this area may be of special interest to members of APGA.

*"Complete evaluation of a training program must include an evaluation not only of the content of the program but also evaluation of the graduates when they complete the program and at various points in their later careers."*

Continuing professional development was a central focus of the Vail Conference. No longer can we feel that our professional training is over when we receive degrees and certification.

To ascertain the effectiveness of training programs, it was suggested in a recommendation that a national survey be undertaken, the survey designed to explore the "interpersonal effectiveness and personal motivation" of graduates in the helping professions at the doctoral, master's, and specialized undergraduate levels. One interesting implication of

such a study is its potential for revealing whether or not those with higher degrees are indeed more competent than their less highly paid colleagues who do not have as many formal credentials.

A great deal of controversy at the conference focused on psychologists at the prebachelor's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels and the distinctions among them. Hot debate centered on whether or not to admit subdoctoral individuals into the realm of "psychologists." There was virtual unanimity of agreement, however, that helping as a profession has been far too restrictive.

Competencies and the importance of providing real career opportunities for helping personnel were considered in the following recommendation:

*"Personal competencies, skills, and related experiences should be applied as equivalents in lieu of specific academic requirements in meeting formal requisites for the performance of certain activities and for salary levels associated with designated positions in a functional career ladder."*

A general theme of the conference was the importance of identifying and assessing competencies of psychologists. Time-defined rather than competency-defined degree programs may well be on their way out.

#### **Training for All of Us**

*"We . . . ask graduate and undergraduate programs to reexamine their curricula and their models. We urge more emphasis on training in primary prevention on the serious emotional problems of psychologists and other people (which especially include racism and sexism). We urge that educational programs in psychology at all levels help students understand the social and political origins of human distress and show students how to become advocates for the disadvantaged and disenfranchised."*

This highly explicit statement is very much in accord with the positions taken

---

**"The words *personnel* and *guidance* imply and have long been associated with value neutrality, distance from the client, and adjustment to the existing social system."**

---

in several Special Issues of this journal—the social revolution (Lewis, Lewis & Dworkin 1971); Asians (Sue 1973); blacks (Smith 1970); Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans (Palmores 1971); and women (Lewis 1972). In addition, there seems to be increasing concern with primary prevention and human development as a central task of the helper. How much our profession is changing is evidenced in numerous articles (e.g., Kuriloff 1973; Smith 1974; Weinrach 1973); two Special Issues of this journal—one on psychological education (Ivey & Alschuler 1973) and one on outreach activities (Parker 1974); and a Special Feature on the outlook for the counseling specialties (Odell 1973).

#### **NEXT STEPS FOR APGA**

Clearly, serious consideration of the issues raised by the Vail Conference cannot leave professional counseling and personnel work where they are now. We need to work in an interdependent way with other professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the National Education Association.

Perhaps the next step is for APGA to call its own conference and give itself a new name, one that represents the latest stage in our growth: "The Association for Human Development." The words *personnel* and *guidance* imply and have long been associated with value neutrality, distance from the client, and adjustment to the existing social system.

Human development suggests that the role of the helper is more than maintaining the status quo. Human development demands that counselors free themselves and their clients from societal constraints that reduce people's opportunities to reach their full humanness. ■

## REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association, Division of Counseling and Guidance, Committee on Counselor Training. Recommended standards for training counseling psychologists at the doctorate level. *American Psychologist*, 1952, 7, 175-181.
- Carkhuff, R. Black and white in helping. *Professional Psychology*, 1972, 3, 18-22. (a)
- Carkhuff, R. The development of systematic human resource development models. *Counseling Psychologist*, 1972, 3(3), 4-11. (b)
- Gans, H. The new equalitarianism. *Saturday Review of Literature*, May 6, 1972, 43-46.
- Halleck, S. *The politics of therapy*. New York: Science House, 1971.
- Ivey, A. The Association for Human Development: A reconceptualized APGA. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1970, 48, 528-532.
- Ivey, A. Counseling: The innocent profession or fiddling while Rome burns. *Counseling Psychologist*, 1973, 4(1), 111-115.
- Ivey, A., & Alschuler, A. (Eds.) Psychological education: A prime function of the counselor. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1973, 51(9).
- Korman, M. National conference on levels and patterns of professional training in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 1974, 29, 441-449.
- Kuriloff, P. The counselor as psychoecologist. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1973, 51, 321-327.
- Leppaluoto, J.; Engin, A.; & Fodor, I. (Eds.) Male and female—The mutually disadvantaged: The school psychologist's role in expanding options for both sexes. *School Psychologist Digest*, 1973, 2(3), 2-10.
- Lewis, J. (Ed.) Women and counselors. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1972, 51(2).
- Lewis, M.; Lewis, J.; & Dworkin, E. (Eds.) Counseling and the social revolution. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1971, 49(9).
- Odell, C. (Ed.) Outlook for the counseling specialties. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1973, 52, 139-183.
- Palomares, U. (Ed.) Culture as a reason for being. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1971, 50(2).
- Parker, C. (Ed.) Thirty-six faces of counseling. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1974, 52(6).
- Raimy, V. (Ed.) *Training in clinical psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1950.
- Smith, D. Integrating humanism and behaviorism: Toward performance. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1974, 52, 513-519.
- Smith, P. (Ed.) What guidance for blacks? *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1970, 48(9).
- Sue, D. W. (Ed.) Asian-Americans: The neglected minority. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1973, 51, 385-416.
- Szasz, T. *The myth of mental illness*. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.
- Thompson, A. S., & Super, D. E. (Eds.) *The professional preparation of counseling psychologists* (Report of the 1964 Greyston Conference). New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964.
- Weinrach, S. Even counselors have irrational ideas. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 1973, 52, 245-247.

Copyright of Personnel & Guidance Journal is the property of American Counseling Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.