

## **Introduction to Special Issue on International Perspectives on Counseling Psychology**

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Lors du Congrès International de Psychologie Appliquée de 2002 à Singapour, le Conseil d'Administration a entériné la proposition de création d'une Division de Psychologie du Counseling. Pour promouvoir son émergence au sein de l'Association Internationale de Psychologie Appliquée et pour encourager son développement, ce numéro spécial analyse l'état actuel de la psychologie du counseling ainsi que ses évolutions à venir dans quatorze pays différents. Ces analyses examinent les forces, faiblesses, opportunités et menaces de la psychologie du counseling. A partir de la matrice SWOT, dont la méthodologie est exposée dans un article introductif, chaque auteur présente les objectifs et stratégies de la psychologie du counseling dans son propre pays pour la prochaine décennie. La conclusion de ce numéro spécial reprend en les commentant l'ensemble des conseils et suggestions afin de construire la psychologie du counseling dans le futur.

At the 2002 International Congress of Applied Psychology in Singapore, the Board of Directors voted in support of the proposal to establish a Division of Counseling Psychology. To promulgate the formation of the Division of Counseling Psychology in the International Association of Applied Psychology as well as to foster its development, this special issue presents analyses of the current status and future directions for counseling psychology in 12 different countries. These analyses examine counseling psychology's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Based on these SWOT analyses, which used the methodology explained in this introductory article, each author presents objectives and strategies for advancing counseling psychology in their own countries during the next decade. The special issue concludes with a commentary that reviews and integrates the authors' recommendations and suggestions for constructing the future of counseling psychology.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the leadership of Frederick Leong, Mark Savickas, Richard Young, Itamar Gati, Paul Pedersen, and a small group of counseling psychologists, a petition and a proposal for the formation of the Division of Counseling Psychology was presented to the Board of Directors at the 2002 International Congress of Applied Psychology in Singapore. The Board of Directors voted to approve this proposal and the IAAP Counseling Division (Division 16) was formed in 2002. The 2006 International Congress of Applied Psychology in Athens served as the inaugural congress for the new Division and a full and successful program of research and applied presentations were made at that ICAP.

To mark the formation of the Division of Counseling Psychology in the International Association of Applied Psychology as well as to foster its development, we have produced this special issue on International Perspectives on Counseling Psychology that considers how the discipline of counseling psychology might be advanced in the coming years. The authors systematically construct and consider alternative visions for the counseling psychology profession in the next decade. The authors, each leading proponents of counseling psychology in their own countries, were selected from the charter members of the Counseling Psychology Division (16) to constitute a panel of analysts who represent a broad range of experience, expertise, and engagement in counseling psychology. The analysts examined the internal strengths and weaknesses of counseling psychology in 12 countries as well as the external opportunities and threats it faces. These SWOT analyses aim to raise awareness of the challenges faced by counselor psychologists and identify possibilities for advancing the discipline. The analysts were asked to use their conclusions to construct a vision for the future of counseling psychology and a set of objectives and strategies that could move the discipline in that direction. The possible futures that they envision can prompt discussion and debate that serve to guide the profession's development. Although SWOT analyses are usually conducted by teams or committees, the authors in this issue each worked alone, or with one or two colleagues, in constructing their visions of what counseling psychology might become in their countries during the next decade. Consequently, the issue concludes with two commentaries that review and integrate the objectives and strategies recommended by the authors.

Some readers may be intrigued by the idea of conducting their own SWOT analyses and constructing a strategic plan for counseling psychology in their country and their role in it. Some professors of counseling psychology may want their students to perform the same task. These individuals and classes are invited to engage in the process recommended to the authors in this special issue. To make this possible, the remainder of this introduction

contains the request made to those authors. The request offers suggestions and prompts for conducting an analysis and constructing a vision for the future of the counseling psychology around the globe.

## CONDUCTING A SWOT ANALYSIS FOR COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

The following outline provides a general structure for thinking about the next decade in the profession of counseling psychology, and it should serve as a rough outline for your article. You may not want to include each section or all the information you considered in a particular section. You can, if you wish, identify what you believe have been the greatest accomplishments and disappointments in counseling psychology during the last ten years. The overriding goal, however, is to articulate your vision for the next ten years in counseling psychology IN YOUR COUNTRY. To help you construct that vision in more detail you may want to consider the following topics.

### Internal Strengths of Counseling Psychology in Your Country

A strength is a resource, capacity, skill, or advantage. In this context, a strength is a condition internal to our field that is under our control and can be influenced by us. The following prompts might help you identify strengths.

- Who are we?
- Who do we serve?
- Why do you do what you do?
- What do we do well?
- What are our core competencies?
- How strong is our market?
- Do we have a clear strategic direction?
- What is our culture?
- What are our resources?
- How do we distinguish ourselves from competitors?

### Internal Weaknesses of Counseling Psychology in Your Country

A weakness is a limitation, fault, defect, or deficiency in resources, skills, and capabilities that seriously impedes the profession. Weaknesses are under our control and can be influenced by us. The following prompts might help you identify weaknesses.

- What can be improved?
- What is done poorly?



- What should be avoided?
- What embarrasses you about our profession?
- What do you want to change?
- What do you want to do better?
- What have clients or institutions asked you to do that you cannot?

### External Opportunities for Counseling Psychology in Your Country

An opportunity is a favorable situation that has the potential to meet a need consistent with your mission. Opportunities may help us reach our goals. Opportunities are not under our direct control. The following prompts may help you identify opportunities.

- What are interesting trends?
- What good chances are we facing?
- Do changes in technology and markets present any new opportunities?
- Do changes in government policy related to our field present any new opportunities?
- Do changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyles present any new opportunities?
- If you take the next step in counseling psychology, what would that be?
- What ideas have been offered to you?
- What opportunities have been presented?
- Are there new markets?
- What changes do you expect to see in demand over the next ten years?

### External Threats to Counseling Psychology in Your Country

A threat is an unfavorable situation which may block goal attainment. We must respond to threats in order to grow. It is best to anticipate threats and to respond proactively.

- Who is doing the same thing?
- Are they doing it better?
- What is threatening your client base?
- What do practitioners want?

### Analysis of Strategic Issues Facing Counseling Psychology in Your Country

Now it is time to build a list of strategic alternatives. To do so, analyse your SWOT list by thinking about:

What should we grow (concentrate on)?  
 Which strength do we build on?  
 What should we shrink (restructure)?  
 Which new things should we attend to (merge, collaborate, acquire)?  
 Which weaknesses should we correct?  
 Which threats do we counter?

The following questions may be useful in helping you to develop issue statements that represent the interaction between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Be specific about and give examples of issues, concerns, and ideas.

How can strengths be used to take advantage of opportunities? (S-O strategies)  
 How can we use strengths to counteract threats? (S-T strategies)  
 How can we overcome weaknesses or counteract threats? (W-T analysis)  
 How can we overcome weaknesses to take advantage of opportunities? (W-O strategy)  
 How can this be considered an opportunity as well as a threat?  
 How may this apparent strength turn out to be a weakness?  
 How does this weakness really represent a strength?

## A Vision or Strategic Plan for Counseling Psychology in Your Country

After completing your issue statements, state your vision for counseling psychology in the next decade, maybe in the form of a strategic plan that includes a mission, objectives, and strategies.

If you write a mission statement, please indicate why counseling psychology exists, maybe describing its chief products or services, customers served, and value added. You may want to discuss goals and objectives which specify the kind of results counseling psychology should seek to achieve. If you do the why (mission) and the what (objectives), you might want to add the how, meaning strategies for achieving the objectives.

## This Special Issue: International Perspectives on Counseling Psychology

Based on these instructions as outlined above, we identified and invited some of the leading scholars, trainers, and researchers from around the world to provide a glimpse into the nature and functioning of Counseling Psychology from 12 countries. As expected, we discovered not only commonalities but also culture-specific and unique features of Counseling Psychology in this sampling of countries. We invite you review these articles for their

country-specific SWOT analyses and also to ponder the commentary by Professor Mark Savickas, President-Elect of the IAAP Counseling Division. It is our hope that this special issue will introduce the field of Counseling Psychology to our colleagues in the other fields of applied psychology. Additionally, as the special issue to mark the founding of the Counseling Psychology Division within IAAP, we are also hoping that this will stimulate and encourage more research into the education, training, and practice of Counseling Psychology by counseling colleagues around the world. This special issue will have accomplished one of its major goals if greater numbers of articles related to Counseling Psychology are published in future editions of *Applied Psychology: An International Review*. Finally, we would like to thank Professor Robert Wood, Editor of *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, for his tremendous support and guidance in the publication of this special issue.