1

Constructing Counselor Education

Garrett J. McAuliffe

You probably teach very well without recognizing that, often, the more teaching, the less learning. Our job in adult education is not to cover a set of course materials, but to engage adults in effective and significant learning.

Jane Vella, Adult Educator

With that declaration, Jane Vella (1994) challenges teachers to instigate something called *significant learning*. This certainly sounds like a desirable goal for all counselor educators. But what is significant learning? Is it the achievement of a set of specific counseling competencies? For sure. Is it a set of positive attitudes toward the work of helping? Yes, in the sense that attitude precedes much behavior. But, most of all, significant learning lies in the ability to perform what Schön (1991) defines as professional work—the use of judgment and considered action in ambiguous situations. Professional work is characterized by unclear problems with multiple dimensions. Such work is commonly fraught with ethical and value implications. The counselor often makes decisions in such situations in the moment. Counseling requires the ability to make commitments knowing that there are other choices that might be equally valid. From these conditions, it might be clear that the act of counseling does not lend itself to rote practice (Harris, 1993).

If counselors are to be prepared for the complexity of the work—in the form of multiple societal values, ethnicities, moral centers, gender expectations, and the like—then the designers of counselor education must prepare students (and themselves) to have a corresponding complexity. That complexity might take two forms: (1) a way of knowing that is reflexive and includes a tolerance for ambiguity and (2) the ability to be culturally relativistic.

In the first case, counselors must embrace uncertainty as an expected condition of the work. The counselor must consistently entertain the possibility "I might be wrong." Counselors must remind themselves, when they are tempted to make a glib assessment, or automatically adhere to a favored technique, "I must catch myself trying to be too complete," to use developmental theorist Robert Kegan's (1998) phrase. Counselors must be reflexive and tolerant of ambiguity.

The second requirement is cultural relativism. In order to work with all clients, counselors must be able to

de-center from their cultural assumptions. Those emerge from their gender, social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion. Walt Whitman framed this challenge in *Leaves of Grass:* "Re-examine all you have been told at school or church, or in any books, and dismiss whatever insults your soul." Whitman's words ask individuals to self-authorize (Kegan, 1998) their values. Similarly, philosopher Richard Rorty (1989) challenges individuals to be culturally de-centered, when they are taking a position, to think they might have "been initiated into the wrong tribe" (p. 75) on that value or issue. In this fluid, constructed social world, teachers and learners must regularly question their certainties, examining the limits of their knowing.

In sum, it is the position of this chapter, indeed of this entire book, that such a flexible, reflexive mindset, or way of knowing, is required for the work of professional counseling. The counselor's own mental complexity must match the requirements of the professional work. Of course, specific knowledge and skill competencies are also required for becoming a good group leader, career counselor, crisis intervener, and child advocate, to name a few professional counseling roles. But those skills must be applied provisionally, with situation, culture, and individual in mind. Given the fluidity of any knowledge base (just think about the single-minded adherence to psychoanalysis in the first half of the 20th century and the humanistic contagion of the second half), no professional can rely on a permanent set of understandings and expect to continue to do ethical and competent counseling. She or he must have the capacity of mind to fully engage and critically evaluate a fluid knowledge base, meet multiple professional roles, and recognize perspectives from diverse cultures.

CONSTRUCTIVISM: AN OVERVIEW

Constructivism is the guiding metaphor for this book. The Latin origin of the word itself (*con* = with; *struere* = to build) refers to the communal act of making something, of putting together. From the constructivist perspective (also called *constructionist*, which will be explained later), humans do not "find" or "discover" knowledge, nor do they receive it from infallible authorities. Knowledge is continually created through conversations. These conversations occur through the sciences,

the arts, religion, the media (e.g., blogs, talk shows), professional journals, and classroom discussion, to name some examples.

Constructivism is not a method. It is instead a way of understanding human meaning-making. It invites the individual into a world in which subjectivity is ultimate (but, lest we descend into total relativism, not all positions are equally helpful or defensible, as determined by a community's standards). Constructivism's central premise is that individuals actively create the world as they experience it. Individuals do not learn by copying some outside reality. Nor do they find knowledge as if it were a gem waiting to be uncovered in a mine (Gergen, 2009). They are actively involved in a joint enterprise with others in creating (constructing) new and preferably more helpful meanings. Some constructivist thinkers (which I will here call *developmental constructivists*) also emphasize the pre-understandings, or cognitive capacities, that individuals bring to experience. These two versions of constructivism are discussed next.

Social Constructionism

Humans are always in a social surround, whether that consists of their internalized conceptions of the good and the beautiful (the social-in-the-individual) or the ongoing public conversations in media, religion, literature, and culture in general (the individual-in-the social), to name some examples. Social constructionism (note that the *tion* in the word is a mere convention from its usage by Berger and Luckmann [1966] in their classic *The Social Construction of Reality*) emphasizes the inevitably social, or communal, context of human meaning-making. All meaning is saturated in culture, history, place, and time. Humans are ineluctably shaped by the social forces of language and interaction. There is no "pure" thought that is not socially mediated.

Obvious examples of the social construction of meaning lie in the words humans use to describe their experience of the world, such as *sinful, gay, moral, mannerly,* and *beautiful.* Each of those words is heavily saturated with meanings that are created in human communities (e.g., ethnic cultures). Other obvious examples of socially constructed meanings are the norms that guide humans' thinking and behaving, such as cultural rules for interpersonal relations (e.g., greetings,

politeness, honesty) and those for gender behavior (e.g., nurturing, aggressiveness). Less subtle are the implicit assumptions that guide thinking about what is good, true, and beautiful (e.g., a work ethic, salvation, conceptions of beauty).

Social constructionists propose that there is no pure knowledge, that is, there are no ideas that are outside of time and place, or chronology and geography, in Gergen's (2009) words. The very language that humans use is, of course, socially constructed. For example, the English word *love* cannot be directly translated into many languages. In Japanese, there is *suki,* which generally means *like* (e.g., food, movies), *koi* for passionate love, and *ai* for parental love. These terms are not directly translatable into the English word *love*.

In addition, it is not just the specific meaning of words, but the way in which they are used, that affects the construction of meaning in cultures. In Japanese culture, *koi* and *ai* are not often spoken directly to another—it is not common to say, "I love you" to a person. Humans are always more or less embedded in their language. Individual meaning-making is socially constructed.

Two terms, *discourse* and *deconstruction*, are associated with social construction. They will be discussed next.

Discourse

The term *discourse* represents any particular socialized meaning system that informs a person's constructions. Therefore one can refer to, for example, a gender (e.g., male) discourse, a religious (e.g., Christian) discourse, a class (e.g., middle-class) discourse, an ethnic (e.g., Anglo American) discourse, a scientific (e.g., positivist) discourse, and a theoretical (e.g., humanistic) discourse.

Any thread of ideas might be called a discourse. In fact, the very concept of social construction is itself a discourse. The discourse of social construction is guided by the notion that humans are always constructing knowledge. Such a view contrasts with the spectator discourse about knowledge. Referring to the spectator view, Ahuja and colleagues (2008) say, "In such a view, the thinker pushes ideas and concepts around in his mental space like pieces of furniture—frozen concepts without a life of their own—making the assumption that the concepts

completely render the world they are meant to model" (Part One, para. 10). This notion is nonconstructivist in that it treats knowledge as found, rather than constructed by a community. By contrast, social constructionist thinking assumes the changeable, fluid nature of knowledge, that is always contingent on place and time, or discourse.

Deconstruction

Any discourse can be analyzed for its foundations. Deconstruction is the act of examining the origins and implications of an idea, that is, seeking its roots in a particular discourse, such as in the zeitgeist of an era or in a thinker's biography (Gergen, 2009). Deconstruction challenges the idea that there are noncontextual, unquestionable verities or givens that can be known. All ideas can be subjected to deconstruction. There is no room for "that's just the way it is."

Implications of Social Construction for Education

It follows, from the social constructionist perspective, that there are no realities that can be purely known beyond culture. The filters of such social identities as gender, age, race, religion, ethnicity, ability, class, and sexual orientation are pervasive lenses through which individuals create meanings. Teachers and counselors should be aware of the social constructions that inform their own assumptions, lest they treat their current understanding as "real" and therefore unassailable.

There are at least three dimensions of social constructionist thinking that have implications for counselor education. Burbules and Rice (1991) lay them out thus:

1. **A rejection of absolutes**. Any declaration of objectively knowable universals results in the restriction of human possibilities. So-called metanarratives, such as grand counseling theories, are viewed as expressions of particular points of view. Therefore, meaning-makers must be humble and reflexive, exquisitely attuned to the limits of their conclusions. They are asked to be consistently aware of their standpoints, whether they be based in culture, situation, temperament, or other characteristics of the time, place, and person. This *standpoint awareness* has implications for teaching: Since knowledge is

something that is developed in community rather than an objectively determined verity, the teacher must be persistently self-reflective, be open to the limits of her or his current positions and methods, and be willing to seek feedback about teaching content and process from fellow learners, including students. Social constructionist educators are aware of the context that affects any perspectives that they may take on phenomena.

2. **The saturation of all social discourse with power or dominance**. Power pervades all human encounters, including the power of hierarchy, physical size, sexual appeal, money, and persuasion. In the classroom, teachers can unthinkingly perpetuate broader patterns of dominance, especially in their use of authority. Teachers can subtly reinforce or challenge existing power relationships through how or whether they encourage students' voices in the classroom, through how they use titles and names, through their openness to being questioned on their own teaching practices, and by being respectful or dismissive in responding to students. With this awareness of power, teachers can give assignments, grade tests, and lead discussions in ways in which the fundamental equality and value of all persons are respected. Counselor educators are thereby challenged to lift the veil of power to make sure that they are not perpetuating inequities. Methods for sharing power will be discussed throughout this book. They include teachers encouraging student feedback on course content and process, sharing their reasons for assignments, and revealing their own doubts.

3. **The celebration of difference.** Social constructionism assumes that the constitutive quality of existence is plurality. In contrast, the objectivist or essentialist stance proclaims that a diversity of ideas is a temporary state on the way to perfect knowing. From the social constructionist framework, any singular, unified discourse is to be treated skeptically, since it is likely that such discourse comes from the framework of the dominant group. For counselor educators, this assumption is a call to attend to the perspectives and experiences of so-called marginalized groups. Participation, it follows, is a correlate of social constructionism. Social constructionist educators therefore actively extend invitations to voices that might otherwise be excluded, in admissions, assignments, and topics for discussion, to name some examples.

Finally, there are at least two implications of the social constructionist impulse: humility and egalitarianism. In the first case, the knower should not take his positions too permanently, or seriously, since they are built on the shifting foundations of culture, era, and selected evidence (Gergen, 2009). Social constructionist counselors are therefore attuned to the discourses from which they speak, whether they be gender, ethnic, social class, or historical contexts, among others. Such counselors recognize the fluidity of all sense-making and the ongoing evolution of ideas. They will consistently ask, "What is another possibility?" and "From what discourse am I speaking?" That is a form of humility about truth claims.

In addition, social constructionism carries with it an inherent egalitarian impulse. Since knowledge is socially constructed, it is the province of all. There are no unassailable authorities. All are engaged in particular discourses, some of which are often valued more than others. Of course, this notion does not rule out expertise; it allows for deconstruction of such expertise and helps individuals avoid offering unthinking allegiance to experts.

The social constructionist curriculum thus sets a demanding agenda for the traditional teacher in all counselor educators. Social constructionism challenges that part of the educator that either believes in the sanctity of her own authority or believes that she has perfected the best methods for knowing and subsequently for counseling. It asks educators instead to embrace Paolo Freire's (1994) concept of learner as teacher and teacher as learner.

CONSTRUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT

A second version of constructivism that is emphasized in this book is developmental. From this perspective, overall approaches to knowing can evolve from more rigid, authoritarian ways of knowing to more flexible, open, and reflective ones. Constructivist-developmental theory therefore has a hopeful premise. The constructivist-developmental formulation allows counselor educators to assess students' ways of knowing and to aim their teaching at increasing learners' relativism and self-authorship of ideas.

The origins of constructivist-developmental theory lie in the work of Jean Piaget (e.g., 1954). Piaget

demonstrated that his children's minds were not empty, but that they instead actively processed the material with which they were presented in more and more complex ways as they developed. Kegan (1998) refers to this increasing complexity as expanded mental capacity.

Constructive development is related to how people come to know something, that is, what process they use to decide what is important. *How* can be distinguished from *what* a person thinks or believes. Thus, two students might hold similar political positions, but have arrived at them in different ways. Another word for the study of how people come to know is *epistemology.*

Many readers will be familiar with the concept of *stages* in the Piagetian and Kohlbergian traditions. The idea of stages is central to constructivist-developmental theory. However, it is a contested notion in that it implies a rigid way of knowing across situations.

A number of other terms are used to describe an overall epistemological tendency. In this chapter, the terms used interchangeably are *order of consciousness* (Kegan, 1998), *way of knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), and the aforementioned *epistemology.* Each of these terms refers to an individual's overall approach to, or central tendency for, meaning-making. As mentioned earlier, an individual's way of knowing can range from a relatively closed, rigid, and simple way of processing to a more open, flexible, and complex one. Another way of describing such development is movement from a relatively external reliance on authority toward a more internal search for understandings.

For the purposes of this chapter, simplification of constructive development is required. Readers are referred to Belenky et al. (1986), Kegan (1998), Kohlberg (1981), and Perry (1998) for more expanded descriptions of constructive development.

Critics of constructivist-developmental theory offer at least two challenges, each of which needs to be qualified here. One is that the theory is hierarchical, in that later ways of knowing are valued more highly, and that therefore it is elitist, or "rankist." While developmental theory could conceivably be used that way, theorists have emphasized the achievement, or triumph over a more limited way of knowing, that each order of consciousness represents. Each is valuable.

The critique of rankism should be taken seriously, as individuals should not use developmental theory as a way of degrading other people. In fact, later stages of knowing are characterized by greater tolerance and openness. Developmental theorists discourage permanent labeling of individuals, instead recognizing the triumph and value that each stage represents. Again, developmental thinking is a hopeful enterprise. It encourages educators to stretch students' epistemologies toward openness and flexibility.

The second qualification about constructivist-developmental theory is that the stages of knowing are not "hard," that is, not absolute all of the time, in every situation. While there is evidence that individuals do tend to use a dominant way of knowing (Kegan, 1998), which might metaphorically be called their center of constructive gravity, they do not rely on only one way of knowing at all times. More relativistic, or self-authorizing, thinkers may rely on external authority and simple answers in situations in which they are naïve. Conversely, generally authority-reliant thinkers may "think for themselves" at times. Therefore, instead of using only one way of thinking at all times, it might instead be said that a person *tends* to operate out of certain frameworks. And those frameworks consist of shades, rather than rigid boundaries. Therefore, individuals tend to construct knowledge in a certain way, with elements of other ways of knowing always possible. And there are not only three or four hard stages for knowing. In fact, Kegan's constructive development theory uses 26 gradations of meaning-making tendencies that can be assessed in individuals (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988).

Three Epistemologies of Interest for Counselor Education

Three overall ways of knowing are of particular import for counselor education, as they represent the range of epistemologies that students of counseling utilize. These stages are called by various names in different theories. I will use the following terms, which are taken from a number of the parallel adult development theories: *received/conventional knowing, self-authorized knowing,* and *dialectical knowing.*

Received/Conventional Knowing (Third Order of Consciousness).

The first position here will be variously called received (Belenky et al., 1986) or conventional (Kohlberg, 1981). The person operating from this way of knowing tends to be reliant on external norms or authorities for what to think and how to behave. Those authorities might be, for example, parents, teachers, religious texts, or clergy.

As noted before, it is important to remember that use of this epistemology is not total across situations (Moore, 1987). For example, a person who generally uses received knowing might show some self-authorization of ideas at times, if asked, "How did you come to know this was good or right?" In the case of counselor education, a student might experience doubt about the correctness of his received/conventional view of homosexuality because of his family or religion's strong negative feelings about gays. Nevertheless, he might also wonder, "How can I both have compassion, as my religion teaches me, and still condemn the physical expression of love in a same-sex relationship? Plus, I have heard that sexual orientation has a major biological component." That thought reflects a glimmer of self-authorization. It might be short-lived, with a quick retreat to the conventional views of the person's culture. It might, however, also blossom if his dilemma is nurtured by an environment that challenges him to think for himself. If those challenges, which Kegan calls (1998) the *culture of contradiction*, help the person think in a more complex way, they can lead to a revolution (or evolution) in his whole way of knowing toward self-authorization.

In general, students who operate largely out of received/conventional knowing assume that their culture is fixed and true, that the rules that they have inherited from family and church and community must be adhered to rigidly and completely. In the counseling workplace, they would ultimately rely on authorities, such as school principals or supervisors, rather than committing to a reasoning process about how to act.

Individuals who largely use received/conventional knowing cannot easily step outside of their inherited systems (e.g., culture, social norms) to question rules. They see the received systems as the way things are and must be. Those systems might be gender roles, social manners, received hierarchies of all kinds, or racial views. Thus, counselors who operate largely from received/conventional knowing are unlikely to challenge a system that is unresponsive to nondominant groups, such as gay students or migrant workers, if it differs from the system under which they were raised. The received system (e.g., culture, social norms) reigns for them. This author and his colleague (McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006) found students who largely used received knowing to be characterized by externality, surface thinking, concreteness, and solution-drivenness. Those qualities are problematic for professional work.

Most students of counseling operate from an order of consciousness that is either received/conventional knowing (Stage 3, also called the third order) or a mixture of Stage 3 and self-authorized knowing (Stage 4, or fourth order) (Eriksen & McAuliffe, 2003, 2006). The transitional way of knowing (3–4) has been called *subjective knowing* (Belenky et al., 1986) in that the individual relies on implicit subjective rationales for deciding on what is good or right, without reference to larger reasoning, scientific evidence, or other self-chosen procedures for deciding. Readers should note, nevertheless, that students of counseling commonly operate from that mixture of received and self-authorized epistemologies.

Self-Authorized Knowing (Fourth Order of Consciousness).

If a person experiences received knowing as an unworkable means of deciding on what is right or good, she may open up to the fourth order of consciousness, or self-authorized knowing (Kegan, 1998). Somewhat corresponding terms for this way of knowing include *procedural knowing* (Belenky et al., 1986), *relativism* (Perry, 1998), and *postconventional thinking* (Kohlberg, 1981). At this stage, the individual can consistently use her own judgment and self-chosen procedures as sources of decision making. No pat answers based on tradition or authorities are acceptable. The self-authorizing knower no longer takes social conventions, such as family norms or peer models, as the ultimate guides for deciding, but rather weighs evidence about what is important in a situation. Perry calls this way of thinking relativism, as the individual now recognizes that knowledge varies according to the context, whether that is culture or the unique circumstances of a relationship.

Individuals who are self-authorizing approach complex situations realizing that they must use a self-defined

procedure for deciding on what to believe or how to act. It follows that, using self-authorized knowing, individuals are not ultimately reliant on an external authority for how and what to think. Instead, people who are guided by this epistemology decide on what is right or good by looking each time at complex sources of evidence. For example, self-authorizing allows them to generate a relatively autonomous view on sexual orientation or gender roles, rather than relying on received religious or family rules.

The benefits of self-authorized thinking for counselors are at least twofold. First, and overall, self-authorized thinking enables counselors to make more nuanced counseling decisions in the midst of what is inherently ambiguous and complex work. More specifically, self-authorizing thinkers are likely to have the following characteristics: empathy, self-reflectiveness, insight, and tolerance for ambiguity (McAuliffe & Lovell, 2006). They are also more likely to challenge an oppressive status quo and engage in activism for oppressed groups (McAuliffe, Grothaus, Jensen, & Michel, 2010).

It should be noted again that there is no pure self-authorizing order of consciousness, or stage. Instead, each individual has a general tendency, or center of gravity (Laske, 2009), that will predispose him to certain ways of knowing. For example, all individuals will rely on authority occasionally, in specific situations. Beginning counselors might take a suggestion from a supervisor about how to work with a client. Supervisors will also dictate procedures for handling emergencies, for keeping records, and for evaluating progress. However, if self-authorized knowing is well consolidated, students will know that supervisors have also constructed their views. Students will take in the information for the moment, recognizing the supervisor's (or the text's) relative expertise. External authority can be important, but not ultimate, for the self-authorizing thinker.

As mentioned previously, students of counseling generally use aspects of both received (Stage 3) and self-authorized (Stage 4) knowing. Thus, it is not uncommon for students to be caught between hearing the authority of the teacher or supervisor and deciding for themselves. Students might experience ambivalence about authority as they waver between Stages 3 and 4. For example, the practicum student might express some adolescent-like rebellion about a supervisor's guidance,

due to the circumstance of teetering between using her own hunches and needing the input of a more expert practitioner. In Chapter 4, counselor ambivalence toward authority at certain career phases is described more fully. Overall, more self-authorizing knowers have greater ability to find their source of judgment amid the cacophony of supervisor, textbook, instructor, and peer voices on what to do as a counselor.

There are limits to self-authorized thinking. Individuals can become too enamored of their own procedures for deciding what is good or important. They can fall into the trap of certainty-by-method, that is, ultimate adherence to their own logic. For example, a counselor can hold too firmly to his self-defined version of multiculturalism, humanism, feminism, quantitative (or qualitative) research methods, diagnosis, and other hard-won points of view. Therefore, self-authorized thinkers face a new challenge: to question their self-defined certainties, to consider alternate formulations, to find greater understandings in seeming contradictions (Hanna & Ottens, 1995). That is the task of the next stage.

Dialectical Knowing (Fifth Order of Consciousness).
The last of the adult stages will here be called the dialectical, or the fifth order of consciousness, following Basseches (1984) and Kegan (1998). Research indicates that people under 40 years of age do not consistently exhibit such a way of knowing. In general, fewer than 5 percent of adults have been found to use dialectical thinking as a dominant mode (Kegan, 1998). Thus, it is unlikely that counselor educators will encounter students (or faculty, for that matter) who demonstrate dialectical knowing. But it is useful to discuss this way of knowing because it reminds educators to attempt to take multiple perspectives and question their certainties, and to help some students who are ready to do so.

The term *dialectical* has a number of meanings, but, stated most simply, it refers to taking multiple perspectives and questioning assumptions. In this way of knowing, the thinker is especially attuned to the fact that she is constructing knowledge in a social manner in which ideas and values are created over time in communities, through shared discourse.

When individuals use dialectical thinking, they question the certainty of their own positions. In particular, they consistently look for the discourses from

which they speak, such as those of gender, social class, or any other framework. They then consider alternate, even opposite views, seeing them as valuable contributions to emerging understanding of an issue. Kegan (1998) considers this order of consciousness to be, in fact, fully actualized social constructionist thinking, as described in a previous section of this chapter. With dialectical knowing, individuals seek contradiction, input, and dialogue. They look for the limits of their way of thinking. But the thinker need not be awash in a sea of relativism. In the process, the individual can make tentative commitments to positions (e.g. diagnoses, counseling theories), or what Perry (1998) calls *commitments in relativism*.

Counselors who think dialectically can question the foundations of any system, going back and forth between two or more perspectives. For example, the dialectical counselor would seek the limits of the humanistic principle of being "in the moment" with clients, perhaps by considering a diagnostic impression. In the process of doing so, the counselor would see the diagnostic scheme as a socially constructed system, coming from a particular set of psychiatric, theoretical, cultural, and research discourses, with their flaws and limitations. And the counselor would know that all of these formulations are tentative and temporary. He would seek the limitations in his thinking, thus embracing the playful expression that "contradiction is my friend."

Another iteration of consistent dialectical knowing is called *constructivist knowing* (Belenky et al., 1986). I will use the characteristics of constructivist knowing to explain this stage. Readers might list these characteristics and aspire to them.

The first characteristic of constructivist knowing lies in a person recognizing that she is *engaged in the construction of knowledge.* Such a perspective-sensitive stance is characterized by humility about the finality of one's beliefs. Consistent with the recognition of subjectivity is a second, related quality, namely, *accepting responsibility for continually evaluating one's assumptions about knowledge.* The constructivist counselor could live in the "permanent whitewater" of consistently checking on her position and being open to new information. A related, and third, characteristic lies in being intensely self-conscious, that is, *aware of one's own thoughts, judgments, moods, and desires.* Here the

individual can stand outside of her momentary perspective and examine its usefulness.

Beyond awareness of one's standpoints is, of course, the ability to understand the perspectives of others. In that vein, Belenky et al. (1986) found that constructivist counselors *can take positions outside of a particular frame of reference,* whether that frame be science, logic, culture, family, religion, a political perspective, or any other context. This extending of oneself beyond any one personal and cultural discourse is related to a fifth characteristic: a deepened ability to *attend to others and to feel related to them* in spite of what may be great differences. This connectedness would allow the counselor to attend to differences in cultures, personalities, and lifestyles, letting the universal and the different sit side by side.

A sixth characteristic of constructed knowing consists of a behavior: The constructivist thinker usually engages in *real talk,* as opposed to what the philosopher Jurgen Habermas (1984) called *concealed strategic* talk. Real talk means sharing ideas, listening carefully, and, in the process, encouraging emergent ideas to grow. The opposite of real talk would be having hidden agendas, masked metamessages that involve manipulation. Such talk requires the seventh characteristic of the constructivist counselor: the ability to *recognize the inevitability of conflict* and learning to engage it in a useful way. Internal conflict would be entertained as an opportunity to learn. External conflict would be similarly approached with a receptive posture.

The last two characteristics of constructivist knowing represent an activist impulse: Eighth, such knowers would consistently *notice what is going on with others and care about the lives of people around them* and, ninth, they would *want their voices and actions to make a difference in the world.* This author and his colleagues (McAuliffe et al., 2010) found such an activist stance to be particularly present in postconventional (Kohlberg, 1981) thinkers.

Despite the allure of dialectical thinking, it would not be a central goal of a constructivist counselor education, as students are not necessarily ready to question positions that they are still trying to self-authorize. However, knowing the characteristics of such thinking can point educators and future counselors in a direction that would make the counselors more humane, systems-challenging, and able to manage conflict. Indeed, these are qualities that counselor educators themselves, including the reader, might strive for.

As mentioned earlier, students of counseling generally think from a mix of received and self-authorized frameworks. Therefore, counselor education should focus on the movement toward a self-authorizing, relativistic order of consciousness. Kegan (1998) argues that that is the mental capacity required for beginning professionals.

Implications of Constructive Development for Education

Constructivist-developmental theory can serve as a guide for counselor educators to assess student thinking and to stretch students toward self-authorized knowing. Teachers can trigger dilemmas that call into question students' received views about what is good and right. As students encounter topics such as invisible privilege, religious diversity, minority sexual orientation, authenticity in human relations, and theoretical integration, they are called to puzzle their own assumptions and come up with a way of knowing what is most useful for solving dilemmas. Those dilemmas can be intentionally presented by counselor educators.

As students encounter a diversity of ideas, educators can challenge them to generate their own answers to complex problems from real-life situations (e.g., by asking them to respond to cases, to engage in role-playing, to ponder ethical dilemmas). After such inductive learning opportunities are provided, students can be asked to reflect on the basis for their solutions and listen to others' ideas. Such a participatory environment contrasts with one in which an authority delivers truths. By contrast, the developmental educator sets up problematic situations, invites students to ponder the issues and choices involved, and, when students propose possibilities, asks the students, "How did you come to know that?" and "What is another perspective?" and "What might be various consequences of this decision?"

Authors in later chapters of this book will share teaching methods that instigate self-authorized knowing. They will suggest methods for challenging learners to generate their own ideas, to recognize the limits of external authorities, and to seek evidence for positions that they take. In that way, significant learning (Vella, 1994; see Chapter 3) might occur in the form of empowering future counselors to think for themselves.

CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHING AND COUNSELING IN GENERAL: THE PARALLEL

It might be seen from the preceding discussion that constructivist-oriented teaching prepares students for the complex work of counseling itself. Jean Peterson (personal communication, 2000), a counselor educator from Purdue University, lays out the implications of constructivist teaching for school counseling in this way:

> Students who have difficulty embracing [constructivist teaching] also often have difficulty going into a counseling session open to the experience of it, to the client's way of seeing the world, and to new ways of conceptualizing and strategizing. By contrast, students who begin to embrace [constructivist thinking] begin to leave "over-preparation" behind.
>
> It is certainly not just for typical counselor-client "sessions" that a constructivist approach models something important; it is also in helping our students to enter a school [or agency], be open to learning about the unique and idiosyncratic culture there, and have confidence that their "theory-building" will serve them well as they move into autonomous (and collaborative) professional behavior. Former school teachers who aspire to become school counselors often have difficulty with this "low-control" approach. However, once they can integrate their great strengths, they can be great school counselors. Students without a teaching background (the majority of my current students) are sometimes initially intimidated by the school culture. However, they, too, can be nudged into openness, acceptance of multiple perspectives (certainly including those of the teachers in their buildings), and tolerance for ambiguity (which all counselors must have, certainly no less so those in schools).

With this example, Peterson has described a hoped-for result of counselor education: the creation of the relativistic, self-authorizing counselor who can help clients become empowered, who can reflectively select among many interventions without being captive to one theoretical discourse, who is alert to the cultural context of the work, and who can examine any system of thinking or institution for its implications.

CONCLUSION

Counselor education can share the goals of liberal arts education, that is, to free students from the narrow prejudices of their cultural and historical context. It is therefore a goal of counselor education to create skeptics, practitioners who accept no truth on hearsay, thinkers who can question their own foundations for knowing. Liberally educated counselors are those who are inclined to listen and hear, to pause and reflect on new phenomena, to look for evidence and counterevidence for their views, to practice humility and self-criticism, to nurture and empower the people around them, and to make and see connections among people and ideas that seem distant in time and space.

This introductory chapter is a request for counselor educators to pay attention to students' current ways of knowing, to help them be reflective and consider the limits of their knowing, all the while passionately committing themselves to the enhancement of human welfare and equity in human affairs.

REFERENCES

Ahuja, S., Ebersole, J., Laske, O., Neiwert, P., Perez, M., & Stewart, R. (2008). Business leadership for an evolving planet: The need for transformational thinking in intercultural and international environments. *Integral Leadership Review, 8.* Retrieved July 12, 2010, from http://www.integralleadershipreview.com/archives-2008/2008-10/2008-10-article-ahuja.php

Basseches, M. (1984). *Dialectical thinking and adult development.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing.* New York: Basic Books.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Burbules, N. C., & Rice, S. (1991). Dialogue across differences. *Harvard Educational Review, 61,* 393–416.

Eriksen, K. P., & McAuliffe, G. J. (2003). A measure of counselor competency. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 43*(2), 120–133.

Eriksen, K. P., & McAuliffe, G. J. (2006). Constructive development and counselor competence. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 45*, 180–192.

Freire, P., & Freire, A. M. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Continuum.

Gergen, K. (2009). *An invitation to social construction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action. Volume 1: Reason and the rationalization of society.* London: Heinemann.

Hanna, F. J., & Ottens, A. J. (1995). The role of wisdom in psychotherapy. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, 5,* 195–219.

Harris, I. B. (1993). New expectations for professional competence. In L. Curry, J. F. Wergin, & Associates (Eds.), *Educating professionals: Responding to new expectations for competence and accountability* (pp. 17–52). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kegan, R. (1998). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kohlberg, L. (1981). *The philosophy of moral development: Moral stages and the idea of justice.* San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Lahey, L., Souvaine, E., Kegan, R., Goodman, R., & Felix, S. (1988). *A guide to the subject-object interview: Its administration and interpretation.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education, Subject-Object Research Group.

Laske, O. E. (2009). *Measuring hidden dimensions of human systems: Foundations of requisite organization.* Medford, MA: Interdevelopmental Institute Press.

McAuliffe, G. J., Grothaus, T., Jensen, M., & Michel, R. (2010, March). *Ethnocentrism challenged: A study of intentional cultural de-centering.* Paper presented at the Annual Symposium of the Society for Research in Adult Development, Philadelphia.

McAuliffe, G. J., & Lovell, C. W. (2006). The influence of counselor epistemology on the helping interview: A qualitative study. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 8,* 308–317.

Moore, W. S. (1987). *Learning environment preferences.* Olympia, WA: Center for the Study of Intellectual Development.

Perry, W. G., Jr. (1998). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Original work published 1970)

Piaget, J. (1954). *The construction of reality in the child.* New York: Basic Books.

Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, irony, and solidarity.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Schön, D. A. (1991). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* Aldershot, UK: Avebury.

Vella, J. (1994). *Learning to listen, learning to teach: The power of dialogue in educating adults.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.