1985

Reflection Upon the Intangible Process of Professional Development in a Graduate Program in Counseling Psychology

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REFLECTIONS UPON THE INTANGIBLE PROCESS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A GRADUATE PROGRAM IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

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A Digest Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the Lindenwood Colleges in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Art

1985

Digest

The following narrative is a personal account of the experiences, observations, and awarenesses of two students completing their Masters degrees in counseling psychology. It represents an effort to document what we view as an identifiable and stress-producing process of growth occurring within an academic framework. We feel that this duality of personal growth and professional development is inadequately addressed in graduate programs. Yet, we have found this unstated, underlying, and inevitable threat of uncertainty, risk, and change to be as predictable a reality as the theoretical coursework required.

This paper is written not so much to prove a point as to provoke thought: as a resource for fellow students and prospective ones; as a guideline for academic planning and advisory committees; and as a therapeutic gift to ourselves. By reliving and putting into perspective what have amounted to some of the most exhilarating and exhausting times of our lives, we have succeeded with the latter intention. We hope that the first two goals will prove beneficial also.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE INTANGIBLE PROCESS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A GRADUATE PROGRAM IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

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A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the Lindenwood Colleges in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Art

1985

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Introduction

This culminating project is an exploration of the struggles encountered in the interplay of personal growth and professional development as experienced by two students in a graduate program of counseling psychology. It is written both to offer fellow students and future applicants an additional criteria with which to better understand and assess the complexities and implications of the psychological field of study and practice, and to provide an evaluative dimension to be considered by administrative policy-makers when reviewing program objectives.

The study of behavioral science is a different experience than that of a natural science where the course material is compartmentalized and self-contained. Rather, it is encompassing in its scope and permeating in its nature, with a developmental life cycle of its own. Personal growth becomes not only the offshoot of professional development, but its foundation; ideally,

both become on-going companions in a lifetime process.

Hopefully, a reading of the following collection of thoughts, reflections, and recommendations will reassure those already in a graduate counseling program and challenge those contemplating it. The former may realize that the periodic ups-and-downs, convictions and doubts, elation and exhaustion are characteristic outgrowths of the subject matter under study rather than indicators of individual pathology. The latter may find this subjective scrutiny to be as valuable a component in their decision-making process as an objective survey of the academic requirements involved. For teaching practitioners, it may serve as a reminder of what it's like to be a neophyte therapist.

To further describe what this paper is, it might be helpful to define what it is not. It is not an experimentally designed research project, nor is it an instructional manual for aspiring helpers. It is, instead, experiential in nature and meant to be used as a supplementary resource to a prescribed course of study.

The methodology chosen stems from the phenomenological approach whereby an extension of our experience as living "variables" significantly affects our "controlled" development as therapists. Analytic psychol-

ogist Carl Jung (1958) declared that:

> The statistical method shows the facts in the light of the ideal average but does not give us a picture of their empirical reality. While reflecting an indisputable aspect of reality, it can falsify the actual truth in a most misleading way. This is particularly true of theories which are based on statistics. The distinctive thing about real facts, however, is their individuality. Not to put too fine a point on it, one could say that the real picture consists of nothing but exceptions to the rule, and that, in consequence, absolute reality has predominantly the character of irregularity. (p. 7)

It is our position, too, that an objective, structured framework could not have been applied to this project considering the personal dimension which had to be taken into account.

In an age and society which place a premium on technical data and statistical reliability, a personal and retroflective analysis of one's learning experiences may appear naive and invalid. Despite these reservations, we feel there remains a legitimate and pressing need for such an orientation to fill the void of human research so crucial to the study and practice of the behavioral sciences. Such an effort may also provide a starting point for further investigation.

The following narrative has evolved from reflections upon our pursuit of knowledge and growth, and the insights we wish we had possessed at the time to make the route less harrowing.

Although a number of writers, teachers, practitioners, and classmates have influenced us and will be referred to throughout this paper, the works of two in particular have provided the structural framework for our examination: Charles Seashore with his predictable components of the educational process, and Roberto Assagioli with his critical phases of personal growth. It is hoped that our odyssey--both the straightforward academic venture and the more elusive and profound inward journey--will provide a compass of sorts for other students braving such an adventure and a guidepost for the faculty members accompanying them.

Chapter I: The Paradox of Growth

> You can stay at home, safe in the familiar illusion of certainty. Do not set out without realizing that the way is not without danger. Everything good is costly, and the development of the personality is one of the most costly of all things. It will cost you your innocence, your illusions, your certainty. (Kopp, 1972, p. 7)

Modern culture proclaims personal growth and development to be desirable goals. Most people, purposefully or not, recognized or not, undergo transformations at various stages in their lives. This life-cycle phenomena has been described by a number of investigators: Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson and Jane Loevinger among them. The experiences presented in this paper come from the vantage point of two individuals, Judy Fletcher and Randi Kapp, who have experienced and continue to undergo the realities, disillusionments and rewards of the various phases of what Abraham Maslow refers to as the actualizing process.

The intensity and complexity of our growth was unanticipated and came in a highly concentrated form: graduate school. Are we farther along in our individual development and in our effectiveness as therapists than when we began? After investing much physical, mental, and emotional energy, gaining knowledge only to lose answers, re-evaluating previously defined dimensions of our personal identities, and expending thousands of dollars, our answer presumably should be a resounding "Yes." Yet, our response is more ambiguous and subdued: We're not sure if we are farther along than when we began, but we now seem to possess a greater understanding of our points of departure. We have accepted the fact that there is no return--a somewhat disturbing but strangely uplifting prospect.

In the words of Richard Bach (1977), there "is a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished. If you're alive, it isn't" (p. 121). We have discovered it's not and we are. Thus, we more or less blundered upon the theme for this culminating project as we lived it for the past two years: We have experienced an identifiable and stress-producing process of growth in the academic framework of counseling psychology and professional development, which is inadequately addressed in graduate programs. We believe this process is shared,

though not always recognized, by all participants, despite individual temperaments, diverse backgrounds, and differing expectations.

In an effort to document this unstated, underlying, and inevitable threat of uncertainty, risk, and change that is as predictable a reality as the coursework involved, we have drawn upon our experiences and realizations as graduate students in a program supposedly designed to train therapists who can give to others out of substance rather than need. Ironically, in the very process of learning how to do this, students frequently face a battle to maintain whatever substantive components of their make-up they had previously established. Everything becomes vulnerable.

The recognition that this duality of personal growth and professional development is a conflicting, yet complementary aspect of the field of study is crucial to both individual survival and a comprehensive training program. Prior knowledge of this duality is a necessity rather than a luxury, if a program is to be successful in producing effective therapists rather than merely manufacturing competent technicians. It is the integration of the regressive qualities of stress and the progressive features of growth which lead to the development of effective therapists. The disregard

of this paradoxical state of affairs results in the therapist who "seems to be," one who is fixated on theory and restrained by techniques. The acknowledgement of this paradox culminates in the therapist who "is," one who transcends theory and is unfettered by technique.

In a commencement speech to graduating psychiatrists, Charles Seashore (1975) expressed his belief that there was a negligence on the part of professional development programs in the behavioral sciences which needed to be addressed. In the reams of literature listing entrance requirements, coursework descriptions, program resources, faculty credentials, and career opportunities, there was scant, if any, attention given to the personal dimension of the potential students--of the possible consequences of their public studies for their private lives. Nowhere was it mentioned that there was:

> a likelihood of [their] spending more energy on survival than growth . . . or of the high probability that [they] would have to re-examine, renegotiate, or just plain retreat from most of the significant relationships in [their] lives in the process of gaining credentials to help others, or that growth and regression just might be intertwined in such a way that one step forward might require several steps backward.

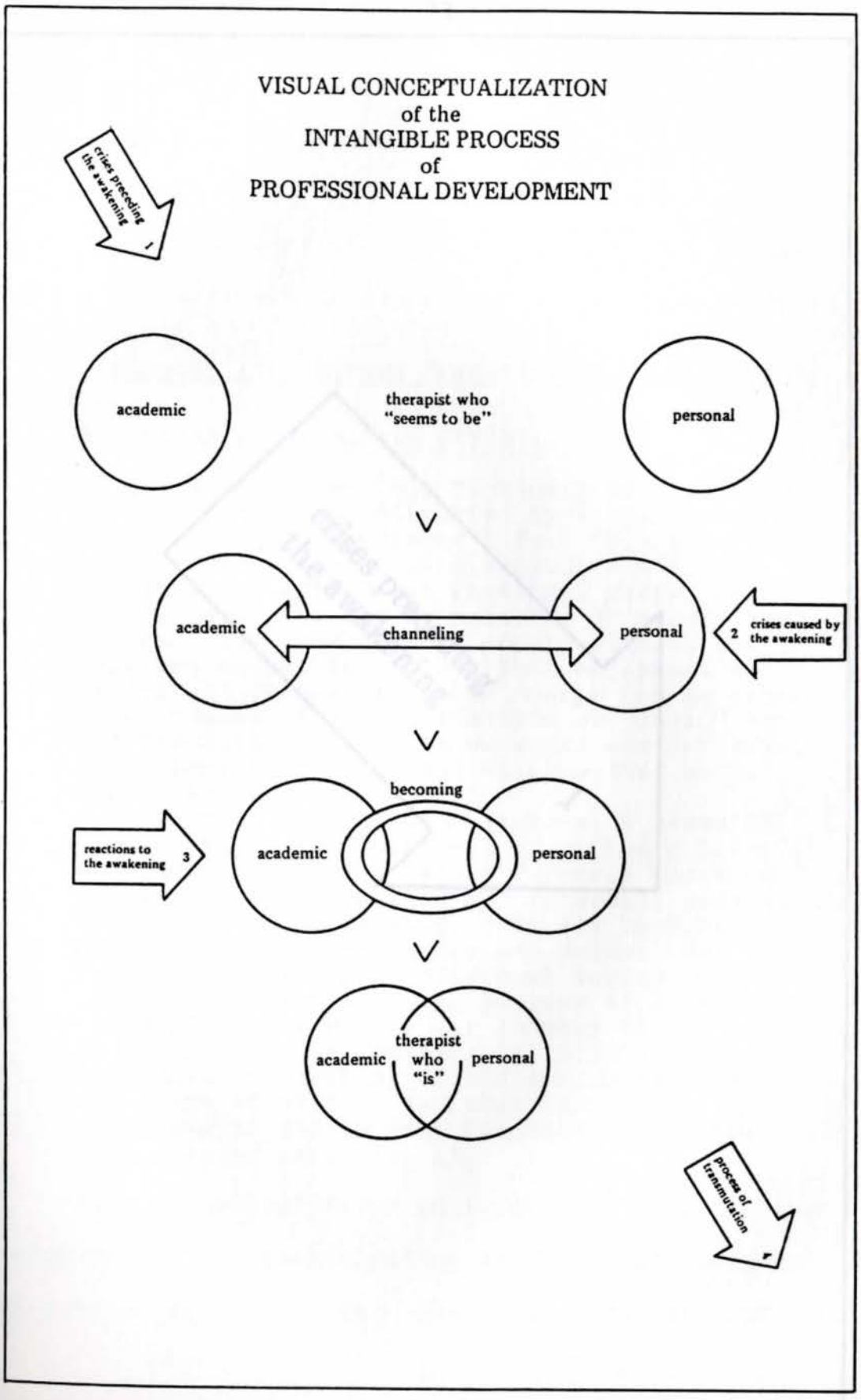
Although Seashore designated over a dozen potential and probable areas of difficulty, we are choosing to elaborate on four of them which we have experienced: a regression from competent performance and emotional stability to incompetent functioning and emotional instability; the tendency to limit oneself to established proficiencies rather than openness to untested skills;

a discrepancy between expectations and realities; and the inclination to compromise integrity as a coping mechanism.

In data accumulated a half century earlier, but published after his death, physician and psychologist Roberto Assagioli investigated self-growth and the expansion of personal consciousness. He broadly referred to personal growth as "spiritual" development: experiences "involving the awakening of potentialities hitherto dormant, the raising of consciousness to new realms, a drastic transmutation of the 'normal' elements of the personality, and a functioning along a new inner dimension" (Assagioli, 1976, p. 9). With such changes, he felt that "crises"--uncertainties, anxieties, and feelings of frustration--were bound to be experienced. He described four critical stages inherent to this evolving or symbolic "awakening" process: "crises preceding the awakening; crises caused by the awakening; reactions following the awakening; and phases of the process of transmutation" (1977, p. 150). The relationship of the work of these two scholars, separated by years and continents, but both delivering the same message, to our experiential testimonials will now be explored more closely.

The diagram on page 12 is our visual conceptual-

ization of the cyclical development of a therapist in training. Its individual components will be described as we proceed with our examination.


VISUAL CONCEPTUALIZATION
of the
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of
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crises preceding the awakening 1
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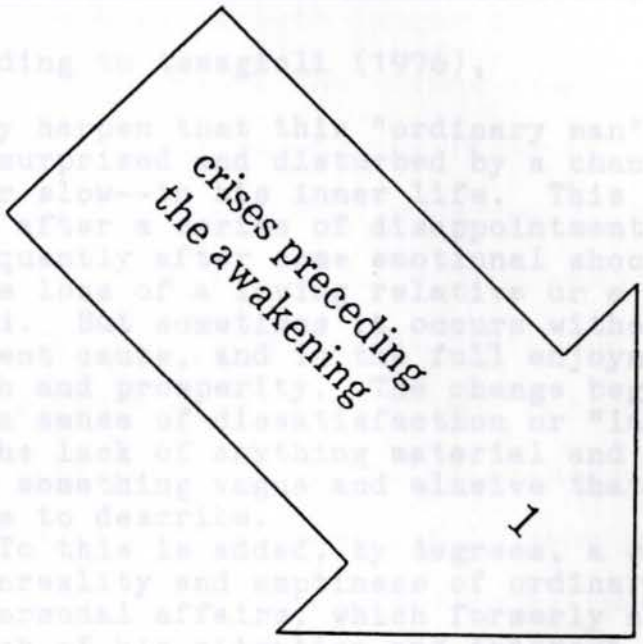

crises preceding
the awakening
1

Chapter II: Crises Preceding the Awakening

According to Assagioli (1976),

> It may happen that this "ordinary man" becomes both surprised and disturbed by a change--sudden or slow--in his inner life. This may take place after a series of disappointments, not infrequently after some emotional shock, such as the loss of a loving relative or a very dear friend. But sometimes it occurs without any apparent cause, and in the full enjoyment of health and prosperity. The change begins often with a sense of dissatisfaction or "lack," but not the lack of anything material and definite; it is something vague and elusive that he is unable to describe.
>
> To this is added, by degrees, a sense of the unreality and emptiness of ordinary life; all personal affairs, which formerly absorbed so much of his attention and interest, seem to retreat, psychologically, into the background; they lost their importance and value. New problems arise. The individual begins to inquire into the origin and purpose of life; to ask what is the reason for so many things he formerly took for granted; to question, for instance, the meaning of his own sufferings and those of others, and what justification there may be for so many inequalities in the destinies of men. (p. 41)

The "awakening" referred to in this paper is the outgrowth of our participation in a graduate program in counseling psychology. The influences upon our ul-

timate decision to re-enter the academic mainstream after a fifteen year absence were elusive yet compelling. Both of us recognized the need for personal expansion, while simultaneously being aware that a process of transformation had already begun. Gail Sheehy (1974) designates the mid-thirties as the "deadline decade . . . a time of both danger and opportunity, . . . a chance to rework the narrow identity by which we have defined ourselves in the first half of life" (p. 43). Erik Erikson (1968) referred to this phase of the adult life cycle as one of "generativity versus stagnation" (p. 94), whereby the individual is faced with the challenge of creativity and productivity or the sentence of monotony and pointlessness.

The external events immediately precipitating our enrollment were, by contrast, concrete, readily identifiable, and of a decidedly different nature. Judy had a close friend who committed suicide; Randi won a trip to Holland. Both sets of circumstances support psychologist Ira Proghoff's (1982) suggestion that "a large part of each individual's destiny is brought about by factors that are of a chance, or at least unpredictable nature" (p. 54). We will briefly take turns sketching in these separate backgrounds before our paths merged.

Randi

Although I would prefer to attribute my enrollment in graduate school to the weighing of logical and sound judgment, it was more a result of happenstance--one of those unforeseen phenomena of life whose significance crystallizes only with time.

Two years ago I unexpectedly travelled to Holland where the seeds of conceptual change germinated and the scattered forces of my life began to converge and unfold, reaching for some unknown entity. The influence of the acquaintances I made halfway around the world, the growing conviction that something was missing in my present life, and the relentless challenge to confront this intangible force led to my return to student status after years of conventional duties and pastimes.

At this point, I had no inkling of the depth and ramifications of a training program in behavioral science, nor had I clarified any motives or goals. I perceived coursework in terms of written reports and oral presentations--read the chapter, close the book, resume everyday functions.

My first assignment was to keep a journal recording my thoughts on the class and how it affected my life. Incredibly, it was not until typing those directions just now that I realized the impact and impli-

cations of what I totally missed back then. "How the course affected my life"--six words that I am presently struggling to demonstrate. All I had anticipated was taking classes to learn psychological theories and develop therapeutic skills. I had no idea the subject matter was going to be me!

My final entry in my journal, "I am emerging from a merely existing me to a more fully living me" was followed by my teacher's comment, "You will be unable to stop growing ever." I found great delight in his statement which seemed strange for a person who had considered herself fully grown. And growing, as exciting and freeing as it can be, is also fraught with hesitations, misgivings, and setbacks--a paradox I would live with for the rest of the program, and probably my life.

Judy

When I was twelve
I dreamed of becoming a nurse,
"Too messy," said my mother.
"Not ladylike," said my father.
And so I dreamed no more.

When I was sixteen
I dreamed of joining the Peace Corps,
"Too risky," said my mother.
"That's ridiculous," said my father.
And so I dreamed no more.

When I was eighteen
I dreamed of a new world, a caring world,
"You don't think normal," said my mother.
"Get married, have kids," said my father.
And so I dreamed no more.

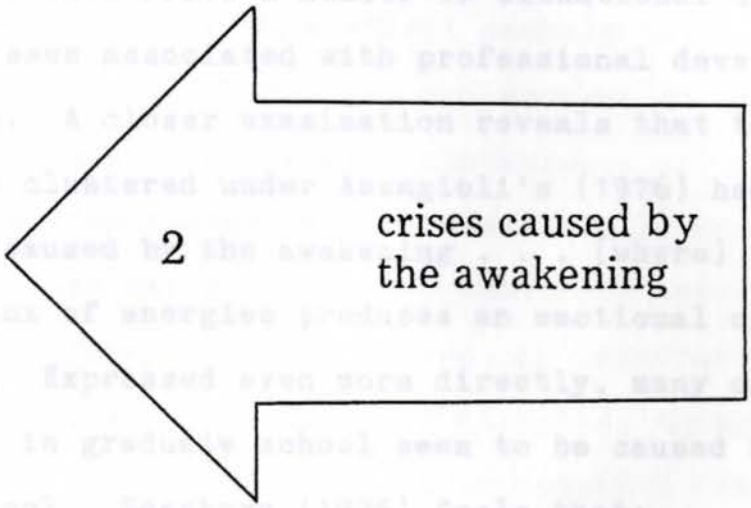
When I was thirty
I dared to dream again,
"You're too old," said my mother.
"Be satisfied with what you've got," said
my father.
But I was their child no more
And so I dreamed some more.

After years of performing routine duties in a chemical research plant but discovering that working with people, not machines, offered me the greatest fulfillment, I faced the prospect of re-careering. I had been successful at my job, but not satisfied, and in the words of Gestalt therapist George Brown (1977), "After the individual can stand on his own two feet, what does he do then? Just stand there?" (p. 70). These realizations, culminating with the suicide of a close friend and the ensuing personal therapy I sought to deal with this grief, resulted in my desire to make a difference--not to save the world because that's already been done, but to share with others the freedom to risk.

We were both aware of the need for change. For Judy, graduate school was a methodical way of formalizing that need. For Randi, it was an impulsive gesture which assumed a more tangible form as time passed. In speaking of these transitional phases, Assagioli (1976) stated that:

> Sometimes these new emerging tendencies revive or exacerbate old or latent conflicts

between personality elements. Such conflicts, which by themselves would be regressive, are in fact progressive when they occur within this larger perspective. They are progressive because they facilitate the achievement of a new personal integration, a more inclusive one, at a higher level--one for which the crisis itself paved the way. So these crises are positive, natural, and often necessary preparations for the progress of the individual. They bring to the surface elements of the personality that need to be looked at and changed in the interests of the person's further growth. (p. 154)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crises caused by
the awakening

Chapter III: Crises Caused by the Awakening

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Charles Seashore has identified a number of situational difficulties he sees associated with professional development programs. A closer examination reveals that these could be clustered under Assagioli's (1976) heading: "crises caused by the awakening . . . [where] the sudden influx of energies produces an emotional upheaval" (p. 45). Expressed even more directly, many of the problems in graduate school seem to be caused by graduate school. Seashore (1975) feels that:

> A fair number of persons who have been functioning quite competently in work, family, and social settings will experience periods of being de-skilled, incompetent, emotionally out of commission, or just plain confused after entering the program . . . and invest several times the amount of energy than they had expected.

We would like to add a definitive "Amen!" to this conjecture. Even though we were besieged by the standard apprehensions of adult students returning to the academic world--questioning our motivation, doubting our

capabilities, wary of competition--it was an unexpected jolt, a sobering awareness, and a source of discouragement to realize how unknowledgeable we were, despite a vast accumulation of life and work experiences.

We were soon to learn that although studying theoretical material, paraphrasing it, and understanding it is a major accomplishment in itself, it is still only a prerequisite to implementing it in a therapeutic setting. When faced with a client seeking help, at times the volumes of knowledge are not enough; at others, they are too much and create obstacles.

As novice therapists, we occasionally found that our attention was so riveted on abstract concepts or diagnostic labels that we missed the immediate realities. Without the security of theories, though, we floundered. De-skilled??? Incompetent??? We were both! The requirement of some supervisors to tape our sessions for critique afterwards (a valuable, but oft-times humiliating experience) tended to ingrain our insecurities, accentuate our errors, and highlight the possibility that we had inflicted a menace on the unsuspecting world. We felt as if we had "I-N-T-E-R-N" emblazoned on our foreheads; to acknowledge this status would be akin to having a dread disease. The height of this frenzy for me (Randi) was the afternoon a new

client was ushered in by the secretary who handed me a note saying, "Watch it!!! She asked if you were a student." In the wave of apprehension and defensiveness which overcame me, it took a full ten minutes to even hear her presenting problem.

Each perceived "failure" added more pressure for "success" the next time, until the self-imposed anxiety and compulsiveness were probably more serious therapeutic issues than the concerns presented by the client. This brings up another issue--the lingering but unvoiced discomfort that <u>you</u> are the person described in the chapters on psychopathology!

In his own indomitable style, family therapist Carl Whitaker (1982) has declared:

> My theory is that all theories are bad except for the beginner's game playing, until he gets the courage to give up theories and just live, because it has been known for many generations that any addiction, any indoctrination, tends to be constrictive and constipating. (p. 318)

And even more succinctly, David Viscott (1972) in describing his days as a psychiatric resident, adds: "You have to use everything you have to help people. There's nothing wrong with common sense, even if you can't find a theory to back you up" (p. 46).

For the student, though, the necessity of incorporating a multiplicity of theoretical concepts, recog-

nizing and identifying symptomatology, and formulating treatment plans, only then to realize that the mandatory formal learning can be limiting, even detrimental, is bewildering to say the least. It is also quite draining emotionally to swing on a pendulum of feeling omniscient to admitting powerlessness, tasting victory to suffering defeat, grasping too tightly to letting go prematurely. And there is the ever-present pitfall of over-functioning: attempting to be available at all times to all people at the expense of yourself . . . emotional anemia. Although "burn-out" has received much public attention at the professional level, it is a serious reality in the preparatory phases as well. Where was this in the program brochures?

Seashore (1975) describes a closely affiliated source of anxiety in the situation whereby "students and faculty look for opportunities to continue practicing things they already do well and try, usually in vain, to ignore opportunities to develop new competencies." This might be termed a "disciple/convert" paradox, a cyclical process in which the student has digested a particular theoretical orientation and/or adopted the style of an inspiring therapist, consequently establishing (in his own mind anyway) some semblance of professional identity. Ironically, this

consolidatory state is short-lived and usually attained near the completion of a course or practicum setting just at the time of moving to the next stage of the program. This transitional period can be distressing as the student is torn between strict adherence to the security of practicing what he already knows (the disciple) to the allure of experimenting with a new, unfamiliar system (the convert). The strain stems from the fear of losing both perspectives--similar to the old "bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" adage.

On this same note, Gestalt therapist Joseph Zinker (1978) has declared that:

> All human processes include polar forces. . . . One of the central polarities of our existence is that of stability versus change, the need to know versus the fear of knowing. Whether we like it or not, we are habit-bound and behaviorally repetitive beings. We are constantly struggling to improve our lot and modify our future. Much of our energy is used up in the tension between these two forces. (p. 36)

Although it seems odd to draw a parallel between the procedure of acquiring theoretical knowledge and the presence of resistance in therapy, it is plausible. According to Erving and Miriam Polster (1974), resistance, when accurately defined, is "a creative force for managing a difficult world" (p. 52), rather than a dreaded obstacle. Of the various channels of resis-

tance which surface in a therapeutic setting, introjection most aptly describes these transformational stages of the academic process: the act of indiscriminately adopting concepts without fully understanding or questioning them. Frederick Perls (1980), founder of the Gestalt movement, describes this phenomenon:

> A theory that you have mastered--digested in detail so that you make it yours--can be used flexibly and efficiently because it has become "second nature" to you. But some "lesson" which you have swallowed whole without comprehension--for example, "on authority"--and which you now use "as if" it were your own, is an introject. Though you have suppressed your initial bewilderment over what was forced into you, you cannot really use such foreign knowledge and to the extent that you have cluttered your personality with gulped-down morsels of this and that, you have impaired your ability to think and act on your own. (p. 223)

We used to outwardly chuckle, but inwardly groan, as we passed from one class to the next, wondering where and how we would incorporate the new professor or practitioner into our existing methods of operation. Inevitably it would be "Steve on our shoulder" or "Ed in our head" as we struggled to readjust: to discard, to replace, to integrate, to personalize.

Tied into this is developmental psychologist Jean Piaget's model of ego development, especially his concept of egocentrism, in which an individual's "intellectual or cognitive limitations, his perspective--his

mode of viewing the world and his own relation to it--is limited to, or trapped within, a particular stage of development" (Breger, 1974, p. 10). Piaget feels that only through repeated experiences and encounters with external forces, will a state of balance or equilibrium be achieved, although "the initial tendency at each stage . . . is to overdo the new perspective" (p. 10).

Under the heading of significant discrepancies between the expectations and realities of students enrolled in graduate programs, Seashore (1975) listed the following categories: finding a lot of things you did expect; finding a lot of things you didn't expect but really like; finding some things you didn't expect and are sure you don't need.

As the primary thrust of this paper is aimed at examining the unexpected stresses caused by personal growth and professional development, we will speak only briefly of the first two findings and devote our major attention to the last.

Foremost among our expectations which became an immediate reality was the vast amount of required reading, research, written reports, and oral presentations. In addition, generalized apprehension about the logistics involved in overloading already tight schedules

in terms of time, energy, and mobility became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Granted, these conditions were "givens"; unfortunately, the prior knowledge did little to alleviate the ever-present pressures of such a demanding life style.

With regard to unexpected but pleasurable outgrowths, the bonding and sense of cohesiveness which developed in a number of our classes was an unanticipated feature. Although we entered the program as individuals, we discovered a surrogate family of sorts with classmates, professors, supervisors, and other interns. At its best, there was an open atmosphere where it was safe to discuss personal issues or concerns, where it was permissible to disclose imperfections and vulnerabilities, and where it was acceptable to request support and reassurance. And between the two of us, there was an immediate sense of intimacy.

The first day of our meeting at a practicum site, we shared the "rigors" of formal orientation and training with several students from other colleges and universities. In listening to, recording, and collecting the mass of directives, policies, and procedures, we found ourselves exchanging conspiratorial glances and co-miserating sighs. Little did we realize then that these seemingly insignificant overtures were the be-

ginnings of what was to evolve into a deep and meaningful, yet light-hearted and fun, relationship. Nor did we have any indication that less than two years later we would be co-authoring this final paper and discussing the long-range possibility of a partnership in private practice.

We had become each other's confidant, supporter, challenger, critic, balancing agent, sounding board, and fellow "sufferer." The differences in our backgrounds, lifestyles, and personalities were complemented by a mutual respect, liking, and trust for each other, resulting in rare compatibility.

> Randi: Incidentally, while on the subject of unexpected but pleasurable (?) occurrences, it was during this internship that I was given my first "real" client. True to our teachings of "meeting the other person where she is," I did our initial counseling session while clinging to the seat of her Harley-Davidson--another oversight in the course descriptions!

We were steadily learning to delve into worlds of sorrow and pain to the point that no whispered confidence, no shouted obscenity, hindered or shocked us. Moreover, it was rather surprising to discover that it was the humorous, sometimes hilarious moments which more frequently gave us perspective and humility. Although we probably have accumulated enough material in just two years to fill several chapters, we have selected

the following vignettes to illustrate the "lighter side" of what is often perceived as a profession of darkness.

From our first month in the program, we have both been asked by friends and relatives at parties and other gatherings for advice, opinions, support, etc. These instances were quite flattering; nonetheless, we considered it rather unethical to succumb to such temptations. Yet, although we complained outwardly, we were secretly delighted. We must be good if people were seeking our services so quickly! Realistically, we were forced to admit, though, that situations like these bordered on the absurd. Here we were, with several weeks of theory under our belts, supposedly prepared to cure the world. As an experienced professor once told us, "Only hams can be cured, people grow. . . ." In our minds too there was a larger issue revolving around these recurring incidents: what were we doing, what signals were we projecting that were inviting others to gravitate toward us outside the doors of therapy? We never determined a totally suitable answer to this initial "draw," but very recently one of us realized what prolonged the encounters:

Randi: I was frantically rushing around, attempting to accomplish some last-minute Christmas shopping, my thoughts scattered in a dozen

> directions. At the first store I charged into, the young salesman pleasantly asked if he could be of help. I hurriedly replied that I needed time to look, to which he bleakly responded, "My fiancee left me last night." In recounting the conversation up to that point I still don't know what made him relate this to me, or if any person coming through the door at that moment would have been met with a similar reception, but I do know what kept the conversation going. I was very adept at playing the "role" of therapist. I had mastered the communication techniques of reflecting, paraphrasing, and reframing; the automatic perceptive responses; the standard psychological jargon--in short, the tricks of the trade. I could deliver all this with my mind on the navy shoes I was planning to purchase. In ten minutes I could provide this young man with a "band-aid" and postpone the major surgery which was advisable. Initially I was smug and amused. Later, I was disturbed--at the lack of empathy and true feeling with which I could temporarily patch up another person's life and immediately bustle about with my own business. What was I becoming? Everything which had been so difficult to absorb suddenly seemed so easy and I wasn't even trying. "Pride goeth before the fall," as I was jolted back to reality the next day during a scheduled appointment when I felt I didn't even have a grasp on the basics of Psych. 101!

When we were training in Family Therapy, one of the teaching tools was a one-way mirror which allows a family in treatment to be seen and heard by students who are not observable to the family (although the group has consented to this arrangement). One afternoon, we had been witnessing a very dramatic and heated confrontation between a married couple, one of whom was

having an affair. We were duly making notes of the primary therapist's choice of interventions, critiquing our classmate who was assisting at the session, recording our own awarenesses and reactions, and formulating future treatment plans. When the hour ended, the therapists left and the couple remained seated. As the doors to the treatment and observation rooms were at right angles to each other, our class had been instructed to wait for the clients to leave first to spare them any embarrassment. We had gathered up our pens and notebooks and stood in line ready to go. The couple, meanwhile, apparently overcome by a wave of remorse and passion, leaped up from their chairs and crushed each other in a mad embrace, oblivious to the students on the other side of the mirror. As the minutes went by, we alternated between averting our eyes in increasing discomfort and catching each other's eye, doubling over in peals of laughter. The situation was ludicrous. Here we were, stuffed like sardines in this dark little box of a room, watching what should have been a very private moment in the lives of a couple who had forgotten all about us (although we're reasonably certain we will remember them for some time to come). Other people get arrested for voyeurism--we were documenting it in the interest of higher education!

What we rank among the funniest of our experiences (looking back on it anyway) was Judy's tour of duty in the psychiatric ward of a local hospital:

> Judy: A young male patient, diagnosed as schizophrenic, had taken a liking to me. I was one of the few unruffled by his bizarre behavior and I had lent him my "pick" for his hair. Whenever a patient experienced a psychotic episode it was standard procedure to place him in isolation and confine him with restraints. The number of restraints (1-5) was to be recorded on a chart outside the door. My young charge had earned himself a "top 5"--both arms, both legs, and his waist were tied down. Prior to my lunch break I had stopped by his room for a brief visit. He was sufficiently calm to request that I bring him an orange from the cafeteria when I returned. I agreed, but discovered that only apples were available and brought one of them back instead. I automatically checked the door chart which still indicated that all five restraints were in use, and went in with the apple. Apparently, "hell hath no fury like a schizophrenic deceived," nor are door chart regulations observed stringently enough, nor "are apples oranges!" In my absence, three restraints had been removed, leaving my friend free to jump at me in a rage and throw me to the floor, screaming, "I said an orange!" He promptly sat on me, and as I was weakly announcing that this was "most inappropriate behavior," he took a large bite out of my rear end! I had to get a tetanus shot and consequently have become a firm believer that a warning label should be affixed to all counseling pamphlets: "This program may be hazardous to your health!"

In a more serious vein, with regard to unanticipated and unwelcome consequences, we have already mentioned the moments of incompetence and emotional

instability which surface periodically. Later, under another category, we will examine the "politics of graduate school." For now, we will look at four other dimensions which frequently contributed to our frustration, discouragement, and disillusionment.

First, from a very pragmatic standpoint, the necessity to prioritize when everything seems to be of top priority demands the utmost of time and stress management, and a sense of humor. Failure to devise a feasible scheme of determining needs, meeting demands and satisfying wants results in personal and professional fragmentation. Second, from an intrapersonal perspective, we were quite unprepared for our own vulnerabilities becoming figural aspects of the learning experience. Yet, in classroom discussions and practicum placements, disturbing, distressing, and deviant behaviors can trigger similar unresolved personal issues.

In a seminar delivered by Carl Whitaker (1984), he emphasized the effort involved in surviving a course dealing with personal issues and felt that most of the "inner" work was done after class, when the teaching was not only learned but integrated. There is an inherent danger in ignoring or denying this "hazard." Unless we can honestly accept and confront our own

issues, we are of little use to our clients. This leads into an ethical situation where some students and professionals refuse to consider their own "emotional garbage." Consequently, they ignore, deny, or are oblivious to the dynamic processes evidenced by their clients. Such failures can result in practitioners who become so fixated on their own power, techniques, or interpretations that they prescribe answers without really hearing the questions: who feed on their clients rather than nourish them. One classmate expressed hesitancy when the subject of personal therapy was broached, saying she was afraid self-exploration would interfere with her learning!

A third dimension, the interpersonal one, delivered the most tumultuous impact. The decision of a person to participate in the program, the consequent demands on one's time, the drain on one's energy, one's shifting perspectives on life in general and one's own in particular are not isolated incidents involving the student alone. Repercussions reverberate throughout the entire family unit. Family therapists Mark Karpel and Eric Strauss (1983) speak of the predictability of change:

> Each stage is precipitated by a particular life event, a new fact which demands changes or adjustments on the parts of all family members. In this sense, each stage presents the family with a crisis and brings with it

> some increased pressure and disorganization. This is because many of the patterns and regularities each have developed up to that point are disrupted by this new fact of family life. They must be reorganized if the family is to be able to move on with its development. In the broadest possible sense, one of the fundamental tasks of all family life is to integrate stability and change so that the family as a whole and its individual members can grow, without either becoming "stuck" or being overwhelmed by sudden, drastic change. (p. 50)

We discovered that the original expressions of encouragement and praise for our efforts ofttimes turned into resentment and criticism, generally subtle, but occasionally blatant. On numerous occasions we have both been emphatically told by children and spouses, "Don't use your psychology on me!", even though we considered our comments to be the more "inborn" responses of mothers and wives. Seemingly, three of the four "basic" emotions are triggered in family members. They are "mad" at being forced to assume different tasks, share new responsibilities, and make increasing sacrifices to support a choice that was not theirs in the first place and which has disrupted their equilibrium and security. They are "sad" at losing the person they once knew and the lifestyle they once shared, of being excluded from what is becoming an intrinsic part of their loved one's existence. And they are "scared" of the obvious changes inherent in the re-

structuring of the family unit, of the unavoidable threat of their own self-exploration and assessment, and of not knowing what might come next and where and how they will fit in. Jay Haley, one of the leading figures in family therapy, states that: "When one person indicates a change in relation to another, the other will act upon the first so as to diminish and modify that change" (Hoffman, 1981, p. 18).

This is a transitional period of "anomie" where the old norms no longer work and new ones have not yet been formed. The student finds herself in a no-win situation of defending her participation in the program while being besieged by the same frustrations, doubts, and fears as her family. The necessity of needing all the support possible while simultaneously being asked to provide support to all the others can leave one emotionally drained. As psychiatrist M. Scott Peck (1978) has stated, "We cannot be a source of strength unless we nurture our own strength" (p. 83). This is "easier said than done."

Seashore's final point is that: "Significant numbers of students find themselves willing to make compromises in what they will tolerate in others and themselves, in settling for less than what they think they are due, and in staying protected rather than

risking." An umbrella heading for this state of affairs might be the "politics of graduate school." The following observations are not intended as a criticism of any particular program, but as description of graduate education in general. "Politics is a way of life," except the individuals within the system don't get to cast a vote.

We have not decided whether it was naive and/or reasonable to have looked upon graduate school as the utopia in the realm of academe, where maturity and goodwill would prevail. However, the actuality seems to be that the insecurities and the pettiness launched in first grade and ingrained by high school are fostered and intensified at the graduate level. As the saying goes, "Under stress, we regress." Although it is no longer a mere matter of "teacher's pet" with a gold star affixed by your name, it is the same process, only now the stakes are higher. Faculty recommendations are crucial to securing plum practicum positions and providing favorable entries to the networking system--of determining "who's who" in the field and letting them know who you are, all with an eye on future employment possibilities.

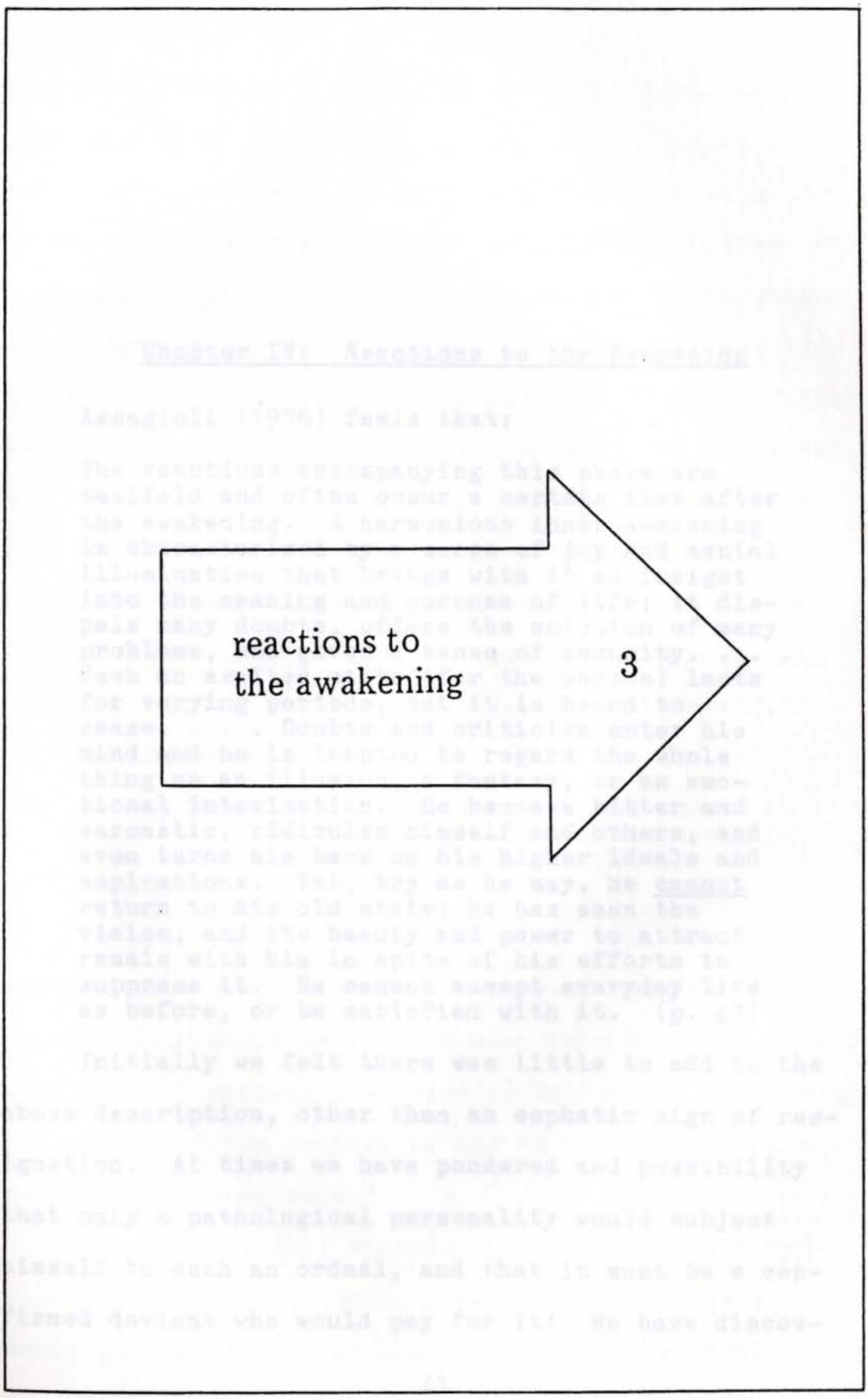
Although speaking in generalities is not advisable overall, it appears to be standard practice to agree

with and write what the teacher wants to hear. We experienced this through trial and error, and despite protestations from faculty members and program descriptions. The grade is the payoff. According to the exchange theory of power, "The major means of inducing compliance in individuals is to control their access to some scarce reward" (Webster, 1975, p. 241). The relationship between professor and student is one of power and dependency, a dependency which frequently breeds resentment. So at times we have compromised with our sense of fairness and integrity. Though we profess to risk, we have "played it safe" and regurgitated the teachings in the professor's own words. Even though we have been steeped in the "here and now" approach of counseling, we have convinced ourselves that only "later" will we have the freedom to be who we are. For the present, it is more judicious to be who the teacher wants us to be. Social Work professor Alfred Kadushin (1968) feels that by resorting to flattery, reversing or reducing hierarchy, feigning helplessness, admitting inadequacies, or deflecting supervisory evaluations, the student can contrive methods aimed at controlling this stressful situation. This is all on an individual basis--group dynamics add another dimension.

In the majority of cases, the "hidden agenda" is to be number one. By virtue of having made it this far, most class members are of similar intelligence, motivation, and commitment, so the task of standing out from the others demands extra attention and planning. This phenomenon might fall under "game theories," concerned with developing strategy and presenting a set of rules which will help the individual to maximize his/her rewards (Webster, 1975, p. 217). Eric Berne defines a game as "an ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions--superficially plausible but with a concealed motivation. It is a scheme, or artfulness, utilized in the pursuit of some objective or purpose" (Kadushin, 1968, p. x). To accomplish these goals requires the "I'm okay--you're not okay" mentality. Some students choose to profess "private" concern for the welfare of classmates and then publicly cast doubt with regard to their competency or stability. Some become chameleons and adopt whatever role is useful to manipulate themselves through sticky situations--similar to the survival tactics of members of chemically dependent families. Others covertly align with the professor, forming a coalition against the other students, subtly portraying them as threatening agents or inept

nuisances.

The effort it takes to use such strategies (or to be witness to them) is vast. The competitive practices rival those in the high-powered business world where only the fittest survive. Incredibly, in this field, whether in student trenches or in professional ranks, it is some of the most dysfunctional psychologically, but most skilled politically, who advance to greater glory and the opportunity to wreak deeper havoc on lives already torn apart. It seems the epitome of irony and injustice that supposedly caring and compassionate people, in the process of learning to understand, empathize, and help others, resort to such uncaring and self-motivated procedures. Although professional licensure does provide a measure of standards, uniformity and consistency among practitioners, it is still not an adequate safeguard against such "charlatans" of the field.


reactions to
the awakening
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Chapter IV: Reactions to the Awakening

Assagioli (1976) feels that:

> The reactions accompanying this phase are manifold and often occur a certain time after the awakening. A harmonious inner awakening is characterized by a sense of joy and mental illumination that brings with it an insight into the meaning and purpose of life; it dispels many doubts, offers the solution of many problems, and gives a sense of security. . . . Such an exalted state (for the person) lasts for varying periods, but it is bound to cease. . . . Doubts and criticism enter his mind and he is tempted to regard the whole thing as an illusion, a fantasy, or an emotional intoxication. He becomes bitter and sarcastic, ridicules himself and others, and even turns his back on his higher ideals and aspirations. Yet, try as he may, he cannot return to his old state; he has seen the vision, and its beauty and power to attract remain with him in spite of his efforts to suppress it. He cannot accept everyday life as before, or be satisfied with it. (p. 47)

Initially we felt there was little to add to the above description, other than an emphatic sign of resignation. At times we have pondered and possibility that only a pathological personality would subject himself to such an ordeal, and that it must be a confirmed deviant who would pay for it! We have discov-

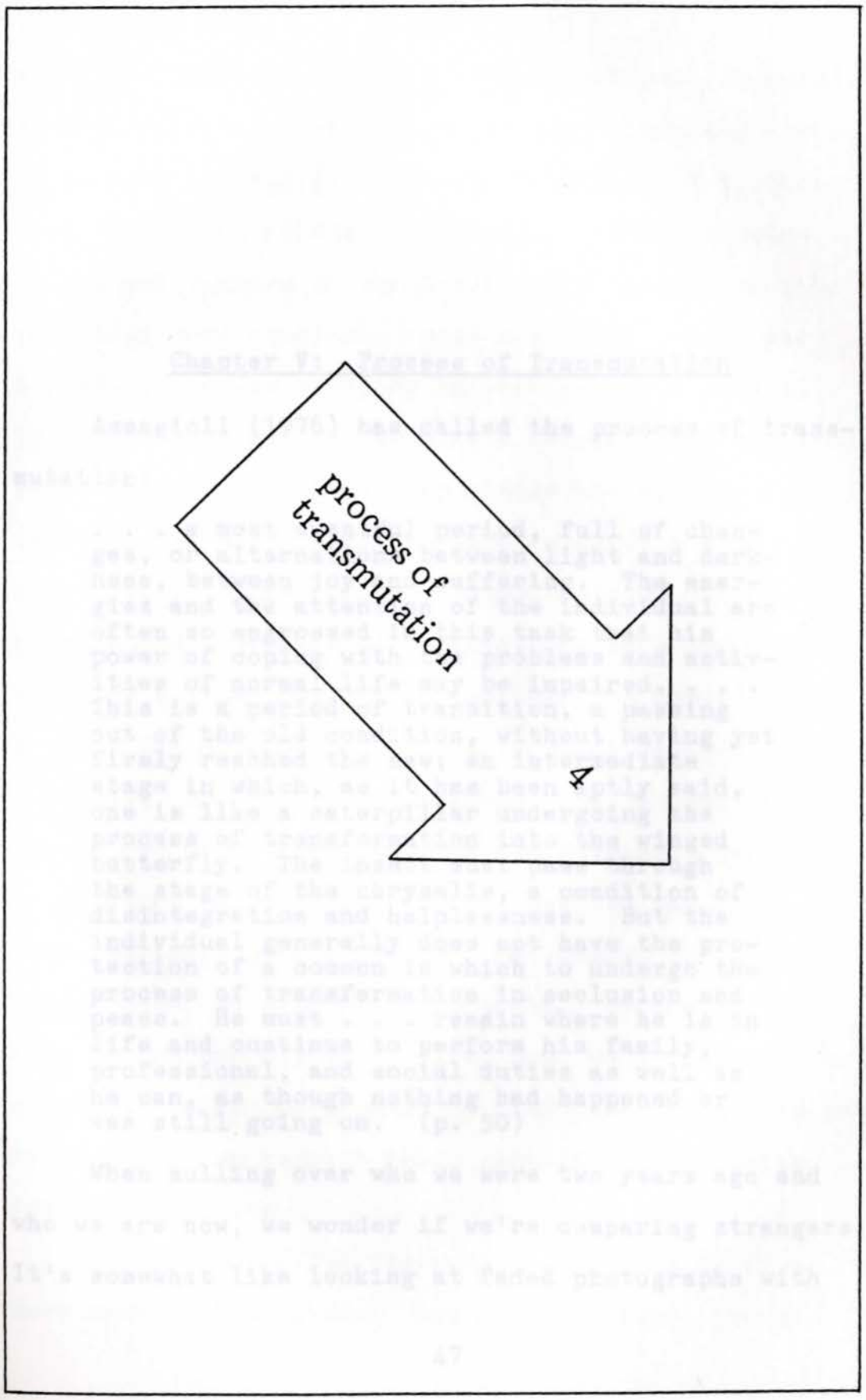
ered that becoming a therapist is a continual, intricate, and often nonsensical process of daring to fly and learning to fall, of guiding another and being led by him, of finding many questions and knowing there are no single answers. Even as we recognize the paradoxical nature of the field, we still struggle to counteract it, to say we have arrived and have it all together. As comfortable as this state might be to the therapist, how constricting to the therapy! So as a compromise, many times we aim for the "balance" which is universally considered so essential to personal well-being. Joseph Zinker (1978), though, has concluded that this need for balance may present a block to the creativity of the therapist:

> We may need to struggle with avenues which lead to cul-de-sacs or a morass of apparent irrelevancies. A theme emerging out of confusion may be stronger, closer to the client's existential struggle than one which is prematurely wrapped and tied. (p. 65)

Perhaps this last sentence is the most succinct representation of where we are and what this paper is about: we are still confused; we want to believe we are stronger because of the confusion; and we are attempting to relish our "loose ends."

Assagioli (1976) stated, "instances of such confusion, more or less pronounced, are not uncommon among people dazzled by contact with truths which

are too powerful for their mental capacities to grasp and assimilate" (p. 45). Scott Peck (1978), when speaking of the therapeutic process, referred to it as "a period of intensive growth, during which the patient may undergo more changes than some people experience in a lifetime" (p. 65). We would like to expand this description to include the period of training to be a therapist.


process of
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Chapter V: Process of Transmutation

Assagioli (1976) has called the process of transmutation:

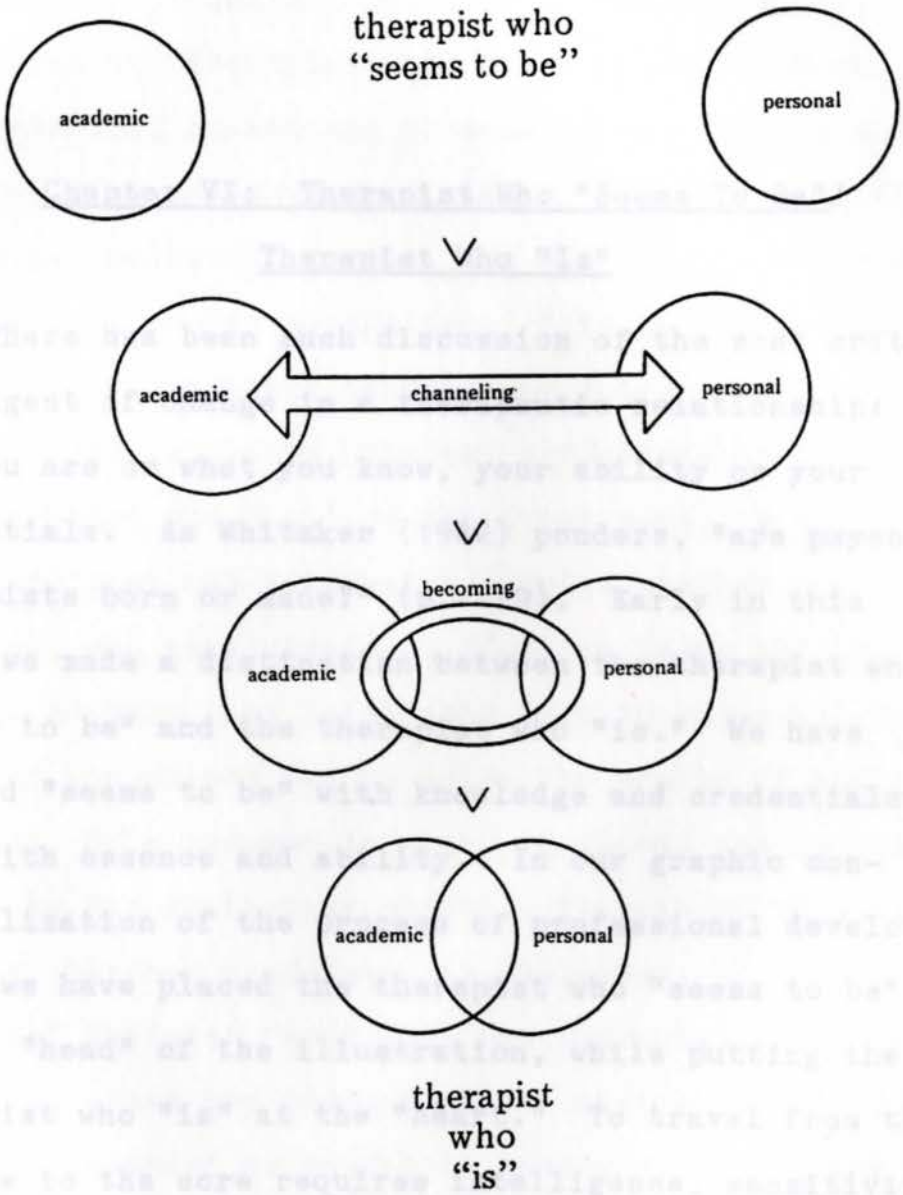
> . . . a most eventful period, full of changes, or alternations between light and darkness, between joy and suffering. The energies and the attention of the individual are often so engrossed in this task that his power of coping with the problems and activities of normal life may be impaired. . . . This is a period of transition, a passing out of the old condition, without having yet firmly reached the new; an intermediate stage in which, as it has been aptly said, one is like a caterpillar undergoing the process of transformation into the winged butterfly. The insect must pass through the stage of the chrysalis, a condition of disintegration and helplessness. But the individual generally does not have the protection of a cocoon in which to undergo the process of transformation in seclusion and peace. He must . . . remain where he is in life and continue to perform his family, professional, and social duties as well as he can, as though nothing had happened or was still going on. (p. 50)

When mulling over who we were two years ago and who we are now, we wonder if we're comparing strangers. It's somewhat like looking at faded photographs with

a sense of dim recognition or recollection. There is a hint of nostalgia for more innocent times and a rush of shocked disbelief--"That can't be me!" Yet, familiar threads of constancy do exist. Facets of ourselves and factors of our lives which brought us into the field have remained: some modified, others magnified, and a few creeping in when we least expect them. We have brought with us a kaleidoscope of love and joy, hatred and fear, knowledge and ignorance, fullness and emptiness. We have retained a sense of humor and a delight in the absurd, a touch of showmanship and a measure of reserve. We have learned the value of a light touch when dealing with heavy issues. We know there is no magic, but we still believe in miracles. Before, we could speak; now, we can listen. Before, we could feel; now, we can respond. Before, we detected pain and avoided it; now, we can identify pain and confront it. Before, we adhered to "absolutes"; now, we risk with instincts. Before, we were awed by the enormities of life; now, we revere the inconsequentials. Before, we "willed" our clients to get better; now, we respect their capacity to determine their own choices.

In re-reading the "befores," it sounds as if we have made much progress. According to Kopp, though,

"progress is an illusion" (1972, p. 11). The hesitancies and fears still hover. There is still the rueful moment of stark terror at being in over our heads. No longer is there the comforting label of "practicum student" to hide behind. Now it's for real. According to our faculty and supervisors, now we are professionals. Interestingly enough, these are the same people who have continually qualified our performance evaluations throughout the program with: "for a beginning clinician," or "as a budding therapist. . . ." Somehow, we have crossed that invisible line to the ranks of the "elite." This is what we've been working towards; this has been our goal; this has received top priority. It's almost analagous to being in labor. After waiting so many months to deliver a baby, after all the hopes and the planning, when the first wrenching spasm of pain comes, there is a tendency to beg for more time to get ready. And when the birth does take place, it is not the end after all, but another beginning. Now the real work starts. As Kopp (1976) says, "each accomplishment becomes the next obstacle" (p. 189).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Chapter VI: Therapist Who "Seems To Be"/ Therapist Who "Is"

There has been much discussion of the most critical agent of change in a therapeutic relationship: who you are or what you know, your ability or your credentials. As Whitaker (1982) ponders, "are psychotherapists born or made?" (p. 129). Early in this paper we made a distinction between the therapist who "seems to be" and the therapist who "is." We have equated "seems to be" with knowledge and credentials, "is" with essence and ability. In our graphic conceptualization of the process of professional development, we have placed the therapist who "seems to be" at the "head" of the illustration, while putting the therapist who "is" at the "heart." To travel from the surface to the core requires intelligence, sensitivity, courage, and humility. To quote Kopp (1972), "the only important question you must ask is: 'Does the path have a heart?' If it has a heart for you, then dare

to follow it" (p. 189).

Broadening our perceptions of the contrasts between the competent technician and the effective helper, we have found the therapist who "seems to be" task and goal oriented, closed and distanced, omnipotent, and static. S/he possesses rudimentary knowledge, is fluent in psychological jargon, and can deliver the services of his or her occupation. S/he is safe, s/he exists, s/he considers her/himself fully grown. Because of this rigidity, his/her usefulness is limited. The therapist who "is," on the other hand, is people oriented, open and vulnerable, admits his/her powerlessness, and participates. S/he too knows the theoretical content, but transcends this to speak the language of the client and to share the truths of the profession. S/he chooses to risk, is alive, and is committed to his continuing growth. Because of this flexibility, his/her usefulness is unlimited.

Carl Whitaker feels that the therapist who "seems to be" is often the product of the narrowly defined role of therapist as taught in graduate school, who is versed in theory and technique, but not in essence. Theologian Martin Buber refers to "seeming" as opposed to "being" as an "invasion which impedes the growth of life between men" (p. 110) and describes the person

who "is" as "one who helps another unfold, while one who 'seems to be' imposes himself on another" (p. 110).

In our experiences of the past two years, we have encountered both kinds of therapists--in ourselves as well as in others. We have seen some who have been of tremendous value to their clients and others who have exploited them. We have been numbed by anger, fear, and sadness at the discrepancies between practitioners. This prior immobilization has exploded into the present intensity of this paper and our sense of outrage at therapists who are allowed to play the role because of ignorance, apathy, or trade-offs.

At the outset of graduate programs, individuals appear to have built-in monitoring systems to maintain the independent functioning of the academic and personal spheres. Some people remain at this level. Because of their stationary stance, they will simulate therapy in a predictable, one-dimensional fashion that deprives themselves and their clients of a truly successful relationship. These are the therapists who "seem to be." They are convinced of their power, are superior to those seeking their help, and are lost to themselves.

Those who choose the other path, however, make contact between the academic and personal realms by

channeling theoretical material into personal awareness and insight and vice-versa. The more they learn, the more they question. Additional interplay and expansion of boundaries occurs in this circular process of "becoming." Ultimately there is enough overlap between academic prowess and personal growth to result in a fusion of the two realms. As Erikson (1968) says, "in every technology there are individuals who can combine the dominant techniques with their identity development and become what they do" (p. 31). This is the therapist who "is." Only by drawing on all his/her resources can s/he be his/her all.

Many times in therapy, it is more illuminating to make a point by use of metaphor or allegory than by direct statement. So too with this paper. Imagine the therapist who "seems to be" as the "Head Chef," responsible for planning the menus, selecting the ingredients, and supervising the preparation. His white hat is usually stiff and impeccable, his starched apron protects him, and he rarely gets his hands dirty. Now picture his "apprentice" who stirs the broth, allows it to simmer, savors the aroma, steals a taste (and sometimes burns his tongue!)--the therapist who "is."

Doing therapy is an art and a skill, a privilege and a responsibility. For others to trust and respect

us enough to reveal their innermost beings demands that we give our utmost. To quote Scott Peck (1978), "It has been said that the successful psychotherapist must bring to the psychotherapeutic relationship the same courage and the same sense of commitment as the patient. The therapist must also risk change" (p. 149). Less poetic a statement, perhaps, but just as meaningful is the following admonishment delivered by Whitaker (1984) in one of his training workshops: "Don't think you know what you're doing, just be who you are and hope it does some good."

Peck (1978) has declared that "a therapist's ability bears very little relation to any credentials he or she might have. Love and courage and wisdom cannot be certified by academic degrees" (p. 315). David Viscott (1972) agrees that "the success of therapy depends as much on the attitudes of the therapist as his knowledge" (p. 120). Yet there has to be adequate academic preparation and rigorous practicum supervision to protect clients from well-meaning but uninformed helpers, who because of lack of knowledge and undeveloped skills might jeopardize the therapeutic experience. With this, it is crucial to recognize the permeating nature of the field when structuring the training. What, then, might be some implications for

an integrative graduate program geared to educating and understanding the total person rather than merely emphasizing the mandatory technical skills?

Chapter VII: Recommendations

We feel the following suggestions warrant further consideration:

1. Devise a more thorough screening process for interested applicants:

   People frequently enter graduate school without an adequate understanding of the kind of personal growth that is essential to becoming a "good" therapist. Therefore, in the initial interviews, questioning should be formulated to determine the willingness of the person to:

   a) Clarify his/her attitudes about the profession (i.e., does s/he view theoretical knowledge and technical skills as a sufficient base to practice therapy or does s/he recognize the importance of self-knowledge and the healing power of empathy?)

   b) Examine who s/he is, how s/he got to be this way, and where s/he wants to go.

   c) Assess the values and beliefs s/he has held until this point and re-evaluate those areas.

2. Develop a more comprehensive program overview:

In addition to existing brochures describing courses and requirements, a document such as this one presenting the likely stages of adjustment and growth should be made available. Further, the range of coursework should be broadened to include the neighboring disciplines of philosophy, history, literature, and religion. The fact that psychology is not an isolated field should be emphasized by taking into account the influence and impact of related orientations and perspectives.

3. Provide additional channels for professional and personal development:

Although the overlap of these spheres must be acknowledged, each should receive individual attention through:

a) An "Informational Panel" of current students and interested graduates which would meet periodically to discuss professional interests and concerns (i.e., workshops and seminars, organizational memberships, topics current in the field).

b) "Specialized Group Therapy Sessions" offered by the sponsoring educational institution to provide emotional support and to assist students in dealing with the predictable stages of stress encountered in the program.

4. Require individual therapy for all participants:

This is designed to help the student maximize

his/her own emotional wholeness and to further safeguard against his/her delivering ineffective or detrimental counseling: There is nothing "wrong" with having personal concerns or problems. However, an unwillingness or inability to recognize or admit to having these issues, and a refusal to explore or resolve them, not only presents serious obstacles when doing therapy, but borders on the unethical. The profession is not to be taken lightly. It is our feeling that therapists have contracted to be the "best" they can be. If they do not make a commitment to their own growth, if they allow personal issues to color or manipulate their dealings with their clients, they risk modeling the very behavior these clients are seeking therapy to undo. Many times, the standard catch-all phrase, "each person is responsible for him/herself" is a convenient escape route. Few will admit that therapists do assume a major degree of responsibility, at least initially, when a person is in pain or when a life is in shambles.

5. Standardize the quality and delivery of supervision:

Although the clinical subject matter can be expertly taught by conventional faculty members, supervision should be provided by practicing therapists who are routinely evaluated to determine if

they are adequately meeting the students' needs. In a study conducted by Heppner and Roehlke (1984) to identify the supervisory behaviors and methods which fostered the most effective counseling abilities, a number of factors were rated, including: "conceptualizing dynamics of clients' personality," "using [the] relationship to demonstrate principles of counseling," and "developing self-confidence as emerging counselors" (Worthington, 1984, p. 84). A list of such items should be the criteria by which the performance of the supervisor is graded.

6. Create educational, therapeutic, and social opportunities for families of students:

   Because the nature of the program is so permeating and affects those close to the student as well, seminars, support groups, or casual get-togethers should be planned to involve "significant others."

If academic content and technical skills remain the primary emphasis of training programs, "reductionism" in therapeutic outcome might be anticipated. In a poem by the same name, Conrad Sommer (1984, p. 16) says:

> Precision may become excision
> Don't push it too far
> Our warming sun will then become
> Only a distant star.

Do you like this fashion,
Shorn of passion,
Where dew drops are merely water
And dreams don't matter?

Chapter VIII: Conclusion

The style of the preceding narrative might belie the thought and feeling which went into its making. There is a degree of ambivalence in revealing ourselves and our convictions and vulnerabilities in such a manner. While we firmly believe there is a pressing need for a paper such as this one, the alternate choice of a more conventional research and design approach is still appealing. How tempting to impress our superiors and peers with our mastery of theory and technique and our command of an aspect of the field! Instead, we have opted to speak the language of growth, change, and contradiction. To borrow another quote from Conrad Sommer, "Thank God, whispers speak clearer than roars" (1984, p. 59).

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