**Sarah Knox**

**Journey So Far**

I began my professional career as a high school English teacher . . . a lover of words and language. Passages of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Steinbeck moved me deeply, a passion I sought both to share with and instill in my students. Even now, some 22 years removed from those days, I recall vividly my favorite activity of each year with my high school juniors: I would read Chapter 14 of *The Grapes of Wrath* aloud to my students, asking them just to listen, to hear the beauty of the words, to let the language wash over them as Steinbeck delivered a powerful sermon on the essential evolution from “I” to “We.” When in need of inspiration, I still return to that chapter . . . it never fails to feed me. It is surely no surprise, then, that working with language continues to be a central part of my professional endeavors as a counseling psychologist (as described below).

High school teachers quite often nurture students’ development beyond the classroom, as well, for the crucible of adolescence is not always kind. Whether experiencing joy or despair, high school students frequently share their world not only with their family and friends, but also with their teachers. When students came to me in distress, I did the best that I could: I listened closely, I provided support, I hoped that they felt heard and understood. But I sensed that many might benefit from more assistance than I was then capable of providing. I wanted to help more, but I didn’t know how to do so.

At about this same time, I realized that, though there was much about being an English teacher that I still loved, I did not see myself teaching symbolism in *Lord of the Flies* or iambic pentameter in *Macbeth* for the rest of my days. I thus embarked on my own professional and personal research project to discern my future. I soon learned of counseling psychology, and found its philosophy and ethos consistent with my own. My hope was that my training as a counseling psychologist would provide me the skills I needed . . . but knew I lacked . . . when I was speaking with my former students in distress. The counseling psychology program at the University of Maryland was in my figurative back yard, so I was thrilled to be admitted, and even more thrilled to be assigned Clara Hill as my advisor.

At Maryland, I received outstanding mentoring, and as I have said to Clara many times, I simply would not be who I am, where I am, doing what I’m doing, without her profound influence. She and Charlie Gelso were central to my surviving, and even thriving, in graduate school, and I am grateful to continue my relationships with both to this day. Each has had, and continues to have, a marked influence on the profession, and I consider myself fortunate to have been shaped by them as well. Each also strongly encouraged me to become involved in Division 17, especially as I began my career, and their wise counsel again proved beneficial. Through my work on the Awards and Membership Committees, a Task Group for Continuing Education Credits via *The Counseling Psychologist*, and the Editorial Board of *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, I have happily served my profession and built a sense of community.

After graduating, I joined the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology at Marquette University. Here, I worked with fellow counseling psychologists who were preparing to seek APA accreditation for the doctoral program. I was excited to be part of a relatively new program, one that was very student-centered and innovative in its training. I also felt quite welcomed and embraced as a qualitative researcher, an approach to empirical inquiry central to my identity.

The final component of my journey as a counseling psychologist has been my involvement in the Society for Psychotherapy Research (SPR). In SPR, professionals from different disciplines (counseling, psychiatry, psychology, social work) across the world seek to learn more about, and thus improve, the psychotherapy services delivered to clients. The multidisciplinary and multinational composition of SPR has provided me with unimagined opportunities to engage with those who share an interest in psychotherapy research.

**Research**

My primary identity as a counseling psychologist is as a researcher, and in fact, as a qualitative researcher (remember, I love words and language). I focus on psychotherapy and training processes, essential elements of counseling psychology’s mission. Using consensual qualitative research (CQR), I have focused on therapist-client, supervisor-supervisee, and advisor-advisee interactions. More specifically, I have studied therapist self-disclosure, clients’ internal representations of therapists, gift-giving processes in therapy, therapy termination, cross-racial therapy dyads, as well as religion and spirituality in therapy. In the supervision arena, I have examined cultural responsiveness in cross-cultural supervision, delivery of difficult feedback in cross-cultural supervision, client suicide, supervisee nondisclosure in supervision, supervisor self-disclosure, and gay/lesbian/bisexual issues in supervision. I have also examined corrective relational experiences in both therapy and supervision. With regard to advising, I have investigated graduate advising relationships from both the advisor and advisee perspectives, as well as international advisees’ experiences of the advising relationship. Clearly, my interests lie in understanding what goes on between therapist and client, supervisor and supervisee, or advisor and advisee, each an area of focus vital to counseling psychology. Although the extant literature certainly provides helpful information regarding such interactions, there remains so much more to learn . . . so many ways we can continue to improve our services to clients, supervisees, and advisees, and thereby facilitate their functioning and enhance their well-being. Such areas have been, and will continue to be, my focus as a counseling psychologist.

My own doctoral students are deeply involved in this research, for I seek to provide them the type of professional mentoring that I received as a graduate student. I know how vital such experiences were to me, and it is indeed my joy to see them grow as burgeoning counseling psychologists. In the same way that I hoped to share with and instill in my high school students a passion for language and literature, I now strive to nurture in my doctoral students a passion for psychotherapy research.

**Becoming a Fellow**

As noted above, I engaged in fairly substantial personal and professional introspection to discern the next step of my journey after deciding to leave high school teaching. This was not always an easy or comfortable process, but the fruits of those labors have surely been worthwhile. When I learned about counseling psychology, I sensed that this was a path consonant with who I was and who I wished to become. The decision to take that step has indeed led to a fulfilling career. I highly value my identity as a counseling psychologist, and am honored to become a Fellow. I thank the Fellows Committee for deeming me worthy of this recognition.