

Fortid, Nutid, Fremtid (Past, Present, Future): Professional Counseling in Denmark

Andrea L. Dixon and Nanja Holland Hansen

In this article, the authors offer a comprehensive overview of the counseling profession in Denmark. The history and development of counseling is considered, followed by a review of the current state of Danish professional counseling. Finally, impressions of the future of professional counseling in Denmark are presented based on the past and current trends.

In the 21st century, the impact of professional counselors reaches far beyond the borders of any nation or continent; furthermore, mental health professionals are seeking to connect and learn from their colleagues all over the world. Denmark is an example of one nation that has much to offer the international counseling network; it is a country with a dynamic past, present, and future in professional counseling. In this article, we offer a comprehensive overview of the Danish counseling profession. First, we consider the history and development of Danish counseling followed by a review of the current trends. Finally, we present our impressions of the future of the profession in Denmark based on the past and current trends.

Cross-Cultural Counseling Terminology

Counseling is interpreted differently cross-culturally. Remaining true to the Danish mental health profession, throughout this article, we use the terms used in Denmark, *counseling/psychology* and *counselors/psychologists*, respectively, when describing counseling activities and counselors. After obtaining required educational training and becoming licensed, Danish mental health professionals are known as *psychologists* versus *counselors*; therefore, there is a clear difference in the professional terms used cross-culturally in Denmark and the United States. Also, there is no direct Danish translation for the word *counselor* as it is used in the English language, although the roles and responsibilities of professional members of the Danish Psychotherapeutic Association mirror the education and roles required for U.S. master's-level counselors.

Fortid (Past): History of Counseling/Psychology in Denmark

The Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland are often perceived as homogeneous due to their close geographical neighborhood, as well as similar cultural and historical traditions, emphases on social welfare systems, and egalitarian objectives (Lundberg, 2001). However,

there are differences in the development of professional counseling/psychology. Sweden and Finland have a history of experimental, neurobiological, and cognitive psychological orientations, whereas Norway and Denmark historically focused on phenomenological and applied psychotherapeutic approaches. Danish counseling/psychology development was clinically based and application-focused from its beginnings (Lundberg, 2001).

The history of counseling/psychology in Denmark has roots in philosophy that are specifically influenced by Danish philosopher Harald Høffding (Funch, 2000; Lundberg, 2001). However, it was not until Alfred Lehmann established the first psychophysical laboratory (at the University Psychological Laboratory [UPL]) in Copenhagen in 1886 that psychology became a distinct discipline (Funch, 2000). Before Lehmann's work, research experiments to explain human behavior were nonexistent; Lehmann was the initial leader of the Danish psychological movement.

Lehmann trained at the Wundt Institut fur experimentelle Psychologie (The Wundt Institute for Experimental Psychology) in Germany in 1885, where he worked under Wilhelm Wundt (the European founder of counseling/psychology as an experimental science [Funch, 2000; Lundberg, 2001]). On returning to Copenhagen, Lehmann established the experimental approach as the main investigate tool at the UPL, today's second oldest psychological laboratory in the world (Funch, 2000). Also, Lehmann became the first professor in experimental psychology at the University of Copenhagen in 1919 (Hjørland, 2000).

Edgar John Rubin became the second most well-known Danish figure in the history of counseling/psychology after Lehmann's death (Lundberg, 2001). Rubin succeeded Lehmann as manager of the UPL in 1922. Rubin is best known for his ambiguous pictures (e.g., the vase/opposed profiles) illustrating the figure-ground phenomenon, and his methodology was that of the old philosophical school (Funch, 2000). Although Rubin's work conflicted with Lehmann's ideology, he became a leader in Danish counseling/psychology, assuming instruction

Andrea L. Dixon, Department of Counselor Education, University of Florida; **Nanja Holland Hansen**, Phoenix Job Corps, Phoenix, Arizona. Nanja Holland Hansen is now at Askovhus, Copenhagen, Denmark. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Andrea L. Dixon, Department of Counselor Education, University of Florida, PO Box 117046, Gainesville, FL 32611-7046 (e-mail: adixon@coe.ufl.edu).

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of experimental pedagogy and chairing the psychology department in Copenhagen from 1921 to 1951. During the 1950s and 1960s, Rubin's successors upheld his phenomenological tradition and developed it further for use in Danish individual counseling/psychological practice (Hjørnlund, 2000). Each of these early Danish historical psychological leaders focused on applied psychology (therapy) and produced little counseling/psychological research (Lundberg, 2001). Low research productivity continued in Danish counseling/psychology despite the establishment of a counseling/psychology department at the University of Århus during the 1960s (Lundberg, 2001).

The Danish counseling/psychological movement rapidly progressed throughout the 20th century, and, in 1905, the Association for Psychological Research was established in Denmark (Hjørnlund, 2000). In 1914, the Association for Experimental Pedagogy was established, which marked the beginning of Danish school psychology (Hjørnlund, 2000). The only opportunity to study counseling/psychology in Denmark before 1918 was through the effort to obtain a master of arts degree in philosophy with a psychology focus; however, by the end of the 1920s, a master of arts degree in psychology was introduced at the University of Copenhagen.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a number of counseling/psychology-focused publications were produced by Danish professionals, and school psychology flourished. As a consequence of World Wars I and II, there was a marked need for school psychologists in social services, prisons and military systems, and business (Jensen, 2000). In response to this need, a 3-year master of psychology-pedagogy degree appeared at the University of Copenhagen in 1944, and, in 1947, the first group of Danish school psychologists graduated. In the 1960s, the master of psychology-pedagogy degree became a master of psychology degree.

In 1947, the Dansk Psykolog Forening (DPF [Danish Psychological Association]) was established (Hjørnlund, 2000). By 1957, the need for licensure expectations and laws was raised by the joint council of Nordic countries, and, in 1958, council members made recommendations; however, it took 37 years before psychological licensure laws took effect (Jensen, 2000). In the late 1940s, the first counseling/psychological treatment centers were established in Denmark, and, in 1950, the first child guidance center opened at the University of Copenhagen (Hjørnlund, 2000).

A 1968 student-led protest at the University of Copenhagen had a great influence on the profession (Hjørnlund, 2000). The protest was a reaction to the Vietnam War, capitalism, and nuclear weapons, as well as the drastic increases in the number of students at the university. Furthermore, there had been no increases in the number of university professors, which led to poor educational conditions (Hjørnlund, 2000). After the highly publicized protest, international psychological ideas such as existentialism and Marxism were introduced into Danish counseling/psychology (Hjørnlund, 2000). One counselor/psychologist shared, "With the student revolt in

1968, there came an increased interest in psychotherapy and other activities around psychological development" (Anonymous, personal communication, July 15, 2007).

Starting in the 1980s and continuing throughout the 1990s, the number of international refugees relocating to Denmark (mainly from East Europe and Africa) created needs for additional applied counseling/psychological interventions (Hjørnlund, 2000). In 1985, The Center for Brain Damage was founded at the College of Humanistic Studies at the University of Copenhagen by the neurological-psychologist Anne-Lise Christensen; this center represented the new focus in Danish counseling/psychology: cognitive approaches (Hjørnlund, 2000).

Throughout the 1980s, the Nordic countries worked together to develop their own set of counseling/psychological ethical codes (Lunt, 1999) apart from the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations' (EFPA's; 1995) *Charter of Professional Ethics for Psychologists*. The Nordic countries used the European charter as the basis for cocreating the *Ethical Code for Nordic Psychologists* (DPF, n.d.). The Nordic code was revised during 1996–1997, was officially adopted in Denmark in 1999, and includes four ethical areas of the DPF: respect for clients' rights and dignity, competence, responsibility, and integrity (DPF, n.d.).

In 1993, counselors/psychologists gained public licensure from the Ministry of Social Affairs, and a committee was formed to evaluate counselors'/psychologists' qualifications: the Psykolognævnet (Danish Board of Psychological Practice [DBPP]; Jensen, 2000). The actual Danish licensure guidelines for counselors/psychologists were established in 1994 (DBPP, n.d.).

The increasing need for Danish counselors/psychologists continued in the 1990s for the purposes of working with emergency medical teams in crisis intervention situations. In the late 1990s, the number of counseling/psychology students had greatly increased, and so had the membership of the DPF (Hjørnlund, 2000). In 1998, it was noted that the number of practicing counselors/psychologists had risen dramatically from 23 practicing counselors/psychologists in 1983 to 848 in 1998 (DPF, n.d.), and, in November 2006, the membership of the DPF was 7,705. The counseling/psychology profession in Denmark was shaped by dynamic historical leaders and events that converged to form the current influence Danish counselors/psychologists have today.

■ Her og Nu (Here and Now): The Current State of Counseling/Psychology in Denmark

Denmark is consistently voted one of the "Best Countries in the World" to live in (Statistics Denmark, 2007), and in a 2006 survey conducted by Adrian White of the United Kingdom's University of Leicester, Denmark ranked as the "happiest place on Earth" out of all the countries in the

world (White, 2007). With a population of approximately 5,450,661 (Statistics Denmark, 2007), Denmark also has the greatest self-reported overall well-being in the world (White, 2007). These reports parallel the current positive state of counseling/psychology in Denmark; professional trends illustrate that therapy is more accepted than ever before (DPF, n.d.). In fact, one Danish counselor/psychologist reported, "Throughout the 1990s there was a growing interest to work on personal development. To seek psychotherapy has become normal and counselors/psychologists have a greater and more visible space in the public" (Anonymous, personal communication, July 15, 2007). There are currently more than 7,700 authorized counselors/psychologists practicing or training (DPF, n.d.).

The DPF reports that the increased use of counseling/psychological services is partly due to the Danish government's decision to channel subsidies into this professional sector, making counseling/psychological services more financially possible (DPF, n.d.). Thus, there is now less of a stigma attached to seeking therapy in Denmark (DPF, n.d.), and the increase in counselors/psychologists working in business organizations has also allowed for more individuals to seek therapy (Jensen, 2000). However, one Danish counselor/psychologist added, "There is still no help from the public health care sector for people who suffer from stress and depression. The cost to see a private practice psychologist is expensive and makes it impossible for many who would benefit to obtain help" (Anonymous, personal communication, July 15, 2007).

Currently, approximately 15% of Danish counselors/psychologists are employed in private practice, 60% in the public sector, and 12% in private companies; furthermore, approximately 10% are unemployed and 3% are retired (EFPA, 1999). Like other counselors/psychologists, Danish counselors/psychologists who are members of certain professional organizations have specific guidelines, ethics, and labels to which they are expected to adhere. The DBPP (n.d.) regards the term *psychologist* as a protected title and states that only individuals with a master's degree in psychology from a university can use the title of *psychologist*. In addition, the DBPP (n.d.) stated that individuals can use the title *authorized psychologist* if they are psychologists who have documented the completion of supplementary, practical training of at least 2 years.

Although the term *psychologist* is the primary mental health label used in Denmark, the term *psychotherapist* is used by individuals who practice applied counseling intervention (the equivalent of U.S. professional counselors). The Psykoterapeut Forening (PF [Psychotherapeutic Association]) was established in 1993 as an interest organization for professional psychotherapists. To become a member of the association, an individual must have a bachelor's degree in psychology, social work, education, or nursing (PF, n.d.) and must have 250 hours of personal therapy, 150 hours of supervision, and 300 hours of theory. At this time, the PF is the only known professional Danish group promoting the development of the profession of

counseling as a separate discipline from psychology.

Currently, there are no specific training programs or licensure/certification guidelines for psychotherapists in Denmark, and there are no licensure or certification requirements for psychotherapists who do not belong to the PF (PF, n.d.). In 2004, the Danish ministries of education, social welfare, national policies, and health collaborated to develop criteria for the institutions training psychotherapists, and, in 2005, institutions training psychotherapists were able to seek permission to be evaluated by the Danish Evaluation Council to ensure they met the standards of providing responsible and quality training. Unfortunately, in 2006, the collaboration between the ministries and the Danish Evaluation Council ceased and has not resumed (PF, n.d.).

Current Contexts of Counseling/Psychology

Today's Danish counseling's/psychology's contexts include a variety of settings, formats, and approaches. One of the long-standing counseling contexts in the United States is school counseling; however, school counseling as it is known in the United States does not exist in Denmark, and there is no equivalent educational degree to the training of U.S. K–12 school counselors. Danish children are educated through Folkeskolen (The Danish Comprehensive School), and their comprehensive schooling begins in the first grade. All students remain in the same classroom with the same teachers through the ninth grade. This 9-year system allows for students and teachers to truly know one another; students' academic and/or personal concerns are regularly handled by their homeroom teacher working in conjunction with the student(s) and parents.

The Danish Comprehensive School has *skolevejledere* (although not directly translatable in English, this is equivalent to U.S. K–12 school guidance counselors). To become a *skolevejleder* (singular form of *skolevejledere*), individuals are typically teachers first and must complete a 6-month supplemental degree, which is divided into three modules (Folkeskolen, n.d.); however, only 82% of current *skolevejledere* have the education. The degree helps *skolevejledere* to guide students about their education and employment choices. In 2000, the Ministry of Education stated that all students in 6th–10th grade would receive guidance regarding future options (i.e., high school, vocational school, and/or employment opportunities; Folkeskolen, n.d.). In addition to the *skolevejleder*, The Danish Comprehensive School *kurator* (*curator* in English, and similar to a special education teacher in the United States) works with children who have learning, physical, or mental disabilities. *Kuratorer* (plural form of *kurator*) collaborate with children, parents, and school personnel to ensure the best education for students, which includes psychological testing to determine students' needs (Kuratorernes Landsforening, n.d.).

Danish counseling/psychological approaches are currently offered in various formats: individual, couples, family, and

group (PF, n.d.). However, the majority of Danish counselors/psychologists primarily offer applied mental health services through the individual psychotherapy model. Theoretically, there are four principal approaches used in Danish counseling/psychology: (a) psychoanalytical-psychodynamic, (b) existential-humanistic, (c) systemic-structural, and (d) cognitive behavioral (PF, n.d.). The primary approach to Danish counseling/psychology is the cognitive framework. According to a Danish counselor/psychologist, "Today, the main trend in counseling/psychology and psychotherapy is using cognitive therapeutic methods. Almost all public institutions, and many private practicing psychologists/psychotherapists, use a cognitive framework" (Anonymous, personal communication, July 15, 2007). Although Danish counselors/psychologists continue to be influenced by traditional phenomenological approaches (Hjørland, 2000), they are currently focusing on cognitive psychological approaches, similar to Swedish and Finnish counselors/psychologists (Lundberg, 2001). Because of this increased use in psychological cognitive approaches, today's Danish researchers are focusing on these approaches and others in their research and teaching in university psychological departments.

Danish Psychological Research and Training

Today's Danish psychological researchers and educators represent a professional culture that is integral in the country's evolving counseling/psychology profession. The University of Copenhagen housed the first Danish counseling/psychology training program; however, today there are additional active counseling/psychology programs at the University of Århus and at Ålborg University. Today's research productivity and training standards in these counseling/psychology programs represent the ever-developing profession in Denmark. Danish counseling/psychology professors are expected to engage in research on international levels (University of Ålborg, 2009; University of Århus, 2009; University of Copenhagen, 2009). University academicians publish research both nationally and internationally and also provide linguistic revisions for international academic journals (University of Århus, 2009). Although low research productivity characterized past Danish counseling/psychology, today's university faculty produce great quantities of quality research (Lunt, 1999). Another aspect facilitating Danish research productivity is the increasing number of professional journals: the *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *Psyke & Logos*, *School Psychology in Denmark*, and *Nordic Psychology*, among many others.

In recent years, the counseling/psychology researchers at universities have focused on interdisciplinary research, exploring learning and relational interactions within social contexts, such as work and educational settings (University of Ålborg, 2009; University of Århus, 2009). They also focus on cross-cultural relationships in counseling/psychology, cognitive and health counseling/psychology, and issues facing Danish youth (University of Copenhagen, 2009). Furthermore, research centers now

exist that highlight teamwork between the centers and university researchers (University of Århus, 2009). Two of these psychological research centers are the Copenhagen Competence Research Center and the Danish National Research Foundation.

Currently, a typical counseling/psychology degree involves a 3-year bachelor's degree and a 2-year master's degree (University of Copenhagen, 2009). Also, universities, various employers, and the DPF now offer postgraduate counseling/psychology training options: (a) doctoral programs; (b) on-the-job training of counselors/psychologists with individual supervision; and (c) formalized education in psychotherapy, neuropsychology, and health psychology (EFPA, 1999).

Today, the "happiest place on Earth" (White, 2007) is experiencing progressive trends in counseling/psychological services, quality research, and the training of ethical counselors/psychologists (Lunt, 1999). Furthermore, counseling is now accepted and financially reasonable for most Danish individuals (DPF, n.d.). The employment outlook for well-trained counselors/psychologists is positive, and it appears that positions for them will steadily rise (Statistics Denmark, 2007). The Danish counseling/psychology profession's dynamic history and contemporary status illustrate infinite possibilities for its future prospects.

■ *Fremtid* (Future): The Prospects of Counseling/Psychology in Denmark

As counselors/psychologists continue to affect individuals around the world, Danish counseling/psychology also continues to evolve and expand. With financial support from the Danish government, the growth of individuals seeking counseling services, better training opportunities, increased quantity of quality research, and foci on cross-cultural understanding, the prospects of counseling/psychology in Denmark are great. Based on current and future cultural traditions and social political movements, the Danish counseling/psychology profession will continue to adapt to the needs of the native, immigrant, and refugee citizens.

As the profession moves forward, we believe it is probable that crisis intervention counseling will become a training specialization for counselors-/psychologists-to-be, as the country will continue to have refugee and trauma victim populations. It is likely that counseling will become more apparent in schools with young children and youth (because of immigrant issues) versus the sole focus on psychological and vocational testing. Thus, counselors-/psychologists-to-be may have the option to receive specialized training for counseling in schools. Also, there will likely be an increase in the number of counseling/psychology courses and programs offered in English because English is Denmark's secondary language (Lundberg, 2001).

Currently in Århus, a pilot study is being conducted in which government assistance is offered to individuals who have depression. Results from this study may significantly inform the counseling/psychology profession in the future,

both financially and in terms of interventions with Danish citizens who seek help for depression. The recent results from research focused on various populations, social and interpersonal relationships, and psychological approaches are also likely to inform future psychological educational training and application. Thus, we forecast that the use of group counseling approaches will continue to increase as greater numbers of individuals seek help. In addition, in answer to increased marriage concerns, we are likely to see greater couples and family interventions.

Another change that will be witnessed in the near future involves counselors'/psychologists' adherence to professional codes of ethics. At this time, only counselors/psychologists who are actual members of the DPF and the PF are bound by the code of ethics; however, the PF (n.d.) is working to change the existing differences among counselors and psychologists. Soon, all authorized Danish counselors and psychologists will be expected to adhere to the same ethical codes.

Finally, we believe Danish counselors/psychologists will continue to reach out in order to learn from and share knowledge with other mental health professionals around the world. For instance, currently, in most of Europe, the countries demonstrate a vast discrepancy in education and training requirements (Lunt, 1999). However, the Nordic countries share similar perspectives on training counselors/psychologists and recognize one another's specialized programs; counselors/psychologists educated in Denmark may practice in Norway and vice versa. One day, we expect to see reciprocity among European and Nordic countries: Counselors/psychologists will be trained in Denmark but will be able to practice throughout Europe.

Konklusion (Conclusion)

As the counseling profession continues to internationalize, counselors will want to remain informed about the profession's manifestations throughout the world. This article is a first step in understanding the historical and current psychological trends in the profession's configuration in Denmark. We hope that our overview and the opinions shared from Danish counselors and psychologists aid in international counselors' knowledge and comprehension of Denmark's approaches to professional counseling/psychology. Indeed, the country considered to be one of the best in the world to live in might just have a myriad of ideas to teach us all.

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