A Rejoinder to Dr. Karaban

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I read with interest Karaban’s five page response (1992) to my article, “Cross-Cultural Pastoral Counseling: Method or Hermeneutic?” (Voss, 1992) Obviously, we have both hit a nerve, and I think that the dialogue which is emerging could well be a metaphor of the very problems which we are attempting to articulate.

My intention in writing “Cross-Cultural Pastoral Counseling: Method or Hermeneutic” (1992) was not to hurt or discourage a colleague who has struggled, and is struggling, with the inherent difficulties in doing cross-cultural counseling. My intention was to identify some of the authors’ assumptions about cross-cultural counseling in light of some of the troubling data about gaps in services to minority populations—which should be a cause for concern. I am surprised Karaban did not comment more directly about these data. Overall, I intended to offer a metaphor for cross-cultural counseling that prompts the counselor to develop an awareness of his or her own socio-cultural alignments. I suppose I was challenging Karaban to look at her own alignments more consciously. I was surprised by the emotionally charged tone of Karaban’s response. I feel that the specific issues raised in her “Response” (1992) merit a rejoinder.

A REJOINDER TO KARABAN’S SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO MY CRITICISMS

I agree that Karaban never explicitly stated that cross-cultural counseling was only a method, but in raising the “to do or not to do” question I think her bias overly emphasized methodology. Contrary to Karaban’s

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assertion (1992, p. 266), I recognize the place for methodology in the counseling endeavor, but would have to say that I would place the greater emphasis on the personal integration of the counselor—the human interactional process as a hermeneutical process. Fundamentally, counseling is a human encounter that, in hindsight, can be viewed analytically through various methodological constructs. An illustration of this may be seen in the case of a cross-cultural supervisory experience with a Korean trainee discussed below.

About my perception of the "non-question" in the title of her earlier article: "Cross-Cultural Counseling: Is It Possible?" (1990), Karaban did not understand my point here. My understanding about the nature of inquiry requires that the terms used in the thesis statement are clarified to the extent that underlying assumptions are made explicit, and the terms can be differentiated and categorically analyzed. Karaban asks whether "cross-cultural counseling" is possible (1990, p. 219 and 220), whether Anglos should be engaged in it (p. 222 and 223), and whether it is a good or desirable thing (p. 223). She never defines "cross-cultural counseling." Reading between the lines it seems that Karaban understands "cross-cultural counseling" as a method of talk-therapy (note emphasis on language, p. 220) analogously based upon middle-class social conventions and self-consciously exercised (note emphasis on equal relational footing between the sexes, p. 222), where the therapist is unaware about his or her own value judgments in an interaction with a client who speaks another language, holds divergent values, and is guided by different social conventions (p. 222). If this is one's understanding of cross-cultural counseling, then I would agree that this might be a form of (institutionalized) racism (p. 223), a kind of psycho-social colonialism. Karaban did not comment upon my definition of cross-cultural counseling (Voss, 1992, p. 254).

Karaban asserts that I missed her point in her observation that "it seems to be the 'in' thing these days to be a minority or work with minorities." (a) Whether Karaban emphasizes "it" or "seems" in her assertion, her speculative statement seems unfounded. From my local Philadelphia perspective, including both urban and rural (migrant/farm) populations, I see few people flocking either to be a minority member or to work with minorities, and the assertion seems more offensive the more I think about it. (b) Karaban is mistaken about the source of my data. It was not "social work' statistics" (1992, p. 267) (whatever that means); as noted in my references, the data were drawn from various government studies, testimonies, etc., from the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. (c) Karaban observed that I changed the focus from "counseling" to "service" in my discussion of cross-cultural counseling. This is not totally incorrect,