

In Memoriam: Dorothy Dobbins Nevill (1935–2022) Sage, Saint, and Servant

The Counseling Psychologist

2023, Vol. 51(3) 449–455

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DOI: 10.1177/00110000221150622

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Dorothy Dobbins Nevill was born August 9, 1935 and died May 5, 2022. She was married for over 60 years to a University of Florida (UF) professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering, Gale Nevill. She was the mother of two sons, David and Robert, and the grandmother of Katherine Fayel, and Coco, Erik, and Milo Nevill.

Dorothy earned her bachelor's degree with honors in English from Rice Institute (later Rice University) in Houston Texas. In 1971, Dorothy earned

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her doctoral degree in psychology from the University of Florida, where she served on the faculty until her retirement in 2000, when she was elected Professor Emerita. She served as the assistant dean of academic affairs from 1973 to 1975, as a core faculty member of the accredited doctoral training program in counseling psychology from 1975 to 2000, and as the Department of Psychology's longest running graduate coordinator from 1986 to 2000. Dorothy also served as the president of the Southeastern Psychological Association in 1981 and as the president of the Society of Counseling Psychology (American Psychological Association [APA] Division 17) in 1996. Dorothy is featured in the [University of Florida \(n.d.\)](#) Department of Psychology's Hall of Fame.

A lifelong Presbyterian, in retirement, Dorothy pursued and completed her Master's of Divinity degree at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. She also earned her Screen Actors Guild Card, co-produced a movie, and traveled widely, including to Machu Picchu, the Zambezi and Amazon Rivers, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, and on a postal ship to the arctic circle to see the Northern Lights.

Dorothy not only has an impressive administrative record, but also an impressive scholarly record. Her primary research focus was on how people's life roles and role conflicts impact, and are impacted by, their work lives. With Donald E. Super, she developed and published the Values Scale and the Salience Inventory. In 1977, she edited the book *Humanistic psychology: New frontiers*, and from 1972 to 1997 she authored and co-authored 59 scholarly publications, which have been cited in other published scholarship 2,304 times. And her scientific impact was both broad and deep. Six of her publications have been cited 150 or more times each and her H index is 21, indicating that 21 of her publications have been cited at least 21 times in other scholarly publications.

As impressive as Dorothy's accomplishments as a wife, mother, person of faith, administrator, and scholar are, she was equally accomplished as a mentor and as a professional colleague. The title of this remembrance of Dorothy was inspired by comments about her from Robert Lent, Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, and Division 17 Leona Tyler Award winner.

As a leader of counseling psychology, Dorothy wasn't just a breath of fresh air. She was a gale force wind of fresh air. In re-reading her Division 17 presidential address from 1996, I was reminded of what a remarkably kind, modest, and giving leader and person she was. The title of her address was *Psychologists as sages, saints, and servants*. Predictably, she used her article to shine a light on many counseling psychology colleagues for sharing their wisdom, caring, and service with the division. Though she might cringe at the idea, in looking back, I think this phrase is an apt description of Dorothy herself. She cheerfully shared

her gifts with her colleagues and set a wonderful example for the rest of us to follow. She is greatly missed.

Another Society of Counseling Psychology/Division 17 colleague of Dorothy's, fellow Division 17 past president John Westefeld, professor emeritus, University of Iowa, shared this remembrance of Dorothy.

I worked with her closely for several years when she was president and I was treasurer of Division 17. Dorothy was one of my absolute favorite people—she was upbeat, and had a great sense of humor. She was also very supportive of me—she always said thank you, she always acknowledged and was appreciative of my work, she always took an interest in my life. That's what I will always remember. And she was never afraid to say she didn't know the answer to something—she sought advice and help when she needed it. I am very sorry to hear of her passing.

Her University of Florida Psychology Department colleagues also shared their remembrances of Dorothy. For example, Greg Neimeyer, professor emeritus and associate executive director for Professional Development and Continuing Education at the APA, served with Dorothy for decades on the core faculty of the counseling psychology doctoral training program.

Many of my memories of Dorothy are more personal, like when she took me aside when I was a fledgling assistant professor following one annual review and told me to “start being less productive because you are making us look bad!” Her personality and countenance were often outsized and floral, but she was firmly rooted in faith and family. Few knew, for example, that she went to seminary to become a minister, though she chose not to become ordained.

Dorothy was a multifaceted person with sometimes contradictory facets. She was, of course, supremely bubbly and social, but intensely private at the same time. She could “work a room” like an inveterate politician, “hold court” at social hours, and break the ice in the sometimes-frozen tundra that is academia. But at the same time, she held her cards close and protected the intimacies of her life and her relationships. When I think of Dorothy, her effervescence is my foremost recollection—adorned in dresses as bright as her smile and as vibrant as her personality. But there was a hardscrabble essence beneath that veneer, the “Texas Woman” beneath the “Southern Belle.” She toiled tirelessly with Don Super to help breathe life into much of his later work, but she took her recreation as seriously as her work. In their hideaway in Ozello [Florida], she and Gale would often take airboat rides through the mangroves for example, conjuring the incongruous image of the social sophisticate riding roughshod on an airboat

through the swamps, an image that aptly characterizes both Dorothy's dimensionality and her zest for life.

Carolyn Tucker, UF Florida Blue Endowed Chair in Health Disparities Research, served with Dorothy throughout her time in the psychology department and shares this remembrance of Dorothy.

I worked in the psychology department with Dorothy. I remember her as being beautiful inside and outside, full of energy, kind, and welcoming to all, regardless of their skin color and status. I hosted a retirement party for her when she retired—the only such party I have ever hosted. She was very supportive of me, and for this, I will forever be grateful.

Another of her long term UF colleagues, social psychologist James Shepperd, professor of psychology, recalls the following from his time with Dorothy.

Dorothy was a force. Although we occasionally clashed about department matters, she and I got along well and I very much enjoyed her company. Dorothy was also a department workhorse; she served on a ton of department committees in her time at UF, while also serving on various national committees. And Dorothy was warm and welcoming. Annie and I spent many hours with Gale and Dorothy at their house in Gainesville or their house on the West Florida coast.

Dorothy often dropped by my office and plopped down in one of the chairs when she was annoyed about something and wanted to vent. What I remember most about her (and it is the story that is most memorable) is that it didn't matter if students were in my office when she dropped in. She would come into my office, and without saying a word, stare at everyone and wait (although sometimes she didn't acknowledge the students). Within 10 seconds the students were gone. I'm still not sure how she managed to wordlessly clear students from my office so quickly and effectively.

Finally, I remember Dorothy describing a walking tour she did of Tuscany. But it wasn't really a walking tour, it was an eating tour. They would have breakfast in the morning, walk 2–3 miles on a country road then have a 2-hour lunch. They then would walk a little further, take a rest break, then have a lavish, lengthy dinner. It was so Dorothy to go light on exercise to organize a vacation around fine eating and drinking.

These remembrances of Dorothy as an advocate for women came from Jaquelyn Resnick, former director of the University of Florida's Counseling Center and senior advisor to the vice president for student affairs.

In the early 1970s, the Southeastern Psychological Association (SEPA) appointed a Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission conducted research that resulted in many proactive programs to increase the participation of women and became a formal part of the SEPA Executive Committee structure. Dorothy was among the early members of the Commission, feminist pioneers who went on to distinguished leadership positions in SEPA as well as in APA Divisions 17 and 35. Dorothy invited me, a new PhD and UF colleague, to attend a Commission meeting with her. It was such a thoughtful and generous act on her part, introducing me to an awesome group of women in the process of transforming a traditional, predominantly male professional organization. I am forever grateful to Dorothy for her mentorship and friendship.

Dorothy's empowerment of women did not stop with colleagues. She also empowered her doctoral advisees, for example Trish Ring, psychologist, equine coach, and philanthropist, who shared this about Dorothy's mentorship.

I'm forever grateful to Dorothy for her smart, practical support and advice as my doctoral chair. I was a 34-year-old single mother of two, working as a TA [teaching assistant] to supplement student loans, juggling my kids' school carpool with my clinical appointments at the counseling center, and wondering how in the world I'd finish my dissertation research in time to run stats, write, format, and defend before my internship ended and still make it to my first academic professorship in another city, kids and pets and worldly belongings in tow.

Dorothy was a powerhouse combination of sympathetic advice plus rigorous standards plus feminine savvy. There wasn't much that she had not already dealt with in her rise through the academic ranks, and she was kind enough to share her hard-earned knocks and triumphs with me. I'd already been in the program for 2 ½ years and had developed a defensive maneuver of keeping my family obligations to myself. But Dorothy had been a mom and a young psychologist when there were very few women in positions of authority; she got it, immediately. I was driven to finish my program on time, because of financial restraints and the kids' need for nearby family, and I needed really solid advice about my doctoral research timeline. She gave it—we tightened the scope of my questionnaire, I followed her direction to cite comparable validity research, and I strategized with her about how to get high participation; her suggestions saved me, literally, six months of floundering.

Along the way, as I spent two years under Dorothy's tutelage, I came to admire her tremendously. She knew the politics of academia, the nuance of managing conflict, the importance of attending to ethics and priorities. She was in some ways hardened by long years of being underestimated in a male-dominated

arena, but her experiences gave her a firm sense of determination free of bitterness. She was collegial, charming, discerning, not easily distracted. She was a breath of fresh air when I was almost drowning and swimming as fast as I could; she slowed me down in order to speed me to the finish line.

Under her tutelage, Dorothy disabused me of several biases. I had veered toward clinical practice in medical settings, under the odd assumption that treating chronic or incapacitating mental illness required more psychological skill. She gave me a lecture about that, illuminating the often unacknowledged, broad impact of helping people choose occupations that align with their gifts and personalities. She helped me choose a path toward consulting psychology that proved thrilling, profitable, and fit my family lifestyle beautifully.

Dorothy also modeled for me a professional persona that was feminist on her own terms, discarding that notion that authority was of necessity wielded in masculine gestures. This was in the early 90s, when a colleague was rumored to have lost a research award because she wore pink nail polish to an interview.

A few years after I left graduate school for the teaching and consulting arena, I facilitated a parent meeting at an independent girls' school in Manhattan. These Upper East Side parents were hostile, relentless, and belligerent about a controversy that had pitted parents against administrators; I'd been flown in to get them to talk to each other. At the end of a fraught but successful meeting, one of the Wall Street dads came up to me and said, "Aren't you a Tennessee psychologist? How in the world did you get this job?"

At that moment, I thought of Dorothy, and her invaluable advice: "Being underestimated can be a strategic advantage, and never believe another person's opinion of you." I smiled at the dad, ignored the insult, and joked with him that a psychologist from the South seemed to be just what "y'all" needed. He laughed, and I sent a silent thanks to Dorothy.

Sage, saint, and servant; Dorothy D. Nevill was each and all of those things. Dorothy ended her 1996 presidential address with the sentence "Thank you for this opportunity" (Nevill, 1997, p. 133). Perhaps saying that very statement back to Dorothy is the most fitting tribute of all. Thank you, Dorothy, for the opportunity we had to learn from your sagacity, to be inspired by your saintliness (in all its orthodox and unorthodox forms), and to benefit from your service.

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