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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes that counseling will and should be replaced by another discipline which will be called applied behavioral science. The applied behavioral scientist would be employed in situations similar to those now employing counselors; his job will be to apply theory and research derived from the various behavioral sciences in order to help individuals and institutions achieve their purposes. For example, the behavioral scientist in the school would work with students, their parents, teachers, and administrators to provide students with experiences that most efficiently facilitate their development. Essentially, much of what is presently included in graduate programs would be eliminated and the proposed preparation would be considered as extending over a life time. The graduate school would only start the preparation, then universities, professional associations and employing institutions would cooperate to provide the professional worker with opportunities for continuing education. Some of the questions and problems one must face to consider this proposal are raised. (TA)

Preparing Counselors for 1980

by

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ABSTRACT

Counselors cannot learn unique solutions to each of the diverse problems with which they work. Consequently, they must be able to generalize from their knowledge of behavioral principles. The proposal is made here that the profession of counseling be supplanted by a new profession of applied behavioral science and that the professional preparation in this new occupation provide familiarity with the major behavioral theories and with practical experience in applying theories to the solution of individual problems.

Preparing Counselors for 1980

In spite of the youth and vigor of the profession, serious questions can be raised concerning the survival of school and college counseling. Unlike the oldest profession, this younger one has failed to incorporate itself into the fabric of society or to demonstrate that it satisfied basic and continuing needs of individuals. Counselors have done much good and have helped many individuals but their occupation has not been widely acknowledged as a Profession nor have its roots extended deep into our supporting economic and social strata. The survival of counseling as it now exists can be questioned.

The thesis of this presentation is that counseling developed to meet needs related to the educational, vocational, emotional, and social development of individuals and that counselors borrowed procedures, theories, and methods from a variety of disciplines and improvised for themselves modes of operating. Like most similar social developments, counseling was a response to a social problem, a response not particularly carefully thought out or planned and with a rationale devised after rather than before the fact.

The proposal here is that counseling will and should be replaced by another discipline which will be called Applied Behavioral Science. The Applied Behavioral Scientist will be employed in situations similar to those now employing counselors and his job will be to apply theory and research derived through the various behavioral sciences to help individuals and institutions achieve their purposes. The behavioral scientist in the school will work with students, their parents, teachers, and administrators in order to provide to students experiences that will most efficiently facilitate student development.

The proposals presented here are based on observations resulting from the author's visits and discussions with counselors from many states throughout

the country during the past year. The reader may wish to question the validity of these observations.

First, little evidence can be found that counselors or the counseling profession are well accepted. Many students when referred to school counselors accept the suggestion with great skepticism and little enthusiasm. Parents and teachers eagerly report their negative experiences with counselors, less often their constructive experiences. In times of economic retrenchment, counseling positions are among the first to be eliminated from school staffs. The guidance office in the United States Office of Education recently was eliminated. The specific provisions for guidance and testing in the National Defense Education Act have been absorbed into other educational programs. At the 1970 White House Conference on Children, a visitor to the discussions and forums well might have left with the impression that the profession of counseling was non-existent. In an increasing number of programs, the functions and services normally provided by counselors are being assigned to non-counselors, to lay personnel, and to fellow students.

Little systematic and objective evidence can be observed that counselors are productive. Frequently counselors and counseling programs have not specified their goals and objectives, have failed to evaluate progress toward goals, and have not justified their existence. Admittedly considerable experimental research provides evidence that counseling can benefit individuals, reduce academic failure rates, and increase academic persistence, but the evidence is not particularly impressive, either scientifically or practically. Some recent research suggests that minimally trained or even lay counselors obtain results essentially no different from those of professionally qualified counselors.

Counselors repeatedly ask for training that will be of more practical assistance. They ask that their periodicals and literature provide them with examples

of how to solve problems, that they be provided with recipes or cookbooks that will aid them. They recognize a basic shortcoming in their training and professional preparation, but usually fail to understand the nature of this shortcoming.

Counselors complain that their professional preparation contains too much theory and too little that is practical. When they refer to excessive theory, usually they do not mean theory but they do mean speculation, discussion, and rationalization.

Counseling theory is not theory but is speculation and discussion. The books of Patterson and of Steffre, although referred to as theoretical, are better described as descriptive. Different approaches and procedures of counseling are described; the assumptions underlying these are discussed; and some attempt is made to relate various counseling approaches to underlying theories of behavior, personality, and learning. There are no theories of counseling, no more than there are theories of medicine. Theories of medicine that have been proposed, such as osteopathy and homeopathy, may resemble theories but they little influence the practicing physician.

Most counselors know little about behavior theory. Professional graduate programs usually require a few courses related to personality, sometimes to learning, but usually counselors have a superficial introduction to a few behavior theories and know little or nothing about many theories.

Counselor educators themselves know little about behavior theory. Many counselor educators themselves were counselors and most are in colleges of education and strongly influenced by educational tradition and orientation. Usually counselor preparation programs are relatively isolated in a university from behavior science disciplines and few of the behavioral scientists in these universities even are aware of the existence of counselor preparation programs.

Counselors share many of these problems with other school specialists such as school psychologists, social workers, and nurses, and the proposals made here regarding counselors well might extend to many other school specialists who are concerned with remediation, adjustment of individual students, and development of school programs and services.

I propose that instead of having in the schools of 1980 elementary school counselors, junior high counselors, senior high counselors, social workers, remedial teachers, school psychologists, child development specialists, or other special educators, that a new profession be developed, not to be added to these others but rather to displace them. This new profession would be that of applied behavioral science and the main professional weapon of this profession would be ideas and concepts. The problem of the present counselor is not that he has too much theory but rather that he has too little. He does not have enough ideas and concepts to understand the problems which face him nor to develop approaches and solutions to these problems. He wants to be told what to do because he does not know enough to figure this out for himself. His professional preparation has failed to provide him with knowledge, theory, and concepts, and these are what he needs.

I propose that every applied behavioral scientist have an opportunity, not necessarily all during his graduate preparation, to learn, understand, and appreciate behavioral theories similar to the following. First, social influence theory is most relevant for counselors. Counselors try to influence behavior and they should know how their behavior and characteristics are perceived by others and how these influence others. The work of Harold and Kelley and of Fritz Heider and the recent research of Stanley Strong have many implications for all professionals working with others.

Obviously counselors should be well acquainted with reinforcement theory and related learning theory. Thanks to Krumboltz and his colleagues, many counselors are aware of reinforcement theory and appreciate its relevance; relatively few counselors have more than a superficial knowledge however.

Our applied behavioral scientist would be well educated in cognitive development theories. Not only the work of Piaget but also the work of men such as Guilford, Cattell, and Thurston.

Equally relevant is Field Theory. Relatively few counselors have any acquaintance with the work of Kurt Lewin. The applied behavioral scientist would have an understanding of relationships between individuals and their psychological environments and of its application.

All counselors know something about psychoanalytic theory but the applied behavioral scientist would know the concepts of psychoanalysis, the supporting research, and the personal and social implications. He would appreciate not only the concepts of the unconscious and of sexual development but also of transference, Oedipal development, and the development of the super-ego.

Much work that counselors presently do is based on trait and factor theory but relatively few counselors have ever faced this theory as a theory nor appreciated the potential of the theory as presented by Allport or by Cattell. Included in trait and factor theory well might be theories of measurement, statistics, and experimental design.

When most counselors play roles in training programs they think they are mastering role theory. The applied behavioral scientist will have an understanding of the concepts and relationships implicite in role theory and be able to understand individual behavior in light of this

Counselors work with people who are making decisions and yet they know little or nothing about decision theory. The applied behavioral scientist will understand how decisions are made, how individuals react to pressures in making decisions, how individual differences are related to decision-making behaviors, and how alternatives are dealt with. Similarly, he will understand organizational theory and have an appreciation as to the reasons why school administrators, teachers, school boards, and students accommodate to the school as they do.

Finally, the applied behavioral scientist will have an understanding of vocational development theory. Today many counselors are aware of the existence of various vocational development theories but few have an appreciation of the concepts and ideas in these theories.

In addition to the above theories which for the most part are based in the discipline of psychology many others will be found in anthropology, economics, and sociology. The development of a program to prepare applied behavioral scientists to work in schools certainly will have to be interdisciplinary.

An adequate understanding of all of these theories will might require years and years of professional preparation. The proposal here is not to extend the graduate program beyond the present two years required but rather first, to eliminate from the program much that now is included, and secondly, to regard the preparation of persons in this new profession as extending over a life time. The two years in graduate school will serve only to start the preparation; universities, professional associations, and employing institutions then must cooperate to provide to the professional worker opportunities for continuing education. In this way the graduate professional preparation program primarily would consist of experiences designed to acquaint the student with a large number of theories, to make him thoroughly familiar with them, and to provide supervised practical experiences in schools which have as their purpose teaching students how to use theory.

The establishment of a new profession and of professional preparation programs presents problems that well might be insurmountable. Perhaps the most significant already has been implied. How will representatives from the various behavioral sciences be involved in the planning, presentation, and evaluation of the professional preparation program? Can such a program be interdependent and within a university insofar as its students will achieve their knowledge about psychological theory from the Department of Psychology, about sociological theory from the Department of Sociology, etc.? Can representatives from these various disciplines be part of a faculty within a department designed for this purpose? Can persons already on counselor preparation faculties be prepared to provide these experiences? The history of interdisciplinary programs is not rosy. Is such a program possible?

What are the most appropriate means for providing experiences that result in knowledge of behavioral science theory? To what extent do traditional courses achieve this purpose? To what extent can readings, independent study, and other experiences provide this knowledge? How much theory can be taught without research, and can knowledge of the behavioral sciences be achieved by persons who have no responsibility for advancing that knowledge?

How are future applied behavioral scientists to be selected? What are the ability, personality, and interest characteristics required of such persons if they are to be successful? Are these characteristics incompatible with the social service interests and values we assume are needed by persons engaged in helping others?

How does one prepare scientists so that they can use their knowledge of science and theory in practical situations? To what extent will schools be willing to provide opportunities for field and practicum experiences? Where will the supervisors come from who are necessary to help students learn how to apply ideas and concepts to practical problems?

Finally, to what extent is current knowledge about behavioral theory adequate to assist in the solution of practical problems? Is such theory so primitive and so speculative that it has no practical value?

These are just some of the questions and problems one must face in considering the proposal. The present and current profession of counseling is not sufficient. Is something new needed? Is the applied behavioral scientist a realistic alternative? Will it be by 1980?

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