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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this paper are: to identify specifically the criticisms of school counseling; to analyze what accounts for these criticisms; to indicate how school counseling should and is responding to its critics; and to look at where school counseling is headed. Through a review and analysis of the conceptual and empirical literature dealing with the development and status of school counseling the range and scope of contemporary criticism are delineated. It is suggested that criticisms of school counseling emanate from problems relating to untrained, undertrained, and uncommitted counselors; professional identity and role; societal contexts; professional ideology; and accountability. Each of these problems is defined and examined and suggestions are made regarding constructive responses to criticism and effective evaluation procedures. There is a bibliography of 124 entries. (Author)

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SCHOOL COUNSELING:  
CRITICISM AND CONTEXTS

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Perhaps no profession in Education was launched with such high hopes, expectations, and federal backing as was school counseling in the latter part of the fifties. Conant's endorsement and, indeed, advocacy of counseling in his widely read book The American High School Today (1959) and the financial support provided by the National Defense Education Act of 1958 generated considerable if not lavish optimism and enthusiasm about the pivotal role and future of counseling and guidance in America's schools. In response to the post Sputnik drive for national potency and social justice executive and legislative programs were established to stimulate recruitment, employment, and training in counseling and guidance. Between 1959 and 1963 14,000 school counselors were trained in over 400 NDEA Institutes (Odell, 1971). Occupational expansion accelerated dramatically--from 12,000 school counselors in 1958-59 to 54,000 full-time counselors in 1970-71, with 44,000 in the secondary schools and 10,000 in the elementary Schools (U. S. Department of Labor, 1972). All in all the sixties were halcyon days for counselors who were envied by teachers, sought after by administrators, held sacred by parents and students, and favored by the Federal government (Odell, 1973).

So much for the sixties and "great expectations"--what of the seventies? During the last three or four years school counseling's elevated position has suffered a decline (Marsh, 1974). In an increasing number of schools counselors are considered as frills and not basic to the school program (Hines, 1973). The 1971 Gallup poll on education reveals that out of sixteen proposals for economizing, counselor removal is ranked as fourth in priority (Gallup, 1971). Federal support has reached its lowest level

since 1958 and funds for school counseling programs have all but disappeared. In three states legislation has been introduced to curtail the activities of counselors in the schools (Guidepost, 1974). Budgets are being cut at the local level and some school systems have eliminated counseling jobs (Cheiken, 1971; Odeil, 1973; DeFeo and Cohn, 1972). Parents, school boards, taxpayers, and students are questioning the value of counseling and their criticisms seem to grow daily. The purposes of this article are: to identify specifically the criticisms of school counseling; to analyze what accounts for these criticisms; to indicate how school counseling should and is responding to its critics; and to look at where school counseling is headed.

#### School Counseling under Fire

Clearly counselors and school counseling as a profession are being subjected to relentless criticism from many different quarters. The volume and intensity of criticisms are reflected in a variety of charges which appear in the professional literature--to wit counselors: isolate themselves from other school personnel (DeFeo and Cohn, 1972); spend a disproportionate amount of time on the errant child and on the child with special needs and leave the average child with unmet needs (Macy, 1972); fail to develop a consistent and coherent set of beliefs in their day to day work (Shertzer and Stone, 1972); continue to spend the bulk of their time in counseling activities and exclude consultation (Randolph, 1972); are unwilling and unable to work as part of pupil personnel teams with specialists from other disciplines (Peters, 1970); are unprepared

to deal with students hooked on drugs (Lewis and Schaffner, 1970); lack resourcefulness in dealing with parents and community organizations, and lack knowledge of modular scheduling and other means of gaining flexibility in school programming (Peters, 1970); are still functioning as if social conditions remained constant during the past ten years (Lewis and Lewis, 1970); appear quite uninformed of new practices and developments in the field of guidance and counseling (Beymer, 1971); are not effective in dealing with student unrest (Maynard, Cooke, and Propes, 1972); are afraid to face up to questions of accountability (Humes, 1972); meld readily into the establishment and are perceived by students as hypocrites, ineffectual, and maintainers of the status quo (Morgan and Wicas, 1972); do not have the minimum competencies to use tests well (Goldman, 1972); have not demonstrated that their work has purpose and has yielded meaningful results (DeFec and Cohn, 1972); have become preoccupied and overinvolved in therapy and neglected career education (Ginsburg, 1971); know very little about the world of work outside of education (NAVCE, 1972); and are much more competent in guiding persons toward college attendance than toward vocational education (NAVCE, 1972).

The current minority group view of counseling is that counseling is a waste of time and counselors: deliberately shunt minority students into dead end, non-academic programs regardless of student potential, preferences, or ambitions; discourage students from applying to college; are insensitive to the needs of students in the community; do not give the same amount of energy and time in working with minorities as they do with white, middle-class students; are sexist and their counseling is a tool for putting women down as second class citizens; do not accept, respect,

and understand cultural differences; are arrogant and contemptuous; and don't know themselves and how to deal with their own hangups (Proctor, 1970; Russell, 1970; Banks, 1970; Smith, Jr., 1970; Aragon and Ulibarri, 1971; Gardner, 1971; Dahl, 1971; and Dworkin and Dworkin, 1971).

After reading this catalogue of indictments one would have the feeling that school counselors cannot do anything well except evoke criticism. Certainly the range and scope of the charges listed is indicative of the magnitude of disenchantment among consumers and professional colleagues. What accounts for these criticisms? They stem from problems relating to untrained, undertrained, and uncommitted counselors; professional identity and role; societal contexts; professional ideology; and accountable evaluation procedures.

#### Untrained, Undertrained, and Uncommitted Counselors

Beymer (1971) suggests that within this decade we are likely to see a malpractice suit made against a counselor on the grounds that the counselor behaved in a careless, negligent, or stupid manner; that he could have or should have known better. The suit may allege that the procedure followed is not within the realm of accepted professional practice, or that a technique was used that the counselor was not trained to use, or that the counselor failed to follow some procedure which might have been more helpful. Or it may be charged that the possible consequences of the treatment were not satisfactorily explained to the client and/or his parents. Such a malpractice suit may become a reality because there are many unqualified or underqualified counselors. They can be identified

among three groups. The first is the grandmother and grandfather group who have had minimal or no training but own permanent licenses because they were incumbents of positions when certification requirements were established. The second group includes those who became counselors when formal training programs were in their infancy. At that time life certificates could be acquired with a dozen or so semester hours of work. The third group is made up of thousands of teachers who became counselors by participating in intensive workshops and brief training institutes. For many such brief preparation was their entire preparation and soon it will be a decade or more old.

Aubrey (1972) argues that counselors are being prepared by counselor education programs to function as therapists and do not have the necessary competencies required to do the other kinds of jobs which need to be done in schools. Kehas (1972) believes that schools have been negligent in providing and supporting staff development programs to upgrade counselors. Whether unqualified or underqualified, Morin (1970) states that the counseling movement has suffered too many losses at the hands of the uncommitted, half-hearted professional who frequently has distorted the role and the work of the counselor to the public. It is difficult to estimate the number of untrained, undertrained, or uncommitted individuals in school counseling today. Whatever their numbers are, their presence engenders criticism and bespeaks the need for improved and more effective recruitment, preparation, employment, and continuing education policies, procedures, and practices.

While there may be some agreement that there are counselors who lack the training or commitment to do the job of counseling in the schools, there is considerable disagreement as to what that job is. What is the counselor supposed to be doing? For what should counselors be held accountable?

School Counselors' Professional Identity and Role:  
Animal, Mineral, or Vegetable?

If there is any one theme which has engaged the attention of the counseling profession over the years it is the search for professional identity (Tyler, 1972). That the search continues on points to one of the major dimensions and questions of contemporary criticism--what is it that counselors should be doing and are not doing? What is the counselor's role? (Arbuckle, 1972) What unique skills and services can or should the counselor provide which cannot be offered by other professionals such as teachers, administrators, reading specialists, nurses, and speech therapists? How does the counselor differ from these professionals in terms of functions and responsibilities? What is the rationale for having a person called "counselor" in the schools? (Arbuckle, 1970) These are questions which are still the subject of controversy today. Part of the problem as Hines (1973) observes is that counseling developed in reverse order--counselors were placed in schools and then the question of their role and function became an issue. Today, "the counseling profession finds itself without an agreed upon structure of beliefs, objectives, practices, and roles with which to defend itself against possible extinction by those who



are hostile toward its existence; nor does the profession appear to want to rally around a selective number of positions. (Barnette, 1973)

Because of the varied meanings of guidance and counseling and because guidance and counseling are so ill defined as concepts there have been marked variations in the practices of school counselors from one school system to another. In a few schools the counselor spends the major portion of his day counseling students regarding personal and social concerns in individual or small group sessions and consulting with teachers. In other schools his day is devoted to guidance tasks such as testing, job placement, college admissions, career education. And in too many schools the counselor functions as a "loose ends" coordinator, administrative handyman, or high paid clerical worker. There are as many variations of practice as there are counselors, administrators and schools.

#### Administrative Attitudes

The fact that the counselor's role and identity and the purposes of counseling have not been clearly defined is a major reason why <sup>in</sup> some school systems administrative attitudes have become a major stumbling block in the development of professional school counseling services. It is difficult for an administrator to have positive attitudes toward the process of counseling when that process and its goals and objectives have not been spelled out. Too often in the absence of counselor initiative the counselor's responsibilities and job description are defined by the school principal or superintendent with little or no input from the counselor. Consequently, the duties of the counselor depend upon the perceptions, knowledge, and feelings which the administrator has regarding the function

of counseling. It is easy and convenient for some principals to assign all odds and ends to the counselor. Unfortunately, far too many counselors have been willing and even delighted to play a quasi-administrative role. Thus they have merely reinforced the administrator's image of the counselor as a jack-of-all-trades who is willing to take on all residual administrative, faculty, and secretarial tasks such as clerical work, lunch room supervision, attendance checking, substitute teaching, computer programming, bus coordination, field trip coordination, and making up honor roll lists. In such situations counseling ends up being a mixture of "hurry up" advice giving and exhortations squeezed in whenever the schedule permits (Boy and Pine, 1968, 1963).

Despite the fact that the counseling service continually has been emphasized as the "heart and core" of the guidance program there is considerable evidence collected over the last sixteen years showing that counselors spend very little time counseling students. (Tennyson, 1958; Stewart, 1959; Gold, 1962; Johnson, 1966; Martin, 1970; Trotzer, 1971; Maser, 1971; Morgan and Trachtenberg, 1974) Counseling and guidance have become omnibus terms embracing a wide variety of behaviors--an umbrella under which anything and everything goes. What are often defined as counseling functions do not require training and preparation, do not require skill, are not unique services, and can be handled by most of the professional, paraprofessional or volunteer personnel we are now employing in the schools. It is interesting to note that a professional function of therapeutic counseling which was once thought by some to be the sole province of the counselor is being taken on by the classroom teacher.

Under effective or psychological education we are witnessing the return of the teacher counselor as classroom teachers are being trained to use and implement the techniques of: Gestalt Therapy (Human Teaching for Human Learning; Brown, 1971); Reality Therapy (Schools without Failure; Glasser, 1969); Sensitivity Training (Encounter in the Classroom; Hunter, 1972); Rational-Emotive Therapy (Emotional Education; Ellis, 1972); Transactional Analysis (T-A for Tots; Freed, 1973); and Client-Centered Therapy (Freedom to Learn; Rogers, 1969 and Teacher-Effectiveness Training; Gordon, 1972).

The attainment of a realistic professional identity remains a central concern for counselors as individuals and for the counseling profession as a whole (Lawton, 1971; Peters, 1971; Arbuckle, 1971, 1972; Barnette, 1973). The expectations of what a counselor should be doing--of what counseling should accomplish shape and form the criticisms of counseling. Too much has been expected. Issues of broad educational and social significance can be and should be approached from many viewpoints (Anastasi, 1972). Each kind of human service brings a different kind of assistance to these issues. Once counselors face up to the fact that counseling is not the only service concerned with human behavior and cannot take upon itself the responsibility for addressing all social, educational, and vocational problems it behooves counselors to ask how they can best contribute to schools as counselors. Only when counselors know why they exist, what it is they are supposed to do, and what their unique functions and responsibilities are will they be able to respond to their critics and develop effective models of accountability. Until general agreement around these questions is achieved, taxpayers and educators alike will continue to be willing to sacrifice counseling at times of financial stress. It's an easy decision to save money by giving up a service the purpose of which you never understood while you had it (Hines, 1972).

The Social Context of School Counseling

Criticisms are influenced by expectations and we can better understand expectations of the public and the consumers of counseling when we recognize that no field such as counseling exists independently of the social framework of which it is a part. There is a dynamic and changing relationship between counseling and the societal context within which it is embedded. The condition and spirit of the times--its social, political, and economic characteristics--will strongly influence the problems that concern us, the principles and theories that we will use to guide us, the helping forms that we will create, and consequently the criticisms which will emerge. In A Social History of Helping Services the Levines (1970) suggest that the spirit of the times may be generally characterized as one of the social-political conservatism or one of social-political reform. Within the field of helping services there are essentially two modes of help: the individual or intrapsychic on one hand and the situational or environmental on the other. Individual modes of help will thrive in times of social conservatism. Situational modes of help will flourish in times of social reform. Neither side will be exclusive or monolithic in a given era but the tone of the era will be set by one side or the other. We have in the past several years moved in an era of social reform which has brought counselors from concern with changing the individual to changing the community, the institution, or the system. Many of the criticisms found in the current literature reflect this social action orientation.

However, Hodgson (1973) suggests that there is a growing skepticism about the efficacy of social reform which seems to be emerging from the works of social scientists such as Coleman and Jenks and that the liberal

education policies of the last few generations are in serious trouble because they have lost and are losing support in the ranks of the social scientists who provided America with a major part of its operating ideology. Judging from the increased enrollments in vocational and career development programs and on the basis of the most popular books (The Chronicle, 1974) being read by students (I'm O.K., You're O.K.; Jonathan Livingston Seagull; Journey To Ixtlan; The Teachings of Don Juan; A Separate Reality; Chariots of the Gods; and Gods from Outer Space) it appears that the prime consumers of school counseling are turning inward concerned with self-help, self-discovery, mysticism, and job entry and security rather than social reform. If these trends among social scientists and students continue then we might expect in a few years that the criticisms of counseling will turn in other directions away from concerns about the school counselor as a change agent and more toward the counselor's performance vis-a-vis and the intrapsychic mode of counseling.

#### School Counseling's Ideology

The counseling profession has never clearly resolved the question of what its roles and purposes are in American society. (Hansen, 1969) Two images of counseling have struggled for recognition, at times seeming to fuse, but at others emerging as distinct, revealing contradictions among their capabilities. The images are on the one hand to further the collective good (for example, aiding in manpower utilization) and, on the other hand, to further the individual good (for example, aiding in the development of autonomy). Although collective and individual needs may often be compatible, they remain far from identical and they must by nature co-

exist in some tension. Unfortunately, some discussions of school counseling, preoccupied with its public statements and functions, have missed the drama of this tension and the drama of the counseling movement itself-- the repeated adjustment and compromise continuously occurring between its ideology and incompatible institutional pressures and organizational constraints. Incompatibilities between ideology and social/institutional limits occur along three dimensions of the American social system (Corwin and Clark, 1969):

1. The strain between dominant cultural values and the individualistic-humanistic form of amelioration which originally inspired counseling.
2. The strain between individualistic-humanism in counseling and the impersonal character of industrial society.
3. The strain between counseling objectives and the actual position of counselors in a bureaucratic society.

These strains call for ideological consciousness raising for counselors to develop an awareness of the larger and subtle social forces which influence their work. Such awareness is necessary if the counseling profession is to make conscious and deliberate choices about its purposes and goals rather than just reacting to social and economic trends. Career education is a case in point. One could speculate about the degree to which career education is designed to help individual students develop vocationally or the degree to which it is designed to revitalize the work ethic and serve the collective good of our business and industry, by greasing the people-wheels of our economy. Another example is found in the concern about counseling's "psychiatric world view" ideology which tends to define social problems in terms of individual psychiatric disorders (Reissman and Miller, 1968). Speaking of this ideological issue Bernard (1969) cogently observes that "if we can explain the agitation of a reformer as the result of an unresolved Oedipus Complex, this fact somehow cancels out the evils he was trying to get rid of."

Speculations about these fundamental ideological tensions argue for a practical effort within the counseling profession--an effort to develop a clear image of its roles in society, and to identify the personal, educational, and organizational requirements for the effective attainment of each (Hansen, 1969). Such an effort may obviate some criticism, result in a diminution of concern around issues of role and function, and ultimately improve the effectiveness of counseling and its delivery as a helping service.

### Responding to the Critics

Criticism of school counseling is not a unique phenomenon of the seventies. For example the theme of the collective good--emphasis on manpower utilization--prompted critics in the early sixties to charge that counselors could do a more effective job; writing recommendations for students seeking admission to college (Berger, 1961); visiting college campuses (Barrett, 1963); advising pre-college students (Hanford, 1964); channeling students into the field of music (Woodworth, 1964); helping students find summer jobs (Babbott, 1964); advocating industrial and trade curricula (Schaefer and Pirchard, 1963); conducting field trips to industrial and business sites (DeSautolo, 1963); and developing greater knowledge and awareness of employment needs in business offices (Shelden, 1963-64). Regardless of its origin or its place in time, criticism should not be brushed aside as inconsequential nor should it be expected or hoped that it will ever cease to exist. School counseling is a public venture and its purposes and the way they are being achieved should be matters of concern. In many respects the current wave of criticism represents an implicit expression of belief in the value of counseling. There are people

who view counseling as one of the potent vehicles for change in education. It is when their hopes and expectations are unfulfilled that those consumers of counseling become disappointed and critical.

The whole movement of current criticism should offer the greatest challenge counselors have ever experienced. If criticism is accepted in this spirit nothing but good can come of it. Such an attitude would develop a sincere desire to take criticism seriously, to analyze it objectively, and to see to it that counseling profits by it. Furthermore it would motivate an eagerness to reconsider objectives, to clarify purposes, to refine processes, and to evaluate results. This would lead to the accumulation of useful data to interpret criticisms constructively. Not the least value to be derived from a constructive interpretation of criticism would be the abandonment of dubious objectives and questionable functions which have been espoused for counseling. Through rational and objective analyses of criticisms will come strategies which can be employed in the realization of the really worthwhile ends of counseling.

In handling criticism it is important that the counseling profession not succumb to the Doomsday Syndrome characterized by three symptoms: doubt of the potency of human intelligence (antirationalism); doubt about the interdependency of humanization and democratization (elitism); doubt about the possibility of the future (the apocalyptic mode) (Maddox, 1973). Each of these modes of behavior offers an escape from the responsibility of assessing criticisms in terms of their foundations in fact, their congruency with social trends, and the quality and temper of the reasoning offered in their support. Hard data collected through evaluative research is the best prophylactic for protection from the Doomsday Syndrome.



### Evaluation of Counseling

The rational evaluation of counseling is of paramount concern to all school counselors. The counseling profession cannot move forward on the basis of gratuitous statements regarding the outcomes and effectiveness of school counseling. What can be gratuitously asserted can be gratuitously denied, and incidental and haphazard approaches to evaluation contribute very little to the improvement of counseling for the consumer. Counselors who maintain that their work has to be evaluated subjectively like a work of art may find themselves being treated as such, i.e., considered as nice frills if money is available to purchase them but not considered essential to the school program. Works of art are the playthings of the rich (Hines, 1973).

Most data on the effectiveness of school counseling are available in the form of experimental studies which usually have been carried out by doctoral students or university professors. But school counseling needs to break out of this straitjacket of the experimental model in assessing its work. The experimental method of evaluation yields data about effectiveness of counseling after the fact. Therefore while it is useful as a judgmental device it has little value as a decision making tool. After the fact data are not provided at appropriate times to assist the counselor in determining what the program should be accomplishing or whether it should be altered in process. Often by the time experimental data have come in, it is too late to make decisions about the plans and procedures whose nature often determines the success or failure of the program to begin with. This is hardly the way to generate data which will answer the critics. There are new evaluation models (Provus, 1971) available which can

provide counselors with on-going process based information about their programs and which use criticism as input data. These models emphasize continual control toward objectives rather than waiting until the end of a program for outcome data. The consequences of this emphasis upon continual control toward objectives are that (1) continuous data are available about the program; (2) there are sequences of intermediate objectives; and (3) data are available concerning all program operations (Zifferblatt, 1972). These kinds of data offer the means for developing an objective analysis of what counselors are doing and how well they are doing it. Such data are required if counselors are to respond to criticisms without becoming defensive, without attacking critics, and without engaging in collective psychological flagellation.

Evaluative research should be an integral part of all school programs--the key to testing old programs, developing new ones, and changing counseling from tradition bound roles to active and efficient services that provide help for the people who really need it (Oetting and Hawkes, 1974). The counseling profession through a national clearing house sponsored by the American Personnel and Guidance Association could collect data and documentation of successful practices in local counseling programs. This information would support the value of counseling and provide an empirical base for determining the directions of counseling programs nationally (Barnette, 1973). Initial steps for developing evaluation instrumentation and documentation have been taken by the New England Association for Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance which has developed a Kit for Guidance Evaluation and by the National Association for Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance which is preparing a special issue of its journal on the topic of accountability and evaluation in guidance.

Where Is School Counseling Headed?

School counseling, notwithstanding its criticisms, is on the move. Changes as well as criticisms have been accruing for the past decade. One of the most significant developments is that school counseling is giving itself away. "Training is the preferred mode of treatment" (Carkhuff, 1971, 1972). The school counselor functioning as a consultant/trainer and psychological educator is transferring the counseling function to students, parents, teachers, families, and members of the community (Biehn, 1972; Bessell and Palomares, 1967; Christensen, 1972; Delworth and Moore, 1974; Derel, 1970; Dinkmeyer and Carison, 1973; Donigan and Giglio, 1971; Ellis, 1971; Ivey and Alschuler, 1973; Ivey, 1973; Jackson, 1972; Ktraochvil, et al., 1970; Leibowitz and Rhoads, 1974; The Counseling Psychologist, Vol. 3, 1972; Muro, 1970; Pancrazio, 1971; Randolph, 1972; Sprinthall and Erickson, 1974; Stanford, 1972; Dinkmeyer and Arciniega, 1972; Larson, 1972; Zimpfer, 1974; and Drum and Fieler, 1973).

The school counselor is beginning to function as an ombudsman and institutional change agent concerned with organizational development and the shaping and reformulation of the school's curriculum, program, and organization to more effectively meet the needs of students, parents, and the community (Baker and Cramer, 1972; Berdie, 1972; Ciavarella and Doolittle, 1970; Cook, 1972; Drew, 1973; Dworkin and Dworkin, 1973; Dustin, 1973; Murray and Schmuck, 1972; Warnath, 1973; and Boy and Pine, 1974).

Rather than being bound by one or more traditional strategies counselors are integrating, organizing, and systematically exploring a variety of alternatives to working with people; and attacking the problems of racism, sexism, and social injustice reflected in the schools (Blocher,

1974; Kuriloff, 1973; Odell, 1973; Pallone, Hurley and Rickard, 1973; Parker, 1974; "Asian Americans: The Neglected Minority," 1973; Lewis, 1972; Boyd and Casteel, 1972; Fitzgerald and Harmon, 1973; Boy and Pine, 1974; Lewis, Lewis and Dworkin, 1971; Palomares, 1971; Smith, Jr., 1970; and Havens, 1970).

It is evident that school counseling is aware of its shortcomings, developing responses, and mapping out a new future drawing from a broad repertoire of strategies: values clarification, human development training, peer counseling, family counseling and education, organizational development, psycho and socio-ecology, and community development. What the future holds for school counseling is difficult to determine but <sup>it</sup> is clear that some school counselors are responding to the challenge of proving the value of counseling in the schools.

In summary, perhaps no profession in education has looked at itself so candidly, studied its weaknesses so critically, and communicated its failings so publicly as has school counseling. If this were not true this article could not have been written. What is needed now at this crucial moment in the age of accountability is reasonable evidence that the changes and new directions which have been emerging in school counseling are effectively meeting the needs of students and that school counseling works--that it is an essential service and not a frill.

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