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## COUNSELING CHILDREN OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE

Who are elementary counselors? Do they know themselves? Could be know them?

We know that they are beginners—infants among educators, children among counselors. What should the tribe exact in tribute or in service if these newcomers are to be invested with trust or given the robes and the badges of a profession? Should we call for knowledge or wisdom uniquely suited to helping children make choices? Should we expect skills and would these be diagnostic or would they be special techniques of influence? Perhaps we should require feelings—a contagious, non-exploitive love which would be so valuable in our society.

We might divide the question in three parts and answer each a little. First, what is needed? What are the special ills and the special targets of the society and how do these call for a complement of additional and new energy? Second, what models, what fabrics of belief will give energy and order to this service? Third, which are the tasks and what are the strategies most appropriate for elementary counseling? In brief, what are the goals, the campaign and the engagements?

### LOOK FIRST ON THE CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL SCENE

One would have appeared insane five years ago if he had predicted that one day in May 1969, Seattle would put 400 policemen on the street and call a thousand in reserve to control youthful disturbers in a small part of the city. The prognosticator would have seemed even more foolish, if he had predicted that a large number of these youth would be junior high and some elementary students. A Canadian might be tempted to label such incidents as an "American phenomenon" but the Seattle incident is part of a Western or international thing, a fragment of widespread disorder. We live in a period of profound change when the optimistic and scientific dreams of the first half of this century have been dimmed by youthful boredom and disaffection.

A particular moment—this "now" is often understood and ordinarily embraced more easily by youth than by adult. There is, however, a remarkably uneven flow between the present generations. Children feel estranged from the ideals and sentiments of adults and parents have a sense of obsolescence, feeling unable to transmit the skills of life and the rules of behavior. There appears a pervasive deafness between the generations.

Where does the school stand in this situation? Schools (particularly public schools, and to a large extent parochial schools), developed as meritocratic agencies. They were instruments of a competency oriented society, dedicated to select and to train young people. They accepted, they placed

and they graduated students according to gradations of previous achievement. The schedule by competence, is now being challenged. For example, New York City College is being asked to accept half of its new enrollees without regard for performance or course background.

During the last fifty or sixty years, schools gave the keenest attention to the preparation of specialists, experts and managers useful in the metropolitan, automated and credentialed society. This was the era of the tool-user when the machine was a prime agent in both social and industrial change. The computer became particularly symbolic, almost symbiotic, a partner in decision with man. Throughout this period most people looked for salvation through science and measured goodness in terms of the gross national product.

The technological men and the academic schools reduced poverty, disease and toil and they enlarged power, goods and comfort. The victories and accomplishments of that era contributed to the ease and security which were essential to a change in goals and attitudes in Western culture. Young people were not so driven by the bare necessities; they could afford to neglect old directions and seek new satisfactions. These considerations alone do not explain the new trend. Much of the criticism and some of the change is a response to the deficits of a rational era and a competitive, pluralistic society.

Ask teachers, they will tell you that there is a new mood. Most sixteen year olds are not responsive to the urging "make something of yourself." They know that accomplishment and survival are not so closely linked as they once were. It is not clear that they will live longer, be warmer and be more loved because they center their energies on vocational and economic tasks. Living may not depend on frugality and hard work, neither do they value so much external and vocational success. They know that many journeymen have ceased to be self-evaluative and that others, too, have surrendered their conscience to the corporation or the union. They choose for themselves subjective truth, authenticity or personal meaning.

In this mood, youth ignore the accomplishments and point at bitter failures in this century. They turn from logic to impulse and through Yogi, group breathing, or LSD they hope to stimulate an inner voice. They abandon the Gutenberg style with linear, orderly reading and embrace a McLuhan experience of massive, low attention involvement. They "groove" the surrounding bombardment of stimuli both electronic and natural; they record it without evaluation. Indeed, the medium becomes the message.

It has frequently been said that the professor and the student speak different languages with the professor from Greece, depending on the rational, sequential and research approaches while the student is from Jerusalem, favoring the emotional, unevaluative and experiential. Naturally, these young people discount the message of experience and the evaluative methods of education. They have found the academy painstaking, data-loaded, methodologic and too highly focused. They suspect that scholarly style is inept in crisis and anaemic when there is a call to action.

Adults needs not accept the new posture but they are less than professional and adult if they ignore or fail to understand it. Adults have some responsibility. Schools have nurtured practicalism at the expense of inwardness. Some years ago, Murray (1961), deplored what he called a deficiency disease, which he described as appearance for tangibles, appearances and

technics. Beyond this, schools have often held a meager view of human potentialities evaluating students only on correctness or perfection but giving no credit for thrust, imagination, or values in the students' work. Schools, with all these defects, have, nevertheless, been the most generous among social agencies. Services and evaluations have been offered with a fair disregard for color and poverty, but schoolmen have not always understood and valued unique thought patterns, contrary ideas and out-of-mode behavior.

Schools reflect an urban society which serves industry and economics well but fails humane and imaginative purposes. Cities are the test site for modern society, often impoverished, dehumanizing and vulgar. They are the focus of current disorder and dissatisfaction. It has been estimated that as many as three hundred thousand hard core public assistance cases in New York City will continue to be dependent, for our society finds no way to make them affiliative and productive.

Millions of central city children live with a low parenting index and they fail to use adults as tools in their learning. Such children seem often to be untouched by humanizing forces and responsive only to emergency emotions of fear and rage. Many of the same children are raised with little privacy and show slow personal development. In the heart of the big metropolitan community there is stimulation without the development of controls and one may observe in these settings, bizarre conjunction of sexual play with childish relations.

We have developed equipment for moon travel without making it safe to go from Edmonton to St. Albert and above all, we are not assured that the trip to St. Albert is a significant and inspiring experience.

We should not be enervated by these problems. Modern youth is no spontaneous eruption, no bastard generation but the legitimate offspring of a society *dedicated to appearances*. We are least happy with young people when they reject adults with the adult values. We would be equally unhappy if they followed the deed or modeled values of established society.

There are separations other than the gap between generations. Ours is a polarizing society with hearing problems from one group to another: from young to adult, from black to white, from poor to nearly affluent, from left to right, and from one vocation to another. Western man is moving from pluralism to factionalism, from the belief that solutions are to be found through reasons and consensus, to the belief that solutions come from group power and feeling. Dame Reason is less courted than Dame Passion as man moves from a tradition of practical compromise to unnegotiable postures.

How may the school play a vital role? We can ill afford to develop sophisticates without a code. Badly understood but deep in the contemporary attitude, is a cry for personal meaning—a hope to be redeemed from the impersonality associated with corporate efficiency. To contribute in human development the school must be radical, using radical in its fundamental sense dealing with the root of things.

The school must promote competence, certainly, but there is special urgency for the school to attend to two other matters: (a) Motivation—not simple acquisitiveness or pain-avoidance, not simple vocationalism but motivation which engages the human, motivation that deals with the integrating human forces, (b) Identification—helping children to find themselves, recog-

nizing that no knowledge surpasses self-knowledge, a most important question is how will a person invest himself.

#### WHAT MODEL BEST SERVES ELEMENTARY COUNSELING?

Two enduring biases in the theory of man are found often in theories of counseling. The first emphasizes man *expressive*. In this view the human is strongly instructed by nature. Life conditions elicit or repress natural tendencies. This leads to the idea that there are dualistic and often oppositional motivations, with behavior caused alternately by the press for pleasure and then adjustment to reality. Significant portions of this idea are found in Rousseau and Freud or in Maslow (1962) when he discusses the thread of *inner nature or urges that we should be guided from the deeper side*. The merits of this orientation have been most apparent in work done with the inhibited, the agonized or the repressed.

The second view focuses on man *adaptive*. In extreme form it holds that man is born *tabula rasa*, an object shaped by experience, becoming human only through socialization. Teaching and counseling take on some aspects of engineering with the chief tool being contingency management. This orientation has enjoyed its greatest successes in animal training, education to some low and well defined threshold, work with the retarded and efforts to initiate a new behavior. If a teacher or counselor could control all rewards or build a complete token economy, it appears likely that clients would learn and adapt to the rules of that teacher created system. The limitations in this approach are most conspicuous when the environment is open and the behavior complex. Clearly, operant procedures may be efficient in teaching a pigeon to dance but the steps are those chosen by the experimenter and further, when the pigeon escapes its cage it is not a dancer but a pigeon.

Elementary counselors may find value and derive principles from either of these orientations but truly effective service, calls for a model adaptable to a wide spectrum of behavior and relevant to the molar and integrative nature of human behavior. At least in part, counselors may wisely examine a psychology of meaning.

For homo sapiens, thought may be as primitive and as natural as any other drive. Because hunger, sex and aggression seem to play a major part in animal behavior and lower order human response, psychologists have often assumed that these drives also underlie all behavior. Human intelligence has been dismissed as a particularly complex response to drives which are common in all species. Such a view may be quite erroneous. Intellect, the search for meaning may itself be drive. The able being seems to have an appetite for knowing and intelligence may itself be motivating. If the human has a modicum of choice then we may conclude that the human is a self-making being and the acts are not simply reflexes but more or less conscious tests of the reality of meaning.

Large portions of animal behavior may be connected to instinct or to specific training but human behavior is much more integrative and contemporaneous, being a response at this moment to the interpretation of present conditions.

In effect, the human is born peculiarly empty with very limited biological determinants and it is this emptiness which is essential to his incomparable capacity for change. Man is condemned to meaning, he has a special

dependence on order in the environment and coherence in experience. He is electrified by his own hypotheses and moved to find the truth of his imagining.

Such a being transcends early needs and chooses new motives from point to point. With human change comes new perception and changed needs. In the beginning, the person is egocentric and the field of existence is undifferentiated. The person remains at the center of his field of understanding. He learns only by building out, either experiencing or inferring from what affects himself. The early self is anchored in the body and moved by physical satisfactions. Soon, the learner begins to differentiate. He touches an object and gets a single sensation, he touches himself and gets a double sensation. He begins to know the difference between "other" and "me." If the conditions are right, he builds strongly into the world and becomes significantly himself.

A loving mother adapts the world, phases it to the child's needs, maximizes his possibilities of participation in learning, while the troubled mother may be unable to bring the world to her baby's hands and eyes. When she limits or denies growth the child reduces his being or self-differentiation and frequently reduces his contacts with the world in order to avoid anxiety.

At all ages and at all levels of ability there seem to be twin rules, that development needs feedback and deficient experience results in injury. The pioneer may have enjoyed a very special opportunity to learn his own identity for the effects of his work and the consequences of his efforts were clear. His products were often damaged by storms or pestilence but the evaluations were not confused or distorted by coming through an elaborate industrial, economic and social system. Studies of experimental isolation show that humans placed in environments with very little sound, only minimal temperature variations and exceedingly low visual stimulation soon begin to imagine or hallucinate. When one loosens his contact with the world he seems pressed to develop a fiction poorly anchored in reality. Shortly his behavior begins to manifest characteristics which have been associated with mental illness.

In defective environments, efforts at differentiation and understanding of self are defeated. One of my students recently studied the adolescent children of alcoholic parents. If we sharply abbreviate the findings, it appears that these children have a restricted or diminished development of self (Stevens, 1967).

Learning and personal growth are largely synonymous. There is a very popular but unnatural distinction made between knowing and feeling, between logic and emotion. We have extended that to make a faulty separation between teaching and counseling ignoring that both promote a building into the world and both avoid the pathologies which defeat growth. The two services are not identical; they differ in setting, in process and to some degree in goals but they partake of common psychological insights.

Knowing is always personal. Experiments with glasses which distort vision show that subjects report the greatest distortions when they are looking at an object or a person with which they enjoy security. They report very little distortion when they look on anxiety producing figures of authority or threat. Clearly the distortion, which amounts to a new picture in the head,

depends on freedom to try that new organization. When the feedback is terrifying then we all reduce changes and learning rates. Many stop thinking and that has been called repression by Freud, by Miller and by St. Augustine. I propose then, that counseling and elementary teaching are highly complementary but not identical. Both produce insight, both search for a newly productive seeing. If they change the child's view of the field (his trust of others or his knowledge of reality) or above all, if they change his understanding or belief in himself, then they change behavior.

I first saw Ronnie when he was eight. He had been raised in a restricted environment. There was little family conversation and no books. His father, a massive and powerful man, believed in discipline—by hand. His mother, a removed and vague woman, felt estranged and incompetent. During the first two years, Ronnie lived in a crib, in a trailer, in front of a TV set. Before speech he often looked at *Popular Electronics* magazines, the only printed material available. He began talking late, beyond two years but he manifested almost instant speech and spoke in sentences.

One of the teachers felt that Ronnie was different enough so that some psychological study should be made. On a Stanford-Binet he scored in the high 170's. When he was asked to draw a man, he drew a little stick man, but a stick man in the coils of a machine, a system of pulleys and ropes lowering the teeny man into a jet car ready to blast off. When he was again asked to draw a person, he drew a robot, and on a third request he broke down, cried a little and said he couldn't draw people.

Ronnie was asked if he knew how a TV tube worked and he said, "Let's make it color." He took a paper napkin and presented a fine diagrammatic explanation. As you might guess, the child's specialty was science, particularly the science of electricity. His mind models, his thinking were much like the source from which they sprung. They were diagrammatic, like *Popular Electronics*. He diagramed everything, he talked about models and when he didn't have a pencil he illustrated with his hands in the air.

When Ronnie was nine he asked to see the University computer and as he walked toward the appropriate building he raised the question of whether this would be an analog or a digital machine. In response to a question, he said that he supposed it would be digital suited to binary mathematics and a yes-no technique in the social sciences. At this point the guide who was a graduate student said, "Which is harder to understand, people or machines?"

The boy said, "people," and then in response to a question he said, "Well, people are harder to understand because there are fewer regularities in their response. They are harder to predict because there is more variability to a stimulus." The graduate student now asked, "Why then, do you prefer to study machines rather than study people?"

The boy began with a question. "Don't you know why I'm here? You see, in studying people, I would be beat before I started because I am not much of a person and I have no reference model for understanding others."

Ronnie's answer is indeed, like that from a graduate student—immensely complex. It is more than that. Like all responses it reflects the peculiar style of understanding and the limitations of understanding of the respondent. He is brilliant, he deals in models and he avoids human content.

## ILLUSTRATIVE TASKS AND STRATEGIES

1. *The counselor is a climate maker in the school.* It is said that Lycurgis advised the monarch that if the Greeks wished to manage a multitude of slaves or Helots, they must develop an aloof, hardy and disciplined style. He recommended eugenic selection of pupils, then placement at seven years in a special state-residential school with communal and frugal conditions combined with careful monitoring of rewards and out-of-school influences. The goal was to make Spartans (Murray, 1961).

History tells us that youth always reflects the values and the nurturing style of the community. Clearly, in modern times the goals are confused. Pines (1967) in his article, "A Pressure Cooker for Four-Year-Old Minds" advocate teacher-directed education with tight schedules and active, precise instruction and rehearsal. Equally vigorous protagonists argue for a gentle beginning with individual interests serving as the major criterion for selection of tasks. The teacher hears arguments for the primary school to be a little M.I.T., a Montessori or a Summerhill. From experience and from training the counselor should be able to give some leadership in these classroom matters.

Most teachers accept that human outcomes result more from climate than from a specific program. Humans work from a massive syndrome of stimuli, memory and insight, not from a single stimulus. Roe's (1953) studies of scientists show the powerful effects of family climate in molding scientism. Affiliation with aspiring, Protestant and conforming families is more significant than any isolated scientific experience.

Counselors and teachers hope to develop climates which will affiliate the interest and engage the "left outs." Jackson (1968) at the University of Chicago and others have shown that disinterest in school bears no direct relation with the degree of academic achievement. It is increasingly clear that a number of able or gifted children disaffiliate themselves with school in junior high years. They become dropouts who continue to attend. Their disaffiliation seems to coincide with the school modification toward less personal involvement and more attention to facts rather than to discovery and meaning. Comparisons of impulsive and reflective children show that reflective children usually enjoy a comparatively positive self-reflection but impulsive children who make many errors get a negative return with elements of punishment and they may respond with anger and apathy.

There appear to be a wide variety of learning styles. The bright active child who has been lightly mothered learns to do for himself. He climbs and handles. Such a child begins school as a visual-motor learner. He finds a verbal style where questions and words are the tools. He may be unstimulated and then, become bored, dreamy, disorderly or stupid. Obviously, the counselor is not simply involved in establishing one good climate but in promoting a number of relevant climates. School for all the children, calls for multiple adaptations and the elementary counselor should have a key role in promoting affiliative environments, suitable teaching methods, adequate curricular offering or reasonable administrative arrangements.

2. *Counselors are consultants to significant others.* By working with cases they help teachers to adapt methods or choose instructional materials. Through curriculum embedded evaluations they influence the school. But

perhaps the keenest need is for work with parents, particularly, parents in the pre-school and primary years.

Casual observation shows the importance of early development and early family experience. Experimentation with both animals and children support a conviction that effective child rearing values the early years. Kretch (1969) at Berkeley, using rats as subjects, has studied the consequences of chemical and food shortages or abundances and he has also appraised the effects of variety and experience in development. He concludes that experience results in a heavier thicker cortex with larger and more glia cells. Therefore a well fed rat from a good family becomes a retarded rat if it is denied adequate educational fare (Kretch, 1969).

Animal data seem not to translate directly to other species. Clearly, they do not translate directly to the human situation. Human studies seem, however, to concur with the animal observations. Rheingold (1956) gave an around-the-clock-mother to one of each pair of institutionalized children and found that the mothered one grew most during an experimental period. The remarkable element in this experiment was that the assigned mothers were themselves feeble-minded. While it is not assured that these gains are permanent, it does appear safe to conclude that love is a significant variable in adapting the world not only to the level but to the quality of a child's growth.

A number of studies show that Chinese children tend to have a competency profile which peaks on spatial abilities (Fort, 1969). This is consistent with the observation that many of their fathers are architects and scientists and that Chinese-American rearing patterns tolerate large portions of exploratory movement. Jewish children are quite different. They tend to peak on verbal and numerical abilities. Many of their parents work in the realm of words; teachers, psychologists and lawyers. Their homes are more controlling and force exploration away from the physical and into words and questions. Goertzels and Goertzels (1962) in their studies of 400 creative people report evidence of the importance of child rearing. The fathers were sometimes dreamers and failure-prone while the mothers set standards and often found an outlet for their own ambition through the children (Goertzels & Goertzels, 1969). In general, the eminent adults achieved in fields highly valued by their parents, not always fields in which their parents were accomplished.

Obviously, attitudes and interests develop remarkably early. It is logical that the best payoff in counseling may come in helping parents of young children. This hunch is supported by an experiment done by Duncan and Fitzgerald (1969) in Florida. They report remarkably large returns in such matters as better attendance and higher grades associated with very limited parent conferencing.

3. *Counselors are change agents working directly with children.* Faust (1968) in a survey of the literature reports that elementary counseling from the years 1950 to 1965 shifted from crisis to developmental work, from dealing with problems to dealing with learning and from one-to-one to both individual and group work.

Clearly, a prime criterion of counselor competence must be counseling, the ability to develop interpersonal conditions which are propitious to client change. This calls for wisdom, interpersonal skill and empathy. The counselor must be able to stand in a special relation to children, providing one

more chance to grow, one chance to go outside the archaic boundaries or to step into understanding. This is a highly subjective process violated by one who takes authority not rightfully his or violated by the adult whose responses to children are determined by his own anxieties.

These services are difficult to evaluate. The products or outcomes easily measured are not the products sought and it is exceedingly difficult to predict what the outcomes would have been without counseling. One must evaluate not so much the product as the process. Counseling is a subjective process, not easily evaluated or objectively controlled. It, therefore, calls for special purity of motive and training of an extended and intense kind.

The highly prepared counselor must sometimes deliberately expose children to new ideas, must set up low-risk conditions where children will explore their environments and rearrange their thinking. The elementary counselor participates with the child to discriminate which is important, explore roads that have been closed, see how he evaluates himself differently from others, drop archaic baggage that slows his growth or evaluate his own behavior.

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## LE COUNSELING CHEZ LES JEUNES DE L'ELEMENTAIRE

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Il semble bien qu'une éducation bien structurée établisse une relation directe entre l'étudiant et la matière apprise, entre le maître et le disciple. La haine, l'injustice et la peur engendrent scission et ignorance tandis que l'amour, la curiosité et l'imagination augmentent la participation et facilitent l'addition de connaissances. A travers tout ceci, le counseling a son rôle à jouer. Si le counseling a parfois un apport correctif, il doit toujours travailler au développement du sujet, car conseiller et client sont tous deux des humains qui veulent profiter à la limite de l'expérience acquise et de la connaissance d'eux-mêmes.