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## TOWARD BETTER RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

One of the foremost problem areas confronting the helping professions of school social work, guidance, and school psychology today is that of attempting to define the role and function of professional workers in each discipline within the framework of a common goal—that of improved service to the public schools. Attempts at role clarification have been made by numerous writers, but a consensus of opinion among the three groups does not seem to exist. For example, the school social worker is seen as a type of counselor, consultant, home-school liaison agent, and behavior specialist by Pearman and Burrows (1965), Yaffee (1961-62), and Quattlebaum (1963). Others have listed one or more of these functions of the school psychologist (Bowen, 1955; Hirst, 1963; Magary, 1967), while still others claim these duties for the school counselor (California Teachers' Association, 1962; Dinkmeyer, 1962; Glanz, 1962; Wrenn, 1962). Clearly, the similarities and differences among the three professions deserve our close attention if we are to move in the direction of discovering how each can best serve the public schools. Perhaps an examination of some of the areas that lead to confusion in role definition would be beneficial.

### 1. THE POSSESSION PHENOMENON

Although counselors, psychologists, and social workers would probably not like to admit that they can become possessive and resentful of others who may be working with a child, teacher, or parent, this attitude does seem to be a reality. Counselors constantly refer to "my clients," social workers to "my cases," and psychologists to "my referrals" (Hirst, 1963). In a warning directed to school psychologists, Hirst illustrates the possessive attitude that can affect all of us.

The school psychologist may do well to heed this implicit warning: an emotional involvement often follows when an adult works closely with and for a particular child. As a result, the adult becomes quite possessive. He resents the encroachment of an outsider. He does not emotionally accept the idea that another can assist "his child" with personal problems (Hirst, 1963, p. 147).

It seems strange that at a time when the need for professional workers far surpasses the available supply any of us should have to cross professional swords with another in order to feel that we are making a contribution. Although Hirst's warning is probably not valid for all situations, helpers in all three fields should at least be cognizant of the fact that it can become a problem. A periodic self-analysis of each individual with regard to his feelings towards others who may be assisting a given child would be a desirable and beneficial practice for all school personnel—including those who are specialists.

## 2. THE NON-INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

The possessive attitude previously mentioned probably stems at least in part from our traditional methods of educating counselors, social workers, and psychologists. A glance at any university catalog will reveal that numerous courses which supposedly cover the same or similar material are offered under different titles in separate campus departments. One major American institution offers three separate courses entitled "Advanced Learning Theory"—one each in the College of Education, Department of Sociology, and Department of Psychology. One must wonder if children learn so differently that three separate and apparently distinct courses are necessary for those who, in all probability, will work in the public schools! What we desperately need in graduate education is more and better opportunities for students in the three disciplines to interact with each other in an effort to discover what the other is attempting to do and why. An additional area at least worthy of investigation is that of the possibility of providing a common core program for school psychologists, counselors, and social workers. The details of such a program may well vary from institution to institution, but it would certainly appear that certain basic learnings are common to all three groups.

In this context, we should applaud the efforts of the United States Office of Education in their efforts that make interdisciplinary study a priority condition for the awarding of grants. For example, at the University of Maine, twenty graduate fellows are currently studying to become elementary school counselors under terms of an integrated USOE *Experienced Teacher Fellowship Grant*. Although the University does not yet have programs in social work or school psychology, fellows in guidance take over forty percent of their work in the departments of psychology and sociology. Faculty members of these departments meet regularly with professors of education and have managed to sweep away some of the traditional departmental barriers that make joint planning so difficult. Consultants from outside the field of guidance are brought in to confer with students, and an attempt is made to give them some exposure to philosophers, artists, and economists as well as practicing social workers, psychologists, and counselors. In this way, we hope to broaden the vistas of the students and help them to become more cognizant of the contributions and problems of other disciplines. In the process, the fellows are becoming increasingly able to envision their own role as counselors and to project this role to include the definite probability that they will be working with other professional helpers in the schools.

## 3. THE JOURNAL BARRIER

Too often, graduate students suffer from professional myopia from rather narrow reading in those journals most closely related to their chosen field. Although it is perhaps natural for a student to seek out readings most closely related to his interest, it is *unnatural* in terms of future work assignments. Faculty members who fail to promote and encourage "outside readings" are almost bound to foster student rigidity and contribute to the "possession phenomenon." For example, articles published in guidance journals are written primarily by guidance people, and not surprisingly contain a distinct guidance flavor and more than a little "guidance" bias. To combat this, students should be asked to explore writings in such journals as *Child*

*Welfare, Children, Psychology in the Schools, and Personnel Management* as well as *Personnel and Guidance Journal, Journal of Counseling Psychology, Journal of School Psychology*, and numerous other professional publications. Secondly, leaders in the prospective fields need to be encouraged to submit articles to journals in related fields, especially to those publications that have wide circulation. This will only be possible, of course, if the editorial policies of some journals can be broadened enough to include written efforts of those in separate but related disciplines.

An additional helpful step would be more imaginative program planning at state, regional, and national meetings to include more speakers from related disciplines as presenters. Far too many programs have been structured to exclude anyone but those who work under the label of counselor, psychologist, or social worker—depending, of course, on which group is sponsoring the program. A recent example of this was a panel discussion at a guidance meeting in New England entitled, "The Counselor and the Home Environment"—yet no social worker or school psychologist was among the participants!

#### 4. THE RESEARCH LAG

Several investigators have attempted to study the role and function of school counselors, social workers, and psychologists in an educational setting (Grant, 1954; Warmon, 1960; Oldridge, 1964; Muro, 1968). The results of these studies have been useful in that they have provided us with much needed information about *what* members of the helping professions are doing in the schools. We now need to expand the criterion space in our designs to include some assessment of what *benefits* occur to pupils and staff when an institution has the services of a counselor, social worker, psychologist, or some combination of these. Most of us believe that members of the helping professions do much "good" for public education; however, this belief is largely based on faith and armchair philosophy rather than on empirical evidence.

We would do well to direct our attention to the innovative research project now under way at the University of Maryland (University of Maryland, 1965). In essence, this group is attempting to discover what does happen in schools that employ social workers, psychologists, and child development consultants. Although finalized conclusions are not yet available the design appears to hold promise for all of us in the helping professions.

On a positive note, the birth of the information retrieval systems, the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) of the United States Office of Education and School Research Information Service (SRIS) sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa, have allowed us to take an important step forward in the area of rapid disseminations of research findings. Members of the helping professions who are *not* familiar with these systems would do well to investigate their potentialities.

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VERS DE MEILLEURES RELATIONS ENTRE LES  
SERVICES PROFESSIONNELS

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Psychologues scolaires, travailleurs sociaux scolaires et conseillers d'orientation n'ont pas toujours fonctionné dans une harmonie totale. Le manque d'entente entre ces trois groupes a semé la confusion quant au rôle et à la fonction de chacun et cette confusion a nui plus qu'elle n'a aidé à ces professions dont le but est sensiblement le même: aider le client le plus possible. Si nous acceptons le principe que de meilleures relations entre ces groupes sont vraiment désirables, les responsables de la préparation des futurs conseillers d'orientation, des travailleurs sociaux et des psychologues se doivent d'envisager de sérieux changements dans les cours de formation universitaire.

De plus, réunions et congrès devront être conçus de façon à inviter des membres de chacune de ces trois professions.