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COUNSELING WITH DEAF PERSONS: AN OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE DEALING WITH DEFINITIONS, SITUATIONS, AND TYPES OF APPROACHES USED

William D. Scott

Introduction

Each year many professionals begin to provide counseling services to deaf persons. Most of these professionals have not been exposed to any formal training program in the area of "Counseling With Deaf Persons (CWDP)." They attempt to familiarize themselves with this area by 1. comparing the similarities and dissimilarities of counseling and of CWDP, 2. consulting with other workers with the deaf and members of the deaf community, and 3. searching for various bibliographic lists in order to discover information about what has been accomplished in CWDP.

There has not been a central reference point from which a professional could obtain an overall view of the area of CWDP. The author surveyed the literature concerning CWDP, interviewed counselor educators, professional workers with the deaf, and members of the deaf community in order to develop an article that might serve as a starting place in orienting workers to the area of CWDP. The author discusses 1. problems in identifying what constitutes "counseling" and thus CWDP, 2. how different writers have viewed CWDP, 3. situations in which

CWDP has been found beneficial, 4. types of counseling found useful in CWDP, and 5. the future of CWDP. The author includes a selected bibliography concerned with the area of CWDP that updates and adds several relevant articles to the list of previously published bibliographies (Austin, 1976; Fellendorf, 1965, 1972).

What Is "Counseling"?

A wide variety of definitions concerning what is counseling exists in the literature. Good (1973) identifies several types of counseling: analytically-oriented, behavioral, client centered, crisis, directive, eclectic, educational, family, individual, job, marriage, parent, pastoral, precollege, preemployment, rehabilitation, trait and factor, and vocational.

Brammer (1971) defines counseling as the process of helping people to change their behavior in the direction they choose.

Arbuckle (1957) emphasizes that the client has a problem(a disturbance)and that only through the counseling relationship could the client develop insight. It is thought that the development of insight relieves the complexity of the client's emotional disturbance.

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Good (1973) thinks that counseling is mostly something the counselor controls. Other definitions emphasize the belief that the counselor is able to create a psychologically non-threatening climate and is able to communicate this fact to the client.

While there is no uniformity of what is meant by the term counseling, the author believes that the following seven conditions, when present, are indicative of counseling: 1. a helping relationship exists between two or more individuals, 2. one person (the counselor) is identified as a helper, 3. the other person is identified as a helpee, 4. the client is expected to communicate with the counselor, 5. through progress in the relationship the client is expected to change his behavior, feeling, or attitudes; 6. the relationship is structured as to the limits in which counseling can proceed; and 7. the counselor is qualified to engage in counseling due to his experience and professional training.

What Is "Counseling With Deaf Persons"?

Patterson and Stewart (1971) state that it is difficult if not impossible to define counseling in a brief statement. The wide range of conceptualization that characterizes the various definitions of counseling is reflected in the definitions as to what constitutes CWDP.

Sanderson (1974), Avery and Youst (1973), Blish (1955), MacDonald (1935), Goetzinger (1967), and Mathews (1974) are of the opinion that CWDP consists in attempting to effect a better functioning relationship between the client and his environment.

Sussman (1971) suggests that the goal of counseling is to help the client better understand himself as a person. Goetzinger (1967) recommends that the goal include developing with the client a better understanding of the client's attitude towards the hearing person. He further recommends that the counselor assist the client to establish and clarify the client's self-identity.

Myklebust, Neyhus, and Mulholland (1962), Rodda (1974), and Goetzinger (1967) advocate that CWDP aims at developing insight. Rainer and Altschuler (1973) suggest that CWDP should help the client learn to control his impulsivity as well as to improve his poor social relationships and low self image. CWDP should help to develop adequate internal "super-ego" controls and constraints.

Stojnic (1972) believes that CWDP is a process in which the counselor aims at developing what types of employment are best suited for the deaf client and what preparation is necessary for the client to participate in that field of endeavor.

Reddan and Duggan (1973), Difrancesca and Hurwitz (1969), Goetzinger (1967), and Myklebust, et al. (1962) propose that CWDP consists of an activity in which the client is taught how to make appropriate decisions independently. This may occur through the counselor concentrating upon specifics, e.g., assisting the client to learn and utilize daily living skills. Williams and Sussman (1971) believe that it is the quality of the counseling relationship that enables the deaf client to solve his own problems. This occurs when the counselor is able to create a psychologically non-threatening climate within the counseling relationship and the client is able to perceive this climate.

Porter (1975) and Troop (1966) suggest that the counseling process is so closely attached to other phenomena, e.g., occupational information giving or coordinating services for the client, that it is unable to be separated from the observable activities that occur.

The author believes that the nature of CWDP is similar to that of counseling. As such the seven conditions mentioned earlier are usually necessary for CWDP. These conditions may not always apply since counseling goals are often situationally specific. The necessity to recognize that various goals may apply at different times helps to explain why

there appears to be so little agreement as to what constitutes CWDP. It may be that many of the writers function in different situations and perceive the needs of the deaf client in a different manner than do some of the other counselors functioning in situations.

Situations In Which CWDP Has Been Found Beneficial

Avery and Youst (1973) as well as Goetzinger (1967) discuss several situations in which CWDP occurs. These situations are: elementary and secondary schools, rehabilitation centers, career information centers, post-secondary educational facilities, workshops, correctional facilities, independent living centers, vocational training programs, and church counseling centers.

Vernon (1971), Blake and Tully (1966), and Elliot (1974) identify other situations: marriage counseling centers, parent counseling programs, family counseling centers, employment offices, community mental health centers, and vocational rehabilitation agencies.

The goals of CWDP may be different for clients undergoing training in a comprehensive residential rehabilitation center than are the goals of CWDP for clients who only require placement assistance from a state vocational rehabilitation agency. The author believes that it is important to recognize that CWDP many times is dependent upon the situation. As previously pointed out the counseling relationship is usually structured as to the limits in which counseling can proceed.

Types of Counseling Found Useful In CWDP

Brick (1967), Clayton and Robinson (1971), and Curtis (1975, 1976) report that several different types of counseling have been used. These include: behavioral modification, behavioral counseling, contingency management, transactional analysis, reality therapy, relationship and skill building

groups, role-playing, psychodrama, behavioral contracts, eclectic approaches, preventative counseling, play therapy, rational-emotive psychotherapy, information providing and social work technique.

While both directive and nondirective types of counseling were reported, the author did not notice any report of existential psychotherapies being utilized. The author has observed the following types of counseling being used successfully in CWDP: Adlerian, client-centered therapy, gestalt therapy, biofeedback therapy, and assertiveness training.

Only very limited application of psychoanalytic techniques is reported used. The more language-based types of counseling (those depending upon learned verbal skills) do not seem to be used as predominately in CWDP as they are utilized in counseling with the general population.

The Future of CWDP

The relative lack of agreement concerning what constitutes the area known as CWDP as well as the multiplicity of types of counseling utilized will probably continue to exist. Because counseling has been assumed to be effective in the delivery of human social services, it is likely that as more services are provided CWDP will take on an expanded range of meaning.

COUNSELING WITH DEAF PERSONS: AN OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

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