chapter one - system orientation: a dilemma for the role conceptualisation of 'counsellors' in schools?

A survey of the American and British literature on counselling is used to elaborate an hypothesis concerning the importance in the minds of counsellors of the organisational as well as the interpersonal relationships they make. The hypothesis is tested and confirmed by a questionnaire enquiry to counsellors, pastoral care staff, guidance staff and others in British secondary schools. It leads to an elaboration in organisational terms of the notion of 'directiveness'.

the experiential base

There is a theory of research which suggests that people who undertake investigations and enquiries into this or that aspect of the physical or behavioural world are really using the research as a way of dealing with some inner impulse or repression of their own. If that is the rule, then this study is no exception to it. The study springs directly from the meanings and significances I attached to my work as a school counsellor in a London comprehensive from autumn 1968 until December 1972. I came away from that work with a vaguely formulated hypothesis. It was that when I sought to resolve one or other of the dilemmas of counselling, a chief consideration in my mind was a sense of the demands, expectations and cues offered to me by the school as a social system. Moreover, my impression was that my counselling colleagues in other schools were faced with much the same dilemmas, and that they could be differentiated in terms of what I was later to term 'system orientation'. In other words, once I knew how a counsellor resolved one dilemma, I could begin to predict how he would resolve some, of the others: the common theme of legitimation or bastardisation of the school's demands would thread each counsellor's responses into a recognisable conception of what he thought counselling in schools was for.

A large part of the formulation of hypothesis for this study comes, therefore, from a consideration of actual cases with which a school counsellor is confronted. The case studies are set out in more detail elsewhere (Law, 1977) but some appreciation of the main shape of the issues I have identified can be gained from the brief description of the situations given below.

- '**Alan**' on entering the upper sixth form is offered a prefect's badge which he wants to decline on political grounds; he asks for the advice of the school counsellor.
- '**Keith**', a deeply distressed 12-year-old, refuses to come to school and is referred to the school counsellor by the Head, who subsequently asks the counsellor, at frequent intervals, how long it will be before he is regularly attending again.
- '**Christine**' complains to the counsellor that her plans for higher education are being controlled unfairly by 'pushing' teachers.
- '**Derek**' is referred for aggressive behaviour in class, and confides in the counsellor who is later asked to write a detailed report to support the Head's recommendation that Derek should be excluded from school.

- '**Eric**' is referred for under-achievement; counselling leads to some improvement in achievement but meanwhile it becomes clear to the counsellor that 'Eric' is in deeply distressing emotional difficulties, which some people would classify as pathological, and which have been invisible on the surface of his life.
- '**Fiona**' refers herself because she says she is being persecuted by younger girls in the school. Parents, staff, peer-group and psychiatrist all have precise but different characterisations. to make of what they take to be Fiona's problem.
- '**Gary**'- who claims that his teachers are right to characterise him as 'lazy' - consults the counsellor concerning whether he should leave school to take a job which has been offered: a job which 'Gary' very much wants to take but which he knows offers few real prospects and will use few of his abilities.
- '**Anne**' is able to make use of an essentially self-referral system of counselling, makes a suicidal gesture, confides it to the school counsellor, and then claims the right to total confidentiality as a bar to any further action on her part or his.
- '**Irene**', who is seriously in personal conflict with a teacher, asks the counsellor if he can arrange for her to be transferred to a parallel 'set'.
- '**Janet**', an anxiously vulnerable 14-year-old, is upset by the counsellor's use in her group of an intelligence test and an interest inventory: her parents complain to the headmaster and the school governors that the use of such tests represents an unacceptable invasion of privacy.

elaboration from the literature

The cases of 'Keith' and 'Anne' have been reported in more detail elsewhere (Law, 1973; 1974). It seems to me that what each of these situations symbolise is some aspect or other of the working relationships that exist between the counsellor and the social system of the school in which he works. Each case raises issues concerning the extent to which the counsellor legitimises the demands upon him and upon his client of the school as a social system.

Such issues can be identified also in the literature on counselling. Eleven issues of this kind are identified below, each of which can be attached to one or more of the foregoing situations.

(a) The counsellor and the value system of the school. The counsellor is appointed to work in a social system which has a 'hidden curriculum' (Illich, 1971). That hidden curriculum may be seen by the teachers as deriving its authority from the traditional values of society (Grace, 1972) - perhaps, more specifically, from the traditional middle-class values of society (Hargreaves, 1967). It may also be less coherently conceived as being composed of the personal preferences (whether for competitiveness or spontaneity) of individual teachers who happen to work in the school (Musgrove and Taylor, 1969). Or it may be a simple or complex system of instrumental rules to maintain non-disruptive compliance on the part of students (King, 1973).

In all cases the question for the counsellor is 'do I share in the transmission of such values?' - as Williamson (1958) has argued he might, and Shoben (1965) has argued he cannot avoid; or 'do I seek to work independently of such

transmitted values?' - as Rogers (1951) has argued those who have respect for the individual will, and Wrenn (1971) has argued all counsellors should. Both sets of answers can be found in the British literature: Hamblin (1971b, p. 12) has emphasised that 'like other social workers the counsellor is sponsored by an agency of whom he is a representative and to whom he owes responsibility and loyalty'; while Daws (1968) and Hughes (1971) have both followed Strang's (1955) support for Rogerian client-centred techniques as those which are most likely to facilitate the client's own autonomy and his sense of responsibility for his own actions.

In the cases referred to above, 'Alan's' refusal of a prefect's badge, Keith's' refusal to come to school, 'Christine's' complaint and 'Derek's' aggression all represent challenges to the transmitted values of the school. The way in which the counsellor resolves such dilemmas will say something about the extent to which he legitimises the transmission of such values.

(b) The counsellor and the identification of problems. Value systems, as Goffman (1963) vividly illustrates in his examination of social stigma, identify problems. Problems which are seen as central and pressing in one setting may be seen as peripheral or irrelevant in another. While Williamson (1958) has argued that school counsellors should concern themselves with problems which can be worked out in a rational and logical way rather than with those which are affect-laden, Rogers (1961) has entirely dismissed the notion of 'presenting problem' as a viable base for real help, because it is concerned only with the 'facades', 'oughts' and 'expectations' which others foist upon the individual.

In this country discussion of what are appropriate problems for counselling help has been dominated by the 'educational -vocational-personal' trichotomy first set up by Daws (1967) but extensively used by subsequent writers (Thompson, 1970; Williams, 1973). Some, like Barnett (1971), tend to support Williamson by arguing that a school counsellor should establish his role at the educational-vocational end of the problem-spectrum. Others, like Hughes (1971), shift the terms of the discussion, and argue that the 'non-rational' as well as the 'rational' aspects of a student's progress are properly the counsellor's concern. Practice seems to accord at least as much with Hughes' as with Barnett's view: both Jones (1970) and Holden (1969; 1971) have described essentially personal and affect-laden counselling services, and Thompson's (1970) study of the work of 25 counsellors found that for every interview conducted which could be designated mainly 'educational' or `vocational', a further interview could be designated mainly personal'.

In the cases quoted earlier, the amount of attention given to 'Keith's' distress away from school and to 'Eric's' other problems will depend upon how much attention the counsellor tends to pay to the way in which the school identifies the problem: both were referred for help with specific educational 'problems' identified by the school.

(c) The counsellor and the maintenance of the school system. A strong and recurring theme in the American counselling literature is that the appointment of counsellors will lead to humane changes being made in organisational systems (Wrenn, 1962; McCully, 1965; Lortie, 1965; Kuriloff, 1973). Some of the empirical evidence (e.g. Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963) suggests, however, that the role of the American secondary school counsellor as social reformer may be more rhetorical than real: that essentially counsellors will be agencies for maintaining the status quo.

In this country the suspicions of Musgrove and Taylor (1969) that counsellors are appointed in order to 'cool out' students into an acceptance of what the school provides has been supported by North's (1972) more extensive and ambitious attack upon what he regards (I think wrongly*) as Halmos' (1965) 'quietist' approach to counselling. The quietist approach is characterised as one which effectively legitimises inadequate organisational and social provisions by failing ever to challenge them politically. North wants to replace the 'secular priests' - who are concerned with getting the adjustment of people to organisations - with 'secular prophets' - who will be concerned with adjusting organisations to people. The literature of school counselling in this country has, so far, failed to assign to the counsellor a more politically interventionist role than that of a mediator (Morris, 1955; Holden, 1971): indeed Jones (1970) specifically rejects the more interventionist stance of advocacy on behalf of the student.

Whether 'Christine' or 'Irene' are likely to enlist the active support of the counsellor or not will depend largely upon whether the counsellor sees himself - in however skilful and diplomatic a style - as some kind of reformer rather than as a maintainer of the school system.

(d) The counsellor, the individual and the group. The responsiveness of education to the needs of the group on the one hand and to the individual on the other is nowhere more pressing an issue than in the counselling interview. In the end, on whose behalf is the counsellor acting? In America, Riesman (1961) has convincingly argued that as society becomes more complex, interdependent and urban - i.e. as 'other people' are progressively more of a problem - the shift will be in the direction of an 'other-directed' rather than an 'inner-directed' ideal for behaviour. That is, group rather than individual needs will become the arbitrator of the ideal. Wrenn (1962) has already pointed to some evidence that this shift in attitude has rippled into the counselling movement in America.

The needs of the group are not necessarily in opposition to the needs of the individual, but neither are they necessarily congruent with them. Sometimes the counsellor must choose, and the recurring rhetoric of the British literature of

* I've changed my mind: at least to the extent that I think Halmos put far too much faith in any belief that 'post-political' individual change was the only answer that we need. We need to know much more about how to change damaging systems.

counselling is that it embodies the principle of individual freedom (Morris, 1955), individualistic and existentialist ideologies (Holden, 1969), an egalitarian political ideology (Craft, 1969), and 'child-centred education' (Hughes, 1971). Indeed, Daws (1968) sees the introduction of a counselling' approach to careers guidance as a means of correcting the traditional bias, which has sought to ensure 'employer satisfactoriness', so that 'client satisfactoriness' is at last given its proper attention.

Both 'Derek' and 'Gary', in the cases quoted above, are in some sense troublesome to the school. But whether it is the troubles of the client as an individual or of the school as a group which become the focus of attention is a dilemma which different counsellors may resolve in different ways.

(e) The counsellor and the identification of clients. Elsewhere (Law, 1971) I have argued that attempts to define the work of the counsellor on the e-v-p model fail because the model is essentially a school-based analysis of life's problems, and life is not so arbitrarily fragmented. An alternative to the 'types-of-problem' definition of the counsellor's work is the 'types-of-client' definition.

The most thoroughgoing analysis in Britain of the clientele for school counsellors has been offered by the NAMH (1970). They distinguish between all children, children at particular stages of development, and a small minority of children who have 'pathological' needs: they argue that the school counsellor is primarily concerned with the first two of these three categories. Others too have argued that counselling is for the 'normal', 'developmental' problems of 'the majority' of youngsters (e.g. Jones, 1970; Thompson, 1970), although some (Daws, 1967; Craft, 1969; Hughes, 1971; Maguire, 1975) have suggested that some school counsellors will, and probably should, have more than minimal roles in helping youngsters with serious emotional difficulties. Such evidence as we have (Thompson, 1970) suggests that by no means all school counsellors are happy to accept responsibilities of this latter kind.

Whether or not he is able to refer them, the way in which the counsellor handles cases like those of 'Keith', 'Eric' and 'Anne' will depend very much on the sorts of limits that he sets upon the appropriateness of undertaking work with those who have more than 'normal' or 'developmental' problems.

(f) The counsellor and the definition of problems. Once a youngster has been accepted as part of the clientele of the counsellor, there are of course many more ways than one of defining and elaborating 'the problem'. Professional groups have diagnostic categories into which most human conditions can be fitted without too much difficulty (cf. Antonouris, 1974). A party game could be devised to guess which professional group would be most likely to use which particular terms - 'deprived', 'paranoic', 'underachieving', 'acting-out' - to describe which of the cases mentioned at the beginning of this article. Non-professionals have other terms like 'naughty', 'unhappy', and 'like me!' or 'not like me!'

Language symbolises frames of thought, and subsequently those frames of thought control the way in which the human condition can be defined and elaborated. Among the variety of such frames which can be used to comprehend the condition of a particular student is that of the student himself. It is upon the task of comprehending the individual in his own terms that Rogers (1951) concentrates his attention, distinguishing on the one hand the exercise of empathy, and on the other the use both of (professional?) interpretations and (non-professional?) projection. The influence of Rogers' use of the term 'empathy' is traceable in. a great deal of British literature, although some authors (Ryle, 1969; Hamblin, 1974) have sought to guard against its feared subjectivism by introducing the more structured and verifiable use of personal construct techniques.

The counsellor of a person like 'Fiona' might find it difficult, in the middle of much diagnostic and projective material, to gain some empathetic understanding of what it is like to be 'Fiona', until he makes a conscious attempt to do so. That, in turn, implies some capacity to resist the problem-defining and problem-elaborating elements which already multifariously exist within the school system.

(g) The counsellor and client change. Tyler (1969) in America has distinguished two wings of the counselling movement in terms of their tendency to think of two different outcomes of counselling: client-choosing, and client-changing. The technology of changing client behaviour has been most thoroughly explored by behaviourally-orientated theorists and practitioners (e.g. Michael and Meyerson, 1965). Some of these have insisted that the changes facilitated must be sought for (or chosen) by the client (Krumboltz and Thoresen, 1969). But sometimes changes seem to be sought without the client's agreement, and perhaps even without his knowledge: Michael and Meyersen (1965) appear to exhibit few qualms about such an approach. On the other wing of American counselling, Wrenn (1962) claims that the purpose of counselling is always for client-choice, never for change.

The 'change' and 'choice' orientations in counselling may not be so clearly discrete alternatives as Tyler and Wrenn appear to imply. At times some kind of change may be worked for precisely in order to make real choice possible. A person can be imprisoned by psychological as well as sociological barriers. The British counselling literature tends to coalesce the two notions of counselling for change and for choice. Much of what has been written by Jones (1970) and Holden (1969; 1971) is at least interpretable as seeking to bring about attitudinal and behavioural changes, sometimes as a necessary preliminary to facilitating genuine choices.

Nonetheless, the counsellor of 'Gary' may have to decide whether he is going to work for 'Gary' to make the choice with which he is currently presented, or alternatively to work to facilitate some maturation (i.e. change) so that a more satisfactory range of choices might become available at a later stage.

(h) The counsellor and the contract with the client. The term most commonly used to describe the interaction between a counsellor and his client is 'relationship'. It connotes the psychological ambience which facilitates or inhibits interpersonal communication. The term 'contract' also has its uses, because it connotes the public and private commitments which are made between counsellor and client. Among such commitments there might be explicit or implicit agreements as to what kind of help can or cannot be found in the relationship, how much time can be available, who controls information yielded by counselling, and who has the power to initiate and terminate the counselling relationship. Emmett's (1975) challenge to the use of 'contract' with reference to counselling, on the grounds that there are no formal sanctions, is - arguably - over-legalistic. People have been known to make contracts where no enforceable formal sanctions exist!

One of the few American writers to explore this aspect of the counselling enterprise is Aubrey (1969). He complains that a psycho therapeutically orientated counselling service is inappropriate to American schools because clients cannot initiate or terminate treatment, the whole situation being controlled and circumscribed by incongruent institutional norms and insufficient time. Counsellors in American schools, he argues, are bound to be authoritarian.

Yet much of the British literature yields a contrary picture of what actually happens in schools. Both Jones (1970) and Holden (1969; 1971) describe 'self-referral' and confidential counselling services. Taylor (1971) argues that what distinguishes the idea of school counselling is its voluntary nature. Thompson (1970) shows that, of the interviews conducted by the members of his sample, more were requested by clients than were arranged by staff, and that many of the counsellors would part with information yielded by the interview only with the client's permission. Murgatroyd (1977) has, however, uncovered more recent evidence that, in at least one school, counsellors are perceived by students as authority figures.

If 'contract' is conceived of in terms of distributing the power of initiation and control between counsellor and client, there is evidence that some British school counsellors do and some do not manage to concede power to their clients. Not everyone applauds the former contractual posture. A working party set up by the West Sussex County Council (1973) argued that counsellors should only take cases referred by teaching colleagues. The counsellor of 'Anne' may wish that he had taken the Council's advice; on the other hand, people who want to avoid being blackmailed by adolescents should probably not go into school counselling at all!

(i) The counsellor and role influences. The counsellor is not only in contract with his clients, he is also in contract with his teaching colleagues in the school. They too have expectations of him and commitments to make to him. It may very well be that a counsellor who concedes a great deal of contractual power to clients cannot be as generous with his colleagues.

The American literature contains a number of warnings and complaints concerning the extent to which American school counsellors have allowed themselves to be influenced by in-school demands, thus losing their professional identities (Stewart and Warnath, 1965; Lortie, 1965; Boy and Pine, 1968). The evidence of the Thompson study (1970) (which is derived only from the perceptions of counsellors) is that the greater part of the conflict between teachers and counsellors stems from the teachers' fears that counsellors are likely to subvert existing roles in the school or to undermine school discipline. There may be a strong case, as Barnett (1971) has argued, for British school counsellors to aim at a fairly precise definition of their possible roles, so that pressure on threatened teachers (and its backwash effect on the counsellors) can be eased.

The teachers of students like 'Keith', 'Christine', 'Derek' and 'Irene' would have a legitimate interest in the way in which the counsellor handled the situation. Some options would be open to him only at the cost of resisting pressure from the system in which he worked: that is, of resisting its power over his role.

(j) The counsellor and decision-making responsibility. In considering issues of power, eventually the question must be asked: 'how much power should a school counsellor have?' It has already been acknowledged that a counsellor may see himself in a position of either system maintenance or system reform. But these are positions which are tenable in both a persuasive and a decision-making posture. The question now is: if a counsellor feels that the school should be set up in 'this' rather than 'that' sort of way, how much power should he have to implement it as a decision?

In America, Boy and Pine (1968) have complained about the extent to which school counsellors have come to see themselves as 'assistant-principals'. Lortie (1965) elaborates the argument by pointing out that a counsellor in a position of administrative power becomes trapped in a 'quasi-judicial' role which makes it difficult for clients to confide in him in an open and genuinely exploratory way. Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) have documented some of the counter-productive consequences for such counsellors in one American high school.

The career structure for administratively- inclined American school teachers is quite different than for their British counterparts (Baron and Tropp, 1961). The sorts of administrative power which might be sought by a British counsellor are, accordingly, likely to be different. There is however evidence that at least some British school counsellors do see themselves in the role of decision-maker. Moore (1970), for example, found in his small sample study at least one counsellor who clearly shared with the Head a considerable degree of decision-making and policy-making power. The NAMH (1970) argue that there should be a senior trio in the school, comprising the Head, a senior administrative colleague and a senior counselling colleague. Holden (1969; 1971) suggests that the counsellor should be a senior member of staff, but his argument is based on the (somewhat shaky) assumption that such members of staff are more likely to have the personal qualities that make for good

counselling. He does not argue that the counsellor should in any sense be able to 'fix' things for clients: indeed he explicitly rejects such a suggestion.

The fact is that the counsellor of students like 'Christine', 'Irene' and 'Janet' will find themselves in possession of information which could form the basis of decision-making in the school. Some counsellor will seek out such decision-making positions in their careers. Others will not.

(k) The counsellor and the formal and informal organisation of the school.

Much of the foregoing discussion is concerned with the relationship between the counsellor and the formal organisation of the school. In America one of the chief exponents of the view that the counsellor should work in close organisational contact with the general formal organisation of the school is Blocher. In a paper addressed to British school counsellors (Blocher, 1969) he argues that attempts on the part of 'the catatonic counsellor' to work outside the system will have feeble consequences because they do not cooperate with the most powerful determinants of student behaviour in the classroom. His argument is for what he calls 'milieu therapy' as an alternative - or at least a supplement - to one-to-one interviewing techniques. In this country Hamblin (1971a; 1971b) has argued on very similar lines for what he calls an 'active' rather than a 'psychotherapeutic' model for counselling. In broad agreement with this view, Biggs (1975) has more recently suggested a consultative role for the school counsellor which is intended to improve classroom management by teachers. All of this is in some conflict with Jones' (1970) description of a counselling service which was explicitly stated to be 'outside the main stream of the school's organisation and discipline'.

A central argument used in support of 'milieu therapy' and 'the active model' is that some of the most powerful determinants of student behaviour can by these means be harnessed to the counselling enterprise. But a broader appreciation of the nature of organisations suggests that not only formal but also informal provisions significantly affect the behaviour of people in organisations. Hargreaves (1967; 1972) is among those who have pointed to the great potency of informal relationships in a school. Indeed it is argued by some sociologists that the informal component in an organisation supplements and compensates for the deficiencies in the formal organisation (see, for example, Lambert et al., 1973). What is striking about this conceptualisation of informality is the close parallel it presents with Tyler's (1970) characterisation of counselling as that which 'supplies what is missing in the imperfect human organisations to which we belong'.

The question arises, therefore: 'If the counselling service in a school commits itself extensively to co-operating with the formal organisational and disciplinary structure within a school, what will the consequences be for its contact with the informal sub-cultural life of the school, which might also be looked upon as a potential source of help for the students?' Experimental attempts have been advocated in America to set up peer counselling services for high school students (Mosher and Sprinthall, 1971; Varenhorst, 1974). In this country the only writer to address this topic at any length is Williams (1973) who argues with

some feeling concerning the potentiality of peer-groups as a source of help. He supports his arguments with evidence from a questionnaire enquiry which tends to show that adolescents look upon their peers as a prime source of help. Some of my own (Law, 1973) reported experience with school-phobic youngsters adds further support to such a view: the anxieties of the students were attached as much to peer-relationships in the school as to anything else, and the experiment developed to help them showed that the peer-group could be an important helping resource. A counsellor working in a school is working in an organisation with strong formal and informal structures. He may have to decide with which of these he is going most closely to co-operate in order to maximise the effectiveness of the service he seeks to offer.

The consequences for 'Janet' and her parents of a counselling system which was firmly plugged into the management and information system of the school might well have exacerbated their anxieties rather than relieved them. On the other hand, it might have facilitated the effectiveness with which help could be formally offered.

conceptualisation

The purpose of the foregoing section has been to attempt to link together a number of role conceptions of secondary school counsellors in such a way as to maintain a broad distinction between what have been called 'system' and ‚open' orientations to counselling.

The system-orientated counsellor is seen as basically loyal to the school in which he works. He* tends to restrict his counselling concern to matters which are connected with the school-life of the child. He sees himself as a maintainer and protector of the school social system. Where the interests of the individual and the group clash, he tends to put the interest of the group first. He sees his clientele as the whole school, emphasising the counselling needs of the 'normal' child. His conceptualisation of the 'problems' with which he is presented tends to be based upon objective parameters suggested by the type of institution in which he works and by his colleagues, rather than by the child's subjective experience. He tends to see himself as working towards adjustment on the part of his clients. He tends also to retain some control over his clients in the way in which interviews are arranged and conducted. He is responsive to the cues and expectations of his teaching colleagues and is prepared to accept the assignment to him of his role by the school system. He does, however, seek power and authority in the system. He readily accepts the role of consultant, aid and source of information to his teaching colleagues, seeing himself as organisationally closely linked to the formal system of the school.

The open counsellor*, on the other hand, might not be embarrassed by a suggestion that he is a subversive influence in the school, although he would not necessarily welcome such a suggestion either. He tends to see his work as

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* Sorry! I doubt that I even thought about gender-bias in wriring this at that time.

** Although my use of terms 'system' and 'open' does not much influence what the study eventually shows, I would now not design the SOI as a bi-polar scale. There may or may not be something 'open' about being 'low' in

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being concerned with the emotional and personal concerns of the children. He is also ready to accept the role of 'advocate', 'change agent' or 'reformer` in the school system. Where there is a clash, he is inclined to put the interest of the individual first. He sees his clientele as including the rejected, isolated, deviant and pathologically distressed. His approach to the definition of .'problems' is through the point of view of the child. He tends to allow a great deal of freedom to the children to come, go, and use the counselling relationship in their own way. He may, however, be prepared to oppose the expectations of his colleagues concerning the way he does his work, seeing himself as a role-achiever rather than a role-assignee. He does not seek administrative power in the school, and he tends to set thresholds between the organisation of the counselling service and the school's formal organisation. He is interested in developing an informal and supplementary counselling service in the school, but not entirely of it.

Figure 1 sets out a simplified analysis of the main elements described above.

Figure 1 – chapter–one: counselling dilemmas

Issue	System orientation	Open orientation
1. School value system	Support	Independence
2. Problem identification	E-v	'Personal'
3. School social system	Maintenance	Reform
4. Individual and group	Group needs emphasise	Individual needs emphasised
5. Client identification	'Normal' clients	'Needful' clients
6. Problem definition	System-defined	Client-defined
7. Orientation to client	Change-in-client	Choice-by-client
8. Contract with client	Power with counsellor	Power with client
9. Role influences	Role assignment accept by counsellor	Role achievement sought by counsellor
10. Decision-making responsibility	Sought by counsellor	Not sought by counsellor
11. Organisation of the school	Formally integrates counsellor	Counsellor is informally supplementary

cont.../

system orientation. A 'low-system' person might be 'high' on some other orientation – such as theory or self-interest. I will come back to this in the conclusion; but the scale is best thought of as having a single-pole, showing high and low levels of system orientation.

The characterisations of system and open-orientated counsellors are simplifications. They are similar to Hamblin's (1974) distinction between what he calls 'isolated' and 'integrated' counsellors. They are also similar to the continuum described by Antonouris (1975), which ranges from what he calls 'outsiders' to what he calls 'insiders', with a median, compromise position for 'participants': outsiders are characterised as 'pure' specialists in counselling, insiders as members of the school's policy-making groups with considerable hierarchical power. Neither Hamblin's nor Antonouris' characterisations, however, are elaborated in the detail employed here.

It is important to emphasise that the words 'system' and 'open' are meant to refer to attitudes or role conceptions on the part of counsellors rather than to wholly distinguishable groups of counsellors. Most counsellors will probably see themselves as sharing some aspects of both orientations: in Antonouris' terms, they will be 'participants'. Indeed the quotations which have been given earlier from the work of at least two practitioners, Jones and Holden, confirm such an expectation, because each exhibits both 'system' and 'open' orientations to their work. The expectations set up in this analysis are not rigid: they express expected tendencies. The expectation is that agreement with one aspect of system orientation will tend to be accompanied in the same counsellors by a tendency to agree with other aspects of system orientation, and by a tendency to disagree with aspects of open orientation; that is, that the system and open orientations have some coherence in the minds of counsellors.

empirical study

The foregoing discussion amounts to the formulation of an hypothesis. This hypothesis was checked by attempting to develop a System Orientation Inventory (SOI) comprising items based upon the issues that have been identified. The original item-pool contained 64 items: 32 expressing a 'system orientation', and 32 the opposing 'open orientation' to counselling. In order to be identified as a radically system-orientated counsellor, a respondent needed to agree with each of the 'system' items and disagree with each of the open' items.

Respondents were asked to say, therefore, to what extent each of the statements represented a conception of their role which they wanted or did not want to perform. 'Wanted' roles were defined as those roles which would be experienced as 'rewarding, satisfying or fulfilling'; 'not wanted' roles were defined as 'irritating, frustrating or antipathetic'. Each item was accompanied by a seven-point scale of responses: +3 `absolutely want', +2 strongly want', +1 'want but not strongly', 0 'neutral or uncertain', -1 'do not want but not strongly', -2 'strongly do not want', -3 'absolutely do not want'. The sought pattern of agreement and disagreement could be seen to exist where agreement with any system -orientated item was accompanied by a general agreement with the other system-orientated items and a general disagreement with the open-orientated items. The same pattern of agreements and disagreements also existed, but in a less polarised form, where, say, the system orientation was represented by weak agreement or neutrality (+1 or 0) concerning an open item.

The 64 items were first incorporated into a 'pilot' questionnaire which was administered directly to 50 students on one-year full-time diploma courses in counselling and guidance at the Universities of Reading, Keele and Wales (Swansea). It was completed by all 50 students during the spring or summer terms of 1973 (for the general findings, see Law, 1976). This pilot study was used to select items for the main-study questionnaire. Of the 64 original items, 55 were found consistently to reflect the patterns of agreement and disagreement suggested by the hypothesis. The 30 items which, additionally, most extensively divided the pilot sample into 'agreers' and 'disagreers' (i.e. yielded higher standard deviations) were retained for the main study.

The main-study questionnaire was directly administered or mailed during the spring term of 1974 to 686 contacts who were known to have appointments in educational institutions and an interest in some aspect of guidance and counselling. The contacts were derived from mailing lists of the National Association of Counsellors in Education (N=262) and from current students of long and short courses in guidance and counselling held in various parts of the UK. Of the 686 questionnaires issued, 549 were returned completed (response rate 80%j. The questionnaire was addressed to secondary school teachers having some kind of responsibility for guidance interviewing or counselling work: 151 were found not to be secondary school teachers and/or not to have such responsibilities. The final main sample therefore numbered 398.

One of the methods chosen for checking the existence of the hypothesised patterns of agreement and disagreement was to assign each response a numerical value on a seven-point scale and to correlate the distribution of scores for each item with the aggregated score for the remaining items. The system items were scored from 7-1 and the open items 1-7. Thus absolute agreement with any system item and absolute disagreement with any open item would both attract a score of 7. A high aggregated score for all items indicates, or so we at this stage suppose, a high degree of system orientation. The hypothesised pattern of agreements and disagreements exist where a positive product-moment correlation is found between the distribution of scores on any item and the distribution of aggregated scores for the remaining items. This is, in short, the well-known scaling method developed by Likert (1932). It was selected because it offered the possibility of establishing the relationship between a diverse sample of items on the basis of the small representative pilot sample available for this study. It was also judged likely to be a 'more reliable and sensitive mirror of attitudes' (Moser, 1958) than other scaling methods because it allows more than one level of response (in this case ranging from ~3 to +3) on each item. Moreover, it permits the inclusion of a diverse range of item content. with the possibility of subscaling by cluster- or factor-analytical methods at a later stage.

A detailed description of the results from the pilot and main studies is given in Law (1977) where both item-total and item-item correlations are given. Item-total correlations for the 30 items used in both the pilot and main studies are given here in Table 1. The application of McKennel's (1968) version of Cronbach's (1951) 'coefficient alpha' measure of internal consistency to the pilot-

study results yielded a reliability coefficient of (r) +0.87* for the 30 retained items.

The main-study results substantially confirm those of the pilot study, and the view that system orientation is a measurable parameter operating as a coherent consideration in the minds of trainee and practising school counsellors. On the whole, the correlations from the main study were smaller than from the pilot study. This was not unexpected, in view of the fact the main sample was more diverse than the pilot sample: it is not difficult to understand why students in training would respond to the questionnaire in a more self-consistent way than practitioners who were in immediate contact with day-to-day problems and - possibly - influenced in a random way by their most recent experiences in school.

discussion

(a) Relationship between conceptions of system orientation and directiveness. The elaboration of system orientation has taken us into a consideration of the kinds of working relationships which the counsellor has with the value system, the social system and the organisational system of the school, as well as with his client. Accordingly, items in the SOI refer not only to the contract with the client but also to the nature of working relationships with the school system. Some of the items have explicitly 'directive' references** in the sense that they refer to the 'legitimacy' of the demands of the school upon client and counsellor. An examination of table 1 shows that to a marked degree it is these 'legitimacy' items which correlate most highly with system orientation. It seems then that system orientation, as it is measured by these items, refers centrally to the legitimisation of the demands of the school upon the client and the counsellor. The system-orientated counsellor sees the school as a system to which loyalty is properly due, whose interests are properly served, whose assignments are properly carried out, and whose demands and disciplines are legitimate. System orientation, as a concept, thus retains much of the meaning

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* This is, of course, itself a finding. It shows that each counsellor was positioning himself in relation to a value system, articulated to a single coherent notion, which was also used in much the same terms by other counsellors.

** 'Directiveness' was an issue for counselling in the '60s and 70s. 'Guidance' was thought to be more directive, offering interpretations and advice judged to be in the best interests of the client. All was thought to rest on the wisdom and insight of the helper. By contrast, 'counselling' was thought of as 'non-directive' or 'client-centred'. It was said to be an attempt to facilitate self-direction in the client, by listening and reflecting. The findings in this study are a significant addition to that discussion. This is because they suggest that 'directiveness' might not only have to do with the wisdom and insight of the helper. It might have to do, also, with the way in which the helpers thinks of her or himself as representing a system - or, or course, as not representing one. Both versions of directiveness enter into current thinking concerning personal advisers; they may be directive in the sense that they are trained and 'know best'; but they can also be directive because they work for a service which has targets, values and purposes which they must serve. The equivalent to loyalty to the school, in this study, might be loyalty to Connexions for personal advisers.

Table 1 – chapter one: Item-total correlations for 30 items common to the pilot version and main-study version of the System Orientation Inventory

		Item-total correlation for pilot study (N=50)	Item-total correlation for main study (N=398)
1.	I want to be a useful source of information about the children to the school (system).	.29	.28
2.	I want to be seen to be loyal to the school (system).	.48	.44
3.	I want to be able to bring about changes in the school on behalf of the children (open).	.27	.14
4.	I want to be free to act as an advocate on behalf of the child (open).	.20	.15
5.	I want to work in a school where I can share in its general educational and social philosophy (system).	.36	.14
6.	I do not want any responsibility for maintaining discipline (open) (in main study reworded 'I am ready to accept responsibility . . .' and scored as a system item).	.27	.58
7.	I want to work with children who are referred by my teaching colleagues (system).	.47	.13
8.	I want to help bring about socially desirable changes in the children (system).	.47	.44
9.	I want to mediate the needs and problems of the teachers to the child (system).	.32	.28
10.	I want to be free to work out my own role in the school (open).	.32	.27
11.	I want to employ behaviour-modification techniques (system).	.37	.27
12.	Where the interests of the school and the child clash I want to put the interests of the school first (system).	.45	.50
13.	I want to be free to acknowledge to certain children that they are right to oppose the demands of the school (open).	.31	.30
14.	I want to contact and work through the children's informal social systems (open).	.34	.10
15.	Iwant to protect the school against potentially harmful children (system).	.52	.44
16.	I want to achieve a position of decision-making responsibility in the school (system).	.31	.32
17.	I want to employ client-centred techniques (open).	.42	.30

		Item-total correlation for pilot study (N=50)	Item-total correlation for main study (N=398)
18.	I want to put the needs of the Individual before the needs of the group (open).	.47	.33
19.	I want to help the teachers by showing them how they best get the cooperation of the children (system).	.23	.08
20	I want to provide a service for children which is not being provided by any other part of the school system (open).	.28	.16
21.	I want to work alongside, but separately from, the other services provided by the school rather than integrally with them (open).	.36	.14
22.	I want my work to be assigned to me by the school in which I work (system).	.38	.29
23.	I want to be involved in the administrative work of helping to plan and run the school (system).	.55	.41
24	I want to help the child change the school rather than helping the school to change the child (open).	.22	.31
25.	I want to help children comply with the requirements of the school (system).	.69	.50
26.	I want to engage in liaison, communication and consultation work in the school (system).	.31	.03
27	I want to work with children having primarily 'personal' difficulties (open).	.30	.21
28.	I want to bc able to work from the child's point of view in a disagreement rather than from the school's point of view (open).	.29	.43
29.	I want to work with parents to show them how they can best help their children comply with the requirements of the school (system).	.43	.25
30.	I want to communicate the values of school to the child (system)	.63	.53

Notes

1. Each item is identified 'open,' or 'system' in brackets. This identification did not appear in either version of the questionnaires issued to respondents.
2. The item-total correlation is the correlation between the distribution of scores on each item and the aggregated total for the remaining 63 (pilot inventory) or 29 (main-study inventory) items.

Open items are scored thus:

Response scale	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3
Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

System orientation items are scored thus

Response scale	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3
Score	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

4. Statistical significances:

	Pilot sample (N = 50)	Main study sample (N=398)
05 level	+0.23	+0.08
01 level	+0.32	+0.11
005 level	+0.36	+0.13

of 'directiveness' in the sense of' presenting legitimised demands and expectations to another. In Berne's (1966) transactional analytical terms, the school is thought of by the system-orientated as an appropriate, perhaps even benign, 'parent'. In other words, it is possible to see 'directiveness` as the transmission of another's authority as well as the imposition of one's own.

(b) Relationship between system orientation and organisational and instrumental considerations. Yet there are 15 items in the inventory which do not explicitly refer to the issue of the legitimacy of the school's demands, and which nonetheless have positive item-total correlations with system orientation. These items refer mainly to the counsellor's organisational relationship with the school and to his instrumental technique. In some cases the item-total correlation for such items is fairly high (see e.g. item number 23). It is of some interest to note that a disposition to accept administrative responsibilities tends to be accompanied in the same counsellor by a disposition to legitimise the demands of the school upon the individual.

A careful examination of the main-sample item-item correlations yielded more detailed observations. A disposition to accept responsibility to maintain school discipline is significantly correlated with the organisational and instrumental dispositions to accept administrative responsibility (r=+0.43), to accept decision-making responsibility (r=-+ 0.34), and to act as a source of information about the children (r=+0.33), as well as with a disposition not to accept the use of' client-centred techniques (r=0. 18), and so on. Conversely, the 'organisational and instrumental' inclination to use behaviour-modification techniques is significantly correlated with a disposition to communicate the values of the school to the child (r=+0.31), to put the interests of' the school before the child (r=+0.23). to gain the compliance of' the child to the requirements of' the school (r =+0.2 8), to bring about desirable changes in the child (r=+0.32) to be seen to be loyal to the school (r=+0.23), to protect the school against potentially harmful children (r=+0.22), and so on. System orientation, then, appears to be a mixture of dispositions, some of' which explicitly legitimise the demands of the school., and others represent a wide range of organisational and instrumental preferences extending into the acceptance of administrative and decision-making roles, the use and rejection of specific face-to-face techniques, and even the selection of particular kinds of' problems upon which to focus attention.

The study tends to show, therefore, that 'directiveness' is not just a relationship issue in face-to-face counselling but an issue with organisational ramifications. It suggests, in part, that the use of the system as a therapy or 'active model' tool for counselling is a preferred instrumental mode for those counsellors who tend most to legitimise the system's demands upon themselves and their clients.

conclusion

Inevitably, this study has opened more issues and posed more problems than it has resolved. Although we have the beginning of a working knowledge of how system orientation operates in the role conceptualisation of secondary school counsellors, there is a great deal left to learn. We have not, for example, learned anything about the relationship between the aspirations of role conceptualisation and the realisations of role performance. It is at least possible that, despite our lengthy attempts in the discussion section to tease out the ideas, the differences between what system-orientated counsellors and open-orientated counsellors actually do is indistinguishable to the external observer! Neither do we know the answer to the related question: 'How central to the role conceptualisation of counsellors are considerations of system orientation?' For they are surely not the only considerations. Furthermore we cannot be sure how close., or how far away, we are from the encapsulation of system orientation by the use of the 30 items in the SOI

From a more general and sociological perspective it is legitimate to ask whether system orientation represents an issue only for school counsellors, or whether (and in what senses) it is an issue also for teachers, and indeed for practitioners in other kinds of systems. Is there any sense in which we can say that a nurse, a company accountant, or a member of parliament may be system-orientated? May they too be caught in a dilemma between the legitimisation of the system and the use of its machinery on the one hand, and considerations of client (patient or constituent), profession, ethic or whatever on the other, as an alternative (and therefore 'open') base for making judgements about their roles? And if such questions can have meanings in other contexts than schools, what are their concomitants in the personalities of role occupants, for role conflict, and for selection and/or training?

Finally, assuming that the way in which system- and open-orientated counsellors do their work in school is observably different, what are the consequences for the systems in which they work their differential styles of role performance? Since systems are not static, what are the productive and counterproductive, intended and unintended, consequences of system and open orientation? What other variables - in counsellor and in organisation - intervene to render unintentionally counter-productive what was intended to be productive?

Further evidence on some of these issues will be submitted in future articles*, but until more evidence is available, different readers will have different judgements to make as to whether more 'open orientation' or more 'system orientation' is called for in the way in which counselling work is undertaken in schools. Such discussion may not be entirely irrelevant to the current debate concerning the reciprocal dependency of the school as a system and its social and economic community. If some counsellors are not going simply to legitimise the demands and expectations which are set up by the school as a 'closed' social system, then perhaps they should be prepared to say so clearly - in advance. And to say why.

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