COUNSELING THE DISADVANTAGED

Report of a graduate project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Counseling and Guidance

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FOREWORD

I have been employed as a vocational counselor of the disadvantaged for several agencies since 1963. Most of my training and study for work with this population has been "on the job." For my graduate project I wished to expand my knowledge of the research and information available to counselors of this group. A survey of some of the recent literature on the subject is contained in Sections I to V. Since I often heard counselors complain of the lack of study and tools relevant to their work with the disadvantaged, I reviewed the literature from the point of view of what would be of practical value to a counselor and increase his effectiveness. I found pertinent and thought provoking study available with concrete suggestions which I believe would be of value to anyone working with the disadvantaged.

Section VI contains some general conclusions from interviews with various local agencies. I conducted interviews to obtain some firsthand knowledge of other counselors' experiences with this population and to provide a frame of reference for my own experiences. In Section VII I discuss some of my own recent experiences and beliefs regarding the counseling of the disadvantaged. This section is basically a personal reaction to my study, interviews and experience.
I. BACKGROUND

In 1960 America elected a president who spoke of a "new frontier" in which we would be concerned not with ourselves but with what we could do for others. National concern arose for the "other" American. "The increasing visibility of minority groups brought into clearer focus the impediments which handicapped their development and their attainment of educational and vocational competence. Change along a variety of dimensions seemed the only solution, and, even though fundamental change in human institutions never comes easily or quickly, the multiple adjustments necessary to accommodate relevant changes began." (Caldwell 1970: p.v)

In 1963 President Johnson declared a "War on Poverty", and federal legislation was directed towards the employment and educational problems of many disenfranchised Americans, especially youths, e.g., amendments to the Manpower Development and Training Act, Vocational Education Act of 1963, Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. (Mangum, 1971) The terms socially/culturally/educationally deprived/disadvantaged/different/handicapped were argued and interchanged to rally the support needed for legislation and programs. Poverty was viewed by many the "most crucial and difficult problem" of the time. (Meadow 1968: p. 596)

The labeling of the disadvantaged has also been severely criticized as 1) promoting a negative stereotype of minorities and directing attention away from de facto segregation, 2) focusing attention upon the failings of minority mem-
bers rather than the shortcomings of the dominant society, 3) detracting from the need for structured changes in education because of the emphasis on individual life styles and 4) attempting to impose the sickness and hypocrisy of the dominant middle class culture upon lower class youngsters. (Frost, 1970)

Much of the enthusiasm of the early sixties has diminished, but the problems of the disadvantaged continue especially in education, guidance and employment. In the November, 1972 issue of Manpower (p. 14) Lawrence Davenport, Chairman of the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education writes:

"But progress in improving guidance is piecemeal and slow. Meanwhile, some 2.5 million youth leave school each year without the skills they need to realize their potential in the labor force. This waste will continue until schools provide quality guidance to all students, regardless of career interests, race, income group, sex or any handicaps they may have."

Caldwell views the seventies as a period of "consolidation" regarding the disadvantaged. The confusion and frenzy are over; the unrealistic expectations removed. "Things are now in a better perspective." (Caldwell 1970: p.vii)
II. DEFINITION OF DISADVANTAGED

Who are the disadvantaged? In 1945 Wirth (p. 347) described a minority group as those who, "because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. The existence of a minority in society implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group with higher social status and greater privileges. Minority status carries with it the exclusion from full participation in the life of the society." The "exclusion from full participation" is the disadvantage. All minority groups are not disadvantaged; however, the possibility of being disadvantaged is increased if one is a member of a minority group.

Johnson believes the disadvantage materializes "when the child leaves his primary cultural group to function in the dominant culture. It is created by conflict between his subculture and the dominant culture. Only in a situation of conflict is the subculture of a minority child a handicap." (Johnson 1970: p.3) It is the conflict which is disadvantaging. Johnson suggests the following as working definitions of the disadvantaged: "anyone who cannot participate in the dominant culture...one who is handicapped in growing up to live a competent and satisfying life in American society." (Johnson 1970: p.3)

Similarly Amos defines disadvantaged youth as "those who have heavy liabilities which lessen their chances of competing successfully with their fellow
citizens in all phases of life. Disadvantaged youth may be found living with their families in a world where day-to-day survival takes all thoughts and energies." (Amos 1964: p. 9) Amos also notes that youth may possess a combination of disadvantages.
III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Familiarity with the characteristics of the disadvantaged is necessary for effective guidance. Winschel believes the essential characteristic of the disadvantaged is "the severe restriction on freedom of choice and freedom of response." (Winschel 1970: p.8) Deutsch describes the disadvantaged as possessing the following: negative self image, feelings of alienation, short attention span, lack of expectation of reward for performance, deficient language development in syntactical organization and subject continuity, informal language usage related to tasks or objects rather than to concepts, absence of well structured routine and activity in the home and low evaluation of individual competency. (Deutsch, 1967)

Johnson notes that the social, economic and psychological characteristics of the disadvantaged are highly interrelated and lists the following characteristics as being shared by disadvantaged youths in varying degrees:

They have an experiential background that does not fit the expectations of a middle-class-oriented curriculum.
They come from a rural background.
They are economically impoverished.
They are caught up in self-perpetuating spiritual, moral, aspirational, educational, and economic poverty cycles.
They feel rejected by society.
They have a poor self-concept.
They are aggressive.
They do not adhere to the values of the dominant culture—often, they are not aware of these values.
They live in a negative environment that is ugly, crowded, filthy, noisy and disorderly.
They have a poor attention span.
They have a conceptual development that does not fit the expectations of a middle-class-oriented curriculum. They are linguistically handicapped. (Johnson 1970: p. 20)

In 1965 the University of the State of New York reported the following characteristics of disadvantaged high school students:

1. Overage
2. Retardation in grade level
3. IQ below 90
4. Lack of interest in school
5. Low school marks
6. Reading retardation of two grade levels
7. Uncooperative parental attitudes
8. Poor or fair general personal and social adjustment
9. Nonparticipation in out-of-school activities
10. Absenteeism and truancy
11. Underlying racial tensions
12. Rejection by in-school peers
13. Members of large families (five or more children)
14. Resentment of controls
15. Parental achievement of Grade 7 or below
16. Poor personal health
17. Short attention span (Buchheimer 1969: p. 55)

Vontress describes some statistics which suggest many of the problems facing counselors of the disadvantaged; they are: about one half of disadvantaged children come from homes where no man is present, one third to one fourth of all births in these homes are illegitimate, the home is usually female dominated, and 75% of the disadvantaged students in the first grade drop out before completing high school. (Vontress, 1966)

Reissman summarizes the typical characteristics of a disadvantaged child's
style as:

1. Physical and visual rather than aural.
2. Content-centered rather than form-centered.
3. Externally oriented rather than introspective.
4. Problem-centered rather than abstract-centered.
5. Inductive rather than deductive.
7. Slow, careful, patient, persevering (in areas of importance), rather than quick, clever, facile, flexible.
   (Reissman 1962: p. 266)

Payne believes the most common characteristics of the disadvantaged are the lack of positive self concept and a feeling of success and the inability to express oneself verbally. He also notes the lack of individual and/or group support which results in the youth responding less to peer pressures to conform, less of a need to achieve, and more generalized anxieties to threatening situations. The disadvantaged youth is "unable to employ appropriate means for gaining acceptance, identification and recognition." (Payne 1972: p. 157)

Amos suggests that it is important for counselors to be aware of the characteristic goals of the disadvantaged. He maintains that their goals are usually short range because of their necessary preoccupation with the immediate, e.g., food, housing; consequently, it is difficult and often unrealistic to engage in long term planning. (Amos, 1966) This view is shared by Kranz of the Department of Labor in discussing the employment needs of the disadvantaged; "they need some immediate satisfaction, but they also need guidance in preparing for a permanent job." (Kranz 1966: p. 324) Wittmer writes: "Counselors and teach-
ers must also understand that the child from the ghetto is not interested in learning something that will help him in 20 years. He is most often black, lives in poverty, and knows much about the futility of the future. What he wants to know is what will help him now. What can he learn today that will help him this evening when he returns home to reality? Counselors and teachers must understand that the slum child seeks immediate goals and that delayed gratification is ineffective." (Wittmer 1971: p. 50)

Neff continues: "Among the so-called underprivileged youth of our country the meaning of life is usually earthy - it is defined largely in terms of job opportunities and bread-and-butter values. Life assumes meaning in so far as airy abstractions are kept at a minimum and jobs are or will be available that are commensurate with training and ability. The line between present training and future placement had best be kept taut, lest the teenager lose interest and become discouraged." (Neff, 1966: p. 152)

Conant emphasizes the significance of poor housing, contacts with penal institutions and poor medical care upon the disadvantaged. He quotes a principal from a school in a slum area "The parents of at least one third of the children are either in penal institutions, are on probation, or have prison records...Less than 10 percent of the children have private doctors or dentists. A dental examination of 900 children in the fall of 1959 reveals only forty-four free of cavities. The eyes of every child in the school were examined and about 300 showed some vision defects, and thirty had such serious vision loss that they were referred for partially-seeing teaching." (Conant, 1966: pp. 173-4)
Amos believes that underlying the absence of long range goals is a typical passivity, a feeling there is "no use," no dreams, only insurmountable odds. The other extreme of highly unrealistic goals is also possible, and Amos believes, more healthy. Disadvantaged youths may be attracted to the "glamour" occupations of professional sports, entertainment, etc., because these occupations have afforded opportunities to minorities. Amos describes the following as frequent characteristics of the disadvantaged: functioning beneath one's potential, socially underdeveloped, impulsive, hostile, bitter, disillusioned, irresponsible according to middle class standards, and having difficulty with authority and supervision. According to Amos more favorable characteristics can result from the conditions of the disadvantaged, e.g., independence, adaptability, resourcefulness, initiative, realism and flexibility. (Amos, 1966)

In an attempt to concretize some of these characteristics a group of Manpower counselors described what they considered to be a typical disadvantaged trainee in a skill center:

One of the main distinguishing points of MDT counseling is who we work for and with. It is the MDT trainee and his individualistic character as distinguished from the patient or student that general counseling addresses itself to that makes it different. He is an individual who possesses a part or all of the problems that beset most of us --he probably does not have a job or a marketable trade or skill; he might not know English; he might have a drinking problem; he might not know how to budget his money (to acquire maximum feasible utilization); he might have a large family; he might not have finished high school; he might have a drug problem; he does have transportation problems; he might have a police record; he might have multiple families; he does have legal problems; he might have health problems; he does have money problems (unpaid bills and resourceful creditors); he might have immigration problems; he does have housing problems;
he might have marital problems; he does have problems with his driver's license; he might not be motivated toward a particular goal; he is a loser (using society's gauge, because he does not have a job that gains him money); and it seems he has lost sight of his hopes, dreams, and trust as a human being; but most of all our American society has an unforgiving stereotype image of him...(AMIDS, 1972)
IV. PROBLEMS IN COUNSELING THE DISADVANTAGED

The characteristics of the disadvantaged present a challenge to the counselor. Buchheimer believes a crucial aspect in the effective counseling of the disadvantaged is the need to deemphasize verbal communication. Counselors frequently expect highly verbal behavior in a formal interview situation. This is unrealistic for the disadvantaged. Buchheimer believes that frequent, short, informal contacts are likely to be more helpful than a structured counseling interview. He notes that a counselor operating in such a manner would need to be highly mobile and sensitive and responsive to situations as they arise. (Buchheimer, 1969)

A similar view of counseling resulted from a study of inner-city black youth in a job training project. Gurin writes "the study data indicate that the counselor's personal supportive function was more significant than his socializing one. The responses of the trainees to the formal group counseling sessions tended to be relatively indifferent...these findings have obvious implications for the role of the counselor in projects such as these. They suggest that personal interest, sympathy, and support may be more important than the more formal socializing function." (Gurin 1968:p. 134) Gurin uses the term "socializing function" to describe the traditional formal role of the counselor. He discusses the possibility and advisability of having counselors "on the job" with clients in training programs.

Lefkowitz and Baker felt that the usual counseling techniques would not reach the black ghetto youth in their project and developed a "physical action"
 approach. They maintain that this approach is an effective prelude to overcoming hesitancies and to developing deeper verbal relationships.

Since most of the students, for various reasons, had difficulty relating verbally, we worked on a "physical action" basis, often chatting with them while they were involved in activities. These activities became a major force in the creation and continuance of most counseling relationships.

The students seemed to feel most comfortable when they were not being focused upon directly, so we tried to get them interested in various crafts and activities we had available around the counseling center. Rather than directly suggesting an activity, we used a casual approach, leaving a partly finished rug, a paint-by-number kit, or knitting needles and yarn lying on the table. Their curiosity winning out over their resistance, they would soon be "hooked"...

Having something to do with their hands helped relieve the tension. The constant encouragement and satisfaction they received as their projects took shape served as a prelude to verbal counseling. We used anything we could think of that might interest them...this "action focus" served three main functions: a) it relieved tension, b) it provided an opportunity for the student to develop areas of interest and satisfaction, and c) it was a primary aid in developing an effective relationship between student and counselor. (Lefkowitz and Baker: pp. 291-292)

Waller presents five deficiencies of conventional counseling methods for use with the disadvantaged:

1) Current techniques are time consuming which is expensive in terms of professional time and often discouraging to the client.

2) Current techniques center on information giving rather than motivation and self-help.

3) Counseling tends to be abstract and unrelated to the client's immediate interests and concerns.
4) Counseling tends to emphasize objective test measures of a client's status which discourages the possibility of rapid change.

5) Historical data has been overemphasized. (Waller, 1966)

The conventional tools of the counselor must be reconsidered for use with the disadvantaged. Buchheimer maintains that the traditional guidance concepts of intelligence, aptitude, and achievement need to be reexamined and that the techniques used for assessing these factors are not applicable to the disadvantaged. (Buchheimer, 1969) Freeberg attempted to overcome a number of the defects customarily attributed to conventional measures by the construction and application of a test battery tailored specifically in content, format and administration to the disadvantaged adolescent group. He concludes that "prospects for success appear promising when an attempt is made to overcome possible sources of bias in customary test content, format and administration through the use of materials or techniques that bear greater relevance to the academic and cultural experience of the disadvantaged." (Freeberg 1970: p. 238) This is an area which warrants further development and research.

Tolson believes the ingredients of effective counseling are the same for all groups: a genuine concern for the client, an awareness of the particular problem being experienced by the client, a readiness to receive both verbal and non-verbal material, a willingness to be a "buffer" between the client and hostile aspects of his environment, and an ability to communicate. She maintains that problems arise in the counseling of the disadvantaged because of the shortsightedness and stereotyping of counselors. Some adjectives have become
so powerful (e.g. black, poor, disadvantaged) that counselors relate to the stereotype rather than the person. Tolson believes these stereotypes stem from racism and elitism in American society. Noting that counselors usually come from the upward striving working class, she describes as a common affliction of counselors "the need to see themselves as better than their clients... We in the helping professions rationalize our striving to seem superior by insisting that maintaining authority is essential to providing services." (Tolson 1972: p. 736) She describes the term disadvantaged as supercilious, paternalistic, and "a dead giveaway...of the peculiarly American embarrassment about dealing with or relating to someone who we feel is inferior to us." (Tolson 1972: p. 736) Tolson continues:

Good counseling demands a peculiar and difficult type of honesty— the ability to question one's own motives, examine one's reactions, and analyze one's ways of making judgments and decisions. The generally accepted forms of social dishonesty are not allowable and are particularly despised by the poor and powerless minority groups... they are angry and impatient with the traditional role of the counselor, which has been to maintain the status quo rather than to improve the condition of any individual or group. They are becoming increasingly suspicious of counselors and counseling bodies, to the point that suspicion often becomes rejection. A counselor is good for working with the powerless only when he has proven in their eyes his effectiveness in working toward real change in their behalf. (Tolson 1972: p. 738)

Buchheimer agrees with the need for counselors to question the validity of their values, prejudices, and social attitudes, and he believes a more activist concept of counseling (similar to the Hull House concept of social work) is
needed. He maintains that techniques to counsel the disadvantaged are best developed through active involvement and direct contact with the disadvantaged.

The school is not an island set apart from the community, but rather it is an active agent creating change within the community. It is incumbent, therefore, on the counselor to become a community worker, to be directly involved in community action programs, and indeed in the ferment that may occur within the community. Through such involvement and through the charisma that he may be able to develop within his community, he may actually learn about the psychological environment of "slum children," and develop the essential tools that he needs to communicate with these children and their parents. (Buchheimer 1969: p. 70)

Vontress writes of a school-community approach which "represents a departure from the traditional desk centered, school centered, face to face contact. It indicates that the counselor must be in some ways a social worker, in some ways a PR man, and in some ways a catalyst for social change." (Vontress 1966: p. 366) Vontress describes a counselor as "a smuggler of values; and as such, his job is almost always touchy and edged with uneasiness. Community and institutional pressures often encourage the perpetuation of traditional racial roles. Occasionally the counselor may have to decide whether he will be loyal to the institution in which he works or to his profession." (Vontress 1966: p.361)

Briggs and Hummel also emphasize the need for an activist concept in the counseling of the disadvantaged especially in the area of employment.
Researchers...have written about the deep-seated and complex interwoven feelings of blacks and the possible problems arising in a counseling relationship due to the interaction of the forces that both counselors and black counselees bring with them into the counseling relationship.

Some of the painful and often confusing values and attitudes possessed by many blacks are their loyalty to, yet hatred for, their ethnic group and cultural heritage, their hostility toward other ethnic groups, and negative feelings towards themselves involving self-rejection and societal alienation.

Other factors hindering effective-growth promoting encounters between counselors and black clients are reactions to color, sex, language differences, the counselor's unfamiliarity with black culture, and his guilt over feeling himself a part of the prejudicial majority group. (Lefkowitz and Baker 1971: p. 290)

Vontress states that

During the beginning stages of the therapeutic encounter, the Negro counselee may show sullen reserve, resentful anxiety, distrust... (and) overt hostility... How the white counselor handles this phase of the relationship determines its duration and his effectiveness with the Negro client... Since it is the professional's role to assist the non-professional in some way, it is incumbent upon him to break through cultural barriers. (Vontress 1969: pp. 272-273)

Wittmer emphasizes the need for the counselor to possess a cognitive understanding of the customs, traditions and values of various subcultures.

A counselor comes in contact daily with the culturally different and the current trend is to communicate warmly, empathically, and genuinely. If the school counselor is inexperienced in the values and ways of a particular minority culture, he will be ineffective when encountering a member of that culture...

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Generally, counselors in expressing their concern for manpower maintain that:
1) Every individual should be given the opportunity to obtain training commensurate with his capacity.
2) Every individual should be given the opportunity to have full knowledge concerning his capacities and potentialities and to be free to make a wise and realistic choice concerning his future career.
3) Suburbs and communities must make available to individuals those experiences and situations which will provide full opportunity to appreciate individual potentialities and to realize the satisfaction that can be derived from their fulfillment.
4) Society must encourage a broad diversity of talents and skills and eventually provide equal opportunities to persons developing skills in the sciences, the arts, humanities, and government and the social studies.

These suggestions throw a great deal of light upon the role of the counselor as it relates to both his responsibilities to the individual and to society. Certainly, they stress that the counselor cannot achieve his goals by working in an interviewing room alone with a counselee, but he also must assume his social responsibilities as he works with the schools and other broad aspects of society. (Briggs and Hummel 1962: pp. 27-28)

Also relating to employment and manpower, Mangum writes:

It is particularly necessary that the temptation be avoided to prepare the disadvantaged for only minimum participation in society and in the world of work. The goal must be to take them from where they are, overcoming their handicaps, to wherever they have the potential and develop the desire to go. Since most members of society find their highest achievement in their vocational activity (including homemaking), preparation for employment is critical not only to income and living standards but also to prestige, status, and self-esteem as well. (Mangum 1971: p. 39)

Lefkowitz and Baker discuss some of the difficulties which arise in the counseling relationship between a white counselor and a black client.
The acute disparities are certainly compounded when a counselor with a lack of cognitive knowledge interacts with a confused and bewildered minority student. The counselor, functioning in his congenial, familiar cultural situation and inexperienced in the lifestyle of minority students, is more prone to impose his idealized values on this student. Empathy with the culturally different client's feelings is necessary for counseling effectiveness, as is knowledge of his traditions, customs, and values existing in his unique milieu. (Wittmer 1971: p. 49)
V. TECHNIQUES FOR COUNSELING THE DISADVANTAGED

Many of the characteristics and problems discussed earlier have suggested possible counseling techniques and programs. Gowan and Demos discuss the need to change the disadvantaged's self concept, e.g., from that of a potential dropout to a potential achiever. They recommend eight steps for the counselor to facilitate this change:

1) Listen and attend to the youth's problem.
2) Have the youth talk about his problem.
3) Isolate and specify any fear.
4) Demonstrate that others have similar difficulties and that they are successfully combating them.
5) Act as a "corrective mirror" for the youth to see himself as others do.
6) Help the youth to accept himself.
7) Identify the youth's competence, skills, strengths, etc. and capitalize on them.
8) Invest confidence and support. (Gowan and Demon 1966: pp. 312-15)

Gowan and Demos believe that "change in self concept is at the basis of effective counseling." (Gowan and Demos 1966: p. 315) In their book The Disadvantaged and Potential Dropout they include several papers which present unusual approaches of counselors working with the disadvantaged; some of the papers are summarized below.

Fox writes of a patron-therapy system used in a school district in Utah to
reduce dropouts. A child is interviewed by a psychologist and is assigned a patron as a special friend. The patron is another youngster usually several years older who will spend time with the child (at least three hours a week) doing whatever they enjoy together. This patron keeps a record of how the time is spent and reviews it with the psychologist periodically. Fox states that through this patron-therapy program a child "who is undergoing emotional stress often is able to gain a new attitude and outlook towards life and improve his adjustment in many areas." (Fox 1966: p. 321)

Kvaraceus describes seven operational principles which should be implemented by counselors in order to combat juvenile delinquency:

1) The counselor must know what a delinquent is.

2) The counselor establishes, preserves, and promotes a positive attitude toward the delinquent as a child needing help.

3) The counselor must be alert to the identifying signs of a potential delinquent.

4) The counselor must utilize and participate in child study and diagnostic resources.

5) The counselor must cooperate in seeing that treatment is individually and systematically carried out.

6) The counselor must help coordinate the school with other community agencies and resources.

7) The counselor must operate on a theoretical framework which is based on sound research. (Kvaraceus, 1966)
Waller describes the use of a two consecutive day initial group session as an accelerated interaction to motivate and assist disadvantaged clients to formulate and achieve goals of their own choosing. This two day session is followed by weekly sessions for as long as necessary. The counselor does the following:

1) informs the group of what he and the organization he represents is able to do and provide;

2) assists the group in sharing and developing their ability regarding information, experiences, goals, solutions;

3) has each client formulate a definite detailed (including time and place) plan to solve his immediate needs;

4) elicits information from the group and provides relevant information as needed regarding opportunities and services in the community;

5) avoids taking the role of the "all powerful" leader, and

6) provides vocational and/or psychological testing as needed.

Waller believes that as compared with traditional counseling the concentrated session has a greater impact; rapid decisions and marked changes occur; realistic planning is possible; the gains appear to be more permanent, and the client and the counselor know each others' attitudes and values better.

(Waller, 1966)

The field of rehabilitation counseling offers some suggestions and similarities for guidance with the disadvantaged. Noff notes that disadvantaged youth have limited opportunities to associate positive meanings to work and offers the rehabilitation workshop as a possible model.
We need to devise complex ameliorative environments, in which the deprived persons can learn to assign a wide range of positive meanings to work. The best available model is the rehabilitative workshop, in which work is done on real commodities, in which real wages can be paid on a scale related to productivity, and in which trained staff members can manipulate the variables crucial to work adjustment in a systematic manner. It is our suspicion that many severely underprivileged youngsters will not be able to profit from skilled training - and may in fact simply drop out because it is too much like school - unless they are provided with a substantial period in a simulated work environment, during which they can learn to play the expected role of a worker and be rewarded for it. This means learning how to come to work on time and enduring it for the ordinary work day; it means learning how to utilize constructive supervision without being angered or frightened to the point that work in impossible; above all, it means being able to get some gratification out of working, to begin to feel that it is possible, through work, to gain some measure of respect and self esteem. (Neff 1967: p. 76)

Acker describes the counseling of the disadvantaged in the Job Corps as based on two assumptions: 1) that there is a client group who share common status, problems, and aspirations; 2) that individuals through and with the group are competent to initiate action which can result in effective problem solving behavior. Acker views the counselor as a "mobilizer" to facilitate group identification and solidarity, a "consultant" to both the disadvantaged and their intermediate helpers, and a "liaison" between the disadvantaged and the establishment. (Acker, 1967)

Principles of behavior modification have been systematically applied to achieve desired results with juvenile delinquents, emotionally disturbed, etc. Brayfield describes five ingredients for behavior change in order to develop
the human resources of the disadvantaged:

1) The most powerful tool for shaping behavior is selective differential reinforcement of responses with immediate rewards.

2) The second most important tool for behavior change is modeling -- the systematic provision of opportunities for observing the behavior of others.

3) The role of expectation in the shaping of behavior is influential.

4) There is support for the view that ideas, insights, and thoughts influence behavior.

5) Participation in any problem solving or decision making situation significantly increases the personal satisfaction of the participant.

( Brayfield, 1968)

Consideration of each of these ingredients would increase the effectiveness of a counselor working with the disadvantaged.
VI. OVERVIEW OF VARIOUS AGENCIES

In order to gain information about actual counseling practices in the field, I interviewed staff members of the following agencies and organizations:

Bank of America Training Center
Brotherhood of Railway & Airline Clerks (BRAC)
Central City Occupational Center
Concentrated Employment Program (CEP)
East Los Angeles Non-Residential Job Corps Program
East Los Angeles Occupational Center
East Los Angeles Service Center
East Los Angeles Skill Center
Girl Scouts of America - Hard to Reach Program
Goodwill Industries
La Puente Adult Occupational Center
Los Angeles Job Corps Center for Women
Pacoima Skill Center
San Pedro Harbor Non-Residential Job Corps
Security Pacific Bank Training Center
State of California Department of Human Resources Development (HRD)
State of California Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Urban League Training Center
Watts Skill Center
Work Incentive Program (WIN)

The purpose of the interview was to discuss each agency's counseling program.

I selected these agencies because each operated a program designed specifically for disadvantaged adolescents and/or adults. The agencies represent the various types of institutions and organizations involved in work with the disadvantaged, e.g., volunteer organizations, private businesses, labor unions, non-profit organizations, special federally funded programs, local and state agencies. The agencies contacted are located in various communities in the Los Angeles area which have large minority populations, e.g., East Los Angeles,
Pacoima, South Central Los Angeles, San Pedro, Central Los Angeles.

Because of my work with the Job Corps I selected agencies concerned primarily with the education and training of the disadvantaged. Many of these agencies are engaged in the work for which James B. Conant foresaw the need in 1961:

To my mind, guidance officers, especially in the large cities, ought to be given the responsibility for following the post-high school careers of youth from the time they leave school until they are 21 years of age. Since compulsory attendance usually ends at age 16, this means responsibility for the guidance of youth ages 16 to 21 who are out of school and either employed or unemployed. It is with the unemployed out-of-school youth that I am especially concerned—especially the boys, for whom the unemployment problem is more severe than for girls. This expansion of the school's function will cost money and will mean additional staff—at least a doubling of the guidance staff in most of the large cities; but the expense is necessary, for vocational and educational guidance must be a continuing process to help assure a smooth transition from school to the world of work. The present abrupt break between the two is unfortunate. What I have in mind suggests, of course, a much closer relationship than now exists between school, employers, and labor unions, as well as social agencies and employment offices. (Conant 1965: p. 183)

With the exception of the adult occupational centers, few of these agencies have direct relationships with the schools. Many of these agencies are concerned with those over 21 who have not developed marketable skills and are considered to be "unemployable" or marginally employable. Some of the agencies are specifically concerned with women. Dr. Conant emphasized the severity of the unemployment problem for men, but it has also become
increasingly true for women, especially disadvantaged women because of the high number of female heads of household. (Vontress, 1966)

I interviewed counselors and occasionally administrators and teachers. The interviews were one to three hours in length and frequently included a tour of the particular facility. The interviews were informal and unstructured; however, at each interview we discussed the goals of the program, how counseling helped to implement these goals, the kinds of problems frequently encountered and methods which have been effective or ineffective in dealing with the problems.

I will discuss these interviews in a global manner, for there was a great deal of similarity in responses and agreement with much of the literature cited earlier. Because of the kinds of agencies I selected, the goals of the programs were frequently related to employment, e.g., to develop employable vocational skills, to successfully maintain employment and become self supporting, to advance beyond an entry level of employability. Some agencies were more concerned with developing sound vocational plans (HRD, YWCA); others, with upgrading employment potential (Security Pacific Bank, Bank of America) and others, with improving educational ability as well as training in specific areas (skill centers, occupational centers, Job Corps).

Counseling was frequently viewed by the agencies as a method to help develop personal traits which would enhance the client's employability, such as: regular attendance and punctuality, acceptance of supervision, relating effectively with peers, handling frustrations, appropriate grooming and
hygiene. The counselor was often considered the resource person to assist clients with outside problems inhibiting the client's success in the program (for example: family difficulties, legal problems, child care arrangements) and the liaison person with other agencies providing services to the client.

Counselors were characteristically used for crisis situations, e.g., outbreaks of violence - physical and verbal - with other clients or staff members, drug problems. Counselors were often viewed as providing an ongoing supportive function to the entire program, i.e. a counselor would screen applicants, help them formulate their personal and vocational goals, provide support and encouragement during the program, assist the client in finding a job and follow-up on the client's progress. Some counselors provided only one or two aspects of these supportive functions. Counselors often provided a supportive function for other staff members working with the clients and conducted joint case conferences or in-service training. Counselors were frequently involved in work in the community to develop public support of the program and potential job placement sites.

The problems which the counselors typically encountered were many of the same cited earlier in this paper. The most prevalent difficulties described were how to deal with the clients' short attention span, poor attendance, unrealistic goals, desire for immediate gratification, limited academic ability, poor self image, and the vast number of day to day pressing problems (legal, medical, social, personal, etc.). Whether the counselors were entitled vocational/employment/school/rehabilitation/guidance or residential coun-
counselors, they almost unanimously described the impossibility of dealing with only one aspect of a disadvantaged person's life (e.g., school, job, etc.) because of the complex interrelationships of the client's difficulties.

Many counselors described the following frustrations which they attributed to society's ills: the client's reluctance to work because he receives as much or more money on welfare than he could probably earn; the client's poor language and academic skills which handicap his success in any program; the lack of emotional support for the client in his own home environment; the reality of discrimination and stringent hiring requirements of many employers; the limited opportunities in today's labor market. Others described frustrations because of the functioning of their particular agency: large case loads, excessive paper work, limited funds, limited vocational training offerings, few short term programs, long waiting periods before entry, extensive test batteries for clients to be accepted.

Formal counseling sessions tended to be held primarily at the points of intake, termination, and crisis during the programs. Some counselors wished to do more formal counseling, but felt restricted by the size of their case loads and ongoing programming and paper flow needs. Others relied heavily on group counseling and group interactions in the classroom. Many were convinced of the effectiveness of group counseling with this population and wished it were scheduled as an integral part of the program. Some felt a counselor could be most effective by providing a service related to the client's immediate needs, e.g., referral to a job, enrollment in a particular class or program,
locating a reliable baby sitter, helping to purchase a used car, locating low rent housing. Many of the counselors viewed themselves more as social workers than as traditional guidance counselors. This is similar to the views noted earlier of Tolson (1972), Buchheimer (1969), Vontress (1966), and Briggs and Hummel (1962).

Many counselors shared the views of Gurin (1968) and Lefkowitz and Baker (1971), regarding the effectiveness of short, frequent, informal contacts rather than lengthy structured interviews. Many believed their most effective interactions occurred in the hall, over the drinking fountain, or in the local cafe.

In discussing techniques of effective counseling most believed the qualities of honesty, openness and directness to be more important than any technique. Some experienced a conflict of "selling" middle class values (e.g., work ethic, materialism) because of the agencies' goals and believed it impeded counseling if they did not openly discuss this aspect of their role with the clients. Many emphasized the importance of respect for the client and admitted to difficulties in achieving this. Others considered the following to be of value in the counseling process: helping the client to be aware of when he is making a choice and the implications of the choice, setting limits and providing structure when needed, supporting and reinforcing small gains and successes, presenting oneself as an effective model, adjusting one's own expectations according to the client's needs and goals, responding to the client as an individual. These are traditional views of the counseling process; however,
some counselors expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional methods (especially one to one non-directive counseling techniques) in which many of them had been trained. They expressed frustration and uncertainty regarding what constitutes effective counseling methods and techniques for the disadvantaged.

I believe some of the most innovative techniques in these agencies resulted when the counselors had been involved in the planning aspects of the programs and had attempted to develop a "counseling attitude" throughout the program. For example, because of the repeated pattern of client frustration while waiting for openings in classes and training programs, many of the occupational centers have developed curriculum which allow for weekly entry. This approach also enables the student to progress at his individual rate. To eliminate one of the constant causes of poor attendance, some of these agencies provide child care services within their facilities (La Puente) or provide funds to obtain adequate child care in the community (WIN, East Los Angeles and Harbor Non-Residential Job Corps programs). The geographic location of some of these agencies within a community is often an attempt to reduce the transportation problem. However, this problem can again arise when a client is ready for employment, and some programs include driver's training and car buying in the curriculum (BRAC, Job Corps).

Because of the disadvantaged client's characteristic limited exposure to various occupations and poor performance on aptitude tests the La Puente Occupational Center has developed a work evaluation program. A work
station has been developed for each training program. Each station has some of the equipment used in the training and provides instruction in basic tasks of the particular occupation. A client can assess his own ability and interest while a counselor supports and observes his performance. If a client is uncertain of his interest or ability, he can participate in the class for several days without formally enrolling. This approach provides a means for the client to experiment with various kinds of occupations and familiarize himself with an occupational area before making his vocational choice.

Somewhat similarly, Goodwill Industries provides tasks of increasing difficulty in order to evaluate client's aptitude and performance and to allow time for the client's self-evaluation. The amount of money which a client earns increases with the quality of his performance.

In order to help develop positive attitudes towards work many of the agencies attempt to model their program to resemble a job rather than a classroom. Some use time cards, 8 hour days, stringent rules regarding dress and behavior in order to familiarize the clients with the usual expectations of employers. Some teachers and counselors assume the role of the "boss" or supervisor for the training. This is similar to the rehabilitation workshop model suggested by Neff. (Neff, 1967)
VII. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS

In light of the current literature and the agency interviews, I would like to review some of my own experiences and conclusions regarding the counseling of the disadvantaged. In the fall of 1972, I conducted a training group of five vocational counselors at the Los Angeles Job Corps Center. The group met for two hours once a week for ten weeks. Initially, I conducted the group in the manner of a case conference in which the counselors presented individual clients which they wished to discuss. Repeatedly the presentations became more detailed and lengthy; the counselors desired specific practical solutions, and we would consistently run out of time. It appeared to me that the counselors became deeply personally involved in the problems of the client they presented, and they often needed a "handle" or an operational manner to view the client and the client's problems. I discussed the time problem with the group, and it was decided to limit the case material to one hour and to use the second hour to consider topics related to the counseling process rather than to specific cases. In time I observed the counselors become more skilled in presenting case material simply, directly and succinctly. The second hour was utilized to explore the counselors' expectations and attitudes, to study the population, to explore various methods to meet the clients' needs, to argue ways to change or circumvent the system, or to role play various methods of responding to crisis situations of difficult clients.

At the end of the ten week period, the counselors evaluated the training
They all stated that they felt they had developed professionally and personally and had benefited from the combination of the general didactic discussions with the specific problem solving sessions. Three counselors believed they had benefited from questioning their own attitudes and expectations regarding the disadvantaged and had developed an awareness of how they communicated these feelings to their clients. One counselor decided to resign because she was uncomfortable with the homosexuality, violence and language of the clients.

I learned of the day to day frustration the counselors experienced. They often felt powerless to affect change for the client and consequently felt they were ineffective as counselors. They particularly suffered with the problems of what to do with a client who cannot meet the minimal entry requirements for any training program, how to encourage a client and simultaneously reduce the client's unrealistic aspirations, and how to spend sufficient time with each client.

I believe that the counselors often felt overwhelmed by the multiple and overlapping problems of the disadvantaged. This feeling frequently resulted in an attitude of passivity and acceptance regarding what was possible to accomplish for the disadvantaged client. Indeed, they appeared to absorb and evidence some of the same attitudes which have been described as characteristic of the disadvantaged, e.g., feelings of insurmountable odds and inability to choose or succeed. (Amos, 1966 and Winschel, 1970). The counselors expressed an attitude of "there's nothing we can do...perhaps some
other agency can help...we just don't have the services."

It is my observation that the training sessions developed and enhanced the counselor's concept of themselves as professionals. They gradually became aware of their assimilation of the clients' attitudes of self defeat and failure and how this was diluting their effectiveness as counselors. They became more enthusiastic about changes they could affect on behalf of the client and experienced some success. They also became more efficient in how they used the time in the training sessions to further their professional growth.

In reviewing some of the literature, I was particularly interested in the descriptions of an activist concept of counseling with the disadvantaged. I have often found myself wondering if I still do counseling. After reading the articles by Tolson (1972), Buchheimer (1968), Vontress (1966) and Briggs and Hummel (1962) regarding the active role of a counselor both in the sponsoring organization and the community, I found myself redefining my concept of counseling. I do believe that effective counseling with the disadvantaged involves direct personal contact, but not necessarily in a structured interview setting. I believe much of a counselor's time can be productively used to help create a responsive, therapeutic environment for the disadvantaged. A counselor can use his concerns for the individual client to obtain needed change.

I can illustrate this from my own experience. I observed that consistently enrollees at the Los Angeles Job Corps Center were graduating from the clerical training program without marketable skills. In investigating this
problem, I became involved in the whole course of study in business education, and eventually an associate and I were allowed the time to develop a new curriculum for training in clerical occupations. We were able to eliminate some of the factors which had previously inhibited the program's success by including the following in the curriculum design: more frequent entry dates, various step-off levels of short lengths of time (file clerk → general clerk → clerk typist → steno clerk), provisions for marketable clerical training for an enrollee who did not become a competent typist (file clerk, duplicating machine operator), elimination of letter grades, suggested methods of instructing enrollees of various levels of ability in the same classroom. The revision of this program came about because of my concern as a counselor regarding a repeated pattern among the clients.

In my work at the Job Corps I found a limited amount of relevant, effective vocational material regarding opportunities for women. Much of the available material tends to perpetuate conventional stereotypes of "man's" work and "woman's" work. I wanted effective tools to assist the disadvantaged young women at the Job Corps to capitalize upon the changing legislation and growing opportunities for women. I documented the need for new vocational materials and submitted a proposal to research and develop the materials. I am pleased that the proposal is scheduled to be funded by the Department of Labor in the next fiscal year.

In the last few years, I have been involved in divergent activities which appear to be far afield from my early concept of counseling. Some of these
include in-service training of teachers and counselors, job analysis studies, research of community services and evaluating local labor market needs.

Recently, the book The Angel Inside Went Sour by Esther Rothman, a principal of a continuation school in New York, reaffirmed many of my personal beliefs regarding work with the disadvantaged client. Dr. Rothman writes:

To find her way to self-esteem each girl must fight two enemies, the enemy within and the enemy that is reality. Before she can fight either one, however, she must first learn how to find them. This is not an easy task. We teach her how.

Reality - the enemy without - is usually easier to find, but harder to fight. Poverty, friends who are not really friends, parents who have died or deserted, or parents who are so destructive no child should be asked to live with them, are realities that no girl wants to face. Yet we force her to. And we teach her how to fight back. Sometimes fighting back means that a girl and I both go to court to petition against a destructive parent. Sometimes it means I find a decent apartment for a family to live in. We fight back when we can. We cannot always. We cannot fight death or desertion or poverty. But we try! How we try! Otherwise, how can a girl begin to believe in herself? (Rothman 1970: p. 230)

She describes the activities of her staff to meet the needs of their students: establishing a student-run store, supplying eggs for hot breakfasts, scheduling classes in song-writing to teach reading and writing, confronting and manipulating the Board of Education. This all suggests to me an active role and responsibility for counselors. Many of the counselors I interviewed appeared to institutionalize agencies which had been specifically developed because of the failings of our institutions. The counselors would comment
"I couldn't do this... they'd never let me...," and administrators at the same agency would be pleading for innovations of any kind. Perhaps I am raising the question: why do counselors select to work with the disadvantaged? Do they want to be agents of change or maintainers of the status quo?

Carkhuff describes social action:

Written and verbal changes are not enough. A program can demonstrate it's effectiveness only when it has produced change or gain in the physical, emotional, or intellectual behavior of the individual involved.

In order to produce such change, social action programs must deal with the total person in the total environment. They must produce physical, emotional, and intellectual gains, not only in the individual, but also in the environment which supports the individual and makes possible the sustenance of the gains the individual has achieved. (Carkhuff 1971: p. 106)

It is my belief that the counselor of the disadvantaged should be committed to working with the environment as well as the individual. My goal is to develop a "counseling attitude" within our institutions and agencies in which individual concerns are utilized to develop productive changes in the environment.
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