

# Contents

## I. Sociometric Method and Referral

Introduction

(1) Merits

(2) Demerits

1. Difficulty in choosing appropriate people

2. Stimulation of clients

3. Difficulty in arranging information

To remove the demerits

Consideration and conclusion

The Bible and methods of counseling

## II. Understanding

Introduction

Cases

Consideration

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# The Boundary of Understanding and Sociometric Method in Counseling and Psychotherapy

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## I. Sociometric Method and Referral

According to Ohlsen's \**“Guidance Service in the Modern School”* the use of sociometric appraisal and referral is introduced to be one of the effective methods in guidance of students who have problems. The writer learned that American psychologists and psychoanalysts who are taking eclectic method in counseling very often utilize the method of sociometric appraisal and referral. Not only for gathering informations about the student or asking help when the problem surpasses the counselor's area of study, but also for a kind of environmental therapy including disciplinary purposes. So to say, all the people who have connection with the student are asked to work with the counselor. As for the method of counseling, Mr. Masaharu Takahashi \*\* mentions in his book that in America 75% of all child guidance clinics are utilizing primarily psychoanalysis and secondarily eclectic method. In Europe, psychoanalysis is 60% in the first and secondarily eclectic, while in Japan, Rogers method comes first. Accordingly, the

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\* M.M. Ohlsen : *Guidance Service in the Modern School*, New York  
1963 p. 106, 132-33, 142

\*\* Masaharu Takahashi : *Saikoterapi Nyumon*, Tokyo 1963

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writer assumes that most American counselors are using sociometric appraisal and referral in their counseling process.

There are certain merits in the application of sociometric appraisal and referral:

- 1) The counselor can learn the many sides of his client's personality through the anecdotal reports.
- 2) The client has a chance to grow or adjust while being watched by people who are deeply concerned and wish him happiness. But those merits are based on the assumption that the people who are referred to or asked to observe the client would be all good willed, having no prejudice and able to observe and evaluate correctly. Hence this way of guidance is on the side of idealism and cannot be whole heartedly relied upon.

Demerit of sociometric appraisal and referral

1. Difficulty in choosing appropriate people

People who are referred to are usually teachers, ministers, responsible persons of the clubs or groups to which the client belongs, or certain persons in the place he is working. While people who participate in sociometric appraisal can be anybody who has contact with the client, as many people as possible are needed to give a fair and correct opinions. Even authorized people who are referred to are not always appropriate to observe and watch the person who has problems.

The criteria for choosing an appropriate person for sociometric appraisals are as follows:

- (1) A person who can keep a secret

Those who like to gossip are not qualified.

- (2) A person who can accept not only his own type but those

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- who belong to a different type - who have different purpose of life, different tastes,
- (3) abilities, talents, ways of thinking, intelligence levels, health condition and so on.
  - (3) A person who is fair in observation and judgement
    - a) A person who has a complex cannot be fair - especially an inferiority complex towards somebody or certain qualities of the client (outlook, position or property). This person often makes false representations of the client and tries to make himself important utilizing the chance he is given
    - b) A person who is a rival in any field with the client is to be avoided.
    - c) A person who sticks to his opinion or finds it easy to have prejudice or malice is to be avoided.
  - (4) a person who respects the student as a personality
  - (5) a sensitive but not treacherous person

Outline of Rogers' \* explanation about respecting clients' personality in "Counseling and Psychotherapy" is as follows:

..... The second quality of an efficient counselor is respect of the client's personality. If the client is really trying to achieve the goal which he himself chose, the therapist should arrange the relationship in which the client can develop his personality. However, a person who is eager to convert a client's character, or unconsciously tries hard to push the client into the image he himself drew,

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\* Carl Rogers: Counseling and Psychotherapy translated by F. Tomoda, 1960 Tokyo P.327

cannot be a counselor. He should accept the clients as they are, and should give them freedom of choice and freedom to solve their problem by themselves.

Usually the people who participate in sociometric appraisal are just common people with much variety, so counselors must remember that they cannot swallow all the information people give. Phyllis Greenace and Patterson \*\* mention that a counselor's character or his own problems relate to the process and results of counseling. The writer thinks that, in the same way the characters of those who give sociometric appraisals affect the information.

"The situation of counseling often gives a chance for the counselors to fulfill their need to be loved and to be important which is the deepest and oldest desire of human beings."

"Those who have a need to teach (beginners who have teaching experience are usually so) have an inevitable tendency for desiring to be superior to others, to dominate, and to lead the clients to a solution of the problem. And they sometimes push clients hard to improve and change by means of suggestions, persuasion and so on.

## 2. Stimulation of the clients

It seems that the people who know the student's problems and process of treatment and what is going on about him, would often like to give hints or say teasing words to him. They, because of the human tendency, may feel superior to him, knowing his secrets. However, this will stimulate him. In case the observation and

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\*\* C. Patterson : Counseling and Psychotherapy translated by H. Ito, p.55

\*\* Phyllis Greenace : cited in Counseling and Psychotherapy by C. Patterson

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hypothesis is not true, the student will feel sad, hurt, irritated, annoyed and feel resistance, because he cannot argue with the vague hints. If he argues, he will be said neurotic. And even when the issue is close to the truth, still he may feel very unpleasant. All these reaction are not desirable ones but cause another new problem of adjustment for the student. To hint something about his problem itself is in the bounds of psychological discipline or therapy and the person who would do this must be a qualified one whom the student respects. When any discipline is applied on the student, based on a false hypothesis the result would be undoubtedly negative. Needless to say, all must be very careful not to gossip the student. The counselor's hypothesis may be taken like a diagnosis or truth and might become a rumor in the process of spreading the news from mouth to ear. Consequently this will make him feel isolated from his friends and make adjustment difficult.

3. It is difficult for a counselor to arrange the information from people who have connection with the student, and judge which is really useful for making diagnosis and treatment.

At the case conferences, which are usually had in the course of counseling and therapy by school psychologists and others who have relation with the student, untrained people, especially those who have prejudice, are not flexible and tend to stick to their own opinions (sometimes they even try to bring evidence which will back their opinions). But the counselor remains flexible. Hence the result is that the counselor is apt to be drawn to other's opinion and misjudge the situation. to avoid these defects:

- 1) People who have contact with the student are offended if they

were not told the details of the student's problems. However, the counselor should be very careful not to tell too much and he should be careful that as few people as possible know about the problem.

2) Training of people and exclusion of unsuitable people for sociometric work

If the counselor thinks that at the teamwork of people around the student is needed for improvement of the student, he should pay the utmost care in choosing the team and educate the team. According to Patterson; the counselor can give the clinical information of his counselee, only to a few limited persons. They are the type of persons in whom the counselee himself has confidence to think that they are really in the side of the counselor's endeavour to help the counselee.) As for the information which exceed the usually permitted boundary, the counselor must get his counselee's permission before he actually takes action. He should do anything which will promote his counselee's welfare. According to L. M. Brammer and E. L. Shostrom\*\* "It is unwise and impractical to refer a student to community agencies without the knowledge, consent and cooperation of his parents. (He states of the referral to community agencies, but the way will be applied to other cases such as to church, his employer and so on.)

3) When the counselor strongly needs information from people to analyze

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\* C. Patterson: Counseling and Psychotherapy, translated by H. Ito p.52

\*\* L. M. Brammer and E. L. Shostrom: Therapeutic Psychology, N. J. USA 1964, p.125

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the case for the student inspite of side effects, he should pay attention to the relations between each person, and identify each person's character and adjustment, their attitude towards life, and their true feelings towards the student. He must be minute and prudent in taking in the information and giving any diagnosis. Taking in those conditions in his consideration, it would be wiser to simply gather appraisal not letting people know why he needs the information.

#### Consideration and conclusion

From above mentioned materials, the following points are considered:

1. Some side effects surely accompany the sociometric works.

Some of the people who are informed about the client are apt to have misconceptions and come to see him through colored glasses. Once they have become mistaken, it becomes another means of misunderstanding, because the student will react to the issue. Thus misunderstanding becomes larger and-aggravates the student's problem, and he again will react to it. Carl Manninger\* states that all the behavior of human beings can be induced to S-R (stimulus and responses) Formula. The student will become nervous and sometimes will resist the counseling relationship and that will cause further maladjustment to the environment. That, in turn, hinder the integration of his personality, and may causes neurosis.

2. Discipline and insight

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\*K. A. [Manninger: The Human Mind translated by H. Furusawa, 1960, Tokyo p.287



E. G. Williamson\*\* mentions as follows about discipline of students in "Counseling and Discipline".

"If the counselor takes the attitude to chase the cause of problem, he needs time, patience and insight. Discipline should be approached not through the punishment. There were no students who did not feel grateful when he was shown the weak point of his character *with sincere concern and sympathy.*"

The counselor who takes directive ways of discipline will need to make careful checks on the information and cumulative data whether it is true or not. Then he can ascertain his diagnosis and give friendly persuasion.

Rogers'\* point of view is that most of maladjustments and ill behavior are caused of the client's emotional barrier. He thinks any data on his client does not give any assistance to his therapy. A counselor must not have any bias because of the data. He tries to ease out his client's emotion and help them to reach the insight. He says that the most valuable insight is reached by the client himself when the latter was helped to see himself and his problem closely.\*\* Insight is not the experience which he is forced to reach but of that attained by himself.\*\*\* When the counsellor suggests the insight which is not expressed but repressed, the client will resent it and resist, and the counseling relation may be destroyed. The writer agrees on this point and think that it is most important to help the client to attain his own insight but the counselor must be aware that some type of clients are very sensitive and will be affected by the counselor's slightest hints.

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\*\* E. G. Williamson and J. D. Foley: Counseling and Discipline, USA

\* Ibid p. 33,

\*\* Ibid p. 264

\*\*\* Ibid p. 189

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Or they will feel too much obligation to the counselor and feel unnecessary guilty feelings. Some of them feel guilty at the counselor's untrue suggestion, in reality he has no reason to feel guilty. According to Rogers, \*\*\*\*\* the client, who attains his own insight, reflects it on his behavior. That is the most valuable insight. In case the result was not revealed, it must be the counselor's insight and not his own. The writer is afraid that the client can not reflect his insight when the client's environment prevents the realization of his insight even when the insight is his own. In that case, the writer assumes that the counselor should try to remove the true cause of his client's maladjustment. According to Rogers, the counselor must always stay with client's emotion but not with the knowledge and fact he hears from the client. He never plays the role of authority trying to know everything. He stands on the opposite view from psychoanalysis on this point. Rogers thinks that the approach of \*\*\*\* psychoanalysis will retard the remedy of the clients. In the process of psychoanalysis, the counselor chases the cause and points it out to the counselee. That means showing the insight to which the client is not ready. (And moreover analyst is not always right) The wirter thinks that it will be successful when if it is brought out by an experienced analyst in the course of talking which is made by the client in the shape of the client's own insight helped by the analyst. To attain this goal the counselor must be patient and wise, and the client must be sensitive and thoughtful. But when the analyst is not right, he will make his client resent, and the counseling situation will break.

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\*\*\*\*\* Ibid p. 165

\*\*\*\* Ibid p. 251

The question which is more effective in the process of counseling to remain always in non-directive way putting emphasis on client centered, or approach the problem by eclectic method sometimes taking up psychoanalysis and sometimes collecting anecdotal evidences is very difficult to tell. How to approach would be decided taking into consideration the clients' age, character, intelligence, and the type of the problem. No wonder that Patterson \* says that it might be good to suit the way of counseling to the counselee's taste. The eclectic method taking in sociometric appraisal and referral in it, may be successful for very young people in very friendly circle, but not for the grown ups who usually are in the midst of various unrevealed conflicts between people. Or some grown ups are tough enough to get through the pressure of stimulation, but sensitive people cannot. As for the intelligence level of the client, tests would not be given, whichever test it might be, unless the client wants to have it. The writer is rather in the side of client centered. A counselor would be often tempted to analyze the client or try to make anecdotal evidences or moved by the sociometric appraisal. However, the most important is adjustment of the student. The above mentioned methods may satisfy the counselor's desire, but the writer wonders whether they can really help clients. There are so many side effects. Sociometric appraisal and referral might cause new maladjustment. Clients might become more nervous and some of them may feel helpless and others may resist. Especially beginners have lots of chances to make errors, in these methods. In non-directive

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\* Ibid p.82

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counseling the minor errors are harmless and can be regained if the counselor tried to correct it, Rogers says. He thinks that clients usually have strong capability to recover. (Rogers thinks the most serious error is to bring out the counselor's insight before the client is ready. And the counselor cannot regain most of this kind of errors.\*) However, the method of trial-and-erros applied on a human mind, is not at all efficient for the client's recovery. It might aggravate the client's state of mind. Even if the counselor needs the help of others, he should take a mild way not stimulating the counselee. It may be because Rogers mostly treats problem *children* who belong mainly to the family and who have less social life than college students or grown ups, that he takes non-directive method. Children usually have less repression. In addition to this, for children, the counselor can apply play therapy in which they find their outlets of emotion. While, grown ups repress their emotion, so it needs so much patience, skill and time to treat them with non-directive method. It, however, seems that his approach of helping the client achieve insight by himself is very effective. To point out to the counselee the issue which his own insight has not reached or repressed is not effective in the results, shown as Rogers says. This attitude comes from his view of respecting the client's freedom. The most important thing seems to be to respect both counselee and counselor himself. Patterson\*\* mentions that if a counselor is self-respecting, he finds no need of forcing his counselee to his own aim using methods of suggestion, persuasion and other methods to evidence his own efficiency.

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\* Ibid p. 300

\*\* Ibid p. 55

Patterson's reference to the fact that he asks counselee whether he can refer to others, stands on his view that counselors should respect the counselee's personality

As for eclectic method, Patterson \*\*\* states that as it lacks unity, its efficiency is dubious. The technic which was devised from conflicting frames of reference, later causes contradictions and conflicts. According to E. A. Hilgard,\* as for the same method, if some attempt to systematize is not taken, it is difficult to settle the problem area. Anecdotal evidence is often used in irresponsible and careless ways if there is a weakness in settling the problem area. Consequently only fruitless results can be expected.

The idea of community is foreign especially for Japanese. So the type of guidance like sociometric appraisal and referral is apt to lead to harmful influence on the person in the case. People tend to exclude the person and feel superior. This feeling might be expressed in a kind of gossip. So the method has a high possibility of failure.

According to the above mentioned reasons, the writer takes the view of avoiding referral and sociometric appraisal in the process of counseling unless the counselor holding client's details strictly lest it spread in the people. Only few limited persons who really wish the client happiness can participate. However, the special cases such as danger of suicide, psychopathy and criminals are excluded from the discussion. As for the counselor's responsibility towards

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\*\*\* Ibid p.128

\* E. A. Hilgard : cited in Patterson's Counseling and Psychotherapy, p.128

the society, Wrenn\* states that the counselor should keep client's secret except danger of suicide, homicide, and treason. He is standing in the side of a client individual.

At the end of this chapter, the writer would like to cite some passages which has relation with counseling technic, from the Bible.

1) Matthew, Ch. 18 vs. 15-17: If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, *between you and him alone*. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother, but if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen, even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

This is close to the directive method. The writer of the passage does not give whole hearted approval to the sociometric approach but permits the approach and referrel according to the case. However, there is a certain respect towards the problem person in keeping his secret at the first step.

2) Galatian, Ch. 6, vs. 1: Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted.

This is partly directive but in the point of placing himself on the same level with the person in problem, this is in the side of non-directive.

3) Colossians, Ch. 4, vs. 21: Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

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\*\* C. Gilbert Wrenn : cited in Patterson's Counseling and Psychotherapy, p.37

The word *discouraged* is translated into Japanese words  
“grow timid, shrink or become perverse.”

This is very close to \*Rogers' viewpoint. “The most effective  
counselors are patient.”

## II. Understanding

### 1. Introduction

Understanding is thought to be one of the most important capacities of the counselor in process of counseling. Dealing with a case, a counselor sometimes can be extraordinarily understanding to certain situations or certain emotion of the client. As C. H. Patterson \* mentions in “Counseling and Psychotherapy”, “a counselor often projects the personal problems of his own”, “the counselor’s understanding relates with his own emotional experiences” Some counselors avoids stepping into the same area of the client’s problems when he has deep unfavourable feelings towards his emotional experience. Some, on the other hand, become very sensitive and understand the problem very quickly and even share the client’s feelings. It is true that the counselor can deeply sympathize with the client’s feelings and his problem area. It may release the client from the repression and agony under which his personality is deeply influenced. But it can happen only in the case when the counselor and the client belong to the same pattern of character. or the counselor has the same experience with that of the client. However, when a counselor understands too much to the extent of enlarging some parts of client’s feeling - that is, he fails

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\* Ibid p. 301

\* Ibid p. 56

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to make a correct view of the client's problems and feelings - it is called a kind of bias. He tends to go too far in a little different direction and thinks that the client's feelings and cause of the problem and his behavior is just the same as his own, and really it is not so. Often the understanding which goes too far causes emotional involvement. And in case the client's problem is mainly of human relation, the counselor is apt to misjudge the situation, because he emphasizes a part of the problem and the depth of his understanding becomes irregular according to the area of the problem.

When the counselor's understanding is too far and he gives a premature judgement, he protects the client. The client, then, is apt to become dependent. According to Patterson\* the counselor who has a strong social service drive likes to take the role as father or mother. He may try to arrange the environment for his client or protect his client. Very often the insight which the client achieved is actually the counselor's insight. This is not a favourable goal.

## 2. Cases

### a) Meg's case

Meg came to Japan for the purpose of studying Japanese literature. Her sponsor was an energetic politician whom she found by herself through a weekly magazine. She was most irritated and depressed when she came to the office to be counseled about her

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\* Ibid p.55



problem with her sponsor's family with whom she was living. His sponsor was very kind and very eager to entertain her. However, he was not the type of person who stopped to think of what Meg really wanted. He was always dominating and full of confidence. Meg was very sensitive and kindhearted; considerate in American way but she has a strong will. She needed more time to study and needed time of her own for enjoyment. She tried to please everybody and so, especially felt an obligation towards her host. The conflict between her desire to be free and his forced kindness (and hence her sense of obligation) must be softened instantly. But the family was enjoying having her with them, and she did not like to disappoint them. The counselor talked with the family and she moved into a lodging house. The counselor tried hard not to disappoint the family, but because she evaluated her client's consideration and kindheartedness highly and sympathized with her sensitivity, all through the problem she was too closely involved on the side of her client. After a year she left with her study not completed. The counselor understood her client's feeling perfectly but she failed to understand the host's side with the same depth of understanding. Her understanding was irregular. In examining the process of counseling and what the office did for the student, the counselor found that she went too far in sympathizing her. She tried to remove her emotional barrier, but she should have known that the conception of freedom is very different in U.S. and in Japan. The counselor should explain to Meg how Japanese parents protect their daughters. Meg wanted to be more freer than Japanese girls usually are, and wished to act as though she were

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living in her own country. If she had known a little more accurately how Japanese people feel toward their daughters, the conflict between her and her host would have been less tense. If she had reached her insight that she should have tried to make herself less sensitive to adjust to a new environment, it would have been easier for her to live in the new community and finish her study.

b) Mrs. A. was sensitive and intelligent but decisive and strong willed for a woman. Her husband was supposed to be frank, talkative and dominating. She had to get his decision for anything before it was carried out. Mr. B. happened to reveal a problem about his married life. His wife had to take a leading role, because Mr. B. was too weak willed, while B. drank too much, almost to his failure. Mrs. A. sympathized with him in his situation. She thought that all of his situation was just the same as hers. She compared his drinking with her crushing dishes when things were unbearable. She protected him by every means. She thought even his character was just the same as hers, decisive and strong willed and able to suppress his feeling so as not to get fight with his wife. But really he was indcisive, dependent, weak willed and could not repress his desire to drink. And she did not know how his wife had been annoyed by his weak will and drinking. Mrs. A. projected herself in her dealings with Mr. B. She sympathized too much and made a wrong diagnosis. Atter all her understanding towards the wife cannot be deep, because she had no experience in having a husband like Mr. B.

### 3. Consideration

It is very effective to be able to accept all of the client's

emotion and understand how he is feeling, but it is inevitable for the counselor to be unfair and have bias sometimes. Out of the issue which was above mentioned, the writer came to the conclusion as follows: however hard a counselor might try to understand the client's feelings and situations correctly, there seems to be a certain boundary in the area and depth of understanding. In other words the area and depth of the counselor's understanding relates to his own experience and character.

For all that, a counselor should try to understand a client and be fair to the issue.

Taking these points into consideration when he needs to make an hypothesis, a counselor should always think of all the possible situations and cases which concern an issue. Even if a counselor has an hypothesis for the true cause of the client's problem, he should be ready to take another way of thinking, and to see the client and the situation without bias.