

Perspectives on School Counseling--C. H. Patterson: A Personal View

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Dr. Patterson is widely recognized for his outstanding contributions to the counseling profession. His past professional record includes serving as president of both the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association of the American Association for Counseling and Development and Division 17 (Counseling Psychology) of the American Psychological Association. He has also been the recipient of two Fulbright Fellowships, has been a fellow in three divisions of APA, and is recognized as a leader in counselor education and counseling psychology.

Foremost, Dr. Patterson is known for his scholarly accomplishments, which include over 165 articles and book chapters and 13 books. His writings have had tremendous impact on the thinking of practicing school counselors, many of whom studied his widely acclaimed texts *Counseling and Guidance in Schools: A First Course (1962)*, *The Counselor in the School: Selected Readings (1967)*, and *An Introduction to Counseling in the School (1972)*.

Dr. Patterson is presently a Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of Counseling and Specialized Educational Development at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He currently teaches advanced counseling theories and provides counseling supervision to both master's and doctoral level students. Students and faculty alike enjoy the opportunity to share ideas, perspectives, and research interests with a renowned scholar and contributor to the profession of counseling, Dr. C. H. Patterson.

How did Dr. Patterson's interest in school counseling evolve? What are his thoughts regarding the evolution of school counseling and implications for the future? How will future school counselors be trained? How does he view the current role and practices of school counselors? During a 45 minute interview, C. H. Patterson presented some answers to these questions and offered insights into the past, present, and future of school counseling.

The interview was videotaped for educational purposes on April 24, 1990, at the Center for Educational Studies and Development at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The interview was edited for clarity and ease of reading by Dr. John Poidevant, who is an assistant professor and coordinator of school counseling at UNCG.

JMP: *At what point in your career did your interest in counseling evolve? What factors influenced you to pursue counseling as a career?*

CHP: As I look back on my life, there many things due to chance, things that just happened to occur that I was interested in--although I was ready to respond to them. Actually, my counseling experiences go back to before I got my Ph.D. In 1946, the Veterans Administration established a new position, that of "Personal Counselor." In 1950, it was changed to "Counseling Psychologist," one of the first positions with that title. A friend of mine who was in the Veterans Administration Office in the St. Paul Regional Office contacted me and said, "We have this new position. I'd like to have you come here and fill it." At that time I was a clinical psychologist in a Veterans Administration Hospital in New York State. I'd been a clinical psychologist for a short time in the service, also.

JMP: *At that point you had a master's degree?*

CHP: At that point I had my master's degree, which was in child psychology, from the University of Minnesota. I was interested in this new position, since I was a little tired of being a clinical psychologist, because it seemed to me I wasn't helping anybody. I was just giving tests and interviewing and evaluating, and all these tests were going into a file, and I didn't feel it helped people very much. So this new job was interesting, because it was going to provide psychotherapy for veterans with personal problems who were in educational and vocational training programs. This position involved a short-term training program with Carl Rogers and his staff at the University of Chicago. So I went from New York state with my wife and son--who was less than 2 years old at the time. That's how I became client centered, over 40 years ago. I'm still client centered. So that's how got into counseling.

While working in the Veterans Administration, I was a Ph.D. student in counseling in the University of Minnesota College of Education. I stuck it out for 7 years while working full-time, because I wanted to get into the academic world. I got my degree in 1955. A chance contact with a man from the University of Illinois who was in Minnesota for a meeting led to an offer from the University of Illinois. A member of the psychology Department at Minnesota (Donald G. Paterson) heard I was being offered this job, contacted me, and said he would like me to stay at Minnesota. I said, "Well, I don't have to give an answer right away; I'll wait, say, 10 days."

So he talked to the other members of the psychology department because they had the same kind of position at the University of Minnesota. But they decided they preferred someone who was not a Minnesota product. I think it was fortunate. I don't think it's a good idea for new Ph.D.s to stay where they receive their degree.

So I went to the University of Illinois to set up a new program training rehabilitation counselors and rehabilitation psychologists. There were three faculty members there who had just gotten together as a group (Lifton, Ohlsen, and Proff). It was the first year they had three full-time people. I was a fourth full-time person. This was 1955-1956. The program was for school counselors, and I was interested in being part of the on-going program. I wanted an integrated program, so I got involved in the total counseling program. I set up some special courses for rehabilitation counselors, but I used the basic courses that were in the program. I had a secretary financed by a federal grant that

also provided support for students and my position. So I was essentially chairman of the program. Several years later it was decided to have an official chairman. So I was elected, supposedly for 2 years. Nobody thought to have another election for about 6 years, when I said I did not want to continue as chairman in 1969.

JMP: *How did your initial interest in school counseling evolve?*

CHP: It was natural to become involved in school counseling, because the other three faculty members were educators in school counseling; the whole program was in school counseling. I was interested in teaching other courses besides rehabilitation counseling. So I was teaching courses in school counseling. At that time there was a good introductory text (Ohlson, 1955). But as years went by, I thought I had my own ideas. I always wanted to write my own text, so I wrote *Counseling and Guidance in Schools*, published by Harper and Row (1962), which had published two books of mine earlier. A man in the Navy who was taking a correspondence course wrote me from a ship in the Atlantic Ocean somewhere telling me how much he liked this book. When I came here [to UNCG], I discovered that the instructor in the course was Dr. Purkey, then teaching in Virginia. So that was my beginning in school counseling.

JMP: *What prompted you to edit in 1967 *The Counselor in the School* and to write in 1975 *Counseling and Psychology in Elementary Schools*?*

CHP: Well, Rogers's book on client-centered therapy was published in 1951. One of the reasons I wrote the book was because I thought most texts in school counseling did not have a strong, or even any, philosophical-theoretical orientation. So my book had both a philosophical and theoretical orientation that was essentially client-centered. So here I was teaching school counselors, and writing a book on school counseling, but I never had any experience in the public schools. I have never had teacher education courses, never been certified, never worked in the public schools. And this was interesting because at one time a year or two after my book was published, a representative of the publisher was traveling throughout the country. He had been to another university in Ohio, then had come in to see me. He said, "You know, I was talking to a faculty member at such and such a university. He said you were not qualified to write a book on school counseling because you didn't have experience working in the public schools."

A little facetiously I said, "If anyone asks you that question again, say that I have 12 years of experience in the schools. I'm a high school graduate." I continued to teach school counselors all during my career at the University of Illinois and was very active in the program until I retired in 1977.

The program at the beginning was one in which we had school counselors and rehabilitation counselors. Later we went into elementary school counseling, student personnel work, and mental health counseling. We had four or five different tracks. But our program was a generic one. My philosophy is that counseling is generic. The basic principles of counseling, the relationship, are the same whether you are working in a school, in a college or university, in the field of rehabilitation, in mental health, or in private practice. So I've always felt the basic preparation of school counselors should be generic.

At the University of Illinois, all of our students took most of their basic courses together. We had an introduction to rehabilitation counseling, an introduction to counseling in the schools, etc.--an orientation to the field in which they wanted to go. We had special courses in terms of the subjects they were working with--students, handicapped, etc. But our basic first intensive practicum experience was the same for all of these students. They took their practicum together and it was unique for many years. We operated a counseling center on an Air Force base (Patterson, 1966a). There were a lot of men in training, but there were also others, permanent staff members as well as civilian personnel with families. So it was really a community counseling center. Our students were the staff members of that center.

So the students took their basic counseling practicum together, working with a wide variety of clients. Then the fourth semester they would go into an internship in the setting in which they would work. Most of our school counselors didn't have the internship; it was not required at that time, and they had experience in schools. With rehabilitation counselors, we did have a formal fourth semester of our 2-year program, an internship in rehabilitation counseling. It was the first really formal internship and was supported by the federal government.

Speaking of support for students, remember that in 1957, after Sputnik, the United States got very concerned by the fact that we were not turning out enough scientists and mathematicians. The government wanted the schools to emphasize science and mathematics and to encourage students in these fields, so the National Defense Educational Act (NDEA) of 1958 was passed (Patterson, 1963b), providing support to universities to conduct summer session institutes, and providing support to students. We were involved in that program, both summer session and then year-long programs. I was not personally involved, because it had a separate faculty, and the students were separated from the rest of our program, so in effect we ran two programs. We hired new staff members strictly for the NDEA program. We operated these for several years.

About the early 1960s, the United States Office of Education (USOE) realized (I think we had raised the question) that the law did not restrict this program to secondary school counselors. So the USOE decided it would support some programs to train elementary school counselors. Three or four universities were selected for the first programs. We were one of them, with the University of Missouri, Columbia, and an Arizona university. We filed an application at the request of the USOE.

I remember we had a staff meeting on what kind of a program we should establish. Some of our staff members said: "Elementary school counselors should be trained to give intelligence tests." I opposed that; my reasoning was that if elementary school counselors were qualified to give individual intelligence tests, that's all they would do. Their time would be taken up in testing and they wouldn't do any counseling.

JMP: *Similar to the role of school psychologist?*

CHP: Yes. It would be overlapping with the role of school psychologist, that course. And we also objected to the segregation of the NDEA students and faculty. The USOE did allow us to have some of our regular staff members work with the institute students. I was interested in that, because with a master's degree in child psychology, I wanted to get involved with the program in elementary school counseling. So I worked part-time in the institute, supervising the intensive practicum

(internship) experience of the students in the program. These students didn't take the regular practicum at the Air Force Counseling Center, but had their experience in the school setting. There was a selected group of schools that cooperated. It wasn't a very good place for students to work because elementary schools had no counseling programs--no counseling rooms! I had tapes of my students counseling in the nurse's office, in the supply closet; one of them did her counseling out in one of the halls with a screen around her, because there was a place to plug in her tape recorder. So it was rather primitive. But the students, I think, got a very good experience. In these cooperating schools, they probably got as good or better experience than many of our students are getting now in their so-called internships in the schools, where they tend to do a lot of clerical work.

We were assured support for 3 years in this program. The third year our application for continuing the grant was denied. We tried to find out why they rejected our application for the third year, and we never got a good answer. My impression is that the USOE didn't agree with our program. They didn't like the fact that we weren't teaching individual intelligence testing, and they didn't like the fact that it was not a completely segregated program. So that was the beginning of elementary school counseling. These programs were, as best I can remember, conducted in the mid-1960s.

I would like to add that I think counseling in the elementary schools is extremely important. That is why I wrote *Counseling and Psychology in the Elementary School* (with Henry Kaczowski) in 1975, after our experiences in the NDEA institute programs. If counseling is available in elementary schools, many later problems of students can be prevented or minimized. It could minimize the need for later intensive or long-term counseling or psychotherapy. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be recognized--elementary school counseling has not been given the attention it deserves.

JMP: *Many school counselors were trained exclusively in client-centered counseling. Could you speculate as to the impact of this approach on the evolution of school counseling?*

CHP: First, let me comment on a problem in the education of elementary school counselors. There was a controversy at that time. Should the elementary school counselor actually work with individual students? And there were those who said, "No. Elementary school counselors should be essentially consultants."

There was a bill in Congress to support child development consultants for the schools, essentially to replace elementary school counselors. I didn't accept that (Patterson, 1967a). The USOE reasoning, stated in a publication by the USOE, was that counseling is not relevant to elementary schools for several reasons. One was that elementary school students are not verbal, so they can't engage in a verbal relationship. And there was no provision for play therapy in the school. A second reason was that young children do not have the cognitive ability to deal with their problems. The third reason is interesting. It was said that they don't have any real control over their problems; their problems are due to their family situations or the school setting.

It seemed to me unreasonable from my experience with children, my own children and other's children, to say that children have no control. A child can't control the father's alcoholism, but that child can get some help in understanding the father, accepting the father, and changing attitudes toward the father. Besides changing the situation, an important thing is to change attitudes in that situation, and the counselor can help do that (Patterson, 1969b).

You ask, "What is the situation now?" I'm not really up on what's happening now. I do get something back from the students I work with here. And it seems to me, we haven't made a lot of progress. Several years ago I was asked to be the luncheon speaker at the North Carolina School Counselors Association. I was asked to talk about progress in school counseling. So I began to look at the situation as much as I could in terms of the contacts I had with people and asked myself. "What has changed in school counseling?" And I became very pessimistic. It seemed to me that little if anything had changed. I changed the title of my talk: I called it *Progress, or Lack of Progress, in School Counseling*. I pointed out area after area where things seemed to be pretty much the same as they were 40 years ago.

JMP: *There remains a strong emphasis on the role of the counselor as a counselor, consultant, and also a coordinator. What are your thoughts about the current role and function of school counselors?*

CHP: I accept the fact that the counselor in the school has other functions than individual or group counseling. As I remember, the American School Counselors Association 40 years ago said that 50% to 60% of the counselor's time should be spent in individual or group contacts. So how much progress have we made? It varies. There are some schools that are really good. A lot depends on the administrator.

JMP: *In a legislative sense there has been progress. Florida now mandates that school counselors provide counseling services 75% of the time. And I think North Carolina is beginning to explore that.*

CHP: Right. But it's not universal. And if the administrators-superintendents don't do it, they have to be forced to do it by state law. I accept the fact that school counselors are involved in other things than counseling. Coordination--I'm not so sure what that means. Consulting--sure. You consult with the teachers but also the administrators. I think the counselor in the school has a responsibility for what I call the psychological environment of the school. I don't see many counselors taking that responsibility or being given it. If a counselor has a background in the counseling process and some psychology, the counselor should be concerned for the effect of the classroom, the administration, the whole school setting, on students. And in some cases, the effect may be negative. The school counselor has a responsibility to try to change that situation.

JMP: *How would you see the ideal role of the school counselor?*

CHP: I see the ideal role of the counselor as being that the counselor is recognized as a professional. Often administrators don't recognize the counselor as a professional. I think the counselor has been handicapped in this recognition because of the fact that counselors have been teachers. They have been looked upon as teachers. And they see themselves fundamentally as teachers. Teachers have more influence because they are organized. Counselors are at a disadvantage, because there may be one or just a handful of counselors in a school or school system. But there are many, many more teachers. So the counselor is in a minority, making it very difficult for the counselor to have much effect on the school or school system compared to that of teachers and administrators.

JMP: *One of the ways in which that has changed, I think, is that many counselor education programs are receiving more and more applicants who have not been teachers and wish to pursue school counseling as a career.*

CHP: But it has taken a long time to recognize that school counselors don't have to go through teaching. Forty years ago there was general agreement on this among counselor educators--not every one, because there was some controversy at that time (Patterson, 1961). But I think a majority of counselor educators came to the conclusion that a counselor didn't have to be a teacher. It's interesting that there's only one other field in which a person has to be qualified in one profession before being allowed to enter another profession--and that's in psychiatry. A psychiatrist has to have a medical degree, medical training, before that person can become a psychiatrist.

JMP: *Do you see a similar analogy to counseling and teaching?*

CHP: I think the fact that counselors have been teachers has a detrimental effect on their perception by teachers and administrators. Of course in many cases, 30 or 40 years ago, counselors had no training in counseling. They were just assigned to be a counselor. Often it was a coach who got a little old for coaching and they needed a counselor. I used to say that old coaches never die, they become counselors. That has always been a problem. We need to get more recognition of school counseling as a profession. Counselors can do much more if they're respected and seen as professionals, not just another teacher who has become a counselor, and who is often overburdened with clerical work.

I also use another analogy. Business knows better than to use somebody who has a high level of specialized training to do clerical work. In our school situation we're paying professionally trained people a professional salary to do clerical work. It's much more efficient, more cost effective, to have more clerks and let the counselors do their professional jobs.

JMP: *Discuss your perceptions of the current role of the client-centered approach for school counselors.*

CHP: This goes back to my belief that counseling is generic. There are certain basic fundamentals in counseling that apply regardless of what kind of label you put on it, or the theoretical orientation, whether you're a behavioral counselor, a cognitive counselor--whatever you call it. I have a book on theories of counseling (Patterson, 1986a), and one of the things I noticed when I was studying other theories was that there were common elements. Everybody recognizes that a relationship is important--counseling is a relationship. There are certain characteristics of this relationship which are common among all the theories.

Rogers happened to be the one who recognized them (I wouldn't say discovered them; they existed before), explicitly defined them, and encouraged research on them. They are empathic understanding, respect or warmth, and unconditional positive regard. *Genuineness or congruence* was another term that Rogers used. Genuineness is more widely used now. I always precede genuineness with *therapeutic genuineness* because genuineness is not always therapeutic. So counseling is generic. School counselors should have the same kind of training in these

fundamentals as any other counselor. I prefer not to use the term *client-centered*, because it is so widely misunderstood. A number of years ago, I began using the term *relationship counseling*, and in 1974, I published a book on relationship counseling (Patterson, 1974b). School counselors need to be trained in generic counseling. Yet there was a feeling many years ago, that still exists, that client-centered counseling is not appropriate in the schools.

JMP: *Why?*

CHP: Well, there are a number of reasons. One of those reasons is that a lot of the students who are referred to counselors are not really clients or don't become clients. To be a client, the student has to recognize that he or she has a psychological problem and want help. Students often don't realize they have a problem. They don't want help. But they're sent to the counselor. Counselors say client-centered therapy doesn't work with these people. So, client-centered therapy has no place in the schools. My experience in supervising students here is when they really understand client-centered counseling, and begin to understand the difference between counseling and guidance, for example, then they realize that client-centered therapy is appropriate. But many students who were trained in client-centered counseling really didn't understand it.

JMP: *I think a criticism that counselors have, or more so administrators, is that client-centered counseling is not time efficient.*

CHP: Yes. I think that's a misconception. There's an idea that client-centered counseling is long-term therapy. It reminds me that in the early 1960s, I was in Portland, Oregon, conducting a month-long institute for the counselors in the public schools. It was essentially client-centered counseling. One day, the superintendent or assistant superintendent came in and he said, "I hope you're not teaching these people to be therapists." There's this idea that therapy has no place in the school. I have a paper on psychotherapy in the schools (Patterson, 1966b) in which I argue that psychotherapy does have a place in the schools. That's where the kids are. You bring the services to the kids. I think administrators feel that client-centered counseling is long term. That is not so. The research evidence shows that client-centered therapy is no longer than any other therapy--that giving the client the option of saying when therapy should end does not extend it unduly.

JMP: *As an eminent scholar in the field of counseling for over 30 years, what do you see as the future for school counseling? We discussed the current and the past. What do you think may change or how do you think it needs to change?*

CHP: I think it needs to continue in the direction in which it's going, but I think it is going very slowly. One of the problems is that so many administrators don't understand counseling, don't accept it, don't recognize it as a profession. They expect counselors to do the jobs that they don't have the time to do or don't want to do--discipline, record keeping, that kind of thing. I think we're going in the right direction, but it's very slow, so I'm very pessimistic about any major progress in the future.

JMP: *What about the professional recognition that a lot of counselors have received? How might that affect school counseling with, for example, the National Board for Certified Counselors, CACREP, and also licensure for many counselors in 30-plus states?*

CHP: To me, that's a controversial issue. I've never been in favor of licensure.

JMP: *For counselors or just licensure in general?*

CHP: Licensure in general. In Illinois at one point, there was a move to license psychologists, and I disagreed with it. The Illinois Psychological Association levied an assessment on all its members, and I refused to pay the assessment. They said if you don't pay the assessment, you're no longer a member, so I was dropped from the Illinois Psychological Association. This is interesting. In preparing for my class last night, I was looking for something that I never found. But I found something else.

Serendipitously, I picked up a 1973 issue of the *American Psychologist*. The first article was by Carl Rogers. It was in this article where Carl Rogers makes the statement (I can almost quote him directly) that he favored licensing in the American Psychological Association when he was President in 1947. But he changed his mind after that and thought it was a mistake. One of the statements he made was that there are as many charlatans who are licensed as there are who are not licensed. That licensing does not guarantee competence was the basic point he made. It's paper credentials. You take paper-and-pencil tests. That doesn't demonstrate that you are competent. So I've never been in favor of licensing, certification, those kinds of things.

JMP: *What are the professional skills that are required for school counselors to be effective and how has this changed in the past 10 years, from 1975 to 1985?*

CHP: Well, I don't see any changes, because I think counseling is counseling. Of course, we don't know all the answers. One of the points I make in my teaching is that any profession must train people to be competent at the highest level of which we are now capable of teaching. I don't think that counselor education is turning out counselors at the highest level of which we're capable, in terms of what we know--because I don't think there is agreement among counselor educators about what we know. They have wide misconceptions of client-centered therapy, so they reject it. They don't examine its basic essence. They are quickly caught up in all the new techniques and fads that develop. They don't want to be left behind.

Every counselor educator has to go to all these workshops, and collect all these pieces of paper to demonstrate that he or she knows rational-emotive therapy, transactional analysis, and all these other things. It has always bothered me how willing counselor educators are to accept things for which there is no research evidence. Academic counselors are always saying that what we are teaching is based on research. But when you look in the introductory textbooks you'll find statement after statement recommending what counselors should do, and they have no basis in research.

One of my own students wrote a textbook with a colleague, an introduction to counseling. He asked me to write a preface, and I said before I write a preface, I have to read the book. So he had the publisher send me a copy of the manuscript. I found myself going through and raising questions. What is the evidence for this? There were all kinds of statements for which there is no evidence. For example, questioning. What is the evidence for the effectiveness of questioning? What evidence we have shows that it's not effective. What is the evidence for the common sense idea that you should

summarize at the end of an interview? I don't know a single piece of research that shows that it is effective. The books are full of this kind of stuff. We're not teaching at the level of which we know.

JMP: *I believe there is some research that suggests that counseling effectiveness isn't dependent upon theoretical orientation, but rather whether or not basic conditions or skills were displayed. How would you react to that?*

CHP: I would react against the idea that it's skills that are important. One of the problems is that most counselor education programs now have gone overboard into skill training. They're turning out technicians rather than professional counselors. What the research shows is that there is apparently no difference in the effectiveness of various methods or schools of therapy. Why? Because they all share the common elements. And that's not recognized.

JMP: *Which relates back to client-centered therapy.*

CHP: Yes. Again, client-centered therapy has no monopoly on these things, although it did develop them and teaches them as the essence of therapy. Many instructors, behaviorists especially, teach people behavioral techniques. They assume that students know how to form a relationship. Students don't, and are not taught how. So that the effectiveness is because of the common elements, constituting the therapeutic relationship.

JMP: *Is the ability to form a relationship something that can be taught?*

CHP: It can be taught, assuming that the student has a minimum level of potential. There are some students who can't become counselors. They're not necessarily bad people. Three kinds of people have difficulty becoming counselors. One is the person who is too cognitively-oriented. We select people for our training program on their cognitive level. Second is the person who is too extroverted, who can't keep his or her mouth shut, and can't sit and listen. People have different levels of the capacity to be empathic, and counseling students must have at least a minimal degree. But they can be helped. You can't teach people to be genuine, obviously. You can't teach people really, didactically at least, to have respect, concern, and caring for others. So you have to have people that have enough of this to begin with. You can help people become more empathic, because most people can understand what empathy is. Once they understand what empathy is, that is, putting yourself in the frame of reference of the other person, they can learn to do that pretty quickly. So that the teaching and learning of counseling depends on two things: the modeling of the instructor and the supervisory experience.

JMP: *Is there anything else that you'd like to share in closing?*

CHP: I've gone pretty rapidly, and I'm sure I've skipped a lot of things.

JMP: *Thanks so much for taking the time to share your knowledge.*

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Over the past 40 years, Dr. Patterson has written extensively on the theory and application of client-centered therapy. Many of his works have had a significant impact on the training of professional counselors.
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