

COUNSELING PHILOSOPHY AND THEORIES  
IN AN ABORTION INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICE

by

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CE 1720

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The decision to have or not to have a child is a decision, like any other personal choice, that should be made by the individual himself. However, the right to this free choice is, for the most part, blocked in every state of the United States. Only under certain conditions specified by state statutes may a woman have an abortion. But this abortion is not available without undergoing various legal and medical harassments. If a woman is rich or well informed she probably will be able to obtain an abortion, legal or otherwise, somewhere. However, the younger woman, especially the unmarried one, may not know the necessary steps to the right people. Furthermore, randomly going to a physician in most cases would not lead to the desired termination of pregnancy.

Therefore, we decided to set up an abortion counseling, information and referral service to help these women realize their basic right for "freedom of choice". This service would direct women eligible for therapeutic abortions to physicians sympathetic to their condition.

It would help women through the medical-legal bureaucratic harrasment which is usually a prerequisite for obtaining a legal termination of pregnancy. It would help women obtain abortions in other countries if they were not eligible under the present state laws.

Futhermore, the service would counsel women who were having ambivalent feelings about abortion and help to relieve any tramatic experiences they may have had in trying to procure an abortion or from having had one.

In setting up this service and working within its context a counselor should be aware of his views and values concerning pregnancy and abortion. He should be aware of himself as an individual and be aware of his personal philosophy of man and counseling. Futhermore, he should continue to grow by developing his own theories of counseling and by being familiar with current theories and examining these in light of his experiences.

Therefore, this paper will discuss the importance of knowing one's own values and morals concerning pregnancy and abortion and the implication of these views for abortion counseling. This paper will discuss various techniques that the counselor should be familiar with if he is to act efficiently in this service. Futhermore, it will discuss a personal view of man and the dynamics of personality and counseling that have implications for this service.

Perhaps the most important aspect to be taken into consideration in such a service as abortion referral and counseling is the counselor's own views concerning abortion and human life. If the counselor should feel that life begins at conception and that abortion is morally wrong most probably he would, or should, not be counseling in this service. However, if such an individual happened to be in this situation, he should be aware that he might unconsciously communicate non-verbal expressions indicating disapproval of abortion or disapproval of his client for seeking an abortion. In this case it would be best for the counselor to express his opinions of abortion but he should be careful not to impose these beliefs on the client.

However, in all likelihood the counselors in this service will believe in <sup>the permissibility of</sup> abortion as they will be working within a framework that is primarily aimed at helping women ~~to obtain~~ obtain abortions. But even if the counselor does believe in abortion there are varying opinions as to when the foetus becomes a human being which would determine when an abortion could be "morally" done. Some individuals believe that 40 days after the time of conception the foetus becomes a human, some after "Quickening" and some not until the foetus has seen the light of day. The counselor must be aware of his

own beliefs as to when the foetus becomes a human since he is apt to come into contact with clients having different views of this question than himself. If he has a client with a different view point from himself he should help the client reach her goal of what she wants to do even if it may disagree with his beliefs.

However, he should state his view point without imposing <sup>if his beliefs either implicitly or explicitly enter into the\*</sup> it upon her. If he does not make his opinion known it will probably be communicated, anyway, through non-verbal communications and be misinterpreted or and may lead to a lack of trust on the clients part.

More commonly in this service will be the counselor who believes that every woman should have an abortion even if she is not sure she wants one. The counselor must be aware that many women are ambivalent about abortion and should try to help the client express her feelings of ambivalence. The counselor should not impose his own beliefs or try to push the client into having an abortion. The counselor may express his personal feelings, however. The biggest danger of this type of counselor and this type of counseling service is the unconscious manipulation on the counselors part, to convince the girl that she wants an abortion when she may not morally believe in it or have extreme ambivalence. If the counselor did succeed in pushing a ambivalent girl into obtaining an abortion, the girl might develop more serious psychological problems and resent

\* I'm not sure that one need "self-disclose" in every case. sometimes there is no need to deal with the counselor's belief, other than the awareness he has of them himself.

the counselor for manipulating her. It will be imperative for the counselor to identify any undercurrents of ambivalence and other problems when talking with the client. The counselor should also explore the reason why the girl wants an abortion to ascertain that it is not a neurotic reason such as self punishment leading to further guilt and more serious emotional upsets. If neurotic undercurrents are uncovered the counselor should discuss them with the client, help her become aware of them and perhaps refer her to a service offering deeper psychotherapy. If after exploring any ambivalent feelings the girl decides she does not want an abortion, the counseling service will refer her to other agencies in the community designed for helping unmarried women. On the whole, it is exceedingly important for the counselor to know his own position and be objective and open to his clients opinions and views.

My basic view on pregnancy and abortion is that every child should be a wanted child and that an abortion is preferable to producing a child who has the good potential of being unloved, unwanted or emotionally or physically neglected and abused. Furthermore, I feel that having a child should be a carefully thought out act. It should be a privilege and not an irresponsible act.

To shape and condition a new individual is an awsome task. If there are undesirable rearing conditions manifested by a parent who does not care, a hostile environment or feelings that one was really not wanted, a child may turn into a crippled adult who may not be able to give positively to his society and to the world. Furthermore, we are in the midst of the largest runaway population in history. This phenomena threatens to cause widespread famine, discontent among more unfortunate individuals and the greater possibility of war or disease to stabalize this population. Because of these feeling I believe that only children who are wanted and have some potential of a "happy home life" should be born.

Is this an  
overstatement?  
or an  
understatement?

The implications of my views of pregnancy and abortion may make it difficult for me to be able to act as an objective person in this service. It would be very easy to push a confused and bewildered girl into having an abortion if she were ambivalent about it and very easy to reinforce a girl who thinks she wants an abortion. Most probably the majority of girls seeking our service will be wanting abortions. However, as an open and conscientious person and counselor, I should be aware of undercurrents<sup>4</sup> indication<sup>5</sup>s that an abortion might be more damaging to the woman than the bearing of her child.

Before the counselor is able to help an individual become a responsible, fulfilled, self-aware human being, it is essential that he has some awareness of himself, his own philosophy of man and theory of counseling and personality. In order to develop a personal theory of man and counseling, one must be familiar with various experts in the field. *it is, perhaps, helpful to* *The current discussion will examine* There are three main theoretical constructs of personality, man and counseling : the behavioral, the psychanalytical and the existential views. I have adapted various aspects from these views to formulate my own position of man and counseling.

If MAN has been born that he is at the present by the (that rough microlithic stone formed by unique forces and thrown upon the beach) which act on his basic self seeking, pleasure seeking nature. seeks warmth and safety. He begins with various

Molded by the rain and wind

to a smooth jem stone glittering in the sun and picked up by the hot sticky hands of a child to be treasured in a box or skipped upon the tidal pool;

more often it is sharpened by the winds, the slash of sleet and winter nights to become an arrow head inflicting pain on passing feet,

or it is pounded into dust and grains of sand noticed by no one - flowing with the tides seeking out a sheltered nook to become whole again.

Yet these stones change with time and friction

by their fellows on the heap until they disappear.

\* actually there are other orientations r. engs 8/69  
but these perhaps cover a major portion of the area to be considered

I feel that man becomes what he is at the present by the accumulation of conditioned events and past experiences

which have acted on his basic self-seeking, pleasure-

*I feel that he is neither basically good, or bad or neutral. All organisms seeking nature. He begins with various attributes*

are pleasure and self seeking.

endowed to him by genetics and then is shaped by his environment. Because he has been conditioned by society

observe the cat stretching in the

sun pleasure or self seeking

and because conditioning has the capacity to be extinguished, he can be changed. Since he is acted upon by society

or moral connotations it is a basic trait.

at all times, it means that he is continuously changing.

*He has the freedom to choose when and if he wishes to change*

*as an adult* consciously

and the freedom to choose his own values as long as they do not harm others. If he wishes to harm himself that too is his choice. However, he himself must take the responsibility for his choices. Choices and actions can not be made by others. The counselor can act as a facilitator for change but it is up to the individual himself to take the responsibility for changing.

At conception various forces act upon his genetic make up

to shape him. Various studies have indicated that some

shaping takes place in utero. \* It has been observed

that babies born to mothers under severe stress usually

have more emotional problems than non stressed mothers (5).

It has been shown that inadequate nutrition on the part of the pregnant mother can lead to severe problems with

the foetus which permanently effects him (2). It is thought

that other factors can also permanently effect the foetus.

developing

*I find it hard to reconcile the determinism of the first statement and the free choice position of the second. How do you? Sheenspoon carried out a study in which the foetus was conditioned.*

(from my own experience in a  
newborn nursery)

At birth it is observed that the infant is a pleasure, comfort-seeking organism. He sleeps unless he has the unpleasant stimuli of hunger, cold or wetness. His only reaction to these stimuli is to cry until the unpleasant stimulus is abated. He also has some reflexes such as the "startle reflex", the "sucking reflex" and the "rooting reflex" which can be elicited by the proper stimulus. He has two basic groups of needs which according to Sullivan (1) are physical, such as air, food and water, and security, such as comfort, love and pleasant feelings from fulfilled social expectations. All of the energy of this organism is utilized to meet his needs which can only be met by the environment. However, from birth on the environment tries to control his demands for pleasure and self seeking and conditions him to postpone <sup>needs</sup> ~~and gratifications~~

During the first two years of life it is thought by the Self theorists and the Psychoanalytical theorists (1) that the individual develops a self and an ego respectively. The self theorists believe that he begins to sense that he is separate from his environment and his mother. As he grows the self enfolds and he begins to develop concepts, values, ideals and a sense of awareness which determines the way he behaves. The self is not fully developed until he becomes a "mature" adult.

Also, during this first two years of life it is believed by the psychoanalytical theorists that the individual develops an ego system. This system controls the pleasure seeking impulses and is the reality-oriented mastery mechanism. As the ego develops and more demands are placed on the organism by the environment, the ego causes the pleasure seeking impulses, or id, to be buried in the unconscious. At about this same time the super ego, or social and parental moral attitudes, are imposed upon the individual. The ego acts as a mediator between the basic pleasure seeking demands and the demands of the outer environment. By operant and classical conditioning (6) the individual learns defense mechanisms. \* These are under the control of the ego and help the individual cope with his environment and protect his "self".

A major defense mechanism used by the ego is repression. Painful experiences and anxiety producing feelings are repressed in the unconscious. When these experiences are brought to the conscious level anxiety results. Therefore the ego keeps them repressed. As the individual grows other defenses are learned by conditioning to cope with anxiety producing situations.

\* though, of course, the behavioral theorist would explain most of these mechanisms in somewhat different terms than the analytic theorist.

There is often a state of conflict between needs and the meeting of them. A source of tension for many people is the contradictory demands which are placed upon them by our culture. When the individual perceives himself as behaving in a manner consistent with his picture of himself, he experiences feelings of adequacy, security and worth. If he perceives himself acting in a manner against the one in which he should be behaving he has feelings of guilt, insecurity, worthlessness and inadequacy. If he perceives no other way of behaving he may defend himself against this threat by utilizing his defense mechanisms.

Because of this environment and because of the conditioning experiences the individual may find it difficult to be aware of himself, to find security, self esteem and identity, and may exist behind severe defenses that cripple him as an individual.

The empirical value of counseling is to help the individual cope with this environment and help him become, what Brammer and Shostrom consider<sup>(1)</sup>, a self-actualized human being. To become a self actualized person, the individual must develop an awareness of himself, and perceive of himself as a worthy, responsible human. *(necessary but not sufficient)*

*(Somehow, I'm  
not sure how  
the material of  
this P fits into  
your developing  
line of discussion.)*

The counselor can help the client develop by helping him express feelings and become aware of defense mechanisms. He can also help him to develop resources for handling situations and reinforce him for new paths of behavior. Furthermore, the counselor can create a climate in which the client can act in a healthy manner. In his interaction the counselor should not remain completely neutral. He should convey and express his feelings about the client's behavior and help the client to examine behaviors that might be causing such feelings. *on the counselor.*

The relationship of the client and counselor, according to the Self theorists, should be the focus of therapy. In this relationship the attitudes of honesty, trustworthiness and genuine concern are crucial. However, some history of the client is essential because he is what he is at the present due to past experiences. This knowledge of the past can help the counselor understand more fully the action of the client at the present and can help the client become aware of these actions.

There are two important ideas, taken from Brammer and Shostrom, which ~~I~~ <sup>feel</sup> are very important for the counselor to believe in ~~order~~ to be effective. The counselor needs to be aware that each human is an unique individual seeking *identity and self awareness either consciously or unconsciously.*

In abortion counseling the counselor should be aware that becoming pregnant may be the way a girl is seeking self identity. On sexual intercourse may mean that the girl is searching for meaning and a meaningful relationship with someone. A becoming pregnant illegit - imately may be a defiance of the socially ordered system and a substitute for feeling. If these reasons for becoming pregnant are perceived by the counselor they can be brought to the attention of the client and the counselor can help the client find other ways of finding identity and meaning if the client so chooses.

Each individual, however, has the right to freedom of choice and freedom to chose his own moral values. But in assuming this freedom he must take responsibility for his actions and own actualization and does not have the right to harm others. The right to an abortion should be the basic right of all women. But at the moment this right is denied women. Even women who are able to obtain abortions under the state law must go through medical-legal "red tape". Therefore, extra help and support needs to be given to these women who have made the choice to obtain an abortion. This choice, however, must be hers. It can not be made for her by the counselor. Furthermore, the client must realize that she is responsible for this choice and can not blame society or others for it.

Brammer and Shostrum feel that there are various techniques that the counselor should be familiar with if he is to establish a relationship with the client, discover the clients goals and be an effective counselor. In the abortion service, the counselor should be familiar with these techniques so he can understand and help his client to the maximum extent.

One of the most useful techniques is the "reflection technique". Reflection helps the individual feel deeply understood and helps the counselor understand the problem. The client seeking abortion information or referral certainly needs to be understood. In all probability she has gone through recent experiences of misunderstanding concerning her pregnancy.

Reflection impresses the client with the inference that feelings are causes of behavior. It is possible that the client does not understand himself because of strange or unwanted feelings from the unconscious. To understand these feelings would be important to the <sup>In abortion Counseling</sup> client ~~as she~~ may have many conflicts concerning sexual intercourse, if she is unmarried, or have guilt feelings concerning abortion. By reflecting these feelings she may become more aware of herself.

Reflection, also, helps the client to be responsible for himself and his own decisions because it suggests that

a value system is not inherent in any experience but has values as determined by the individual. This would help the client in the abortion counseling setting to realize her own values concerning pregnancy and abortion. This would also give her the feeling that she is responsible for her own decision of having or not having an abortion.

Another useful technique to be used in counseling which would be of value in this service would be the "accepting <sup>\*</sup> technique". These techniques are mostly non verbal in nature. They include such things as accepting facial expressions and tone of voice. The counselor must be aware of these when he is listening to the client and try to avoid such things as yawning, crossing and recrossing his legs which might be construed as negative disinterest cues to the client. In the abortion service it is extremely important that the counselor be accepting and open towards the client because in all probability many of these women have met with rejection and hostility in discussion abortion with other people.

Brammer and Shostrom feel that some structure is needed in the counseling session. They also feel that process values such as it is good and appropriate to investigate

\* Is this a technique or a way of being?

our emotions and express feelings and it is better to do this than blame others, should be conveyed to the client. This would be important for the counselor to consider when talking with these women. Many of the clients may be projecting hostility and blame for their conditions on their boyfriends or husbands. The counselor can help the client express these feelings and try to examine them.

The leading technique is important for generating client thought. The counselor should lead only as much as the client can tolerate. In abortion counseling different types of factual information will have to be disinterred from the client so that the counselor has some bases for the direction in which he should help his client. As an example, it is imperative to find if the client may be from a low income bracket as she might be eligible for care at the Medical School Hospital if she can qualify for a therapeutic abortion. The counselor can use the technique of direct leading when factual information about the client is needed without asking point blank questions. This <sup>also</sup> type of information will be needed for record keeping.

One of the most important relationship techniques is reassurance. It acts as a type of reward which has

a reinforcing effect on behavior. It also helps to directly reduce anxiety and insecurity. Factual reassurance can be given to the client who feels that his problem is unique. This would be important in abortion counseling since many young unmarried girls, particularly if they are from religious or middle-class homes, feel that they are the only ones who have become pregnant.

Terminating the interview is an important part of the counseling relationship according to Brammer and Shostrom. There are many different techniques for termination. A fairly good one for the abortion service would be to summarize the interview and reflect various feelings and thoughts that the client expressed. At this point it would be appropriate for the counselor in this setting to give the client a referral and arrange for another interview if this is appropriate.

Since the majority of the clients coming to this service will probably be interacting with the counselor only a few times, it is necessary that the counselor help the client to utilize the interview as fully as possible. On the whole, the knowledge and use of various techniques helps the counselor to help the client become aware of himself, his feelings and his behavior.

To sum up, the counselor to be an effective individual and an effective facilitator of growth for his client in any setting must be aware of different techniques of counseling. He must be aware of himself as a person, be aware of his views on moral issues, have a developing philosophy of man and counseling and be familiar with theories of counseling and personality.

As I read your papers I am most struck by your application of the material of the course to a need which is real to you. I hope the paper has given you a chance to pull together some ideas and material which will be useful to you in your work.

I feel the paper got somewhat fuzzy in those sections (pp 8-11) in which you discuss psychological foundations. I'm not sure what contribution this material makes to your discussion. It accurate for the most part but somehow it doesn't fit for me.

accept

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