
Comment

A Question of Values

Having read K. E. Clark's *America's Psychologists* and the recent statement by Division 12 of the new requirement for fellowship status of "a significant contribution," we were impressed with the fact that either intentionally or unintentionally values are playing an increasingly significant role in determining the criteria which will be selected as appropriate for assessing the status of professional psychologists.

It is interesting to note in this connection that in Clark's book much emphasis is given to research publication as a means of differentiating "significant contributors" from their ostensibly less productive colleagues. It is apparent that discrimination on this basis has the advantages of objectivity and ease of determination. There are certainly other equally important criteria, however difficult to measure, which the clinical psychologist might suggest: such as skill in diagnosis and therapy, number of patients benefited through treatment, direct and indirect contributions to the solution of mental hygiene problems in the community. The teacher of psychology would, we think, have still other pertinent criteria which he might consider of major import: such as the number of students toward whose education he has substantially contributed, the number of students he has motivated to pursue further study in psychology, and contributions to mental health through informal counseling.

The point we are trying to make is that a value system to a large extent determines what functions or productions are to be considered worthy and thus tends to sustain them. It should be remembered that Clark's book addresses itself, not only to research psychologists, but to the entire profession as well as to any other interested intelligent reader. Surely some consideration could have been given to other professional endeavors which are of significance to a large number of psychologists. It is recognized that Clark and his co-workers cannot be criticized for delimiting their area of investigation; but, if the book is intended to present information about all of America's psychologists, then errors of omission can loom as large as errors of commission. Clark himself reports that about three times as many psychologists are members of Division 12 than any other division. Might not some valuable hypotheses, amenable to research investigation, have been forthcoming from this large group as well as from the smaller number of psychology teachers? And what about problems that appear significant for which no appropriate methodology currently exists? These oversights or neglect trouble us. We see it as a sign of things to

come; perhaps, the structure of the APA may be seriously threatened.

Even Division 12 seems to be suffering from this same (unrecognized?) conflict. New fellows will have to have made an "outstanding contribution" to psychology. Will these contributions be limited to those which can be reliably and validly investigated, leaving the important service and teaching functions to be relegated to secondary importance because of the difficulty in establishing valid criteria for their assessment? Or is it to be a long list of (significant?) publications that will be the *summum bonum*? Was it W. S. Maugham in his *Summing Up* who said that writing a book was inherently no more valuable an activity than plowing a field? The value lies in the eyes of the doer (and perhaps in the contribution to others).

We might add that this question of values pervades many diverse areas in psychology, including psychometric assessment and teaching. In "Comments on Meehl and Rosen's Paper" (*Psychol. Bull.*, 1956, 53, 335-337) by S. Karson and S. B. Sells, essentially the same problem was raised. Certain remarks by S. L. Pressey in "Teaching in the Ivory Tower, with Rarely a Step Outside" (*Psychol. Bull.*, 1955, 52, 343-344) are especially relevant. Although his plea is for a wider range of experiment in teaching evaluation studies, his words (p. 344) are noteworthy:

Climb higher in the ivory tower! Why not instead come down and open the door, watch what students do outside class, see what psychologists are doing in the wide world, and even venture off campus occasionally, to mix with the folks on Main Street.

SAMUEL KARSON

LENIN A. BALER

HERBERT A. CARROLL

University of New Hampshire

A Reply

The comments of Karson, Baler, and Carroll suggest that the planning of the program of research reported in *America's Psychologists* intentionally or unintentionally was influenced by value judgments. What they mean to say, obviously, is that they believe the wrong values were assigned, especially in the study of factors influencing an individual psychologist's research contributions to psychology. I gather that Karson, Baler, and Carroll would rather have had us study the contribution of individual psychologists to the solution of individual and society problems. I would like to see somebody make such a study; I do not believe *America's Psychologists* should be criticized for having done

a different type of study than this, nor should it be concluded that we avoided use of clinical criteria simply because they were too difficult to assess.

The emphasis given to research publication, to which Karson, Baler, and Carroll object, occurred in our study of the way in which significant contributors differed from their less productive colleagues. Attention to publication was essential, we felt, since any contribution to science necessarily involves communication with one's fellows about results. The service a therapist gives to his client may be a great contribution to the client, but it is not communicated to other psychologists. Likewise, the therapist may gain great skill in his work and become an exceedingly capable person; but, unless he has some method, either in the training of others or through his writing, to convey what he has learned to his colleagues, he has not made a contribution to *psychology*. Our study included in the significant contributor group a substantial number of clinical psychologists. These persons might have been nominated either because of their writing or because of the substantial training programs they directed for clinical psychologists, but not solely because they were excellent therapists. Note our directions to raters:

One of the studies being conducted under Project B is an investigation of factors influencing the productivity of research psychologists. Part of this study involves the development of a small sample of persons considered by their colleagues to have made significant research contributions in psychology, either through their own original work, or through their part in training research workers, this sample to be drawn from a larger roster of persons who have become "visible" to their colleagues through substantial contributions to the research literature. . . .

You are asked to nominate those persons whom you consider to have made the most significant contributions to psychology as a science, either through scientific work of their own, or through their work in the training of research psychologists.

America's Psychologists did give consideration to other professional endeavors. One chapter deals with the comparative characteristics of clinical psychologists and of psychologists in other areas of specialization. Another includes a survey of private practice in clinical psychology in Los Angeles. Both of these studies involve no evaluation of the individual clinician, but still provide useful insights into the nature of contributions being made by these persons.

Of course, we were dealing with values in making decisions about the way to proceed in the study of American psychology. Our responsibility was to recognize what values we held and to make them explicit in our account. What these values were is revealed to any careful reader through the detailed procedures employed in our study. In this respect, our study is no different from any other experimental investigation. While we were not willing to stop with a study that directed its attention only toward the characteristics of research psychologists, we did feel that they deserved primary attention, since the field of psychology can grow and develop only with a continuing increment to knowledge. Many clinical psychologists do not make contributions to science as science is normally defined; that they do make contributions is recognized by all.

I think we need to recognize that all of American psychology is today perplexed about the relative values to assign to research and to service in our growing field. Karson, Baler, and Carroll protest that decisions are being made about the desired characteristics of a clinical psychologist on traditional bases without enough attention being given to changing conditions and new roles played by clinical psychologists. For this position I think they can find full and unqualified support in *America's Psychologists*.

KENNETH E. CLARK
University of Minnesota