

Counseling and Accountability:

Methods and Critique



By
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Harold F. Cottingham and
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We dedicate this book to our:

- . . . colleagues who may be surprised that we dared to do it,**
- . . . former students, clients, and subjects who continually
motivated us to do it,**
- . . . future students who we hope will be pleased that we did it,**
- . . . families who wait to share any rewards of our doing it, and**
- . . . collaborators in Part II who are now anxious to do it to us.**

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Preface

Counseling and psychotherapy, as professional enterprises, are being provided to our society at an ever increasing rate. They are often provided on the assumption that if counseling is good, good counseling is even better. This provision of counseling and psychotherapy goes on and on, and too often professionals never ask the question: "What kind of counseling, provided by what kind of counselor, can be most effective at this time for this kind of population sub-group?"

Historically, the focus of counseling and psychotherapy research has been very diffuse. Each researcher seems to be doing his own thing. A glance at any recent research journal indicates a mosaic of studies, lacking any semblance of unity. There is a weak linkage between research findings and actual practice. In addition, innovative approaches to behavior change are constantly emerging. With their roots in new viewpoints on the nature of man, these methodologies have had a significant impact on counseling practices. Ironically, these recent developments in theory and practice have probably generated more changes in counseling strategies than much of the extensive research in the area.

We wrote this book for several reasons. First, as counselors, viewing the current scene, we felt a need to share with others our concerns about methodological problems and strategies of counseling and psychotherapy research. In this vein, we wanted a book which approached the problem in a very practical sort of way, rather than from merely a conceptual or theoretical point of view.

Second, students in social work, educational psychology, vocational rehabilitation, employment counseling, and others in the helping relation-

ships need practical, relevant information on research. Besides abstract ideas they need to see the concrete application of theoretical methods to actual research activities.

Third, there is a large and continuing need for professional workers in human behavioral change-producing relationships to evaluate and document their effectiveness. Accountability in personnel services is a fact which few practitioners have squarely faced, but which must be met head-on in the future. Perhaps this volume will assist those seeking to be more accountable for their efforts.

Finally, we feel that all professionals, involved in any central or tangential way with counseling and psychotherapy, have both a moral and an ethical responsibility to build evaluation and research strategies into their work.

In Part I we have attempted to set forth both conceptual foundations and working principles related to research on psychotherapeutic change. These include such features as theoretical bases, design, criteria, sampling, treatment, and measurement. Ethical and legal considerations are also discussed.

Part II follows naturally as an application of the principles and essential characteristics of research identified in Part I. As a basis for the critiquing process in Part II, thirteen examples of published counseling research are reproduced. These in turn are reviewed in the light of the previously described criteria from Part I. Thus in a departure from the usual research book, basic principles are applied directly to actual research efforts, with appropriate commentary.

We express appreciation to Ellen Amatea, S. Richard Sauber, Robert MacAleese and Alice Fernandez, all of whom have helped us along the way. A special word of thanks is due Dr. Arnold P. Goldstein and the folks at Pergamon Press who have been so very considerate.

Tallahassee, Florida

H. D. B., H. F. C., R. C. R.

Part I Conceptual Foundations

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