
Comment

Subjectivity

Recently a colleague presented some data from his research and I asked him what he *thought* about a particular interpretation of his results which I suggested. His response was to the effect that my interpretation was an interesting idea but that we did not really *know* the facts.

My point is that he acted as if what he has thought about his extensive experience with the problem under discussion had no value because it was subjective. I believe this is a widespread attitude among psychologists.

I am not saying that subjective functions are sufficient to the scientific process, but rather that they are very important to it, and even necessary except in the relatively few instances in which a deduction from a theory becomes the hypothesis. Much recent psychological research has been unproductive, I believe, not for lack of methodological sophistication or objectivity, but because of poorly reasoned hypotheses. It is the subjective process, the thinking about relevant data and our own relevant experiences, which is so important to framing hypotheses which are more likely to stand up under objective testing.

Has the dominant point of view in psychology gone so far in the emphasis on objectivity that we have lost sight of the value of thinking, and further, have so much come to distrust any subjectivity that we are restricted, inhibited, unfree in the thinking process, afraid to trust our minds?

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Amateur Psychology

Robert Frost defines poetry somewhere as "that which is lost in translation." In a recent article in *The Reporter* (Feb. 16, 1962) Marya Mannes, a staff writer of this publication, praises Joyce Brothers for her ability to answer complex psychological problems in simple language "so simple in fact that she might be a new form of computer."

In this computerization into simple language, however, not only the poetry of the problem, but its very individuality is lost. Somebody writes in, or talks to Dr. Brothers and gets the computer answer. What about the other party—the spouse, the mother, the daughter, the sweetheart, the lover? "Due process of law" is sorely missing if the "accused" party is not given any opportunity to cross examine or, at least, to

state his or her side of the matter. Dr. Brothers, and for that matter all the TV, radio, and column Egerias, needs to take the indictment at face value, without the accused party having any chance in this *cour d'amour*.

Such simplicity is easy to achieve because the dispenser of psychological and psychoanalytical generalities, of truisms and "untruisms," has only one theory into which, like into the legendary bed of Procrustes, the unfortunate party must fit.

Miss Mannes has some misgivings lest the simplicity might simply be psychological quackery. She asks politely whether these shows are the soil in which wisdom may flower, and she calls this an open question. I would say it is not an open question; rather it needs an open and firmly negative answer.

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Responsibility for Raw Data

Last spring a graduate student at Iowa State University required data of a particular kind in order to carry out a study for his master's thesis. In order to obtain these data he wrote to 37 authors whose journal articles appeared in APA journals between 1959 and 1961. Of these authors, 32 replied. Twenty-one of these reported the data misplaced, lost, or inadvertently destroyed. Two of the remaining 11 offered their data on the conditions that they be notified of our intended use of their data, and stated that they have control of anything that we would publish involving these data. We met the former condition but refused the latter for those two authors since we felt the raw data from published research should be made public upon request when possible and economically feasible. Thus raw data from 9 authors were obtained. From these 9 authors, 11 analyses were obtained. Four of these were not analyzed by us since they were made available several months after our request. Of the remaining 7 studies, 3 involved gross errors. One involved an analysis of variance on transformed data where the transformation was clearly inappropriate. Another analysis contained a gross computational error so that several *F* ratios near one were reported to be highly significant. The third analysis incorrectly reported insignificant results due to the use of an inappropriate error term.

We have a dilemma. In one way it does not seem fair to report these errors, or in some way cause them to be reported, for those authors who behaved in the best interest of science by retaining their data and submitting them to us; whereas the authors who innocently

(?) lost their data, misplaced their data, etc., go free from criticism. On the other hand one might argue that a scientist should report errors when he finds them.

We completely accept the responsibility of dealing with the present dilemma but we wish to share with the membership of the American Psychological Association responsibility for dealing with the conditions that produced it. If it were clearly set forth by the APA that the responsibility for retaining raw data and submitting them for scrutiny upon request lies with the author, this dilemma would not exist. Failure to retain data for some reasonable length of time following publication would produce notoriety equal to the notoriety attained by publishing inaccurate results. A possibly more effective means of controlling quality of publication would be to institute a system of quality control whereby random samples of raw data from submitted journal articles would be requested by editors and scrutinized for accuracy and the appropriateness of the analysis performed.

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Two Points of View

As an APA member and school counselor of 11 years experience I find it more than a little presumptuous of the APA to set up its own arbitrary standards for preparation of school counselors, especially since most of the recommendations and particularly those concerning preparation in psychology have been unsolicited and unappreciated by the counseling group. This clearly seems to me a case of an "outside" group trying to impose certain preconceived and prejudiced ideas of preparation upon counselors.

Especially am I concerned with the ease with which this group so blithely dismisses teaching experience as a certification prerequisite for school counselors. There may be room for some flexibility here, but it seems to me permitting a clinically oriented psychologist with nothing but hospital and clinical experience to counsel students and work closely with teachers might be courting disaster. Anyone who has worked in school counseling would find it difficult, if not impossible, to work successfully with school personnel without such teaching experience. Also it seems to me there is a misunderstanding of what the counselor's job really is. In most high schools fully 90% to 95% of his contacts with students, parents, and teachers are concerned with educational and vocational plans and progress, not involving deep-seated emotional or personal problems.

I would suggest in all humility that the Division of Counseling Psychology set its own house in order before taking on the Herculean task of dictating to the American Personnel and Guidance Association and its

members, and indeed to all counselors, what their background should be in order to be "minimally qualified" by APA standards. Let us give school counselors credit for being intelligent enough to evaluate their own programs, for making recommendations concerning educational requirements for their jobs, and for indicating changes where needed.

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The report entitled "The Scope and Standards of Preparation in Psychology for School Counselors," by a Special Committee of Division 17, (*Amer. Psychologist*, 1962, 17, 149-152) is an important contribution to American psychology and education.

Regardless of their official status in the profession, school counselors are *de facto* applied psychologists. Provided with minimal professional training, less surely than most other groups in or related to psychology, they are confronted with the most varied range of problems including those of the sociopath, the psychotic, the brain damaged, the feeble-minded, and the sexual deviant. While the school counselor is not expected to treat pathology, he does have major responsibility for the educational/vocational and often the social adjustment of the student. This is not to suggest that the counselor devotes himself to the educational problems only of those with pathology of some kind, but with about 10% of the population spending some part of life in a mental hospital, many with schizophrenia in their teens or young adulthood; the counselor unavoidably works with a substantial number of prepsychotics and psychotics. He works with them under the most difficult conditions, because decisions cannot usually be deferred for two years during the leisurely pace of psychotherapy.

Our devotion to the mental health of the population and the conservation of talent requires that we lend support to this report. No other large professional group, except for teachers, is in a more strategic position for the early identification of characterological or intellectual malfunctioning, nor to serve as spokesman in each school for a grand design for mental health, for prevention through educational and vocational fulfillment.

There will be strong feeling about this report. Differences among us about specific recommendations ought not prevent decisive action, although they call for free debate. One of the implications, Number 8, should be deleted in letter and spirit. It says that school administrators are responsible to see that employed school counselors meet the requirements in psychology outlined in the report. This suggests that new requirements should retroactively be applied to counselors al-