CHAPTER 1

The Nature of Developmental Counseling: An Overview

> For me the basic principle out of which . . . a synthesis grows is that of *development.* At each moment of life, any person is in the process of changing into something a little different from what he is now. . . . A person to some extent shapes the pattern of his life by the choices and decisions he makes. . . . Once a choice has been made . . . it can never be eradicated. Development is a one-way street.
>
> —Leona Tyler (1958)

FOR MORE than 40 years, a growing number of counselors and therapists have quietly agreed with Leona Tyler's identification of the core concept that gives substance and coherence to the theory and practice of psychological counseling. Today, many helping professionals identify themselves as psychotherapists. Psychological counseling is a form of psychotherapy that includes, but is not limited to, assisting with personal problem solving, decision making, and life planning.

Assistance is focused on the goal of facilitating the development of clients by helping them become aware of the factors and forces at work in their own lives and, in the process, to learn to exert some degree of control over those forces. The practice of this kind of professional helping is called *developmental counseling.*

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENTAL COUNSELING

Professional counseling began almost a century ago in what was called the *Guidance Movement,* a small part of a larger, nationwide call for sweeping social, political, economic, and educational reform that historians call the *Progressive Movement.* The Progressive Movement came into being in response to the great concentration of wealth and power that occurred in America during the latter half of the nineteenth century. That concentration of wealth was accompanied by an abysmal set of conditions that afflicted working people, women, new immigrants, and the poor. The Progressive Era—the period from about 1890 to 1920—saw the institution of many reforms and changes that we take for granted today. Rights for women, regulation of big business, legitimization of labor unions, and greater democracy in government all made significant gains during the Progressive Era.

An important aspect of the Progressive Movement was concern for the welfare and development of children. Compulsory education laws, the elimination of child labor, and the humanization of urban environments through construction of parks and playgrounds were all parts of the progressive agenda.

One of the most important aspects of this reform movement was focused on radical changes in public education. At the turn of the twentieth century, public high schools were essentially academies devoted to preparing a few elite students to enter college or university.

For the great majority of children, formal education ended after six or eight years with entry into the workforce following almost immediately. The Guidance Movement developed from the need to help these early school leavers develop a rational plan with which to begin their careers.

Guidance programs developed first in settlement houses and social agencies. Soon, however, guidance pioneers joined vocational educators in the educational reform movement called *Progressive Education* to demand comprehensive high schools that were devoted to the needs of all young people. These high schools offered vocational preparation as well as college preparatory programs.

As comprehensive high schools came into existence, guidance programs and counselors were needed for the task of helping students choose courses and make plans that would prepare them for vocational life (Kelley, 1916). As more diverse populations entered colleges, counseling and other personnel programs began to be provided on college campuses.

From the very beginning, guidance and student personnel work was concerned with the development of students (Miller, 1961). In its early years, guidance was seen as both a program of services and as a philosophy of education. In this sense, guidance was very closely aligned with Progressive Education. This is not surprising since both came out of the same ideological mix, having both been part of the larger Progressive Movement. Indeed, guidance and Progressive Education were so closely related that John Brewer (1932), in *Education as Guidance,* virtually equated the two.

The great spokesman and architect of Progressive Education was John Dewey. He is credited by social historians with revolutionizing American education (Link & Catton, 1967). Dewey clearly saw facilitation and nurture of development as the purpose of education.

In his classic book *Democracy and Education,* Dewey (1916) defined education as the enterprise of supplying the conditions that ensure growth. As he saw it the criterion for the value of schooling was the extent to which it creates a desire for continued growth and supplies the means for making that desire effective.

After World War I, the dominant influence on counseling and guidance was the *Mental Testing Movement.* With the widespread use of tests in schools and colleges, many counselors became little more than custodians of cumulative records and compilers of test results. The emphasis on development was not dead even though guidance was no longer seen as an instrument of social reform. For example, Hamrin and Erickson (1939) writing about the roles and functions of secondary school counselors stated their conviction about the role of the counselor emphatically: There must be someone in the school with the responsibility, the interest, the time, and the capacity to "know" each child as an individual and to integrate the many influences affecting that child into a positive program of growth and development.

With continued emphasis on development as the overriding goal of both counseling and education came a steadily growing awareness of the importance of person-environment interaction or "fit" on development. Williamson (1939), in his book *How to Counsel Students,* pointed out that the counselor must have an understanding and appreciation of the possible effects on the student of social, educational, and occupational situations. Will they help him or her grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally, or will they lead to maladjustments, wasted effort, and emotional conflicts?

As we can see, the rudiments of developmental social ecology (that is, a perspective based on person-environment interaction) were present in

the counseling literature more than a half century ago. The notion that the wellsprings of both development and stagnation are to be found in the interaction between the individual and the environment was well established many years ago.

The point of view that has contrasted with the developmental emphasis has been called the "cult of adjustment." Much of the literature on guidance and counseling before the 1960s interpreted the role of counselors and of guidance programs as centered around the task of adjusting students. Adjustment was accomplished in a variety of ways including homogeneous grouping and assignment of underachievers to nonacademic classes and counseling students in or out of various occupations or programs. Adjustment and conformity were considered primary goals. Traxler (1945) defined this view clearly and succinctly. For him the central idea in guidance was to gather as much relevant information as possible about each pupil, organize it, and use the information for the classification and adjustment of individual pupils.

Personal adjustment referred to a person's ability to conform to given situations and organizations. The personal adjustment orientation unobtrusively reinforced psychological passivity by encouraging individuals to fit in and get along in terms of existing social norms and prevailing practices (D'Andrea, 1988). The adjustment emphasis was as strong in the practice of psychotherapy as in counseling and guidance. One practitioner (Halleck, 1963) referred to psychotherapy as the "handmaiden of the status quo." Counselors and therapists who direct their efforts primarily toward promoting personal adjustment essentially help people become more suitable for given kinds of situations and environments. Adjustment resulted in a kind of rigid and static person-environment fit rather than a mutually adaptive and dynamic engagement or interaction that nurtures development in the individual and responsiveness in the environment.

A simple reading of a major newspaper will demonstrate the hardiness of the adjustment approach to psychotherapy. Today's criminal justice system has made psychotherapy the number one alternative to incarceration. Upon conviction, culprits are routinely sentenced to terms of psychotherapy for a wide range of offenses including drunken driving, domestic violence, child abuse, indecent exposure, window peeping, possession of illegal drugs, and a host of other crimes and misdemeanors. Therapy or jail is a common choice facing violators in our criminal justice system.

In the years following World War II, professional counseling grew very rapidly. The G.I. Bill and other programs related to veterans caused rapid expansion of counseling programs on college campuses

and in communities. The profession itself in those years was torn by the directive-nondirective controversy. For nearly 30 years, the question of whether to be directive or client-centered produced a heated and generally unproductive debate and dialogue. These largely pseudo-issues sank into well-deserved oblivion as the realization dawned that all counseling influences clients, and that all counseling that deserves the name is client-centered.

It was remarkable that one of the few things that both of these camps and their respective leaders agreed on was the importance of development as a primary goal of counseling and therapy. E.G. Williamson (1958) a leader of the so-called directive school, defined the counseling relationship as possessing a developmental thrust, and as an affective relationship that is individualized and personalized. He saw it as a thinking relationship in which human reason is applied to problems of human development, and as an endeavor to achieve full human development in a particular individual.

Carl Rogers (1962) gave his endorsement to the developmental approach as he pronounced that the purpose of most of the helping professions, including guidance and counseling, is to enhance the personal development and the psychological growth of its clients. He stated further that the effectiveness of any member of the profession is most adequately measured in terms of the degree to which, in work with clients, this goal is achieved.

Leona Tyler (1958) saw the study of development as the central theoretical and research focus to give direction and substance to the counseling

Leona Tyler, (Archives of the History of American Psychology—The University of Akron).

profession and the new field of counseling psychology. A focus on development was an important part of the definition of "Counseling Psychology as a Specialty" as Division 17 of the American Psychological Association took on its present name.

In describing this newly named professional called a *counseling psychologist*, the Committee on Definition (1956) said:

> He has now emerged as a psychologist. He is, however a psychologist who uses varying combinations of exploratory experiences, psychometric techniques, and psychotherapeutic interviewing to assist people to grow and develop. *This is the counseling psychologist.* [italics added] (Counseling Psychology as a Specialty, 1956)

By the 1950s, developmental approaches were a central part of the emerging identity of counselors and counseling psychologists.

In the late 1950s, counseling in schools received a powerful, if perhaps misdirected, impetus from the competition engendered by the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Early in 1957, German rocket scientists employed by the Russians put *Sputnik I,* a basketball-sized piece of hardware, into orbit around the earth. A month later, *Sputnik II* was launched with an unfortunate dog named Laika on board. The Russian achievement surpassed the efforts of the group of Germans who were employed in the American space program.

The reaction in this country was one of national humiliation, soul-searching, and backbiting. After a few months of agonized recriminations and a convoluted exercise in illogic by politicians, it was decided that the blame for this catastrophe lay with the public schools and the failure of American school children to take enough science and mathematics courses.

Predictably, the Congress immediately passed the National Defense Education Act that, among other things, provided for the recruitment and training of more school counselors, presumably to remind junior high school students of their patriotic duty to immerse themselves in science and mathematics. Special NDEA Institutes were held in many major universities and teachers and counselors were paid to enter or take additional training in counseling. Within five years after the passage of the NDEA legislation, nearly 14,000 counselors had participated in the institutes (Borow, 1964).

Whether its rather dubious purposes were ever achieved, the NDEA legislation undoubtedly resulted in an influx of new and capable people into the counseling profession. It also increased public awareness of the role of

counseling in the schools. In 1960, a large-scale national study of counseling in the schools was undertaken under the direction of Gilbert Wrenn. The final report was published in 1962 under the apt title of *The Counselor in a Changing World.*

Wrenn reaffirmed the commitment of counseling to the nurture of student development and proposed counselors be actively engaged in helping to shape and reshape schools to become more developmentally responsive and potent learning environments. Shoben (1962) urged a social reconstructive role for guidance in helping the school to transform itself into a developmentally productive, growth-enhancing community.

In a strange and ironic way, counseling and guidance had come full circle back to its roots as a social reform movement. Much of the impetus that brought counseling full circle was the influence of social reform movements that were ushered in by the turbulent 1960s.

The 1960s was a time of social revolution. The Civil Rights movement, the Women's movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement together with a general discontent about many features of American life made the 1960s the most turbulent decade in twentieth-century American history. Part of this change in values and perspectives was what has been called a "quiet revolution" in mental health (Suinn, 1979). This revolution began with the 1961 report of the Joint Commission on Mental Health established by President Kennedy that was the take off point for the community mental health movement.

The community mental health movement undertook to move the primary responsibility for the identification, treatment, and prevention of mental health problems out of psychiatric clinics and mental hospitals and into the mainstream community. Community mental health centers were funded on a large scale.

The community mental health movement generated a set of perspectives on the nature of mental health problems that had much in common with the points of view that had emerged in counseling and counseling psychology.

The community mental health approach tended to minimize the usefulness of the concept of mental disease, and instead to view psychological dysfunctions not so much as a result of personality defects, but rather simply as a set of maladaptive responses to situational problems demanding practical solutions (Lehman, 1971). This approach focused on the task of helping people living in the community to solve practical problems of everyday living, a view that is similar to the traditions of counseling psychology.

A second aspect of the community mental health approach that resonates with the value system of counselors was the view that the *prevention* of severe breakdowns in human functioning is more important to human and social welfare than is the intensive, long-term treatment of acute emotional disturbances (Suinn, 1979).

As a consequence of these new values and perspectives, community treatment programs were naturally concerned with a variety of factors that affect the immediate and practical functioning of an individual within the community setting. These concerns may include the client's attitudes and competencies, family interaction patterns, and educational and vocational skills.

These concerns were not limited solely to processes occurring within the client (Hersch, 1968). They also included problems and resources inherent in the client's environment, such as housing, employment or educational opportunities, health care, and physical safety and security. Also included in these concerns and variables around which treatment may be centered were the attitudes of the community or society itself toward the identified client (Iscoe, 1974).

The quiet revolution in mental health that was under way in the 1960s and 1970s brought the fields of counseling psychology and community health much closer together and moved both toward what J.G. Kelly (1966) termed an *ecological approach.* Such an approach views human behavior as the product of transactions with the environment and focuses both the understanding and treatment of human problems and dysfunctions squarely on such interactions.

The establishment of the Division of Mental Health Counseling of the American Counseling Association is testimony to this close connection. Today, many counselors practice in community service agencies.

As the connection between professional counseling and mental health was strengthened in the 1980s and 1990s, the image that began to shape the emerging identity of many counselors was that of the psychotherapist. As a profession, psychotherapy was even newer than counseling. For many years, due to the dominance of psychoanalytic theories and psychoanalysts over the field, relatively few professionals other than psychiatrists engaged in psychotherapy (Humphries, 1996).

Beginning in the 1950s, psychologists and other professionals began to practice psychotherapy on an independent basis. The image of the psychotherapist free of institutional commitments, connected to clients within a deeply personal and private relationship has seemed an exciting

Table 1.1
Growth Line for Developmental Counseling: 1900 to Present by 20-Year Intervals

20-Year Intervals	Settings	Clientele	Goals
1900s	High schools, settlement houses	Youth leaving school	Vocational
1920s	High schools, colleges, employment services	School leavers, college graduates, job seekers	Vocational, educational
1940s	High schools, Junior high schools, rehabilitation agencies, veterans administration, colleges, employment services	Children, adolescents, young adults, veterans	Vocational, educational, rehabilitative
1960s	Elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, rehabilitation settings, family services, corrections, alcohol and drug agencies	Full age range including women and minorities	Developmental and remedial
1980s	Elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, rehabilitation settings, family services, corrections, alcohol and drug agencies, employee assistance programs	Full age range including women and minorities	Developmental, remedial, and preventive
2000s	Elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, rehabilitation settings, family services, corrections, alcohol and drug agencies, employee assistance programs, private practice, organizational consulting, health maintenance organizations, health care	Full age range including women and minorities	Developmental, remedial, and preventive

and liberating model around which to organize an extended professional identity.

Out of this influence has come a tremendous expansion in the range of concerns and the types of clients to whom counselors offer help. The early focus on vocational development and transitions from school to work or from military to civilian life has been expanded to encompass a wide variety of problem situations across the entire lifespan (see Table 1.1).

The emphasis on enhanced development as a primary goal of therapy, however, has remained. A basic creed for developmental counseling and therapy can be found in the words of Fassinger and Schlossberg (1992).

> Inherent in our philosophy is a nonpathological focus on normalcy, and day-to-day problems of living with an emphasis on strengths and adaptive strategies in our clients . . . We see ourselves as educators, we emphasize the empowerment of individuals, we value preventive as well as ameliorative intervention efforts, and we work for enhanced functioning in all people. . . .
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> Our scope includes environmental as well as individual intervention . . . the effective use of community resources and social and political advocacy where appropriate . . . We emphasize developmental approaches to working with people including attention to their sociocultural context and the influence of gender, race, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability and socio-history. These characteristics give us the unique opportunity to be in the forefront . . . of effective service delivery. . . . (p. 244)

This statement eloquently describes the culmination of a century of the history of psychological counseling and therapy, generally, and of developmental counseling in particular.

Developmental counseling is an approach to psychotherapy that combines the developmental and ecological approaches. It provides a framework and rationale for counseling and psychotherapy that builds on the positive potentials of people to grow, achieve, and build competence in dealing with the inevitable challenges confronting them across their life cycle.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPMENTAL COUNSELING AND THERAPY

Developmental counseling is an approach to psychological helping that is organized around a set of unifying and clarifying ideas, principles, and commitments regarding human beings and the physical and social world in which they live. Counseling and psychotherapy are very closely related processes. Although they have evolved historically out of somewhat different social and cultural antecedents, it is almost impossible to make neat, clear-cut, and mutually exclusive distinctions between what counselors and psychotherapists actually do. In any individual case, a considerable degree of overlap in techniques and functions is very likely to occur.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY: INTERTWINED PROCESSES

Generally attempts to distinguish between counseling and psychotherapy have centered around several types of comparisons. Counseling has been viewed as more appropriate for less severely disturbed people and has been described as more oriented toward immediate, specific, and practical

outcomes than psychotherapy. Psychotherapy, on the other hand, has been perceived as more often directed toward effecting global and pervasive personality change, or toward "curing" presumed mental illnesses or psychopathology.

Counseling has been seen as stressing rational problem solving, decision making, life planning, and stress management. Counseling has also been construed as focused toward helping "normal" people deal with problems arising out of the vicissitudes of everyday life. Counseling is often viewed as preventive, rather than remedial in the sense that it can offer help before problems and difficulties reach proportions that might trigger profound or catastrophic breakdowns in psychological functioning. Counselors have been traditionally positioned in schools, colleges, or community agencies where they are readily accessible to large segments of given communities and populations.

These differences have been based upon practical, common sense distinctions that have had some practical utility and validity in distinguishing between the practice of counseling and psychotherapy. Increasingly, however, the validity of these common sense distinctions has been steadily eroded by changes occurring in the practice of both counseling and psychotherapy. The rapid increase in the practice of brief psychotherapies reflects the influence of both empirical research findings and the economic realities of the marketplace (Koss & Schiang, 1994). These developments have made duration of treatment a less useful criterion in distinguishing between counseling and psychotherapy.

The advent and evolution of a variety of "behavior therapies" have also tended to blur distinctions between counseling and psychotherapy. These therapies focus very directly on specific, immediate symptoms and purposely avoid dealing with inner or unconscious personality mechanisms or defenses. Similarly, more recent cognitive and cognitive-behavioral therapies have stressed rational, logical approaches to the analysis of troublesome problems and situations facing clients (Dobson, 1988). Certainly, the old onionskin analogy that portrayed therapists as probing into the pungent and conflict-laden "core of personality," while counselors busied themselves with the less volatile surface layers is no longer an apt distinction.

The changes that have occurred have resulted in confusion and even the denigration of counseling. For example, Corsini (1995) defines counseling as "the giving of information, advice, and orders by someone considered to be an expert. . . . (p. 3). Such a definition certainly shows little respect

for counseling as a psychologically based, professional activity and is completely out of touch with modern approaches.

Given that approaches to providing psychological help through the medium of personal interaction have a great deal in common, it is more useful simply to consider psychotherapy as the broader and more inclusive term. It is then possible to view developmental counseling as a specialty within the broad and diverse constellation of professional activities termed psychotherapy.

COMPONENTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL COUNSELING

Professional counseling has historically been closely linked to education. Developmental counseling often includes a component involving the dissemination of specialized information and/or the acquisition of specific skills. Educational-vocational counseling may, for example, provide clients with information about occupations or educational opportunities as well as information about self in relation to psychologically relevant aspects of the environment. Similarly, academic improvement counseling may provide skill training in areas such as reading comprehension, test-taking, or time management.

Family counseling may include didactic material on parenting skills as well as basic information about child development. Counseling may also include coaching in social skills or other practical training relevant to the presenting problems of individual clients. Developmental counseling may include any or all of these activities.

Since developmental counseling perceives people as thinking, feeling, and acting beings, it is seen as natural and desirable to couple the exploration of deeply personal hopes, fears, and aspirations with practical, useful information and adaptive skills that can move the client toward the removal of obstacles to goal attainment and thus toward higher levels of development and satisfaction. Issues that deal with successfully handling basic social roles such as those of spouse, parent, worker, student, or friend are crucial in terms of optimal development, while failure or fear of failure in these roles is fraught with profound emotional distress.

DEVELOPMENTAL COUNSELING: AN ECLECTIC APPROACH

Developmental counseling approaches have evolved in much the same way as other psychotherapeutic systems. All such systems represent efforts to deal with a wide range of human needs and characteristics in a

comprehensive yet consistent way. Developmental counseling is a framework for understanding clients and helping to set goals on their behalf. *It is not a theory about counseling processes.*

In choosing formulas or techniques to be used, developmental counseling builds on eclectic integrative approaches, that is, an approach drawn from many sources. Eclectic counseling or psychotherapy uses concepts, constructs, and behavior change principles from a variety of psychological or therapeutic models or bodies of research and theory (Poznanski & McLennan, 1995).

For many years, many psychotherapists viewed themselves as eclectic. Generally, however, eclectic has meant little more than a refusal to be classified as an adherent of a single theory (Garfield & Bergin, 1994). In this narrow and negative sense, it could not be expected that any two eclectic counselors or therapists would necessarily reflect any degree of similarity in techniques or approaches. Eclectic approaches have often been criticized as shallow, poorly organized, and conceptually weak because of their failure to articulate clearly how they draw on and organize principles and concepts adapted from different bodies of theory and research (Mahalik, 1990).

For eclectic counseling or therapy to be evaluated in terms of effectiveness, the approach must be *systematic,* that is, it must attempt to articulate the particular sources of gain that it draws on, and must specify how these are *integrated* into an organized and internally consistent approach to clients. A specific example of the way in which developmental counseling can draw on a variety of theoretical concepts and research findings is elaborated in Chapter 8.

Philosophical Concerns and Commitments

Basically, developmental counseling views people as complex and complete thinking, feeling, and acting beings. The goals of clients, and therefore the goals of developmental counseling generally, involve facilitating lasting changes in the ways those clients think, feel, and act in regard to themselves and in relation to the world in which they live.

Developmental counseling is distinguished by several major philosophical concerns and commitments. The ideas, principles, and values associated with these philosophical commitments help to distinguish developmental counseling from other models of psychological helpgiving. These basic assumptions and commitments can be partially expressed in terms of the following positions:

1. The primary goal of developmental counseling is to facilitate the optimal psychological development of clients, both by enhancing higher levels of functioning and by helping to remove obstacles to further growth.
2. Developing human beings can only be fully understood and helped within the context of their interactions with the physical, social, and psychological environment.
3. The ultimate goal of developmental counseling is to facilitate a *dynamic* and *growth-producing* engagement or "fit" between the developing person and a humane and responsive environment. Change in person-environment interaction is inevitable.

The inevitability of change, however, by no means guarantees the progress of further development for any individual. Development is seen as systematic, continuous change in a *valued direction.* Change in human affairs and individual lives is an inescapable reality. Further growth and development is an ever-present possibility.

Developmental counseling is very heavily concerned with choice and consequently with issues of human freedom. Human beings have the freedom to participate purposefully and consciously in change. The failure to engage actively and planfully with change factors at work in one's own life is to abdicate the opportunity to exert any degree of direction and impetus to your life.

People can only participate actively and purposely in the realities of change when they become aware of those realities. Developmental counseling deals very directly with the task of helping clients to become aware of themselves and equally aware of crucial events and opportunities in their environments.

As self-awareness and awareness of the environment grow, new possibilities, new aspirations, new hopes, and consequently new choices and new challenges emerge. Developmental counseling helps not only to increase awareness, but also to mobilize clients' personal and practical resources to convert hopes and aspirations into accomplishments and successes.

Developmental counseling has a strong focus on human potential. It also has an equally strong concern with interactions between people and their environment—human ecology. Human development proceeds from a long-term, optimal set of interactions between the developing individual and the environment. The ecological focus represents a second set of unifying and clarifying ideas that helps to distinguish developmental counseling from other psychotherapeutic systems.

The ecological approach stems from an interactionist view of the sources and determinants of human experience and behavior. It contrasts with those views that see behavior stemming almost solely from intrapsychic events such as unconscious conflicts, defenses, and motivations.

According to the interactionist view, most human experience and behavior arises out of transactions between the individual and the physical and social psychological environment. Attempts to understand or to assess the behavior of an individual in isolation from his or her interactions with the environment are incomplete and usually misleading. Seen in this way, most human problems do not exist inside an individual in terms of a disturbed psyche or a set of deviant traits. Rather, human problems and difficulties tend to arise around specific interactions *between* the individual and the environment (Rubenstein & Zager, 1995).

When developmental counselors attempt to understand a troubled or inadequately functioning client, they do not search primarily for deep-seated intrapsychic conflicts that are presumed to reside within the troubled individual. Rather, they focus on the pattern of responses that the client makes to immediate and concrete situational challenges. The approach is to help the client deal constructively with practical problems of living, and in that process learn coping and mastery skills that will transfer and persist in future situations and so lead to further growth and development.

Constructs and Concepts in Developmental Counseling

The constructs or conceptual tools used by developmental counselors differ considerably from those that have been developed out of abnormal psychology and that are heavily utilized in other systems of psychotherapy. People know from simple observation that the behavior of human beings changes markedly through time and across situations (Mischel, 1984). The discipline of social psychology deals with the many ways in which human behavior is influenced by the presence of and interactions with other human beings.

Social roles, expectations, and relationships are seen as important shapers of human behavior and human experience. Human beings are social animals. They need and depend on others to meet myriad needs throughout the life-span (Ainsworth & Bowley, 1991). Most social interactions through which people meet their needs is organized in terms of social roles. A social role is a more or less clearly structured way of participating in social interaction. Put very simply, a social role is defined

primarily by what others expect of an individual occupying a particular position within a group.

The life space of any individual is organized around social role memberships that can be mapped. Competence, conflict, and competition within and among social roles govern the rewards and punishment, successes, and failures that orchestrate the emotional life of every individual. Developmental counseling focuses on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources needed to meet clients' legitimate needs within their principal social roles.

CONCEPTS OF DEVELOPMENT

As people move through the life cycle, passing through a sequence of chronological stages, the number and complexity of social roles in which they engage increase rapidly. Often, these roles conflict or compete, sometimes taking on contradictory and incompatible expectations and conceptions. As this occurs, the life space of the individual is characterized by *role strain.* When role strain among very central and significant roles occurs, the individual may be subject to intense anxiety or stress.

Similarly as individuals move through the life cycle, new roles, relationships, and responsibilities are often thrust on them. They may be poorly prepared to handle these new roles. The anthropological concepts of *continuity and discontinuity* link human ecology and counseling and are important in conceptualizing the functions of developmental counselors.

In very simple societies, cultural and social forces act upon developing individuals at rates and in ways that closely approximate the maturational processes that determine readiness for the demands and expectations inherent in new or expanded roles. Expectations for productive work, for example, may proceed at about the same pace as growth in size and strength, giving a developing child the ability to assume a greater share of family tasks. The growing youngster, thus, experiences a basic *continuity* between physical maturation and social and vocational development.

In relatively simple societies, biological and cultural clocks tend to keep the same time. In modern, complex, post-industrial societies, however, there are many cultural clocks that tick away to give notice of new demands and expectations for the developing individual. These cultural clocks are not necessarily synchronized with the biological clocks that govern maturation. Indeed, these cultural clocks do not even keep time with each other.

In complex societies, most individuals sooner or later experience a marked *discontinuity* in their transactions with the environment. Entry into various levels and types of schooling, beginning work, marriage, parenthood, the termination of active parenting, and retirement from work are all examples of events that are frequently accompanied by severe discontinuities with consequent stress and emotional upset. These kinds of challenges are called *life transitions* (Fassinger & Schlossberg, 1992).

Developmental counseling addresses human needs in helping clients deal with major transition points in the life cycle. Because the nature of an organized society imposes demands and expectations on all of its members, some transition points can be readily identified for most members of the society. Failure to succeed reasonably in meeting these expectations means that further development is disrupted or even permanently stalled. Table 1.2 lists some of the ways in which transitions are smoothed by social institutions including developmental counseling.

The cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes needed to continue along the path of further growth are called *developmental tasks.* Each life

Table 1.2
Social Institutions for Bridging Life Transitions

Critical Period	Social Institution
Preparation for school entry (3–5 years)	Nursery school, Head Start, family counseling
Entry into school (5–6 years)	Kindergarten, parent consultation
Early adolescence (11–14 years)	Junior high school, middle schools, school counseling
School-leaving Entry into adulthood (16–21 years)	Community colleges, technical and trade schools, juvenile courts, educational-vocational counseling, premarital counseling, personal counseling
Young adult (21–35 years)	Adult education, marriage and family counseling, vocational counseling, personal counseling
Mid-life adult (35–50)	Personal counseling, vocational counseling, family counseling, health care counseling, adult education
Later adult (50–65 years)	Preretirement counseling, health care counseling, personal counseling
Retirement (65+ years)	Personal counseling, health care counseling, adult education, geriatric counseling, family counseling, nursing homes, retirement communities

stage imposes these developmental tasks on individuals before successful entry into an ensuing stage can be achieved. Developmental tasks may include the acquisition of basic educational skills, interpersonal skills, attitudes toward work or authority, functioning within marital or family relationships and myriad others arising out of complex social role structures (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Developmental counselors are often expert in assisting clients with specific developmental tasks that are prevalent in particular life stages such as adolescence, young adulthood, midlife, or postretirement.

A final major concept crucial to developmental counseling is that of *coping behaviors.* Coping behaviors permit people to deal with stressful and problematic situations triggered by discontinuities in life transitions. They may also be triggered by a host of other events such as serious illnesses, losses, bereavements, job loss, divorces, victimization, and so forth (Gibson & Brown, 1992).

Coping behaviors have two major components: (1) the acquisition of strategies and skills that directly interface with a problematic and stressful situation such as problem solving, decision making, or planning skills; and (2) ways in which an individual handles emotional distress such as fear, anger, and frustration in the face of threat and uncertainty. Often this emotional control is established by helping the client to develop personal meaning about the stressful situation, assess the situation realistically, and interpret it within a framework of personal beliefs and values.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPMENTAL COUNSELING

Developmental counseling differs from other psychotherapeutic systems in the ways in which it conceptualizes human needs and characteristics and how it construes the human condition. The basic concepts are developmental and psychosocial rather than pathogenic and intrapsychic.

People potentially transact with their physical and social environments in patterns that can move them toward higher levels of development with attendant gains in personal satisfaction and capacities for social contributions. They are also vulnerable to cultural discontinuities and personal crises that may interrupt or limit development and lead to chronic frustration and failure.

For the developmental counselor, these concepts mean that clients are counseled and understood in the context of the social systems in which

they live and with which they interact. They are ever-changing humans who live in an unstable world.

Clients are not seen primarily as pathological victims of some presumed set of intrapsychic deficits, but rather are viewed as developmentally *stuck*, that is, confronted with obstacles to growth that prevent them from moving onward and upward within a developmental pattern. In a sense, the concept of developmental arrest or being *stuck* replaces the traditional psychotherapist's notion of being sick. Similarly, the notion of *freeing* clients replaces the goal of *curing* them (Okun, 1984).

The counselor's concerns are not limited, however, solely to processes occurring within the client. The developmental counselor is also legitimately concerned with problems and resources that both reside and are inherent in the client's environment, itself. Problems of decent housing, employment opportunities, discrimination, access to health care, financial or physical security, and opportunities for social mobility all represent concerns that affect person-environment interaction (McCloyd, 1998). They are, therefore, of as much concern to the counselor as the client's responses to them (Conyne, 1988).

The developmental counselor is committed philosophically to avoid the stance that sometimes results in people being blamed for situations in which they are the real victims (Jessor, 1993). Communities and the social institutions that they represent such as schools, agencies, and organizations are human inventions that are ostensibly designed to meet human needs and serve human purposes. When it is clear that the obstacles to growth confronting clients arise from inadequate, aversive or exploitive features of the community or society, itself, the counselor moves to improve the quality of those environments.

For many students entering the field of counseling and psychotherapy, one of the most negative and frustrating aspects of the profession is the sense of helplessness that comes from the knowledge that while we can talk with clients and help them to cathart about their pain and problems, the fundamental situation often does not change.

The ecological or interactive model for understanding and assisting people is a fresh perspective that defines a new kind of role for counselors and therapists (Kaczmarek & Riva, 1996). One of the most important realizations of this view is that people live, work, suffer, triumph, or fail within the real world with all of its imperfections and injustices.

Intrapsychic approaches to understanding human behavior, on the other hand, have tended to focus almost solely on behavior potentials that

exist *within* the person and have tended, largely, to ignore situational or environmental influences. Such approaches to studying human personality typically come up with long lists of inferred traits, needs, drives, defense mechanisms, mental diseases, and so forth, with which to explain behavior.

When the psychological functioning of an individual in almost any kind of situation seems inadequate, or inappropriate, we explain the problem in terms of inferences about what must be going on *inside* the individual. From this perspective, we begin to think of people as "unmotivated," "stupid," "defensive," "paranoid," "psychopathic," and so on. The intrapsychic view is able to generate an almost endless list of labels with which to categorize and eventually to stigmatize troubled people. Unfortunately, these labels do little to enable us to help people and may, actually result in the refusal or withdrawal of help.

One of the problems with this view is that we often begin to confuse the explanatory constructs that we invented to explain and label behavior with reality. These labels and constructs begin to take on a life of their own, and we begin to treat them as though they were real entities lurking somewhere beneath the skin of the individual. In a sense, we create a kind of mythology to explain things that we do not fully comprehend. This modern version of classical mythology may comfort us in denying our own ignorance, or inability to help, but, like the mythologies of old, it results in very little actual control over the natural world or assistance to those with whom we work.

The ecological or interactive view offers us an alternative to the intrapsychic model that enables us to retain much that is useful from earlier approaches while coming to terms with the realities of environmental and situational influences on human behavior. In the interactive model, we do not have to think of people as interchangeable parts or empty organisms.

Rather than studying or working with the individual in isolation, we can take as our unit for analysis the ecosystem, that is, the person in his or her full social context. An ecosystem is the immediate physical, social, and psychological setting within which the transactions between the individual and the environment are occurring. When we use the system as our unit of analysis, we begin to focus on rather than to ignore or obscure the context within which behavior occurs (Cicchetti & Toth, 1998; Wapner, 1987).

We may see, for example, the rebellious behavior of a child in a classroom in which he experiences constant failure or ridicule. We also may

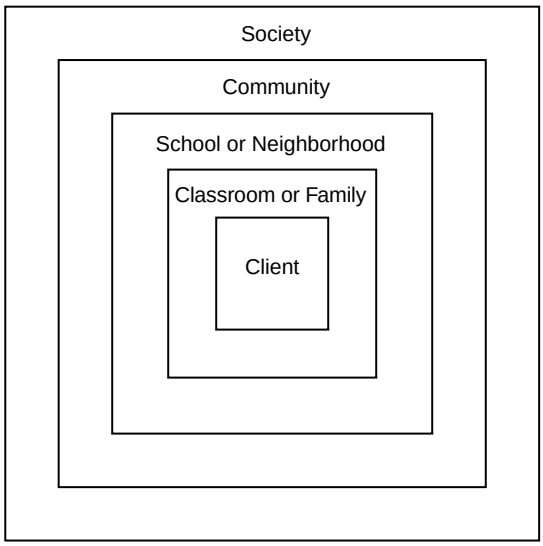

Figure 1.1 The Ecosystemic Model showing boundaries and linkages.

see the violent and tumultuous behavior of a child in a family in which the father has been displaced by the mother's live-in boyfriend.

From this perspective, problems or dysfunctions that are barriers to development are best understood and most effectively prevented or removed in contexts and environments within which they occur. Counseling in systems may involve working with whole families, consulting with parents and teachers, collaborating on neighborhood development programs or participating in curriculum development projects in schools. Figure 1.1 illustrates the ecosystemic model showing boundaries and linkages.

The ecological or interactive perspective, generates larger and more wide-ranging sets of options and alternatives than those available out of traditional personality theories. The approach generates what Tyler (1983) called "multiple possibilities" not available with intrapsychic theories.