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Student Inclinations as Factors in Guidance

MAURICE S. STOKES

Factors that influence the development of students are numerous and varied. They include all phases of heredity and environment. Many counselors develop profiles which emphasize inherent aptitudes, achievement ability, special abilities, student interest, temperament, and personality. Although there are accepted views as to the meaning of the above terms, there is no concensus of opinion as to their exact meaning. In fact, such a term as temperament is sometimes denied admittance in scientific and intellectual language. In one way or another the concepts mentioned are used in personnel services. The vast majority of colleges and universities are committed to a philosophy in which provisions are made for needs and intellectual development.

Student Interest

When the factors previously mentioned are considered, there is much discussion concerning the weight and value that should be given student interest, desires, urges, and needs. Different methods are used for understanding these factors. Strong, in discussing interest as related to acceptance, rejection, or pleasantness, and unpleasantness says:¹

First, if a student has sufficient interest to elect a college course, his grade will depend more on his intelligence, industry, and previous preparation than his own interest. . . . Second, interest affects the situation in causing the student to elect what he is interested in and to avoid courses in which he is not interested.

It could be that this statement indicates that "Interest and abilities seem to be independent variables, each one contributing its own quota to ultimate success."² It is usually thought that interests are well developed by the age of 14 years; college freshmen usually, at least verbally, express a vocational choice in over 80 percent of the instances. This does not deny the fact that there is much shifting of occupational choice. Reading appears to be an area where there is an enormous amount of material available about the interest and habits of both children and adults.

¹Milton L. Blum, and Benjamin Balinsky, *Counseling and Psychology: Vocational Psychology and Its Relation to Educational and Personnel Counseling*, New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951, p. 381.

²*Ibid.*

Procedure Used

Students were asked to complete a Guidance Form, which was a combination personal data, a rating scale, and a questionnaire. In the principal experiment of 52 counselees, the Guidance Forms were administered individually during a counseling interview. This permitted questions to be asked and suggestions to be made for clarification purposes. Nine occupations were listed with several spaces for additions to be made. Other occupations were usually mentioned. The counselee was to rank the first five occupational choice. Tabulations were started in the 1954-1955 school year, and extended through 1955-1956, 1956-1957, 1957-1958 with the number of counselees being 15, 16, 15, and 6 for each year respectively. For the last year, only those counseled at the beginning of the year were used. The number was limited in size to permit concentration on a highly selected group.

Because of the limited number used in the principal experiment, the results were tabulated from two other experiments in order to secure a representative sampling. In the first, 106 Freshman Student Weekly Schedules were used; this unpublished study was made in 1950. For the second, 20 student teachers were given the same Guidance Form. A comparison of these different samples will increase the reliability of the data presented in this article.

Interpretation of Data Presented

Fifty of the 52 education majors selected teaching as their first choice for an occupation. Next, the preferences were given in the following order for an artist, beautician, stenographer, nurse, physician, and civil engineer. This is indicated in Table I. The rank of preference or the total pattern is practically the same for each choice, but there are minor exceptions such as, an artist ranks second for the total pattern of choices, but a weak third as a second choice. For a second choice the beautician ranked first, that is next to teaching, but third on the total pattern.

TABLE I
Occupational Choice in the Order Preferred

	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Median</i>
Artist	0	6	10	10	8	34	6.80
Doctor	0	2	6	2	5	15	3.00
Civil Engineer	0	0	2	4	5	11	2.20
Stenographer	0	11	9	1	5	26	5.20
Carpenter	0	1	2	1	4	8	1.60
Beautician	0	16	8	5	1	30	6.00
Teacher	50	2	0	0	0	52	10.40
Minister	1	1	1	0	4	7	1.40
Mechanic	0	0	2	2	2	6	1.20
Nurse	1	4	4	5	2	16	3.20
Social Worker	0	0	4	3	2	9	1.80
Sales Clerk	0	0	2	1	0	3	0.60

Seamstress	0	0	1	2	0	3	0.60
Dietitian	0	2	1	0	1	4	0.80
Counselor	0	1	0	1	1	3	0.60
Librarian	0	1	0	0	1	2	0.40
Other Occupations	0	5	0	15	11	31	6.20
	52	52	52	52	52	260	52.40

When the results of Table I are compared with the Freshman and Student Teacher interest, the pattern is almost identical for occupational choice. In each experiment there was an obvious indication of similar interest.

The above table indicates the desirability of counselors who consider all phases of guidance in directing students in the selection of career opportunities. The possibilities are many and varied.

Student occupational patterns are suggestive of interest and motivation. Individual choice suggest the urgent need for occupational information in related areas. An important phase of vocational guidance is providing information about broad patterns. Table II indicates the immediate interest as related to the more comprehensive area. Table II follows:

TABLE II

The Rank of Occupational Choice as Related to Interest

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Interest Classification</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Teacher	Social Service	1
Artist	Artistic	2
Beautician	Persuasive Artistic	3
Stenographer	Clerical	4
Engineer	Mechanical Computational	5
Carpenter		
Mechanic		
Nurse	Scientific Social Service	6
Seamstress		
Dietitian	Scientific	7
Physician		
Clergyman		
Counselor	Persuasive Social Service	8

The interest classification is an adaptation made from the Kuder Interest Test.³ Teaching is classified under Social Science, since the Education Department is usually considered in this division. Other occupations classified in Table II are self explanatory.

Employment conditions for Negro women in the South are given in Table III with a comparison being made for the inclinations and desires of Negro College women. Counselors give valuable

³*Ibid.*, pp. 385-386.

service to students when information is given about the demands of society as compared with desires. Table III follows:

TABLE III

A Comparison of Occupational Distribution and Inclinations of Negro Women

<i>Occupational Distribution⁴</i>	<i>Actual Conditions for Negro Women in the South, 1950</i>	<i>Inclinations Listed in This Study 1953-1957</i>
Professional, technical and kindred workers	6.3	72.0
Managers, officials and proprietors	1.3	11.5
Clerical and sales workers	3.5	11.1
Craftsman, foreman, and kindred workers	0.4	5.4
Operatives and kindred workers	9.5	0.0
Service workers, private household	45.4	0.0
Other service workers	18.2	0.0
Non-farm workers	1.2	0.0
Total and Farm Workers	85.8	100.0
Farmers and Farm Workers	14.2	00.0
Total	100.0	100.0

The preceding table indicates that desires for entering certain occupations are much larger than the number actually engaged in the various occupations. A combination of factors that should be considered before a student enters a given occupation.

For the choices listed as Professional, Technical, and Kindred Workers include the artist, physician, teacher, minister, nurse, social worker, seamstress, dietitian, counselor, and librarian. The actual percentage for these was 60. If an occupation was only mentioned in one out of five possible choices it was not tabulated in Table I; this included such vocations as an announcer, journalist, civil service worker, musician, Occupational Therapist, and a policeman. When an allowance is made for the latter the percentage of professional, Technical, and Kindred Workers choices go up to 72 instead of 60. Since most of those who chose a beautician anticipated shops of their own, this occupation was classified under managers, officials and proprietors. Stenographers and sales clerks were considered Clerical and Sales Workers. Mechanics and carpenters were classified as Craftsmen, Foremen and Kindred Workers. Aspirations of the students included nothing below the last named group.

⁴Eli Ginzberg, *The Negro Potential*, New York City: Columbia University Press, 1956, p. 28.

"What guidance can do should not be overestimated." Nor should it be considered an exact science that directs an individual to a precise job. It must not be assumed that the average individual can be successful in only one type of work; for this reason the entire pattern of student interest is considered in Table III; and in Table II related occupations are considered. Since 96% of the students in this experiment were women, the general pattern of social, artistic, clerical, and literary interest and goals was satisfactory. Occupation level interest are similar for business and the professions, while unskilled groups have opposite interest.

Dean George W. Works and Professor Simon Lesser have made a most relevant statement about interest:

It is useless and even mischievous to train youth for a job for which he has no special aptitude and in which he has no real interest.⁵

Interest of 72% of the counselees as indicated in Table III are inclined towards Professional, Technical, and Kindred Workers. The percentage represents students who are near the upper 6% for formal education for the total population. Negro students will experience more difficulty in entering the professions than white students but there seems to be a greater demand for Negroes in the professions such as medicine, law, dentistry, and pharmacy. There is a larger percentage of the white professional group if made on the basis of race. The demand for medical, dental, and laboratory technicians for the country as a whole is most pronounced.

Another example of the relationship between supply and demand and interest would be the conditions of clerical and sales workers. The present secondary desire of these prospective teachers is 3.14 larger than the percentage actually employed. Since clerical and sales workers have a larger increase in percentage than most occupations for the decade from 1940 to 1950, the chances for Negro entrance in these areas are getting greater. Despite the fact that there was no overt interest in operatives and kindred workers, this is an area of increasing importance. Although there are many factors to consider in choosing an occupation, the salaries for many operatives have exceeded the salaries of a number of those in the professions in recent years.

Public schools and colleges should arrange their curricula for the development of good human relations and citizenship as related to occupations. Basic training which will provide the foundation for those occupations that are in demand should be provided. Opportunities for much exploration that will broaden and deepen

⁵George A. Works and Simon Lesser, *Rural America Today, Its Schools and Community Life*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942, p. 102.

interest are important. The preceding statements indicate the following:⁶

Vocational guidance given by a reasonably well equipped person can help a youth materially in choosing his field of work. By focusing his attention on his own interest and aptitudes, by giving him a realistic idea of occupational requirements, and employment possibilities, it lays the ground work for a rational decision.

Summary

Facts in this study indicate that all phases of guidance should be considered in counseling students. Student inclinations represent an important consideration. More attention should be given to the general occupational pattern, since the average individual may be successful in more than one type of work. This is very important since there are not many studies that consider teaching interest as related to other occupations. The occupational information received by prospective teachers will make these studies more effective. Interest, attitudes, and values have emerging importance in our society when related to occupations.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 101.