

An Evaluation of a Model to Train High School Students as Leaders of Adlerian Guidance Groups

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It appears that the use of students in the counseling process is expanding. However, there have been few publications dealing with either the potential or the limitations of the student helper and there have been few comprehensive training models developed. The Adlerian approach would seem well adapted to the use in training student helpers. The principles of Adlerian psychology may be translated into simple, easily understood concepts (of Dreikurs, 1964) and the techniques for performing Adlerian group counseling have been delineated (Dreikurs, 1960; Stormer and Kirby, 1969; Dreikurs and Sonstegard, 1968).

The primary purpose of this study was to discover if high school juniors could be trained to run Adlerian-oriented guidance groups for junior high age students in which they (the juniors) would be able to accurately assess behavioral patterns of their group members and would be able to make the group discussions enjoyable for group members. A secondary consideration was to investigate possible personality correlates of the ability to lead small groups.

METHOD

Sample: Students in two study halls for the junior class were asked to participate in this study. The subjects for the counselor helper (CH) group, the active control (AC) group, and the inactive control (IC) group were selected from the list of volunteers obtained above. The volunteers were administered the High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ) and the Rotter I-E Scale. Subjects were matched according to age, grade point average, intelligence, HSPQ-Leadership Scale and I-E Score. The subjects for the counselor-in-training (CIT) group were graduate students enrolled in an elementary counseling practicum. These students were in the last semester of an EPDA Institute and had been exposed to approximately thirty hours of supervised group work. The subjects for the junior high groups were selected from volunteers in the seventh and eighth grades at a nearby junior high school. Seventeen groups of five students each were formed from this list of volunteers.

The school district, where this study was conducted, is located in southwestern Pennsylvania and is a federally recognized poverty area. A large percentage of the students in the school district belong to families who are receiving some kind of federal or state aid. Despite this fact the school district has modern facilities and is open to new programs.

Instrumentation: The High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ-L) Leadership Scale was selected as an objective measure of leadership ability. This scale was the only scale measuring leadership ability in a high school population found by this writer to have an adequate background of research (Cattell and Cattell, 1969; Cattell, 1965; Butcher, et. al., 1963; and Klausmeir, 1961). The Rotter I-E Scale has been found to measure the ability of a person to influence others (Phares, 1965; Gore and Rotter, 1963; Hamsher, et al., 1968). It was used in this study as a control for this trait. The Group Reaction to the Discussion Scale (GRDS) was used as one outcome measure. This instrument indicates the degree to which the group enjoyed the discussion (Aaronson and Mills, 1969; Whitmore, 1970). The Behavior Checklist (BC) was selected as a measure of the ability to identify behavior patterns in group members (Walker & Mattson, 1968).

Procedure: The CH, AC, and IC groups received different treatments. The CH group was trained using an Adlerian approach to discussions. The first five sessions were devoted to teaching students the fundamentals of Adlerian Psychology. An experiential model was used where students were led to examine the purposive nature of behavior. The trainer asked such questions as, "Why do students hassle teachers?" The group discussion was directed toward examining the multiple reasons for a given behavior, e.g., to get attention, to defeat the teacher, etc. If a group member exhibited a certain behavior the group was led to examine the reasons for this behavior. It was pointed out that once the general purpose of the behavior of a person is known many of his actions will fall into a pattern. This principle was illustrated using actions of the discussion CH group members to show a pattern of behavior. Additionally, the way life goals are developed was examined. Involved in the discussion of goals was an overview of the family constellation and its impact on behavior. Using the family constellations of the group members, the characteristics of the various ordinal positions were examined. By the end of this discussion the group members knew how to obtain a family constellation. Also other techniques, such as going through a typical day of a family or a typical school day were presented. Again the emphasis was on teaching the students to look for patterns of behavior in the events described by their group members.

The second five sessions of the training procedure utilized junior high groups to demonstrate to the students some techniques used in group discussions. Toward the end of these sessions the students led the groups for short periods by themselves. At the end of the training sessions the CH students were given

groups of five junior high students with whom they conducted three group discussions. All discussions were observed either by the writer or by one of the two school counselors.

The AC group received training procedures that paralleled the procedure used with the CH group with the exception that no Adlerian techniques were discussed. Their first five sessions were devoted to discussions of leadership techniques, and the trainer was as non-directive as possible. The second five sessions involved use of a demonstration group and the same procedure described above was followed. The trainer led the group first, and later the students assumed control of the discussion. After completing their ten sessions the AC subjects were each given a group of five junior high students with whom they conducted three group discussions. Again, all discussions were observed either by the writer or one of the two school counselors. The IC group received no training and led no groups. The CIT group led three junior high group discussions.

After completion of the last group sessions with the junior high students, the CH, AC, and IC groups were administered the HSPQ and I-E tests. Additionally, after each of the three sessions, members of the junior high groups completed the Group Reaction to the Discussion Scale (GRD). Each of the CH, AC and CIT group sessions was taped.

Two counselors who had completed an eight week practicum involving intensive training in Adlerian group counseling were utilized as raters. Using a watch, raters evaluated each minute by noting an A if the techniques being used during that minute were those typical of Adlerian groups and noting a U if the techniques were not typical. In this manner, a percentage was obtained as to how much of each session was typical of Adlerian group procedures. The average of the three fifteen-minute scores was used as an index of how closely each leader followed the Adlerian approach. The rating of the two counselors was correlated to produce a measure of rater reliability.

In preparing for the rating involved in this study, the two raters individually rated eight fifteen-minute segments selected from tapes of groups conducted by both Adlerian and non-Adlerian counselors. The Pearson's Product Moment correlation between the eight ratings completed by each counselor was in the correct direction but was not significant ($r=.71$ $df=7$). After the study was completed each of the raters evaluated the first fifteen-minute segment of the recordings of each group session. These two ratings were averaged for the final score and a Pearson's Product Moment correlation was significant ($r=.87$; $p < .05$; $df=54$).

Both the group leader and the classroom teacher completed a Behavioral Checklist for each junior high school group member. A Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient was computed between the BC completed on each student by the teachers and the BC completed on the same student by the CIT, CH and AC leaders. The effectiveness of the CIT, CH and AC leaders was

assessed through completion of the GRD by members of their groups. Using the average GRD, a chi-square was computed with a six cell matrix (three leader groups X three sessions).

The data was divided into two basic categories: that which measured personality correlates of leadership (i.e., HSPQ Leadership Scale and the I-E Scale) and that which measured actual performance (BC, GRD and ratings of sessions). The HSPQ and the I-E Scale were correlated with the GRD scores to assess whether these personality measures significantly affected actual performance. Additionally, chi-square tests were computed on the HSPQ and I-E pre-post test scores to measure impact of the training procedure.

RESULTS

The data suggest that personality factors of the CH leaders as measured by the HSPQ-L Scale did have some relation to the performance as measured by the GRD ($r=.78$; $p<.05$; one tailed test $df=12$). Although the correlation between HSPQ-L and the GRD for the AC leaders was in the expected direction, it was not significant ($r=.71$; $df=.12$). From the above, it might be inferred that the training procedure provided for the CH leaders a vehicle whereby their leadership ability could be expressed. The insignificant correlation between GRD and the I-E scores of the CH group ($r=.21$) and AC groups ($r=.03$) suggest that this variable does not have any relationship to performance of group leaders. Additionally, chi-squares computed on the pre-post I-E and HSPQ Leadership Scales were not significant ($X^2 = 2.41$; $df = 1$ and $X^2 = .19$; $df = 1$). Thus the training procedures did not have any measurable impact on the personality factors measured by the above instruments.

In terms of the evaluation of the training procedure, it can be inferred that the CH leaders did gain some mastery of the Adlerian group techniques. However, their utilization of the techniques did not match that of the CIT leaders who had completed a practicum emphasizing Adlerian group counseling. T-Test comparisons of mean percentage of time sessions judged to be Adlerian between the three groups indicated that the CIT leaders used Adlerian techniques significantly more than CH and AC leaders (CIT vs CH: $T=3.50$, $p<.01$; $df=10$ and CIT vs AC: $T=8.27$, $p<.001$, $df=10$). However, the CH leaders used Adlerian techniques more than the AC leaders (CH vs AC: $T=3.50$; $p<.01$; $df=12$).

As indicated by a chi-square, there were no significant differences in the mean GRD scores between the CH, CI and AC groups. However, the trend of the data does seem to follow the expected direction. It is interesting to observe that the GRD of the CIT and AC groups decreased. In particular the AC group members appeared to lose interest. In contrast, the upward trend of mean GRD scores over the three sessions suggest that the satisfaction of CH group members

increased with each session. This increase in satisfaction would suggest that a longer training session for CH leaders would have increased their performance as measured by the GRD scores.

The correlation between the BC ratings of the CIT, CH and AC leaders and the BC rating of the teachers (T) were all highly significant (CIT vs T: $r=.84$; $T=6.97$; $df=26$; CH vs T: $r=.72$; $T=6.14$; $df=28$ and AC vs T: $r=.61$; $T=4.34$; $df=30$). Using a two-tailed T-test, all of the correlations were highly significant ($p<.001$). These high correlations are all suspect because all the leaders either talked to teachers about group members or in certain instances had known other children who had discussed the behavior of group members.

In conclusion, the data suggest that certain personality factors as indicated in the HSPQ-L scale do have a relationship to the satisfaction of CH group members with their sessions. Further, it may be inferred that Adlerian techniques for leading groups can be taught to high school students in a relatively short period of time. However, the performance of the CH leaders as measured by satisfaction with discussion cannot be stated to be significantly different than the satisfaction of members of groups lead by CIT and AC leaders.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that high school students are capable of learning and utilizing the Adlerian model of leading small group discussions. Given a short training period (ten days), this result is particularly striking. While the students did not reach the level of mastery of the technique that the trained graduate level counselors reached, they were superior to the students who received no specific training.

From a subjective viewpoint, there was an obvious difference between the groups led by the CH and the groups led by the AC. While both groups started their initial sessions with much enthusiasm, the AC leaders immediately began to flounder and the attendance of their groups dropped during the next two sessions. Also, one AC leader did not come back after his first session and another did not come back for his last session. Typically, the AC leaders would introduce a topic and when there was no immediate response, they would either start lecturing their groups or they would allow the discussion to evolve into social chatter. In contrast, the CH leaders obviously had less problems generating and directing discussions. Every one of the initial CH sessions involved a discussion of family constellation. This discussion generally resulted in the students bringing up problems that they had with brothers and sisters. Where such problems were presented, the CH leaders would explore the dynamics of the conflicts and would offer possible alternatives to settling the disputes. Two of the CH leaders were particularly skillful in disclosing goals to the members of their groups. In the CH groups, the leaders also seemed to understand and to use effectively some of the techniques for controlling disruptive group members. In

contrast, in their groups the AC group members would typically resort to authoritarian methods to control behavior problems.

As indicated in the GRD scale the CH groups increased in their satisfaction with the discussions. One possible explanation for this increase in GRD was the increasing enthusiasm of the CH leaders as they led their groups. All seven of the CH leaders spent additional time watching each other lead groups and would hold informal post-session critiques with the leader. These critique sessions were generally very supportive for the CH leader, and numerous ways of dealing with specific situations which might arise in the group were generated. The school counselor who observed the study commented that she felt that all of the CH leaders seemed to change in their attitudes toward the school. For example, a CH leader was particularly noted for his disruptive behavior in the classroom. However, in his discussion group, he led an excellent discussion concerning some of the motivations for classroom disruptive behavior, and the group was helped to understand how often the disruption of the classroom was simply a way of demonstrating that the teacher could be defeated. After the session, this same leader remarked that the discussion helped him become even more aware of the reasons why he was often a class "problem."

One factor which may have influenced the CH leaders was the enthusiasm of the trainer. This same enthusiasm was probably not conveyed to the AC leaders, and this may partially explain why they seemed to become quickly discouraged with their group discussions. In essence, the AC leaders probably did not receive the same support from the trainer as did the CH leaders.

One aspect of this study which is different from other studies in the field of training counselor helpers is that the students used in this study were not selected because they had demonstrated some "superior quality" (i.e., intelligence, popularity or leadership). In contrast, the students who volunteered for this study were generally "average" in their achievements. Thus, it may be inferred that there are a large number of students in a given school who may successfully function as counselor helpers. In fact, there are several arguments which support the use of the more undistinguished students as helpers. For example, the students who demonstrate superiority in academic, leadership, or athletic endeavors often are recognized as being "different" from the rest of the student body—essentially they are the elite of the school. Thus, such a superior student, particularly if he is a striver, may actually make a discouraged student feel even more inadequate. However, much of the recent literature (Pearl and Riessman, 1965; Gordon, 1965; and Carkhuff, 1968) suggests that the helping relationship is facilitated when the client and helper have had similar experiences. Thus, the best student helper for a child who is disrupting a classroom may be one who at one time was disruptive himself.

This study has several ramifications for traditional counselor education programs. For example, it would seem that Carkhuff's assertion (1968) that

graduate counselor training programs are not creating true helpers, must be examined. For example, in the measures of performance used in this study, the graduate CIT leaders did not demonstrate any clear superiority over the high school CH leaders. Thus one may postulate that the skills utilized in counseling situations may be both learned and utilized without requiring students to go through lengthy training programs. Therefore, it seems appropriate to question the necessity of lengthy counselor education programs. Perhaps if counselor education programs would carefully designate the performance criteria that the students were required to master, much of the present course work could be modified in a meaningful way.

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