

## **Use of the Adlerian Model in Secondary School Counseling and Consulting**

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### **Abstract**

The problem focused on in this study was to evaluate a specific method of counseling and consulting with secondary school students and their teachers based on the Adlerian or socio-teleological theory of psychology. Three basic research questions were formulated and then structured into six statistical hypotheses. First, the investigator was interested in learning if Adlerian group counseling with secondary school students identified by their teachers as exhibiting attention-getting behaviors would reduce such behavior. Secondly, the question posed was whether conducting a C-group with the teachers of such students would effectively reduce such attention-getting behaviors. Thirdly, the investigator was interested in knowing if a combination treatment consisting of Adlerian group counseling with such students and the conduct of a C-group with the teachers of these students would effectively reduce the students' attention-getting behaviors. Results of the analysis of the data indicate the following: (1) Use of the C-group method with teachers was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of students than involvement of the students in Adlerian group counseling. (2) The combination treatment involving the use of the C-group method with teachers of attention-getting students and Adlerian group counseling with students was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of students than involvement of students in Adlerian group counseling alone. (3) Adlerian group counseling with students was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of these students than no treatment at all. (4) The combination treatment involving the use of the C-group method with teachers of attention-getting students and Adlerian group counseling with students was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of these students than the involvement of their teachers in a C-group experience alone. (5) Involvement of teachers of attention-getting students in a C-group experience was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of such students than no treatment at all. (6) The combination treatment involving the use of the C-group method with teachers of attention-getting students and Adlerian group counseling with students was more effective in reducing the attention-getting behaviors of students than no treatment.

## **Use of the Adlerian Model in Secondary School Counseling and Consulting**

Contemporary secondary school teachers, counselors, and administrators are faced with an ever increasing number of students who exhibit inappropriate behavior in the classroom. Unfortunately, neither college training programs nor inservice education experiences have prepared today's educators to deal effectively with such behavior. Part of the difficulty, as pointed out by Dreikurs (1971), has been that teachers, counselors, and administrators have not focused on and attempted to understand the students' motivation. However, without such an understanding these professionals are hardly in a position to change it. For this reason, Dinkmeyer (1971a, 1971b) suggested that teachers need a working knowledge of practical psychological principles that can be applied in the classroom. Such principles can enable teachers to provide assistance to students who are deficient academically or socially.

The Adlerian approach views the adolescent as a social being who wants to find his place at home, in school, and in the world. If he misbehaves, it is because he has developed inaccurate ideas about how to belong. Adlerian theorists believe that the behavior of adolescents can only be understood when we know its purpose. All behavior is viewed as goal-directed and as such indicates the ways and means each person has developed as his method of gaining status and significance. Adlerians posit that individuals often make decisions about how they will behave without being aware of the implications of such decisions on their consequent behavior. The individual is also unaware that he/she can change their behavior by changing these decisions. Dinkmeyer and Muro (1971) have suggested the use of Adlerian group counseling with students as an effective approach to this problem. Similarly, Dinkmeyer (1971a, 1971b) and Dinkmeyer and Carlson (1973) have suggested the efficacy of the Adlerian approach in group consulting work with teachers. They have titled this approach the C-group because the dynamics which operate in such a group all begin with the letter "C" (e.g., change, collaboration, consultation, clarification, confrontation, communication, concern and caring, confidentiality, cohesion, and commitment).

Few attempts have been made to evaluate the effectiveness of Adlerian group counseling in the secondary school. This seems to be due in part to the relative newness of the application of group counseling techniques to the secondary school setting and in part to the fact that the greatest number of professionals using Adlerian techniques function in community agencies and private practice rather than in public schools and colleges. The only studies that have been reported using Adlerian techniques with students and teachers were carried out at the elementary school level. Taylor (1971) and Platt (1970) both focused on parents, teachers, and students in an effort to positively effect the behavior of the students. Both reported statistically significant results.

This paper reports a recent study conducted by Hoffmann (1975) in which an Adlerian group counseling and consulting program with secondary school students and their teachers was employed as the major force in the

reduction of these students' attention-getting behavior. More specifically, four questions were posited for study:

1. Does Adlerian group counseling with secondary school students identified by their teachers as exhibiting attention-getting behaviors effectively reduce such behavior?
2. Does the conduct of a C-group with the teachers of secondary school students who exhibit attention-getting behavior effectively reduce such behavior?
3. Does a combination of Adlerian group counseling with secondary school students who exhibit attention-getting behavior and the conduct of a C-group with the teachers of these students effectively reduce such behavior?
4. Is there a significant difference between Adlerian group counseling, C-group consultation and a combination of Adlerian group counseling and C-group consultation with relation to their effectiveness in reducing students' attention-getting behaviors?

The remainder of this paper entails a description of the way in which the study was carried out, a general description of the results, and some implications for practicing secondary school counselors, teachers, and administrators.

### **Description of the Program**

The group counseling and consulting project described in this manuscript was carried out using students and faculty from a rural Appalachian high school.

As Dinkmeyer and Carlson (1973) pointed out, it is important to gain the support of administrative and teaching personnel prior to initiation of any consulting relationship. To this end the program and a description of the Adlerian principles to be used were presented during a meeting of the general faculty. A brief demonstration of a C-group in action was also presented using volunteer teachers.

Each teacher was given a description of the four types of problem behavior outlined by Dreikurs and Soltz (1964) (i.e., attention-seeking, struggle for power, revenge, and assumed inadequacy) and asked to list any student who, in their judgment, exhibited one or more of the above-mentioned behaviors. The investigator then noted all students who had been identified as attention seekers. These students were separated into two groups, one group who had a class with one of the participating C-group teachers, and another group who did not have a class with any of the C-group teachers. From these two basic groups of attention seekers four treatment groups were formed. Those students not having one of the C-group teachers for a class were randomly assigned to a control situation or to a treatment program involving Adlerian group counseling. Attention-seeking students who had a class with one of the C-group teachers were randomly assigned to either a treatment program involving Adlerian group counseling and classroom exposure to a teacher being taught the use of Adlerian principles through the medium of the C-group, or to a quasi treatment experience involving only exposure to one of the teachers participating in the C-group.

In order to determine which of the treatment approaches was most effective volunteers were sought from the faculty for participation in the C-group. In keeping with the suggestion of Dinkmeyer (1971) regarding the size and composition of the C-groups, the consulting group for teachers was limited to six volunteer teachers.

### **Description of the Treatment Programs and the C-Groups**

The students who had been assigned to one of the Adlerian counseling groups met in their group on a weekly basis for ten weeks. Each session lasted approximately one and one-half hours. The early sessions focused on the development of a therapeutic relationship and some exploration of the group members' social interactions. During the intermediate sessions the group leader worked to reveal each member's mistaken goals to him/her while helping them realize that they could change their respective goals if they were willing to do the necessary work associated with such a change. The final sessions focused on alternative behaviors and different, more socially productive goals for each member. Group members were asked to try out some of these new behaviors in the classroom and report back to the group how they were received by both teachers and peers.

Concurrent with the counseling groups, the C-group was meeting on a weekly basis for an hour and a half. The purpose of these groups was threefold: (a) to help the teachers understand the practical applications of Adlerian psychology in their work with students, (b) to help the teachers understand their feelings and behavior in the teacher-student conflicts, and (c) to help the teachers integrate their understanding into beliefs and values which help them work more effectively with students. The following Adlerian principles were stressed during the C-group sessions: (a) behavior is understood on a holistic basis and comprehended in terms of its unity and pattern, (b) the significance of behavior lies in its social consequences, (c) man is understood as a social being whose behavior makes sense in terms of its social context, (d) motivation is best comprehended by observing how the individual seeks to be known or become significant, (e) behavior is goal directed and purposive, (f) belonging is a basic requisite for human development, and (g) behavior is always understood in terms of the internal frame of reference of the individual. Through this C-group experience the teachers were taught four procedures for improving communication with their students. These procedures include: learning to communicate emphatic responses, stating their own feelings about the impact of the student's behavior on them in a facilitative way, learning conflict resolution to reach mutual agreement, and utilizing logical consequences when their students choose not to help in conflict resolution.

During the final week of the treatment program three observers, trained in the use of Adlerian principles, observed each target student in the classroom setting for a period of three minutes. During this observation period the observer recorded the number of times the target student in question exhibited one of the attention-getting behaviors. This approach yielded a mean number of attention-getting behaviors for each target student. A one-factor analysis of

variance coupled with the use of multiple comparison procedures allowed for the statistical comparison of each treatment group with the control group as well as with one another.

## **General Description of the Results**

An examination of the results with relation to Adlerian theory will provide some explanation for the outcomes discussed below. Students who participated in Adlerian group counseling only were helped to become aware of their mistaken behavioral goals and were encouraged by both the counselor and the other group members to try out different behaviors in the classroom. However, they did not necessarily receive any encouragement from their teachers for their attempts. This absence of teacher encouragement and application of Adlerian principles in the classroom is the critical difference in treatment approaches between these students and those exposed to one of the C-group teachers or those exposed to both a C-group teacher and Adlerian group counseling C-group teachers, armed with a different way of viewing their students' attention-getting behavior, were able to not only make students aware of the goals of their attention-getting behavior, but were able to apply the principles of encouragement and natural and logical consequences with the students while they were in the classroom. This, then, provided students with both insight into their consequences of the behavior and encouragement to increase their social interest through the practice of different behaviors. It logically follows that the combined treatment would produce the greatest degree of behavior change.

Results of the analysis of the data indicate the following:

1. Use of the C-group method with teachers was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors in students than involvement of the students in Adlerian group counseling.
2. The combination treatment involving the use of the C-group method with teachers of attention-getting students and Adlerian group counseling with students was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of students than was involvement of students in Adlerian group counseling alone.
3. Adlerian group counseling with students was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of these students than no treatment at all.
4. The combination treatment involving the use of the C-group method with teachers of attention-getting students and Adlerian group counseling with students was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of these students than the involvement of their teachers in a C-group experience alone.
5. Involvement of teachers of attention-getting students in a C-group experience was more effective in reducing the number of attention-getting behaviors of such students than no treatment at all.
6. The combination treatment involving the use of the C-group method with teachers of attention-getting students and Adlerian group counseling with students was more effective in reducing the attention-getting behaviors of students than no treatment.

## Implications

The results of this investigation seem to offer a number of implications, both for further research and for practicing secondary school counselors. While the following recommendations are by no means to be considered exhaustive, the investigator hopes they might prove helpful to future researchers and school counselors.

1. In an era when the number of behavior problem students seems to be increasing rapidly, secondary school counselors might well consider becoming more involved with such students and their teachers. The combination treatment examined in this study involving the simultaneous use of Adlerian group counseling with students and the involvement of these students' teachers in a counselor-led C-group might be an effective mode of ameliorating such student problems. School counselors might offer to conduct such a program with teachers and their problem students.
2. Since most high school students must change teachers a number of times each day, the school counselor might wish to consider developing an inservice workshop for the entire faculty focusing on the application of Adlerian principles in the total school environment.
3. Since the parents of the target students in the present study were not included in the design, it might be appropriate to conduct further research which would be consistent with suggestions made by both Dreikurs, Grunwald and Pepper (1971), and Dinkmeyer and Carlson (1973).
4. Although the treatment period in the present study was limited to ten weeks, it might be appropriate to conduct a similar investigation and include a follow-up observation at some later time to determine if such a change in student's attention-getting behavior is stable.
5. The present study focused on only one of the four goals of misbehavior, attention-getting behavior. Future studies focusing on one or more of the other goals of misbehavior would be timely and appropriate.
6. The investigator believes that counselor educators could profitably give consideration to including consultation techniques in the curriculum of a program designed to prepare school counselors.

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