

# Adlerian Influence on Group Counseling

## A Selected Annotated Bibliography

Johnnie McFadden

### Introduction

The informal history of groups and their formation span the existence of mankind. Even when man was sparsely populated, there were occasions for small gatherings, either within the context of the immediate family or in a communal setting. Psychological and philosophical influences on groups, however, emerged as various orientations gained impetus. One of the most natural and powerful impacts upon group formation and identity emanated from the research and teachings of Alfred Adler. Linton and Vaughan (1964) indicate that Adler purported that social feeling is perceived to be the immediate and unquestionable moulder of our destiny. Adler further purported that "a task in which two persons must be engaged has its own special form and cannot be successfully performed if it is treated as a task for one person alone" (p. 59). Therefore, cooperation and mutual responsibility are necessary ingredients to encourage in Adlerian groups.

A number of literary works on group counseling with an Adlerian influence have been reviewed by the author and summarized for use by both scholars and practitioners.

Adler, A. *The education of children*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1970. (Originally published 1930).

In this book, Adler applies his theories specifically to children. He offers an explanation for the presence of maladaptive behaviors in children and tells in general terms what remedial steps may be taken. Some sections, particularly those dealing with the child in school, seem dated and ethnocentric. His thoughts on superiority/inferiority are interesting (Chapters 3-6) and provide a good opportunity to examine the basic tenets of Adlerian thought.

---

*Johnnie McFadden, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Counselor Education at the University of South Carolina-Columbia, and is a consultant to schools, business, and government agencies.*

Adler, A. Fundamentals of individual psychology. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 1970, 26(1), 3-14.

This article, written in 1926, presents a good overview of Individual Psychology as it existed at that time. The main item of interest is Adler's addition of a fourth "great question of life," this being "attitude toward art and creative endeavor" (p. 8), to his usual trilogy.

Ansbacher, R. R. Reality therapy and individual psychology in the classroom: A special review. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 1969, 25, 106-111.

This article reviews the similarities between Glasser's theories reported in *Schools Without Failure* (1968) and Individual Psychology. She claims that Glasser's Reality Therapy does not deviate significantly from Adlerian principles and considers his principal innovation to be classroom meetings.

Bell, R., Cleveland, S., Hanson, P., & O'Connell, W. E. Small group dialogue: An approach to police-community relations. *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, Police Science*, 1969, 60, 242-246.

This article reports on a program set up in Houston after a 1967 riot at Texas Southern University. This program was designed to lessen community hostility towards the police, which had increased significantly after the riot. A series of small group discussions were arranged between police and community members under the guidance of the Houston V.A. Hospital Human Relations Training Laboratory, an Adlerian-oriented institution. Each group met for three hours on six occasions. The meetings focused on examining stereotypes that each side had of the other. The final step was to develop a cooperative problem-solving attitude directed toward resolving differences and reducing conflict. Some improvement in attitudes was found via questionnaires, but many problems also occurred, such as community non-attendance, great hostilities being expressed, and suspicion from both sides regarding the program.

Bewley, K. W. The effects of a modified Adlerian approach on the self-esteem of selected second- and third-grade students. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 1974 (Dec.), 35(6-4), 3417-3418.

Briefly describes experiment noted in title. The author found that Adlerian group counseling increased the self-esteem of the experimental group members on several measures.

Clark, K. B. Implications of Adlerian theory for an understanding of civil rights problems and action. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 1967, 23, 181-190.

Clark applies Adlerian theory, particularly the notion of the harmful

effects of inferiority feelings, to explain actions resulting from the struggle for civil rights. He says that a sense of inferiority is learned and attempts are made to salvage dignity and self-esteem. These attempts may sometimes take the form of trying to humiliate others. The environment is responsible for the prejudice that leads to this inferiority/superiority struggle; therefore, the environment must be altered to reduce prejudice.

Dinkmeyer, D. Adlerian group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 1975, 25(2), 219-226.

This article lays out the conceptual foundation of the Adlerian view of human nature:

- 1) All behavior has social meaning.
- 2) Behavior is best understood on a holistic basis in terms of its unity or pattern (life style).
- 3) Behavior is goal directed and purposive.
- 4) Motivation is understood by observing how the individual seeks to become significant.
- 5) Belonging is a requisite for mental health.
- 6) The individual is understood in terms of how he sees himself and his situation, his phenomenological field.

Also discussed are group mechanisms for change and the general procedure followed by these groups.

Dinkmeyer, D. & Carlson, J. *Consultation: A book of readings*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1975.

As suggested by the title, this book consists of 32 articles regarding consultation in various settings including the school system, individuals, staff, and parent and family. Of particular interest may be articles number 3 (A developmental model for counseling - consulting), 7 (Power bases: The consultant's vehicle for change), 13 (Contributions of Adlerian Psychology to school consulting), 23 (Teacher effectiveness training), and 31 (Training parents and teachers in new ways of talking to kids).

Dinkmeyer, D. & Dreikurs, R. *Encouraging children to learn: The encouragement process*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963.

This book presents the Adlerian model of child development. The major

concern for the authors is describing the concept of encouragement and delineating how this concept may be applied in effective childrearing, both at home and in school. They have trouble defining "encouragement" exactly, but state that an encouraging person is one who:

- 1) Places value on the child as he is.
- 2) Shows a faith in the child that enables the child to have faith in himself.
- 3) Has faith in the child's ability; wins the child's confidence while building his self-respect.
- 4) Recognizes a job "well done." Gives recognition for credit.
- 5) Utilizes the group to facilitate and enhance the development of the child.
- 6) Integrates the group so that the child can be sure of his place in it.
- 7) Assists in the development of skills sequentially to permit success.
- 8) Recognizes and focuses on strengths and assets.
- 9) Utilizes the interests of the child to energize instruction (p. 50).

Dinkmeyer, D. C. & Muro, J. J. *Group counseling: Theory and practice*. Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock, 1971.

This book covers the group process from a basically Adlerian orientation. Of particular interest are chapters 5 through 9, dealing respectively with group leadership, group organization, establishing and maintaining the group, special problems in groups, and group counseling with children. The authors have synthesized material and research from several different approaches to group counseling and provide a number of practical, potentially useful suggestions. For example, pages 176-179 contain descriptions of 13 group warm-up exercises. One should be aware that the authors are very leader-oriented, and provisions for sharing leadership are not considered. This is to be expected since the book is addressed to the professional counselor, but some of the outlines for groups accompanying this bibliography are expressly designed to eventually be led by the members themselves.

Dreikurs, R. *Fundamentals of Adlerian psychology*. Chicago: Alfred Adler Institute, 1953.

As indicated, this book reiterates the basic tenets of Individual Psychology. It is easy to read and is a good source for examining the basic assump-

tions of Adlerian theory. In particular, Dreikurs thoughts on social interest (p. 1-10), inferiority (p. 20-32), neurosis, crime and insanity (p. 60-72) are interesting. In many ways, this book is an updating of Adler's *The Education of Children* (1930) described earlier.

Dreikurs, R. *Psychodynamics, psychotherapy, and counseling*. Chicago: Alfred Adler Institute, 1967.

This book offers a collection of papers by the author written over a period of 30 years, thus giving a historical perspective of the development of this major American Adlerian's thoughts. The reader may find the following articles particularly useful: "The Socio-Psychological Dynamics of Physical Disability"; "The Psychological Interview in Medicine" (contains a guide for life style analysis); "Counseling for Family Adjustment"; and "The Function of Emotions."

Dreikurs, R. & Soltz, V. *Children: The challenge*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1964.

The most comprehensive application of Adlerian principles to child-rearing to date, this book is intended as a childrearing guide. Many case studies are reported as examples of the practical application of Adlerian principles. It has been used by many parent study groups as a guide. One of the most important ideas contained in the book is the notion of natural and logical consequences. Another important area concerns the goal-oriented approach to understanding behavior. This book is a good source for anyone interested in parenting skills.

Gordon, T. *Parent effectiveness training*. New York: Peter H. Wyden, 1970.

This book presents a model for effective parenting similar to that advanced by Dreikurs in *Children: The Challenge*. The major difference comes in the area of discipline and conflicts. Gordon depends heavily on Method III, wherein two parties with conflicting views on a particular problem examine possible solutions and choose one acceptable to both, for solving conflicts. Dreikurs stresses the use of natural and logical consequences in managing behavior problems and conflict. Both books give insight into the parent-child relationship, stressing the need for mutual respect, equality, and dignity. They both stress the need for the honest expression of feelings and offer methods for developing a greater awareness and sensitivity to feelings. Finally, both are written in non-technical, easy-to-read styles.

Gottesfeld, H. Changes in feelings of powerlessness in a community action program *Psychological Reports*, 1966, 19, 978.

This article briefly describes a community action program in Harlem

where indigent people from the community were trained to be community organizers and employed as such. It was found that feelings of internal control increased in these people as the project progressed.

Hanson, P., Rothaus, P., O'Connell, W., & Wiggins, G. Some basic concepts in human relations training for psychiatric patients. *Hospital and Community Psychiatry*. 1970, 21, 137-143.

This article describes a human relations training program with the following goals:

- 1) develop self awareness.
- 2) learn how one's behavior affects others and vice-versa.
- 3) learn how groups function.
- 4) learn more effective problem solving procedures.
- 5) learn how to learn.

These goals are met through the use of short lectures, small group discussions, movies, problem solving exercises, and role-playing. Several useful exercises are described and several interesting insights into group processes are given.

Levy, L. Self-help groups: Type and psychological processes. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 1976, 12, 310-322.

This article offers a definition of self-help groups, a typology for classifying them, and a description of the cognitive and behavioral processes occurring in the observed sample of self-help groups. Reading this article is strongly recommended for anyone trying to find out what self-help groups are all about.

Lowe, R. N. Parent-teacher education and child development. *Education*, 1960, 81, 28-31.

The author advocates a reorientation of teacher training towards a better understanding of human relations. This is to be accomplished by teaching Adlerian principles to both teachers and parents in a center situation using "live" children for a very applied and practical presentation of Adler. Lowe claims that teachers need to be aware of the goal-directed concept of human behavior. He apparently started a training center using this concept, focusing on the total personality of the teacher and trying to get the teacher to view the child holistically.

Mosak, H. H., & Mosak, B. *A bibliography for Adlerian psychology*. Washington: Hemisphere Publishing Corp., 1975.

This book contains bibliographical references for 10,000 pieces of literature dealing with Adlerian thought. The latest works cited are from 1972.

Petrillo, R. Rap room: Self-help at school. *Social Policy*, 1976, 7(2), 54-58.

This article describes a peer counseling service in a school setting designed to provide a supportive and affective community for students in an otherwise narrowly cognitive, alienating, and disconnected environment; in-school training and experience in group dynamics; listening and helping skills; and interpersonal effectiveness with peers. This article is an important source of information regarding the peer-counseling group.

Reif, T. F. & Stollak, G. E. *Sensitivity to young children: Training and its effects*. East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1972.

This book reports the results of an experimental project designed to teach proper adult-child interaction methods to college undergraduates and to measure the effect of the training by observing student-child interactions occurring weekly for one year. The results suggested that college students' exposure to a relatively small amount of information about mental health principles resulted in an alteration of their behavior patterns with young children to such an extent that the behavior of the children with whom they interacted also demonstrated some form of positive change within the training situation. A rather thorough description of the training procedures is also provided.

Riessman, F. How does self-help work? *Social Policy*, 1976, 7(2), 41-45.

Riessman describes his "helper-therapy principle," which states that "those who help are helped most." He also discusses the aprofessional dimension of self-help groups. His comparison of the characteristics of orthodox (professional) psychotherapy and self-help group therapy is very interesting and should be familiar to anyone working to establish a self-help group.

Steinman, R. & Traustein, D. M. Redefining deviance: The self-help challenge to the human services. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 1976, 12, 347-361.

This article examines the characteristics of the professional system of human service organizations that lead to the definitions of deviance accepted by the community at large. The lack of client participation in policy decisions in most human service organizations is noted. It is argued that self-help groups

are emerging as a method for stigmatized individuals to find one another, support one another, express anger, and reject the prevailing modes of professional and societal response to their conditions.

Sweeney, T. J. *Adlerian counseling*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975.

This book presents a review of Individual Psychology and discusses the past, present, and possible applications of this school of thought in three settings: child guidance, counseling, and consultation. Of particular relevance is the final chapter on group procedures. This chapter describes characteristics of several different group types including consulting, discussion, and counseling.

### **Summary**

Individuals interested in group counseling of an Adlerian nature would be advised to refer to this manuscript as an initial guide to further study and research. An investigation into available resources for reference indicates that the breadth of Adlerian influence on group counseling has been researched on a limited basis. It appears, therefore, that projects for future investigation may well concentrate in this area. While counseling in groups has received widespread attention as a general theme, special focus on Adlerian principles as applied to the subject is quite fertile for the future.

### **Reference**

Adler, A. *Social interest: a challenge to mankind*. (Linton, J. & Vaughan, R., Eds., and trans.). New York: Capricorn, 1964.