

First Workshop on Training Adlerian Counselors

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A workshop, held July 6 and 7, 1970,¹ at the University of Vermont, brought together for the first time Adlerians from many different locations in order to discuss a problem which is probably the most urgent one facing the American Society of Adlerian Psychology (ASAP). It is the problem of training Adlerian counselors —taking this term to include psychotherapists, since there seems to be no difference between these two classifications at the levels of highest competence. The “trainers” who participated in the workshop were Lucy Ackerknecht, H. L. Ansbacher, E. Blumenthal, M. L. Bullard, Danica Deutsch, R. Dreikurs, Helene Papanek, Miriam L. Pew, W. L. Pew, H. Schaffer, M. Sonstegard, joined by R. B. Does and J. A. Peterson of the University of Vermont, with Rowena R. Ansbacher, chairman. These active participants were seated at three sides of a long table, facing the audience-participants who were mostly silent except for certain times of general discussion. The number of those present came to just under 60. There were four sessions of two hours each, with time for informal communication between.

A schedule of questions had been set up in conjunction with the ASAP Committee on Training, and was made known to the workshop participants in advance. The actual discussions departing somewhat from this schedule can be organized under the following questions:

- I. What characterizes an Adlerian counselor?
- II. How can we train such counselors?
 1. How can practice be furnished in counseling?
 2. How can theory relate to practice?
- III. What different kinds of counseling or competences are there, and what should their training be?

Characteristics of an Adlerian Counselor

On this topic there was no dearth of ideas and practically no disagreement, thus the task of organizing the material was largely cumulative, with some attempt at ordering with respect to priorities. Even so, this summation cannot be taken as exhaustive or final, and it will be interesting to see how time (and place) may change it.

A general definition might be added: An Adlerian counselor is competent in helping people to change through the use of Adlerian principles; he should have completed the training program at an Adlerian institute (or be approved by one)

¹This date immediately followed that of the International Congress of Individual Psychology meeting in New York in order to take advantage of the presence of a number of leading Adlerians who had come a great distance for this centennial event.

16. An appreciation of the holistic complexity of the individual enables the counselor to see the unified relationship.
17. Time is saved by *active* listening which includes:
 - a. Observing nonverbal as well as verbal clues and fitting these into patterns (“two points make a line”).
 - b. Guessing, jumping to conclusions, and then correcting one’s guesses (modeled after the way Adler used to read a case history).
 - c. Limiting the counselor’s dialogue to the strictly relevant.⁵
18. In dealing with disturbed children, the counselor looks for the four goals of misbehavior.
19. He is concerned with the problem-situation presently facing the client.
20. He uses early recollections to obtain data.
21. Family constellation provides clues.
22. The counselor’s one concern is to do the best he can to help the client; he is *not* concerned with his own performance.
23. He does not compare himself to others. He may compare Individual Psychology with other approaches, and rank it first, but he does not compare people.⁶
24. The counselor recognizes that the client is the one who must do the changing, and that his task is to entice the client in the right direction.
25. The counselor does not hamper himself by applying limiting categories or a prognosis to a client.
26. The counselor does not become discouraged when he makes a mistake; it is probably not a fatal mistake, and he can learn from it.
27. Other things being equal, he prefers counseling in a group situation over the one-to-one relationship.

Training the Counselor

Training, as for any skill, must afford the trainee the opportunity for practice, models to observe, and theories for understanding and guidance. The majority at the workshop favored demonstration as the first step in our training process, with practice and theory coming close behind; thus, an Adlerian Counseling Center seems a necessity for any training program. It was remarked that what keeps most people from training, and most trainees from counseling is fearfulness. The way to overcome this is by working through centers—observing, participating, and on to co-counseling.

Institutes. There are at present three Institutes offering certification for counseling at the highest level of competence, in New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis, with the Western Institute for Research and Training in Humanics

⁵Relevance and concreteness can also be applied to report-writing.

⁶The case of a most successful wrestling coach was told who instead of exhorting his boys to beat the other team, insisted they would be judged on whether they did *as well as they could* – win or lose.

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Summer Institutes lasting eight weeks are run more or less independently of any university, generally supported by federal educational funds. Twenty-five to 30 people can be trained in *teams*. The advantage is that one does not train counselors who go back to their schools as single individuals trained in our approach, but as a team consisting of administrator, teacher, and counselor from the same school. In this way the school, not the individual is committed. Such groups (in Quincy, Illinois, Washington, and West Virginia University) stayed together from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., in a counseling center learning by observing children in school demonstrations and by exploring learning in doing immediate counseling. In this way the administrator learns what it's all about; the teacher learns some methods she can use; and the counselor learns counseling. Every member of the institute was also a member of a group-counseling unit which met 2 hours a week. All engaged in physical activities such as volleyball, so that they got to know each other well. There were no grades or evaluations. There was just talk about what had been done. Cohesiveness developed in the group; no one felt competitive; they were more interested in helping one another; they developed a great deal of understanding for one another; and many found a personal gain came out of the experience.

Relating Theory to Practice

How do we teach the accumulated experience of others, as well as theory in courses or classes? Some claimed that you can't teach anyone anything; the emphasis must all be on overall learning. Others pointed out that one thing which helps a person to become better trained is knowledge; most people are insecure without it. Often fine points of differentiation must be mastered which can be clarified in a teaching situation. For example, the way in which early recollections can be understood involves learning. Explanations of what is observed come under the heading of teaching. There was some distrust of "drifting into abstractions and getting into terminology," but it was pointed out that all theory is not necessarily abstract and that Adler's theory has been classified as "concrete psychology." It can be taught by showing that its terms are not things in themselves, but stand directly for something concrete: e.g., life style is not a thing, but a behavior. In teaching we want to show the "immediate fit of the concept into the concrete case." Whereas one person claimed "you do not have to be well-versed in theory to be effective," most agreed that theory and practice were inseparable. "In practice we are always inspired by theory: the idea is the instrument for action with success." We do not prescribe what a client should do, without stating the principle: e.g., "do not do for the child what he can do for himself." This we explain to the mother—as well as the whole group. As already mentioned, in one institute, seminars follow immediately upon observation and practice sessions.

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The question involving competence and judgment is highly relevant to criticism often raised that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. For example, teachers who may have had a course in Individual Psychology or participated in a TV program have tried new approaches in their classes; however, the situation worsened and criticism of Individual Psychology was voiced. This can happen to parents and others too. Such incidents, however, could be avoided by better training for specific fields of application followed by a stamp of approval by those who had become competent Adlerian practitioners.

For example, after ten Saturday-morning sessions of teaching, demonstrating and recording, teachers become "pretty good." After a few such courses they become "quite skilled" even at conferences with parents. If one works with a group of parents over a period of ten weeks, the inclusion of fundamental principles such as family constellation, children's four goals, the encouragement process, and demonstrations, although limited in scope would be thoroughly learned; therefore there would be no fear from danger of too little knowledge.

Whereas some trainers felt no qualifications should be applied in selection, it seemed that we do need to train *qualified* practitioners. *How do we judge competence?* There was no consensus on this topic, although everyone agreed they had no problem in identifying the superior trainee. One trainer favored "very comprehensive testing by independent means to see if the trainees understand theory." He opposed teachers giving their own examinations to their own students, as teaching and testing should be independent. On the other hand, none of the other Institutes mentioned examinations. One member of the audience expressed unwillingness to be tested by anyone other than her own teacher, in view of the differences which she felt existed between various trainers. One suggestion was to combine self-judgment peer opinion and trainer evaluation. Another was that the "best way to arrive at a judgment of a trainee's ability is to facilitate his arrival at that decision himself; then part of your job is to find where he can work effectively."

It remained an undeniable fact that official recommendations are sometimes needed for the trainee's job accreditation, or the like, and such a judgment must be in writing. Also there should be a way to evaluate the competence of someone who, of necessity, is *self-trained*.

Toward Resolution

In replaying and listening to the taped recordings of the workshop it was most interesting to observe the noteworthy emergence of group process interaction, which seems particularly noteworthy.

In all cases of difference, these were not of antagonistic positions but of varying positions on a dimension, with not as much distance between them as one might at first have thought. The spirit of the workshop appeared conciliatory with participants for the most part honest in their expressions,

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Mobile Facilities—An Innovation in Counselor Training

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The mountains of West Virginia carry with them a majestic beauty found nowhere else in the east. However, this rugged beauty imposes some problems which have social consequences. One has been the isolation of large segments of the mountain society from the industrial mainstream of American life. This phenomenon within itself is not a problem, but becomes one when a youth leaves the mountains and finds an unfamiliar social and economic world where the skills and values needed for successful living are vastly different; thus, the West Virginia youth who leaves his state is in a disadvantaged position, both economically and socially, when he attempts to compete with his peers for a position in the more industrial areas of the nation.

Family and Community Influences

The culture of the Appalachian region lends itself to close family ties and localized family type control of the youth and produces a very stable value system. In a sense the security and stability resulting from the child rearing practices represent an ideal, but lack of exposure to the larger environment does not generally produce adaptable individuals. Without familiarity with alternatives for meeting individual and family needs, the Appalachian youth tends to be harshly judgmental about the behavior of others. The approach used in changing behavior and attitudes taught at West Virginia University's Counselor Training program capitalizes on the Appalachian philosophy of close family ties and the attitude of community responsibility. The Adlerian model is emphasized in counselor training for understanding behavior and for assisting the student at home, in the classroom, and in the counseling setting. While the Adlerian approach is appropriately applied in various cultures, it is considered extremely effective in the sub-culture of rural West Virginia. The difficulties of the children and their parents are treated as mistaken ideas or erroneous assumptions, not as a consequence of pathological processes. The mistaken ideas and goals of the children are usually a consequence and a reflection of the beliefs and behaviors of parents and teachers, and the concepts are shared with peers. Thus, the entire cultural milieu must be influenced for changes of any consequence to be facilitated. The underlying philosophy of the Adlerian approach to counselor training is that behavior is a community concern. Therefore, much of the counselor's work is performed in a group setting.

No attempt is made to disrupt the family or community influence, but simply to redirect it and to expand the limits of knowledge and the significant persons