

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

Facility Development

Getting the programs into the isolated community and maintaining quality control were the initial concerns and resulted in a plan to develop two teaching stations in the geographical region to be serviced, i.e., one in each half of the region which was within easy commuting distance to each participant. Various members of the West Virginia University teaching staff were assigned to commute to the teaching stations to teach the courses, and one faculty member was assigned full-time to the area during the summer sessions to provide assistance to the staff and consultative services to students and teachers. Thus, instruction and supervision were assured to be at a level equal to the campus facility.

Providing adequate library resources and practicum materials at a distance so far removed from any well-equipped lab or school presented an even greater problem. In an effort to minimize cost and maximize instruction a Mobile Learning Resources Laboratory was obtained. This mobile facility contained software, audio and video tape and playing equipment, and a soundproof counseling office. A trained technician was employed to drive the unit and operate the equipment. The mobile unit was then made available to the counselor trainees for recording interviews, and at the teaching stations to provide library and resource materials.

The Counseling, Guidance and Testing Division of the State Department of Education works closely with the teaching staff in administering and coordinating the total program.

Program Philosophy

The training plan was designed by the Counseling and Guidance program committee at West Virginia University. The philosophy encompassed in the program is closely allied with the Adlerian model and is reflected in the following excerpts from the instructional report.³

Guidance is an integral part of the total education program. To be most effective, guidance must be an organized, systematic effort with administrative support. Its function is to help individuals understand and accept themselves, their environment, and to formulate and implement plans of action. . . .

The broad objectives of the program are to prepare counselors and related pupil personnel workers to work effectively in the school setting, particularly in counseling with students, teachers, and parents in groups; to initiate the working relationship between counselors, teachers, and administrators that is vital to a viable counseling program; to germinate the seeds of an in-service training program that will enable teachers to cope effectively with the behavior of children; to increase the enrollee's understanding of the school environment and its impact on children; to become a "change agent" in the face of resistance to change by concentrating on

³West Virginia University, Instructional Report Teacher Education Program (prepared for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, August 15, 1967).

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were integrated with a techniques course with emphasis on demonstration of group counseling with children, parents, and teachers. Also, the counselor trainee participated as group members in group counseling.

The thirty-three trainees will complete their program with a year-long internship in their respective schools during 1971-72. The internship program will utilize two full-time faculty members as supervisors, and the Mobile Learning Resources Laboratory will be available for video taping of counseling sessions and providing appropriate resource materials. The trainees will meet with their supervisor one-half day once a week in small groups of five or six. The Mobile Learning Resources Laboratory will be present to provide audio and video materials for critiquing and reviewing the recorded counseling sessions obtained at the school setting. In addition, weekend in-service type work is planned at regular intervals for larger groups of 12-15 participants.

The program will be completed in 1972. From present indications, the Mobile Learning Resources Laboratory will have served the purpose of providing the momentum to train counselors in remote locations without the loss of teacher time during training, and without loss of the trained counselor to the state and community upon completion of the training.

Summary

The total community has been utilized in providing this program: the university provided the program; the State Department of Education provided a link to the public schools, administrative aspects, and the mobile unit (equipped); extension service of West Virginia University provided the beginning courses; the seventeen public schools made available their facilities for classes and other activities, and the U. S. Office of Education provided funds for staff and travel.

From an economical point of view, the program seems to be an efficient way to train counselors, and from an educational point of view, the program seems to be an effective way to influence the behavior and education of remote and isolated individuals and school systems. At approximately midpoint of the program, the evaluation is positive, and considerable interest in using mobile materials and personnel in similar situations has been expressed.

The Adlerian approach to understanding and influencing behavior seems to be an appropriate model for working with youngsters whose family relationships produce stable and secure, though highly unadaptable, personality types. The primary goals of much of the counseling and guidance activity is to broaden the scope of choices available to the individual, and to help him find satisfactory ways to meet his needs in a more diversified and changing environment.

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Book Reviews

Rogers, Carl, *Carl Rogers on Encounter Groups*, Harper and Row, Publishers, New York, 1970 (\$1.95)

This book is worth reading from several standpoints: (1) it gives a warm, very human picture of Carl Rogers; (2) it states explicitly Rogers' philosophy of what a group "facilitator" is (See Chapter 3); (3) as with most of Rogers' works, this book is laced with many transcripts from actual groups and thus, one gets a feeling about what *happens* in his sessions; (4) research is cited which claims to answer recent criticisms about T-groups (see Chapter 7).

However, as with previous books by Rogers, there are certain rather disturbing themes in *Encounter Groups*. First, throughout his writings, there is an underlying current of pathos. For example, in *Encounter Groups* Rogers suggests that all of us, under our facade of adequacy, are really lonely, frustrated, and inadequate—i.e. middle class neurotics. Essentially Rogers emphasizes the helpless, insecure nature of man, and not the ability of man to cope with his environment. Instead of viewing man in the context of strength, (something an Adlerian would feel is important) Rogers seems to view man in the context of weakness.

Another shortcoming of Rogers' work is that he glosses over criticisms of his position. He deals severely with "right wing" criticisms—which are motivated by "fear caused by the trend" (i.e. encounter groups), and concludes that these "extremists" statements are made by "authoritarian personalities" who are looking for "the enemy" (i.e. encounter group freaks?) "so that they can hate him" (Rogers, pp. 11-13). When I read this last statement, it crossed my mind that Rogers, himself, might be accused of using the "right wing element" as an "enemy" toward which "T-groupers" can direct vilification. In contrast to his thorough destruction of "right wingers" Rogers ignores the many "responsible" critics of encounter and T-group techniques. In the book, there is not *one* reference given where the reader could gain an exposure to the "reasonable" opposition.

Another disturbing element in Rogers' book is what he seems to consider criteria for success. In one case, Rogers tells about a parochial school, with a majority of black students, that used encounter techniques to deal with a student rebellion. After an initial confrontation with the students, the school administration decided to implement encounter techniques. The next summer, the school counselors were sent to *The Center for Studies of the Person* (where Rogers was a staff member) in La Jolla, California, and at the beginning of the next academic year an effort was made to incorporate students into all levels of the educative process. Rogers cited the positive effects of this intervention — more students going to college, decreased "drug problem," increased attendance and "enlivened" class discussions. However, the adverse effects he relates are disturbing — "intense criticism" came from a "shocked community," by the end