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APPLYING ADLERIAN PRINCIPLES TO COUNSELOR EDUCATION

President's Address
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Introduction

What type of a person should a counselor be? What should be the nature of his personality? What characteristics should he exhibit? No one at this moment knows. Very little effort has been made to find out.

Counseling is based largely upon relationships. The counselor is most likely the only controllable element in such a relationship (Wrenn 1957). Arbuckle (1954) proposes that the counselor must be aware of himself as well as of the counselee in order to understand the nature of the inevitable intrusion of the counselor's self into the relationship.

A review of the literature provides little information to guide us on the type of personality and other characteristics the counselor should possess. The counselor is essentially an interpreter of the culture in which he operates, rather than its representative. This role should provide us with some basis for speculation upon the type of person he should be. Certainly he must be an individual with convictions about himself and about his beliefs and capabilities. Above all, he must have a firm conviction about the psychological formulation within which he operates and a clear concept of the nature of man. He must be a person essentially without fear: without a fear of making mistakes; without the fear of being upstaged by children; without the fear that people might think he is worse than he would like to be. He must be an individual with great sensitivity to people, to

social changes, to social values, to economic changes. He must have a keen ability to observe. Too many counselors *look* but *do not see*. What they look at they are unable to interpret. Interpretations must be consistent with the counselor's psychological formulation. He must avoid the trap of being an astute observer but a poor interpreter.

In my opinion, a counselor should have an understanding of his own life-style. Dreikurs (1950) has stated that no one knows himself, thereby seeming to imply that no individual is able to detect his own life-style and his own goals. Is it possible for individuals to discover for themselves the strategy by which they live? Probably not. As it is particularly important for the counselor to know his own life-style, this knowledge should be provided during his training as a counselor.

In view of the personality and characteristics which the counselor must inevitably have, what type of education is necessary to produce such an individual? At this moment, with a few exceptions, the individual who is studying to become a counselor usually has little opportunity to gain the attributes which have been indicated above. During graduate study in the prevalent system of supervision, for instance, the counselor has little opportunity to experience working as a member of a group. More often he finds himself competing with his fellow graduates for grades as well as for approval from his professors. In general, he counsels an individual child or student in the seclusion of the counseling room, perhaps observing through a one-way screen, and discusses the sessions individually with the instructor, usually with a tape recorder playing back the interview. He is afforded little opportunity to exchange his ideas and perfect his counseling techniques through interaction, with his colleagues observing his actual counseling.

We have been doing some work in the preparation of counselors by supervising them in groups and in counseling before a group (Dreikurs and Sonstegard 1966). The student acquiring knowledge and skill in counseling within a group setting of his peers experiences inestimable value in feedback from observation and questions by his colleagues during and after each counseling session. As students observe and participate in the counseling and discussion of all cases, they are confronted with a wide range of problem situations, thereby increasing their understanding and insight and further developing their skills. Each student counselor, as he counsels before the group and the instructor, thus contributes to the learning experience of the other members of the group as he, in turn, learns from them.

The procedure described above is reminiscent of Alfred Adler, who interviewed children and their parents before a group of teachers. This initiated a general trend toward counseling children and parents in a group, a procedure Adler and his associates used in counseling centers throughout Europe and later in the United States (Dreikurs, et al. 1959). Because of the lack of space, I must resist a historical recounting of why Adler's principles of psychology apply so well to the school situation. Although Alfred Adler did not train counselors as such, the ground work which he laid would naturally lead to an adaptation such as I am about to describe. The theoretical assumptions formulated by Adler are unique in many respects, but they are of unique value particularly when applied to the education of counselors. It appears difficult to apply other theoretical formulations to this particular approach in preparing counselors. Since the approach is intrinsically linked to the theoretical assumptions of Adlerian psychology, it might be pertinent to outline them before proceeding to describe the training of our counselors.

Theoretical Assumptions

If a child's dysfunctions were due to deep-seated psychic conflicts within himself, then interviewing a child in front of a group of counselors who were being trained would not only be futile but could be damaging. Interviewing and counseling in public could not be attempted without doing harm to the child. However, if one sees the deficiencies and maladjustments of a child not as a consequence, a pathological process, but as an expression of wrong ideas and goals, as the Adlerian psychologist does, then one can explore and discuss them in front of others. Actually, interviewing a child in a group is much more conducive to a better understanding of him and much more effective in helping him.

Another theoretical assumption is necessary to understand this approach to counselor supervision. If a child's dysfunctions are regarded as a result of many previous causes, one cannot assume that in a single counseling session one would be able to bring out sufficient material to understand the child and his problems and thus be helpful in the training of counselors. However, the holistic approach used by Adlerian psychologists permits an almost immediate perception of the child's behavior pattern, the structure of his personality, and the meaning of his behavior. We can even establish the antecedent factors which stimulated the child to develop his characteristic attitudes and goals. All this can be done with one interview. No other approach lends itself to accomplishing this. If one approaches parents and children teleoanalytically, trying to understand the purpose of their behavior and transactions and perceiving their private logic, then one can identify all the essential aspects of the case in a relatively short span of time. While it is difficult and often impossible to know for certain the causes of behavior, one can always recognize their consequences, which in most cases are identical with goals and the purpose motivating the behavior.

Application of the group approach to training counselors is made possible by another theoretical assumption. As long as one looks for psycho-pathological and socio-pathological conditions to explain the dysfunctions of a child or a parent, what is found in one case will have little meaning and significance for other parents and counselors-in-training. The Adlerian does not consider the difficulties of a child and his parents as a consequence of pathological processes, except in cases of childhood schizophrenia. They are the expression of mistaken ideas or of erroneous assumptions shared by many children and most parents. Because of the parallelism of the theoretical assumptions and the group approach to training counselors, it becomes obvious that the student who is preparing to become a counselor needs, in addition to the professional background, an education in Adlerian psychology.

Practicum Procedures

Graduate students being trained as counselors may number ten to twelve. After the instructor has discussed with the practicum group the techniques and procedures, he proceeds to outline the basic principles of effective interviewing. They are advised to follow a set routine in order not to overlook pertinent material (Sonstegard 1964). Once they become counselors with experience, they do not need to follow a rigidly structured interview pattern since they then develop their own style and can proceed with greater freedom.

The next step is usually a demonstration or a sequence of demonstrations of the counseling technique by the instructor. The demonstrations bring into focus the principles explained in previous sessions. During the demonstration the instructor asks the child or the parents who are being counseled if he may be per-

mitted to interrupt the interview from time to time for the purpose of instructing the practicum students who are primarily concerned with being educated as counselors. This request is always granted. The parent becomes interested in and benefits from the discussion with the students. The interview and discussion usually last one to one and one-half hours. The interview of the children is also interrupted, but not before the instructor has asked the youngsters if he may do so.

The format of these group sessions follows the general pattern of the counseling of children and parents before groups of parents (Sonstegard 1954), except that in this case the group consists of graduate students being trained to become counselors. The interview takes place first with the parents. After this is completed, the parents leave and children are interviewed before the group of counselors-in-training. After the interview with the child is completed, the child leaves and the parents return to the group.

After a sufficient number of demonstrations by the instructor, the interviewing is done by the graduate student. Under the supervision of the instructor each graduate student in training has an opportunity to counsel as many cases as is necessary to develop proficiency and skill. When the graduate student has reached prescribed standards, his practicum experience is considered complete. After the parents and the children leave, the graduate students remain for the evaluation of the interview and the case. At this time, further details about the procedures are divulged. There is first the atmosphere in which the sessions will be conducted. Complete frankness is essential in the success of this approach to counselor education. Without a friendly acceptance of any criticism voiced by another student or by the instructor, the possibilities of learning will be restricted.

The student who is willing to do the counseling before his fellow student is bound to make mistakes. If he objects to criticism, neither he nor the other students will learn very much. Any initial tendency to be embarrassed soon disappears if all members of the class reveal, each in turn, the lack of preparation which makes mistakes unavoidable. The student is evaluated, but not graded, for his performances. It becomes a learning situation in which each student can learn from the mistakes of his colleagues. Without the willingness of everyone, including the instructor, to accept criticism in good grace, group process in counselor education would be almost impossible. When the group process is successful, however, everyone becomes eager to have his performance evaluated by fellow students and instructors alike.

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