

THE EFFECT OF GROUP COUNSELING UPON THE SELF-CONCEPT
OF WELL-ADJUSTED JUNIOR HIGH GIRLS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART		PAGE
I.	ORIENTATION TO THE PROBLEM	1
	Statement of the Problem	1
	Clarification of Terms	2
	Historical Development of Group Counseling	3
II.	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	6
	Group Counseling with Problem Students	6
	Self-Concept in the Adolescent	10
	The Leary Interpersonal Check List and its Uses	13
	Description	13
	Uses of the Check List	15
III.	THE PROBLEM	16
	Hypotheses	16
	Method	17
	Experimental group	17
	Control group	18
	Role of the leader	19
	Leary Interpersonal Check List	19
	Analysis of Content	20
	Opinion paragraphs	20
IV.	RESULTS	21
	Leary Interpersonal Check List	21

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I.	The Degree of Self-Acceptance in the 6 Girls of the Experimental Group and the 6 Girls of the Control Group before Counseling and after Counseling	22
II.	The Change in the Quality of Behavior in the 6 Girls of the Experimental Group and the 6 Girls of the Control Group during Counseling	23
III.	Content of the Sessions by Per Cent of Session Time Devoted to Each Topic	24

I. ORIENTATION TO THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Group counseling in secondary schools has received much attention in recent years. The group method has been used to deal with underachievers, discipline problems, potential drop-outs, and other problem children, with some success. Benefit was often derived from group sharing of problems with peers and the realization that others had similar problems. It was also deemed useful because of the crowded schedules of most counselors. A counselor could aid 6 or 7 students in one group session whereas he could otherwise see just one student in the time allotted. Of course, group counseling was not meant to replace the one-to-one relationship, but it has been accepted as a useful tool.

While there is some research on the success of group counseling with problem students, little is reported concerning the improvement or clarification of the self-concept in normal youngsters by the use of the group method. Too often the child who does not have an obvious problem has been ignored by school counselors as not in need of attention. Non-problem children, too, could possibly enjoy group interaction and greatly benefit from group processes.

It was the purpose of this study to explore whether group counseling with normal junior high school students can successfully be used to aid in the clarification of the self-concept. Successful clarification was construed as greater self-understanding and a

reduction of the discrepancy between the real self and the ideal self.

Clarification of Terms

There are several terms that are ambiguous or confusing.

The following interpretations were used in this paper:

Group therapy.....group work involving emotionally disturbed persons. The number is usually limited to 5-12 persons, with a psychologist or similarly trained person as a leader.

Group counseling.....a process differing in degree rather than kind from group therapy. The work involves the more normal person with less serious problems. The leader is usually a trained counselor.

Multiple counseling.....almost synonymous with group counseling, but carries the implication of accompanying individual counseling with those involved.

Group guidance.....work with a larger group (approximately 30-100) for the purpose of orienting, explaining, testing, etc.

Well-adjusted.....refers to a description of individuals who, by observation, seem to be well-liked and well-adapted to their surroundings.

Self-concept.....the picture an individual has of himself, based upon his perceptions of himself and how he believes others perceive him.

Real self.....the way in which an individual actually perceives himself, as indicated by his score on the Leary Interpersonal Check List Level II S.

Ideal self.....the way in which an individual would like to perceive himself, as indicated by his score on the Leary Interpersonal Check List Level V.

Historical Development of Group Counseling

Group counseling had an erratic and fitful development. The first systematic use of the group concept in therapy may be traced to the organization of several patients into a group for the treatment of consumption (1). Moreno (2) established a children's theater in Vienna in 1911 where he created "spontaneity plays" for children to "play out" problems. The first group therapy, using a lecture method for mental disorders, was described in the

¹J. H. Pratt, "The Home Sanitarium Treatment of Consumption", John Hopkins Hospital Bulletin, 17, 140-144.

²J. L. Moreno, Psychodrama (New York: Beacon House, 1946).

work of Lazell (3). The actual medical use of group methods was sporadic until after World War II (4). Slavson's (5) early books, along with the work of Klapman (6) and Foulkes (7) demonstrated that the new tool could be useful in helping persons in groups. A complete bibliography presented by Kotkov (8) in 1950, helped establish a summary of group counseling to that date.

The early nonmedical applications of group therapy and counseling were recognized in special situations, especially in helping young delinquents. Rathbun (9) listed many school applications of group counseling, and Strang (10) told of various uses of groups in aiding potential delinquents in a Cincinnati

³E. W. Lazell, "The Group Treatment of Dementia Praecox", Psychoanalytic Review, 8, 168-179.

⁴Paul Schilder, Psychotherapy (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1938).

⁵S. R. Slavson, An Introduction to Group Therapy (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1943).

⁶J. W. Klapman, Group Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice (New York: Grune and Stratton, Inc., 1946).

⁷S. H. Foulkes, Introduction to Group Analytic Psychotherapy (London: Wm. Heinemann Medical Books, 1948).

⁸B. A. Kotkov, "A Bibliography for the Student of Therapy", Journal of Clinical Psychology, 6, 77-91.

⁹Jesse E. Rathbun, "The Functions of Group Counseling", California Journal of Secondary Education, 20, 447-452.

¹⁰Ruth Strang, "Prevention of Delinquency Through Guided Group Experience", in National Society for the Study of Education, Juvenile Delinquency and the Schools, 47th Yearbook, Part 1. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 88-90.

school system. Froehlich (11) and Driver (12) began to isolate specific applications of group counseling with students and adults. The descriptions and research data concerning groups in counseling and therapy multiplied by almost geometric proportions since these early beginnings.

The first group work in the guidance program of schools, termed "group guidance", usually meant large classes led by counselors or teachers unfamiliar with group dynamics or methods. The results were catastrophic; both teachers and students rebelled and counselors withdrew from group work. However, educational theory, the economic and social pressures of the years following World War II, and the pressures of the increased enrollments of the 1960's forced guidance workers to reassess their positions.

Forces creating a new climate for groups included the writings of James Conant on the American high school (13) stressing the guidance needs, the National Defense Act of 1958, establishing guidance training institutes throughout the country, and the

¹¹Clifford P. Froehlich, "Must Counseling be Individual?" Educational and Psychological Measurement, 18, 681-689.

¹²Helen I. Driver, Multiple Counseling (Madison, Wis.: Monona Press, 1954).

¹³James B. Conant, The American High School Today (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959).

increasing number of students. Because of these factors, group counseling began to grow in importance in the public schools. (14)

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Group Counseling with Problem Students

Walter Lifton (15) stated that group counseling had its major emphasis on providing group members with opportunities to explore their own feelings and attitudes. Group counseling implied a permissive atmosphere where an individual could vent his negative feelings or ideas without fear of losing status within the group. The potential authority figure in the group must convey a feeling of real concern and acceptance. Research work in group counseling with adolescents, for the most part, has shown it to be an effective way of communicating and reaching insights about one's self and others. Merle Ohlsen (16) explained that group counseling is particularly appropriate for the adolescent because of his very strong desire to be like his peers. Since the adolescent is often struggling for independence from important adults in his life, it is easier for him to accept help from other students than

¹⁴Edward C. Glanz, Groups in Guidance (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1962), pp. 267-268.

¹⁵Walter M. Lifton, Working with Groups (New York: Wiley, 1961).

¹⁶Merle M. Ohlsen, "Counseling within a Group Setting", Journal of National Association of Women's Deans and Counselors, 23: 104-109, April, 1960.

from an adult. As he receives help from his peers, he solves conflicts within himself with those who understand him best. Also, the fact that others of his peer group have problems similar to his own reassures him.

Because the term "group counseling" usually implied a common problem to be explored, most of the research was with groups of problem students rather than with well-adjusted students. Broedel, Ohlsen, Proff & Southard (17) conducted work on the effectiveness of group counseling with high-ability under-achieving 9th graders, and found that evaluation measures showed an increase in self-acceptance, more effectiveness in interpersonal relationships, and significant personal growth, as compared to a control group. A follow-up 18 months later showed that the achieved gains had been maintained.

Robinett & Waite (18), in conducting research in group counseling with junior high students who were poor academic achievers and potential drop-outs, indicated that this procedure gave the students a chance to get rid of hostility and meet critical peer evaluation. They also found that it helped students to understand themselves and their abilities better.

¹⁷J. Broedel, M. Ohlsen, F. Proff, & C. Southard, "The Effects of Group Counseling on Gifted Underachieving Adolescents", Journal of Counseling Psychology, 7:163-170, 1966.

¹⁸Donald Robinett & Warren Waite, "Voluntary Group Counseling in a Junior High School", Journal of Secondary Education, 39: 226-229, May, 1964.

Cohn & Sniffen (19) studied 7th grade boys from the lowest part of their class who had disturbing behavior and found that for the most part, counseling was beneficial in increasing self-knowledge and responsibility. Suehr (20) worked with several groups of high school students, segregated by sex, who had been labelled as "problem students". A statistical treatment of the before-after data showed significant improvement in grades, self-concept, and teachers' concept of the students, as well as a reduction of absences and number of discipline infractions. Caplan (21) found that the self-concepts and ideal self-concepts of adolescent boys in conflict with school authorities were considerably improved after group counseling.

Although research showed that group counseling with students having some common problem was generally effective, little work was done concerning the effectiveness of group counseling with well-adjusted students. Such individuals were ignored by counselors, probably because they do not seem to be in need of counselor attention. However, the little work that was reported showed that group counseling with well-adjusted students produced beneficial results and a satisfying experience.

¹⁹Benjamin Cohn & A. Mean Sniffen, "A School Report on Group Counseling," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 41:133-138, October, 1962.

²⁰John Suehr, "Counseling in Nonstructured Groups: A Case Study", Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43:304-305, November, 1964.

²¹Stanley Caplan, "The Effect of Group Counseling in Junior High School Boys' Concepts of Themselves in School", Journal of Counseling Psychology, 4:124-128, 1957.

Robinson (22) conducted a group counseling project for senior high girls with the central purpose of helping them evaluate their personalities in a more objective way and helping them understand that other people feel much the same way as they do. Although no objective data were obtained from the experience, Robinson reported that the group members seemed to enjoy discussing personal problems and seemed to profit from the experience. The conclusion concerning the success of group counseling was reached by the counselor, not the students; however, a student's opinion from another group enforced the same conclusion.

Linda Ohlsen (23), a college student reporting on her high school experience in such a group, related that the girls in her group gradually learned to listen to others. The group made her try to understand her own feelings instead of repressing them. According to her report, the great accomplishment of each girl was daring to be herself. By the end of the year, the girls had learned to set more realistic goals, became more confident in social situations, and began to act more like adults since they were being treated as adults. Although the results of the counseling were only expressions of opinion, the statements indicated that group counseling with well-adjusted students is a worthwhile use of counselor time.

²²J. Robinson, "Venture in Group Therapy on Senior High School Level", Journal of the National Association of Deans of Women, 17:25-28, 1953.

²³Linda Ohlsen, "A Student's Perception of Group Counseling", Clearing House, 40:401-403, March, 1966.

Self-Concept in the Adolescent

Since counseling, or any kind of interaction among people, usually affects the individual's self-concept, it is important to understand the self-concept of the adolescent and how it is affected by his peers and others important to him.

Concerning the stability of the self-concept, Engel (24) studied the self-concept of the adolescent over a period of 2 years and found that relative stability was demonstrated. Subjects whose self-concept was negative at the beginning were significantly less stable in self-concept than those whose self-concept was positive. Subjects who persisted in a negative self-concept over the 2-year period gave evidence of significantly more maladjustment. In comparing boys with girls, Taschuk (25) found that adolescent girls were significantly more self-accepting than adolescent boys in most areas, particularly in the social and physical areas.

Schachtel (26) stated that in seeking personal identity, individuals often focus on concepts which are in reality alien to a true self-hood. This statement was especially borne out in research done on the self-concepts of more disturbed adolescents.

²⁴Mary Engel, "The Stability of the Self-Concept in Adolescence", Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, 58:211-215, 1959.

²⁵W. A. Taschuk, "An Analysis of the Self-Concept of Grade 9 Students", Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 3:94-103, 1957.

²⁶Ernest Schachtel, "On Alienated Concepts of Identity", Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 1:110-121, 1961.

Trent (27) found that when he compared delinquent boys with normal high school boys, the delinquents were superior in perceiving the status of others, but inferior in seeing themselves as others saw them. Epstein (28) found that the delinquent's self-portrayal was more highly negativistic of self and of future goals, and less marked by group identification than was that of the non-delinquent. Motoori (29) discovered that the delinquent "self" differed widely from that of the normal adolescent, but that their "ideal selves" were quite similar. The discrepancy between the self and ideal self was greater for the delinquent adolescent than for the normal adolescent.

Maehrer (30) et al. stated that approving and disapproving reactions of certain significant others are followed by corresponding increases and decreases in a person's evaluation of himself. This is true in most persons, but especially true in adolescents who are sharply aware of the opinions of those important to them. For this reason, group counseling, even with well-adjusted youngsters, can prove to be a beneficial experience.

²⁷Richard Trent, "Socioempathic Ability in Group Institutional Delinquent Boys", Journal of Genetic Psychology, 91:99-108, 1957.

²⁸Eleanor Epstein, "The Self-Concept of the Delinquent Female", Smith College Stud. Soc. Wk., 32:220-234, 1962.

²⁹T. Motoori, "A Study of Juvenile Delinquents by Self-Concept Analysis Method", Family Court Probation, 2:44-49, 1963.

³⁰M. L. Maehrer, J. Mensing, & S. Nafzger, "Concept of Self and the Reaction of Others", Sociometry, 25:353-357, 1962.

Zazzo (31) found that the conception one adolescent had of other adolescents served as an incentive for self-development. The discordance between the adolescent's conception of himself in relation to peers was a necessary stage in development. Sherwood (32) also found that group work and self-concept were closely related by explaining that changes in the self-concept were dependent upon (a) the differential importance of various peers for the individual; (b) the extent to which the peer perceptions were communicated to the individual; and (c) the degree to which the individual was involved in the group.

Yoshikawa (33) demonstrated the importance of the group in stating that adolescents are 2 or 3 times more conscious of negative criticism than of positive criticism. Their greatest joy and sorrow, suffering and anger, was usually caused by approval or disapproval of others. He also stated that a means of helping youth acquire a healthy self-acceptance was necessary. Goslin (34) further showed the importance of the group in group counseling

³¹Bianka Zazza, "The Self-Concept Compared with the Conception of Peers among Adolescents", Enfance, 2:9-141, 1960.

³²John Sherwood, "Self-Identity and Referent Others", Sociometry, 28:66-81, 1965.

³³Fusae Yoshikawa, "Development of Self-Consciousness in Adolescence", Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology, 8:26-37, 1960.

³⁴D. A. Goslin, "Accuracy of Self-Perception and Social Acceptance", Sociometry, 25:283-296, 1962.

by explaining that adolescents who perceived themselves differently from the way they were perceived by the group, or were unable to predict how the other members of the group perceived them, would tend to be isolated from the group. He also indicated that the rejected individuals tended to overestimate themselves more, to show more self-conflict, and to have more variance in their ratings from others.

A final indication of the importance of the opinion of others to an adolescent was a study done by Keppers & Caplan (35). They assigned 28 tenth grade underachieving boys to four group counseling situations: (a) boys counseled; (b) boys' parents counseled, but not the boys; (c) parents and boys counseled in separate groups; (d) control group, no counseling. The boys in group B showed the greatest increased congruence in self and ideal self.

The Leary Interpersonal Check List and its Uses

Description. The "Interpersonal Check List" is a measuring device designed by LaForge and Suczek (36) and other members of the Kaiser Foundation psychology staff. It is a technique primarily intended for measuring the degree of subject involvement in each of sixteen personality variables.

³⁵George Keppers & Stanley Caplan, "Group Counseling with Academically Able Underachieving Students", New Mexico Social Studies Educational Research Bulletin, 1:12-17, 1962.

³⁶R. LaForge & R. Suczek, "An Interpersonal Check List", Journal of Personality, 24:94-112, 1955.

During its four year developmental period the Check List went through four major revisions and was administered to several thousand subjects in a number of ways. The main use of the Check List was to serve as part of the evaluation procedure for incoming patients to psychiatric clinics; however, other samples included several groups of college students from various colleges, a group of dermatitis patients, and a group of overweight women. The most frequent administration called for a description of the self, but other subjects also were asked to describe their mother, father, spouse, and ideal self. Some subjects were asked to use the List to describe people in general or to describe the characters in TAT stories.

The present form of the Check List, Form IV, is composed of 128 items, 8 for each of 16 interpersonal variables. An intensity dimension has been built into the Check List, so that each of the 16 variables is represented by a 4-point scale. For each variable there is one item of intensity 1, which reflects a mild or necessary amount of the trait. Three items refer to intensity 2, a moderate or appropriate amount of the trait. Three words reflect intensity 3, a marked or inappropriate amount of the trait. And one word expresses intensity 4, an extreme amount of the trait (37).

³⁷C. K. Garhart, "The Effects of Awareness, Self-Concept and Sex on the Conditioning of Verbal Behavior", (Unpublished Master's Thesis, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1963), p. 22.

Uses of the Check List. Armstrong (38) applied the Kuder-Richardson estimate of reliability to 6 ratings obtained from a group of 50 "normals" and a group of 50 alcoholic men. These rtt's ranged from .953 to .976. All were highly significant, with no significant difference occurring between any of the .2 reliability coefficients.

The Leary Interpersonal Check List (ICL) has been used frequently in research in a number of areas. Kronenburger (39) used it to compare subjects in a company who had had accidents to those who had not. Bentler (40) employed the ICL to study individuals susceptible to hypnotism. Davis, Morrill, Fawcett, Upton, Bondy, & Spiro (41) used the Check List in a study of apprehension and elevated serum cortisol level. The ICL was used by McDonald (42) to study personality characteristics of freshman medical students.

³⁸Renate Armstrong, "The Leary Interpersonal Check List: A Reliability Study", Journal of Clinical Psychology, 14:393-394, October, 1958.

³⁹E. J. Kronenburger, "Interpersonal Aspects of Industrial Accident and Nonaccident Employees", Engineering and Industrial Psychology, 2:57-62, 1960.

⁴⁰D. M. Bentler, "Interpersonal Orientation in Relation to Hypnotic Susceptibility", Journal of Consulting Psychology, 27:426-431, 1963.

⁴¹J. Davis, R. Morrill, J. Fawcett, V. Upton, K. Bondy, & H. M. Spiro, "Apprehension and Elevated Serum Cortisol Levels", Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 6:83-86, 1962.

⁴²Robert McDonald, "Personality Characteristics of Freshman Medical Students as Depicted by the Leary System", Journal of Genetic Psychology, 100:313-323, 1962.

Armstrong & Wertheimer (43) and Gynther, Presher, & McDonald (44) did research on alcoholics.

McDonald & Gynther (45) studied the relationship of self and ideal self description with sex, race, and class in southern adolescents. They found that sex and race markedly influenced the results, but class had no effect. The Negro subjects obtained higher dominance and love scores than the white students for self ratings, but lower scores on ideal descriptions. The males' self and ideal-self ratings gave higher scores on dominance while the female ratings gave higher scores on love. There was less discrepancy between ideal and self ratings of (a) Negroes compared with whites; (b) males compared with females on dominance; (c) females compared with males on love.

III. THE PROBLEM

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were proposed concerning group counseling with well-adjusted junior high school girls:

⁴³R. G. Armstrong & M. Wertheimer, "Personality Structure in Alcoholism", Psychological Newsletter, 10:341-349, 1950.

⁴⁴Malcom Gynther, Charles Presher, & Robert McDonald, "Personal and Interpersonal Factors Associated with Alcoholism", Quarterly Journal of Studies of Alcohol, 20:321-333, June, 1959.

⁴⁵Robert McDonald, Malcom Gynther, "Relationship of Self and Ideal Self Descriptions with Sex, Race, and Class in Southern Adolescents", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1:85-88, 1965.

1. The perceptions of self and ideal self, as measured by the Leary Interpersonal Check List, will change as the result of group counseling.
2. The content of the group sessions will reflect the changing self-concepts, as well as reflect increased trust and intimacy within the group, as seen by the group leader.

Method

Experimental group. The experimental group was a group of six girls, four 14-year-olds and two 13-year-olds. These girls were cheerleaders elected by the student body and considered to be leaders in their peer group.

At the time of their election in the spring, the girls were asked if they would like to participate in weekly discussions during the fall semester in order to talk over problems that may occur as they worked together and to generally get to know each other and themselves better. They were told that one of the purposes of the discussions was to determine whether girls of their age could benefit from and enjoy such sessions. The girls were interested and readily agreed.

At the first meeting of the group in the fall, the leader again explained the purpose of the sessions. To give structure to the group, she explained that the girls were free to discuss anything

they would like, any subject about which they were concerned. The sponsor would take little part in the discussions, remain mostly in the background and take notes of the conversations.

At this meeting, the mechanics of the sessions were decided upon. The group chose to meet every Tuesday after a cheerleading practice, from 4:40-5:30. The meetings were to be held in the library conference room, a small private room with a conference table. The girls were asked to explain the sessions and their purpose to their parents and to have each parent call the sponsor if he had any questions or would like to discuss the arrangement or purpose of the group. Written permission was not sought because the sponsor wished this to be as natural an outgrowth of the responsibility of being a cheerleader as possible. It was assumed that written communication would tend to make the girls feel too "exposed" and therefore inhibited.

Control group. A control group of six girls was selected, which took the same pre-test and post-test at the same time as the experimental group, however they did not participate in group counseling. These girls were selected as having approximately the same degree of peer leadership and status as the cheerleaders. Included among them were the officers of the Pep Club, Y-Teens, and Student Council.

Role of the leader. The leader assumed a passive role, relying upon the girls themselves to initiate discussion and question each other. During the first sessions, the leader occasionally interjected a comment or clarification, but because of the leader's inexperience or because of the authority still seen in her by the girls, these interjections tended to stifle discussion. For the most part, she sat at the table with them and took careful notes of the conversations. At first the girls were aware that their words were being recorded, but after a few sessions, this was somewhat ignored. From the first session, the girls themselves had so much to say, and were so eager to speak, that the leader had a difficult time breaking in.

Leary Interpersonal Check List. In order to assess change in perception of self and ideal-self caused by the group counseling, the Leary Interpersonal Check List for description of self (Level II S) and ideal-self (Level V) was administered at the beginning of the second session and again at the last session. The girls were told that the individual results of this test would be kept confidential; the purpose of the test was to compare the scores they would receive then to those that they would receive at the end of the semester.

The girls were asked to read each item of the 128-item list and blacken the circle in front of each item that they truthfully felt to be generally descriptive of themselves. If the item

was not generally descriptive of them, the circle was to be left blank. When they had completed the description of self, they were asked to repeat the procedure on another answer blank, this time describing the ideal person (ideal self).

Because norms were not available on the Leary Interpersonal Check List for self and ideal-self for the junior high age group, the test was normed on 107 junior high girls enrolled in eighth and ninth grade physical education and science classes. In this procedure, all the scores of the norm group for a level were added. The mean and standard deviation were calculated. A table of T-scores was formulated for Love and for Dominance on Level II S, and for Love and for Dominance on Level V.

Analysis of Content. During the sessions, the leader took careful notes of all that was said. Immediately following each session, these notes were written up as a description of that session, including the topics discussed, the amount of time devoted to each, and the kind of feeling connected with each. At the conclusion of the semester, the number of different topics discussed and the proportion of time devoted to each was tabulated. The changing feeling connected to each topic was also noted.

Opinion Paragraphs. At the last session, the girls were asked to write a paragraph telling, in general, their feelings concerning participation in a group such as this. They were asked

to consider such questions as "Did I enjoy the group sessions?", "Did the sessions change my thinking or behavior in any way?", "Would I recommend that future cheerleaders participate in such a project?", "What did I get out of the sessions?", "What could be changed in order to make the sessions better?"

There was no set format for the paragraph, only free expression of opinions and attitudes was sought.

IV. RESULTS

Leary Interpersonal Check List

In the interpretation of the Leary Check List, two indices were used, (1) change in self-acceptance, and (2) the change in the quality of behavior. Self-acceptance was defined as a concordance of scores of self and ideal self for an individual.

As Table I shows, the degree of self-acceptance in the experimental group and the control group indicates that the two groups were well matched; each group consisted of four individuals of low self-acceptance and two of high self-acceptance.

As Table I also indicates, there was a change in self acceptance in one individual in each group at the close of the semester. However, the change in just these single individuals cannot be considered sufficient to attribute the effect to group counseling.

TABLE I

THE DEGREE OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE IN THE 6 GIRLS OF
THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AND THE 6 GIRLS OF
THE CONTROL GROUP BEFORE COUNSELING
AND AFTER COUNSELING

		Experimental Group	Control Group
Pre-test	High	2	2
	Low	4	4
Post-test	High	1	3
	Low	5	3

The aspects of the quality of behavior that were studied were the change in degree of dominance and the degree of love in the self and in the ideal self. These changes are shown in Table II. By using the Chi-square ($\chi^2 = \sum (f-F^2)/F$, $df = 1$) it was found that neither the degree of dominance or the degree of love changed significantly in the control group for self or for ideal self. In the experimental group, the change in the degree of dominance for self or for ideal self was not significant; the change in the degree of love for ideal self was not significant. However, the change in the degree of love for the self was significant beyond the 2.5% level. As indicated by the scores on this test, the experimental group became significantly less loving after group counseling.

TABLE II

THE CHANGE IN THE QUALITY OF BEHAVIOR IN THE 6 GIRLS
OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AND THE 6 GIRLS OF
THE CONTROL GROUP DURING COUNSELING

		More Dominant	Less Dominant	More Loving	Less Loving
Exp. Group	Self	2	4	0	6
	Ideal	2	4	3	3
Control Group	Self	3	3	2	4
	Ideal	4	2	3	3

Analysis of Content of the Sessions

The topics were divided into seven categories: (1) boys, (2) cheerleading and its problems, (3) family, (4) peer activities, including fads, parties, clothes, etc., (5) other girls and their relationships with them, (6) school activities, and (7) selves. These divisions were arbitrary, and in some cases, a discussion seemed to be able to fall into several categories.

As can be seen in Table III, the time was fairly evenly divided among several of the topics, including boys, cheerleading, peers, other girls, and school. Relatively little time was spent in the discussion of their families, and little time was allotted to discussions of themselves, with the exception of the first and last sessions. The occurrences of the individual topics did not change as the sessions progressed with the exception of the discussions of family and of themselves. The family was not given significant

consideration beyond the fifth session. The principal discussions of themselves occurred in the first meeting, as groundwork for the sessions was laid, and again in the last session as the project was evaluated.

Most of the time seemed to be spent in discussing current activities, varying with important happenings of each week. The sessions were characterized by a great deal of joking and "horse-play". Because current events took precedence, little time was devoted to occurrences in their individual personal lives. Some girls later stated that they did not believe that the other girls would be interested in discussing at length the individual personal problems that they had encountered.

Although the topics themselves did not change a great deal from the beginning of the sessions to the end, the treatment of the topics and the emotions displayed **did** show some change. As time progressed, the fact that the girls were more relaxed with each other and with the leader became apparent. The girls became quite frank in discussing their activities in school and in their peer group with seemingly little fear of censure. The joking, which pervaded many of the sessions even reflected increased acceptance of the group. The girls were able to discuss and bluntly criticize school and classes, showing trust in the teacher-leader. In fact, the leader's classroom was brought up several times with little reserve.

The most obvious progression in the sessions was the increased comradeship and "bond" each seemed to feel in the group, no matter what topic was being discussed. The individual members of the group grew in ability to speak freely.

A change in the girls themselves was easily seen, especially the loss of shyness. One highly-emotional girl displayed occasional tears, sulking spells, and loud laughter. A change that occurred to some extent in all the girls was an expression of their increased sense of importance. This may have been due in part of their prestigious office, but may have been due also to their feeling a part of a special group. They grew in the security that they were accepted by the group and could easily express feelings and opinions.

To summarize the change in the group of girls, it may be stated that they seemed no longer afraid to express what they felt about each other and about the cheerleading activities. They came to discuss more frankly any problems that arose among them without the anxiety that they would offend the others or be ostracized themselves.

Opinion Paragraphs

Five of the girls readily wrote short paragraphs giving opinions of the group sessions. One girl declined by saying that she had nothing to say.

Each of the girls expressed that the sessions had been beneficial to them in helping them to get to know the other girls better and to give them a chance to enjoy each other's company. It was stated that they appreciated the "togetherness" and closeness of the group which encouraged them to understand the others. No comment was made by any of the girls concerning getting to know themselves better, except for one individual who stated that the group helped her (and the group) solve problems that they otherwise would have worried about excessively. The feeling was unanimous that the group meetings should be continued for future groups.

The criticisms given included (1) a suggestion to change the time from such a late hour and (2) the need for them to direct questions to, and include, members of the group who were not participating or who were not familiar with the subjects under discussion. One girl mentioned that she felt some self-consciousness in the presence of an adult.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Leary Interpersonal Check List

The Leary Interpersonal Check List (see Appendix) seems to be an effective device for measuring self-acceptance and change in quality of behavior in adolescent girls except for its level of vocabulary. Its difficulty may have led to misinterpretation of

the meaning of some of the statements by some of the girls. However, an adult was present at all testings to define words, so the vocabulary difficulty was minimal in this case.

The fact that self-acceptance did not change in the experimental group during the group counseling may be expected considering the topics discussed. Little time was spent overtly exploring the self or specific attitudes; most time was spent in what was termed by one girl as "relaxing discussions of things that were going on". The fact that the girls were not challenged in their beliefs or made to think deeply could account for no change in the score.

One might expect increased self-acceptance from this group in view of the fact that it became a much closer, more comfortable group as the discussions progressed. That the girls knew they were a part of a special group with "secrets", as one girl expressed it, would lend one to believe that they would see themselves in a more secure light and therefore more positively.

Since the index of self-acceptance did not change, it must be concluded that the effect of being an integral part of a group did not register on this test, or that the topics discussed were not thought-provoking enough to change such a basic concept as self-acceptance. Perhaps the time element was not extensive enough to effect change in self-concept.

As might be expected, the dominance scores in the experimental group did not change. The various positions of leadership in the

group dynamics did not change from the beginning of the sessions to the end; the leader of the group was the recognized leader of the cheerleading squad and so easily took the leadership of the counseling sessions. This was expected and accepted by all the girls.

However, from another point of view, an increase in dominance might have been expected since the girls had stepped into an office that required leadership of them, and in which they were treated as leaders by their peers. Failure to effect change could be explained by the statement that cheerleading did not require any actual organization or domination of others, but was rather leadership given to them through popularity and prestige.

It was important that the control group, which was carefully selected on the basis of leadership and peer acceptance, did not change in dominance. Therefore, the dominance score on the Check List was not necessarily affected in this case by a position held in the peer group.

The only significant change in quality of behavior recorded by the test was that the group saw themselves as less loving. At first glance this may not fulfill the expectation of group counseling's effect upon individuals. However, it must be remembered that junior high girls as a group are very much aware of peer opinion and strive to fit in with their group. This was shown by the high love index for all junior high girls on Level V of this test. It would be essential, then, to try to be "nice" to people, suppress

hostile feelings so that the adolescent will be "popular", and hope to see himself as a friendly person. The fact that the girls' scores showed them to be less loving after counseling may indicate that they felt less need to be popular and had more freedom to recognize their true feelings and reaction. It must be noted that the love index did not change significantly in their ideal selves indicating that they still saw the ideal girl as highly aware of group values.

Another explanation that must be considered, however, is that the girls did show themselves as beginning to feel more important and superior throughout the sessions, due either to their prestigious position in their peer group or to their membership and enjoyment of a group that was being given special treatment by an adult. This increased feeling of self-importance was shown by occasional intolerant comments concerning others outside the group during the sessions. Perhaps this attitude also was displayed through the score on the Check List.

A significant consideration is that the control group did not also show a change in score on the love index. The control group was carefully selected as enjoying a great amount of peer acceptance and prestige, and would be expected to change as the experimental group changed if the crucial factor had been the importance and security of an elected position.

It is therefore concluded that the girls' becoming less loving is attributable to the increased security of the girls in

the company of one another and a decrease in the need to be popular, in short, a breakdown of stereotypes resulted.

Content of the Sessions

Since the girls were told at the beginning of the counseling sessions that they were free to discuss anything they wished to discuss, the fact that the prominent topics throughout the sessions were school, cheerleading, peers, and boys would indicate that these were the most important concerns to these girls, as a group, at that time. The fact that personal problems were not discussed to a great extent might indicate either that these were not present to a great degree, or that they would not be of interest to the entire group. It may also be true that the leader's presence had an inhibiting influence in this area. One of the girls, who exhibited the presence of personal problems but did not discuss them to a great extent, stated that she did not feel that that was the type of topic she wanted to bring up with the group. The tone of the sessions, set early by the girls, was one of enjoying each other's company and developing a bond. This may not have been conducive to a discussion of serious personal problems or family relationships. The only instances in which the self was really discussed was in the first session and the last, when it was specifically introduced by the leader.

Although personal problems were not discussed to a great extent with the group, it is significant that later the girls found

it easy to discuss these problems with individual girls or with the leader privately.

It is concluded that the main topics of the sessions followed the casual tone set by the girls themselves. These were the topics that were of greatest concern to the girls, as a group, at that time.

One of the most beneficial aspects and obvious changes of the group sessions seemed to be their emotional content. The bond formed among the members of the group and the loyalty that group membership inspired became stronger and important. At the end of the first meeting, the girls were so concerned about maintaining the confidences shared in the group meetings that they spontaneously took an "oath of secrecy". It was felt by the leader that this confidence was strictly maintained.

Although there was never a dramatic confrontation, throughout the sessions the tone of the conversation became much more confidential, displaying a great deal of esprit de corps. Even the girls who had not been accepted as close friends before became an integral part of the group. They were able to discuss occurrences involving each other and criticize other members without fear of offense or losing friendship. The girls began to show that they were secure in their status in the group. Therefore, the functioning of the group, both during the sessions and outside was greatly improved. Because of the feelings of closeness generated through the discussion of any topic, they were able to solve differences in a much more mature way. It appeared to the leader that they came to understand each other, and therefore themselves.

It is concluded that a direct result of the group counseling was the bond of loyalty that it formed. Probably one of the most important things that led to the success of the group was that they enjoyed each other's company and had fun together. Even after the sessions were over, the girls were able to discuss problems and rivalries that arose among them instead of resorting to the common procedure of "talking behind backs" and letting resentment mount. Several times during the year the girls asked the leader if they could call a special meeting to solve conflicts in a face to face situation. This definitely is a direct result of the trust and knowledge of each other built up through learning to communicate in counseling sessions. Although the topic content of this group counseling project was casual, the emotional content was important and had great effect.

Opinion Paragraphs

The statements written on the unsigned opinion paragraphs were gratifying in that each girl who wrote expressed enjoyment and benefit from the group. As one girl stated, she did not realize how much she had gotten from the group until she had to stop and think about it; it seemed that much of the group's benefit was subtle and not noticeable until the subject itself was discussed. Although no girl stated that she had come to know herself or her motives any better, they all said that they had come to understand others better. This may just be another way of expressing increased self-knowledge.

All the girls expressed the desire to see group meetings continued for future cheerleading groups. They felt that meeting together, no matter what was discussed, helped them "to get along". Without the group they would not have had the opportunity to really get to know the other girls and therefore work together as well.

From the short opinion paragraphs, it can be concluded that the group counseling did serve a good purpose; the girls enjoyed the fellowship and enjoyed the closeness of trusted friends. The attitudes built up in the group may carry over to help solve problems or increase understanding of other people in other areas of their activity.

The statement made by two girls, however, is important. These girls said that they felt a greater effort should have been made by the group to include members who were not being involved. This expression indicates the realization of the group responsibility as well as the realization of the importance of each member of the group.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

One way to learn to work with groups in counseling is to start one, they try to analyze and profit from the mistakes. From the occurrences in this group counseling situation, there are several important recommendations to be considered for group counseling with adolescents.

- (1) Privacy is very important to any group that is discussing confidential topics. A room where others will not interrupt the sessions is best.
- (2) Taking notes, as was necessary in this case, could be an inhibiting factor in free discussion. Note-taking must be brief and inconspicuous.
- (3) It is important that permission for the counseling sessions be secured from the parents in writing. In this project, permission was not secured in writing, but was rather done informally for the purpose of keeping the group counseling as natural a part of the cheerleading responsibilities as possible. In this case, however, an unnecessary misunderstanding arose because of the informality.
- (4) It is recommended that the group leader be "debriefed" soon after each group session through a discussion of the events of the sessions with another counselor. In this way, the leader can more clearly see the events of the session and see changes from week to week more easily than if he himself attempted to analyze the sessions. This is especially important for an inexperienced

(4) Continued

counselor. The material discussed by the counselors and the opinions and insights drawn, can be reflected back to the group at the next session to begin a meaningful discussion. In this way, deeper questions can be probed, and the group can be led to their own more meaningful insights and involvement in the group. If a group's discussion seems to remain on the "surface", this tool may help them to see the deeper meanings of what they are saying and encourage them to more careful self-examination. Allowing girls to be completely on their own, especially at this age, will probably not result in much prolonged "soul-searching". An additional advantage of debriefing is that it can serve to keep the leader of the group deeply interested and excited about the group.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of this experience in group counseling with well-adjusted junior high girls one may conclude that group counseling

produced beneficial results. From student observation and observation by the leader, the enjoyment of peer company and the bond of loyalty produced is sufficient recommendation for its continued use.

The two hypotheses were proved, in part: (1) the perceptions of self and ideal self, as measured by the Leary Interpersonal Check List, will change as the result of group counseling, and (2) the content of the group sessions will reflect the changing self-concepts, as well as reflect increased trust and intimacy within the group, as seen by the group leader.

After counseling the girls saw themselves as less loving, measured by the Leary test. The less loving concept may have resulted from a feeling of increased security within the group and a reduced need for trying to be "popular" and "like everyone". Although the topics themselves did not change to a great extent, the ways in which they regarded one another during counseling, and the frankness with which they were able to express their thoughts, did show an increased closeness and more secure friendship. The girls became a tightly-knit functioning group that was able to intelligently solve common problems.

It was further concluded that when junior high girls are allowed to discuss anything they wish, they will discuss current happenings affecting them with increased frankness, but will not deeply question motives and the change in their selves without outside clarification or direction. They must be aided by a leader in order to perceive the deeper meanings of their actions and words.

The discussions themselves are of benefit to them as a group, but more must be done to help them analyze themselves. At the age, much individual analysis will depend upon counselor help.

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C. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

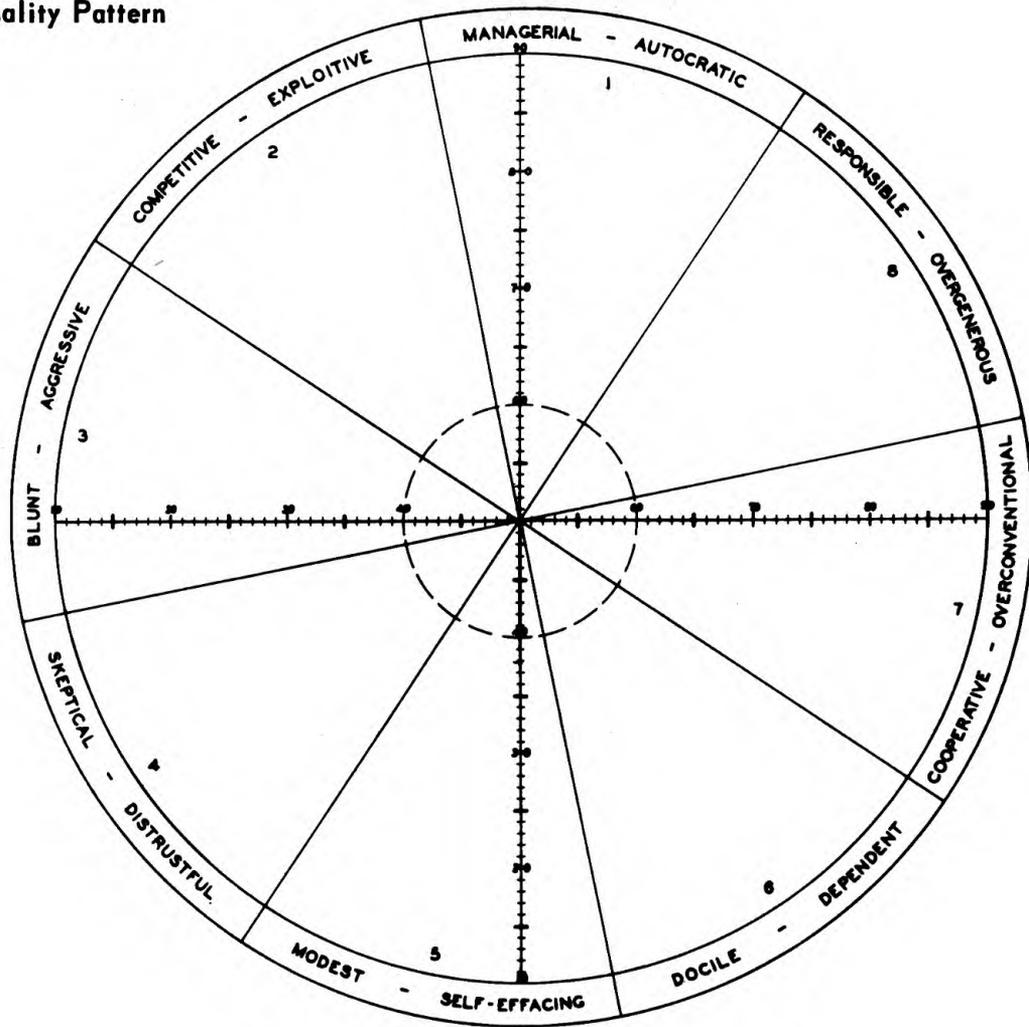
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APPENDIX

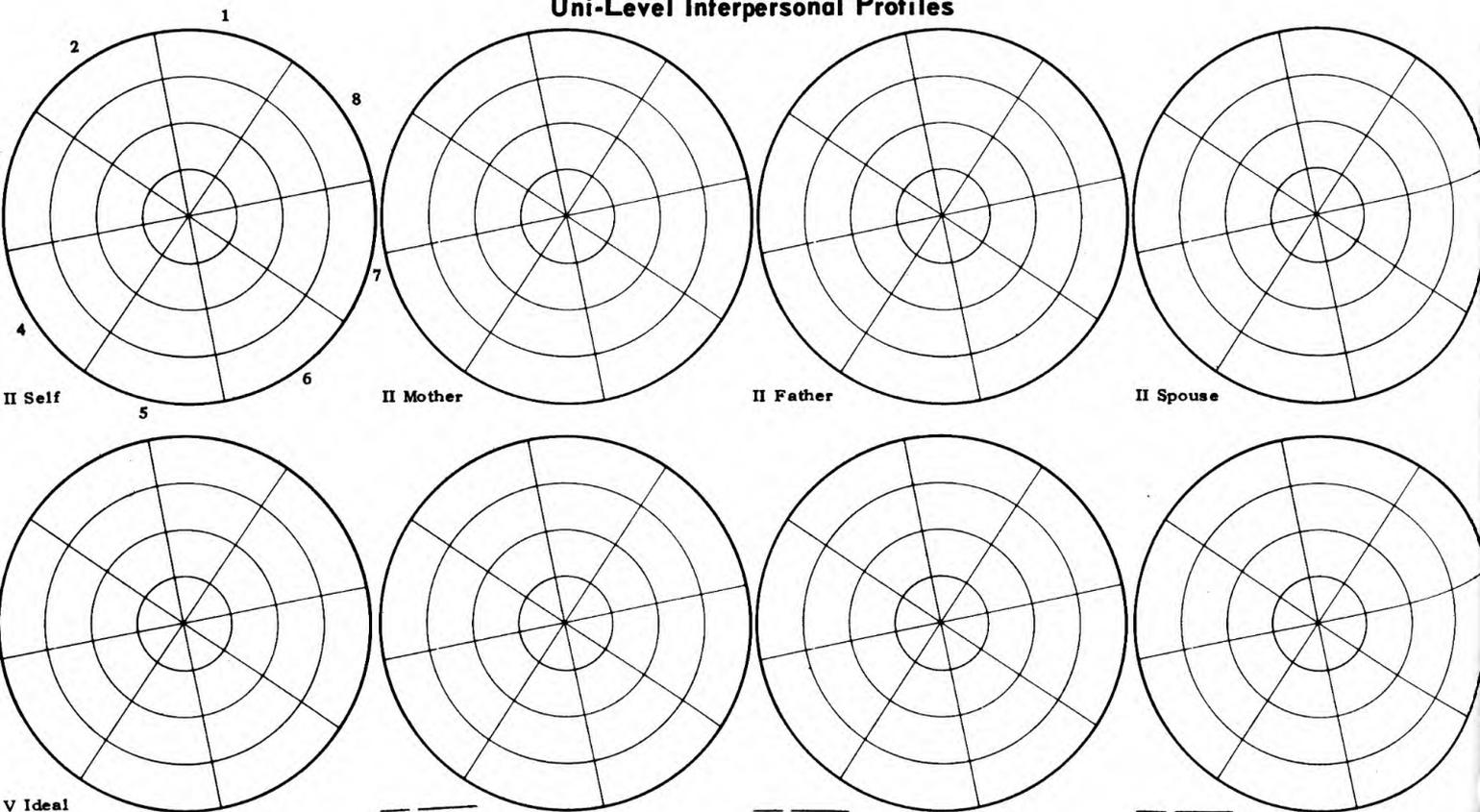
LEARY INTERPERSONAL CHECK LIST

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. well thought of | 33. often admired | 65. always giving advice | 97. tries to be too successful |
| 2. makes a good impression | 34. respected by others | 66. acts important | 98. expects everyone to admire him |
| 3. able to give orders | 35. good leader | 67. bossy | 99. manages others |
| 4. forceful | 36. likes responsibility | 68. dominating | 100. dictatorial |
| 5. self-respecting | 37. self-confident | 69. boastful | 101. somewhat snobbish |
| 6. independent | 38. self-reliant and assertive | 70. proud and self-satisfied | 102. egotistical and conceited |
| 7. able to take care of self | 39. businesslike | 71. thinks only of himself | 103. selfish |
| 8. can be indifferent to others | 40. likes to compete with others | 72. shrewd and calculating | 104. cold and unfeeling |
| 9. can be strict if necessary | 41. hard-boiled when necessary | 73. impatient with others' mistakes | 105. sarcastic |
| 10. firm but just | 42. stern but fair | 74. self-seeking | 106. cruel and unkind |
| 11. can be frank and honest | 43. irritable | 75. outspoken | 107. frequently angry |
| 12. critical of others | 44. straightforward and direct | 76. often unfriendly | 108. hard-hearted |
| 13. can complain if necessary | 45. resents being bossed | 77. bitter | 109. resentful |
| 14. often gloomy | 46. skeptical | 78. complaining | 110. rebels against everything |
| 15. able to doubt others | 47. hard to impress | 79. jealous | 111. stubborn |
| 16. frequently disappointed | 48. touchy and easily hurt | 80. slow to forgive a wrong | 112. distrusts everybody |
| 17. able to criticize self | 49. easily embarrassed | 81. self-punishing | 113. timid |
| 18. apologetic | 50. lacks self-confidence | 82. shy | 114. always ashamed of self |
| 19. can be obedient | 51. easily led | 83. passive and unaggressive | 115. obeys too willingly |
| 20. usually gives in | 52. modest | 84. meek | 116. spineless |
| 21. grateful | 53. often helped by others | 85. dependent | 117. hardly ever talks back |
| 22. admires and imitates others | 54. very respectful to authority | 86. wants to be led | 118. clinging vine |
| 23. appreciative | 55. accepts advice readily | 87. lets others make decisions | 119. likes to be taken care of |
| 24. very anxious to be approved of | 56. trusting and eager to please | 88. easily fooled | 120. will believe anyone |
| 25. cooperative | 57. always pleasant and agreeable | 89. too easily influenced by friends | 121. wants everyone's love |
| 26. eager to get along with others | 58. wants everyone to like him | 90. will confide in anyone | 122. agrees with everyone |
| 27. friendly | 59. sociable and neighborly | 91. fond of everyone | 123. friendly all the time |
| 28. affectionate and understanding | 60. warm | 92. likes everybody | 124. loves everyone |
| 29. considerate | 61. kind and reassuring | 93. forgives anything | 125. too lenient with others |
| 30. encourages others | 62. tender and soft-hearted | 94. oversympathetic | 126. tries to comfort everyone |
| 31. helpful | 63. enjoys taking care of others | 95. generous to a fault | 127. too willing to give to others |
| 32. big-hearted and unselfish | 64. gives freely of self | 96. overprotective of others | 128. spoils people with kindness |

Interpersonal Diagnosis Multi-Level Personality Pattern



Uni-Level Interpersonal Profiles



Verbal Summaries of Variability Indices

- | | |
|--|---|
| Subject misperceives his own _____ . | Subject's preconscious acceptance of self is _____ . |
| Subject is consciously identified with _____ . | Subject's preconscious acceptance of self (deeper) is _____ . |
| Subject is consciously disidentified with _____ . | Subject consciously idealizes _____ . |
| Subject represses _____ . | Subject consciously devaluates _____ . |
| Subject represses (deeper) _____ . | Subject is preconsciously identified with _____ . |
| Subject consciously equates _____ . | Subject is preconsciously disidentified with _____ . |
| Subject's conscious acceptance of self is _____ . | Subject fuses his conscious and preconscious images of _____ . |
| Subject's self-actualization is _____ . | Subject diffuses his conscious and preconscious images of _____ . |
| Subject displaces his preconscious image of _____ onto his conscious perception of _____ . | |

Clinical Notes

THE EFFECT OF GROUP COUNSELING UPON THE SELF-CONCEPT
OF WELL-ADJUSTED JUNIOR HIGH GIRLS

by

MARGARET ELIZABETH POPHAM

B. S., University of Kansas, 1964

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirement for the degree

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1967

This report explored the problem of the effect of group counseling upon well-adjusted junior high girls. Two hypotheses were stated: (1) the perceptions of self and ideal self, as measured by the Leary Interpersonal Check List, will change as the result of group counseling, and (2) the content of the group sessions will reflect the changing self-concepts, as well as reflect increased trust and intimacy within the group, as seen by the leader.

The experimental group consisted of the 6 junior high girls of the cheerleading squad. The girls met for 50 minutes once a week for fifteen sessions, and were given the freedom to discuss any topic they wished. At the first session they were given Level II S and Level V (self and ideal self, respectively) of the Leary Interpersonal Check List. The test was repeated at the last session. In addition, the leader took careful notes throughout each session of the topics discussed and the emotions displayed. At the end of the sessions, the girls were asked to write short opinion paragraphs describing their feelings toward a group project as this.

A control group was chosen to take the Leary test at the same times as the experimental group, but did not have counseling. This group was carefully chosen to match the experimental group on the basis of high leadership and peer status.

At the conclusion of the sessions, the Leary tests were studied to determine any change in self-acceptance or in quality of behavior. It was found that there was no significant change in any area in the control group. The experimental group did not change in self-acceptance, but did change in quality of behavior. The experimental group saw themselves as significantly less loving, although the index of dominance did not change in either self or ideal self, and the index of love did not change in the ideal self.

That the experimental group saw themselves as less loving after counseling was explained by stating that because of the security of the group they no longer felt a need to "like everyone" and strive to be popular. Their responses showed less stereotypy.

A study of the topical and emotional content of the sessions showed that the topics themselves did not change throughout the 15 weeks, centering mainly upon boys, peer activities, cheerleading activities, and school. However, the emotional content did change. The girls became a functioning group, grew closer in their knowledge and understanding of each other, and were able to freely express opinions without fear of censure or loss of prestige. They were able to solve common problems in a more mature way.

An analysis of the opinion paragraphs written at the close of the sessions indicated that the girls enjoyed the sessions and were aware that they grew in their understanding of others. The feeling was unanimous that the sessions be continued for future groups of cheerleaders.

It is concluded from this project that group counseling with well-adjusted junior high girls can be a very beneficial experience. It increases their understanding of others and helps them solve common problems that can carry over to other phases of their lives.