

UNDERSTANDING AND GUIDING
THE ELEMENTARY CHILD

by 680

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1969

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LD
2668
R4
1969
M32

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer is deeply indebted to her major professor, Dr. Herbert E. Kaiser, for his kind and patient assistance and wishes to express her most grateful thanks to him.

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INTRODUCTION

Because the school children of America are faced with ever increasing complex changes in our society, there is a greater need for the teacher to understand the developmental needs of children. The teacher must be aware of the child's needs just as the child must be aware of his own needs.

There exists a conflict between what a person knows of himself and what a person thinks of himself. It is natural for one to appraise the cognitive facts about himself and to sort these facts into pigeon holes that are congruent with what one wants to appear to be in the eyes of the significant people around him. Most people confuse "self-knowledge" with knowledge of their conscious ego personalities. Carl G. Jung summed it adequately by saying:

People measure their self-knowledge by what the average person in their social environment knows of himself but not by the real psychic facts which are for the most part hidden from them. In this respect the psyche behaves like the body with its physiological and anatomical structure, of which the average person knows very little too. . . . What is commonly called "self-knowledge" is therefore very limited knowledge, most of it dependent on social factors, of what goes on in the human psyche.¹

Presumably, then, the need for self understanding becomes more acute with regard to elementary children. The elementary child is more ego oriented than the secondary school aged child. He is also more dependent

¹Carl G. Jung, The Undiscovered Self. (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1958), p. 7.

and less able to defend an ego attack.² Knowing this, one can realize that classroom teachers have a duty to endeavor to understand the child, then, to help the child understand himself.

After this bond of empathy solidifies, the teacher and student are able to work cooperatively in providing a rewarding experience. Concentrated efforts may then be given to striving for behavioral changes.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this report was to integrate the underlying principles of a phenomenological approach to self understanding, a kind of behavior modification, and a therapy, called Reality Therapy, based on a theory which is of a behavioristic orientation.

Since the intention of this investigation was to show how a child can change his behavior, some research relevant to change in behavior of the child was introduced and techniques for applying research findings to the classroom were suggested. The content of the report was directed to the elementary classroom teacher.

Limitations

The investigation was designed to be a survey and not an extensive summation of all theorists' ideas. The report centered upon (1) the research findings of Leonard Krasner and Leonard Ullman, (2) the techniques used by William Glasser, (3) the works of Carl Rogers, and

²Roger F. Aubrey, "The Legitimacy of Elementary School Counselors: Some Unresolved Issues and Conflicts," Personnel and Guidance Journal XLVI (December, 1967), p. 355.