

GROUP COUNSELING AND A PLAN FOR
EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

by 632

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I. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In a recent estimate by the American Personnel and Guidance Association, it was indicated that the schools presently need twice as many counselors as they now have.¹ This fact is a result of the post World War II "baby-boom" and the present "population explosion." To cope with this problem of increased counselor-counselee ratio, educational leaders have had several alternatives. They could have (1) tried to educate and mass-produce counselors, (2) had other, less qualified personnel do counseling work, or (3) used some other method whereby the present number of counselors could be used to satisfy the increased client load. Number one was out of the question since people are free to pick their own careers. Again supply wouldn't meet the demand. It was felt that number two would not provide the quality of experience needed to help the counselee. Therefore, point number three was chosen. Since group work with mental patients had met with a good deal of success, it was felt that group counseling with students would be the answer. It has been tried and tested in many school systems and is now widely accepted and used.

The major concern of the first sections of this paper was with the development and uses of group counseling. In this manner an understanding and feeling for the whole field of group counseling could be gleaned. The final section of the report dealt with

¹Merle M. Ohlsen, *Guidance Services in the Modern School* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), p. 148.

a proposed plan for change of attitudes toward the guidance and educational program of a school system. It has been stated, "A guidance program is successful only when its attitudes permeate the entire school; its program encompasses the school; its purposes, scope and limitations are understood by all the school."² It was the purpose of the last section of this report to present a plan which would bring about this desired ideal.

²B.B. Paulson, "Counselors are Catalysts," The American School Board Journal, 152: 38-9, February, 1966.

II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF GROUP COUNSELING

Group counseling had an erratic and shaky 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.³ Moreno⁴ 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 work of Lazell.⁵ The actual medical use of group methods was sporadic until after World War II.⁶ A complete bibliography presented by Kotov⁷ in 1950, helped establish a summary of group counseling to that date.

The early non-medical applications of group therapy and counseling were recognized in special situations, especially in helping young delinquents. Rathbun⁸ listed many school applications of group counseling and Froelich⁹ began to isolate specific

³J.H. Pratt, "The Home Sanitarium Treatment of Consumption," Johns Hopkins Hspt. Bull., 17, 140-144.

⁴J.L. Moreno, Psychodrama (New York: Beacon House, 1946).

⁵E.W. Lazell, "The Group Treatment of Dementia Praecox," Psychoanalytic Review, 8, 168-179.

⁶Paul Schilder, Psychotherapy (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1938).

⁷B.A. Kotov, "A Bibliography for the Student of Therapy," Journal of Clinical Psy., 6: 77-91.

⁸Jesse E. Rathbun, "The Functions of Group Counseling," California Journal of Secondary Education, 17: 341-3, August, 1963.

⁹Clifford P. Froelich, "Must Counseling be Individual?" Educational and Psy. Measurement, 18: 681-689, February, 1965.

applications of group counseling with students and adults. The descriptions and research data concerning groups in counseling and therapy have multiplied by nearly geometric proportions from 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 appalling. Both teachers and students rebelled and counselors dropped group work altogether. However, educational theory, the economic and social pressures of the years following World War II, and the pressures of increased enrollments of the 1960's forced guidance workers to review their positions.

Forces creating a new climate for groups included the writings of James Conant on the American high school¹⁰ stressing the guidance needs; the National Defense Education Act of 1958, establishing guidance training institutes throughout the country; and increasing enrollments. Because of these factors, group counseling began to grow in importance in the public schools.¹¹

¹⁰James B. Conant, The American High School Today (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1959).

¹¹Edward C. Glanz, Groups in Guidance (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1962), pp. 267-268.

III. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Group Centered

In this process emphasis is placed on the release of the group's potential capacities and the development of the members' independence and self-responsibility. For success these goals generally require: (1) an increase in participation, (2) a decrease in barriers to free communication within and among group members, (3) and a non-threatening climate and genuine acceptance.

Usually group-centered groups achieve five objectives reasonably well. These are: (1) skill in critical thinking, (2) ability in cooperation, (3) a degree of sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others, (4) self-reliance and responsibility to oneself and others, (5) understanding of self and of the group-centered process.¹²

The group leader is of prime importance in helping the group achieve these goals and objectives. The leader initiates the members into a permissive, accepting situation in which they take the lead in formulating goals and process. He conveys the confidence he has in the group members and in their ability and willingness to be responsible for themselves. The leader's acceptance of what is said, his reflection of the meaning of content, and his clarification of feeling are the most beneficial

¹²C. Gratton Kemp, *Foundations of Group Counseling*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1970), pp. 92-99.

kinds of responses. This leader behavior assures the members that he is genuine, lowers the threat, and gives release to those members who are trying to understand themselves.

The theoretical basis of the group-centered approach is self theory. The basic assumption is that the self has a single goal, that of realizing itself in accordance with its make up. It expresses itself through a creative biological urge which motivates a continuous striving against great odds. The rationality of the organism is considered dependable and directed toward constructive development. This development takes place through differentiation and expansion, with the person becoming progressively capable in decision making and more autonomous thinking.¹³

Authoritarian

Authoritarian technique has the longest tradition and is the most common type used in teaching, counseling and therapy. In this type of group setting the leader is the dominant and controlling figure. He outlines the purposes for the group and the methods to be used to obtain them. Through the use of evaluative comments, interpretations, and suggestions he directs the group. By using a system of rewards and punishments, he hopes to accomplish the group goals and further establish his leadership role. He operates on the assumption that his knowledge and decisions are superior to the group's and thus expects a high degree of conformity. A

¹³Ibid.

good authoritarian leader is forceful, energetic, a good organizer and planner, firm, kind, and successful in securing the cooperation of members.¹⁴

The authoritarian type group has its theoretical base in association theory in which attention is focused upon the relation between persons and things. In taking an external objective approach to behavior, this viewpoint sees the action of a group member as a function of the externally controlled stimulus. Change in behavior is the result of learning the interrelationships which exist in conditions outside the group member. These are learned from authority figures, such as a group leader. Evaluation rests in this authority figure, and group members try to conform to his expectations.¹⁵

Democratic

In this type of group setting, the leader has the responsibility of helping establish a friendly, permissive atmosphere in which all may feel at ease and have the desire and self-confidence to participate as democratic members of the group. In the beginning the leader may find it desirable to present an overview of possibilities for the particular group and stimulate group discussions about them. The pooling of suggestions by group members as to personal problems, worries, and interests will usually also provide enough information for a good starting

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 81-87.

¹⁵Ibid.

point on common problems.¹⁶ The leader and members handle their experiences cooperatively and decide on a working plan of action for the group. Generally, the leader and group try to formulate a plan which will assist each member in attaining better understanding of himself, other members, and the process in which he is involved. It is also hoped that more maturity and responsibility will be attained in the fostering of growth of the total person of the group member.¹⁷

The theoretical base of the democratic group is the field theory of learning. The total field is composed of persons and objects, so there are three possible relationships: (1) objects to objects, (2) persons to objects, (3) persons to persons. Although there are these three possibilities in the democratic group, the main emphasis is placed upon relations between persons. Since each group member is the center of his own field, he may understand others better through open interaction and communication. The unit of learning, then, is mainly the member facing his own situation, growing out of his needs as he sees them. The process of interaction, thus, is the most important single factor in the determination of the member's possibilities of becoming. As a result of these interactions, each group member is continually evaluating himself. Thus, his field is fluid and always in the process of emerging or becoming.¹⁸

¹⁶Margaret E. Bennett, *Guidance and Counseling in Groups*, (New York, : second edition; McGraw-Hill Inc., 1963). pp. 101-103.

¹⁷Kemp. op. cit. pp. 87-92.

¹⁸Ibid.

IV. USES OF GROUP COUNSELING IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING

The main plan used in this section of the report is to relate a few studies concerned with the topic area and in this manner show the utility of the group counseling process as used in the subject area being considered.

Underachievers

Mezzano¹⁹ in a study with low-motivated high school students was concerned with two types of counseling, individual counseling and group counseling used in conjunction and group counseling alone, on self-concept, study habits, attitudes, and academic achievement. It was found that the groups that had been group counseled had a significantly higher grade point ten weeks after the study than did the control. Also, no significant difference was found between the two types of group counseling.

In a study by Dickenson and Truax²⁰ with college under-achievers, it was found that underachievers receiving group counseling showed greater positive academic change than a control group. Counseled students receiving high conditions of warmth, empathy, and therapist genuineness showed greater improvement academically than a control group or group receiving moderate

¹⁹J. Mezzano, "Group Counseling with Low-Motivated High School Students; Comparative Effects of Two Uses of Counselor Time," Journal of Educational Research, 61: 222-4, January, 1968.

²⁰W.A. Dickenson and C.B. Truax, "Group Counseling with College Underachievers," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 45: 243-7, November, 1966.

levels of empathy, warmth, and therapist genuineness.

In a third study conducted by Roth²¹ with underachieving college students, group counseling was used with the experimental group while the control received no counseling whatsoever. The counseled group worked on the problem of poor study habits and related concerns. It was found that the group counseled experimental group increased their grade points significantly and that these changes held over time. The grade points of the control group didn't increase significantly. The difference was attributed to the group counseling experience.

Similar studies concerning underachieving junior high, senior high, and college students have been conducted by Gilbreath²², Brown²³, and Tucker²⁴ to mention a few, which have shown similar results. From these findings it can be concluded with reasonable certainty that group counseling is frequently a successful method of helping the underachieving student deal with his academic problems.

²¹R.M. Roth, "Non-Achievement Syndrome, Group Therapy, and Achievement Change," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 46: 393-8, December, 1967.

²²S.H. Gilbreath, "Group Counseling, Dependence, and College Male Underachievement," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 14: 449-53, September, 1967.

²³R.D. Brown, "Effects of Structured and Unstructured Group Counseling with High and Low Anxious College Underachievers," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 16: 209-14, May, 1969.

²⁴B.J. Tucker, "Modifying Exasperating Attitudes Through Small Group Counseling," National Association of Women's Deans and Counselors Journal, 30: 187-9, Summer, 1967.

Behavior Problems

As early as 1957 Caplan²⁵ did a study in which he compared the outcomes of group counseling for experimental and control groups of junior high school boys referred to as unruly, antisocial, unteachable, and incorrigible. Group counseling was conducted weekly for a semester. The Q Sort-Technique was used to measure self and ideal-self concepts at the beginning and end of the period. The data collected indicated increases in congruence of self and ideal-self sorts for the experimental but not for the control group. Positive changes in citizenship marks from teachers were also recorded for the experimental but not for the control group.

In a study by Finney and Dolsem²⁶ academically gifted but underachieving and behavior problem sophomore high school students were given four semesters of weekly group counseling and then compared with a control. As rated by their teachers, the counseled students were less resistive, less rebellious, and more cooperative in the classroom, and absent from school less. On the California Psychological Inventory, the counseled students showed a behavior highly identified with adults and adult values.

²⁵ Stanley W. Caplan, "The Effect of Group Counseling on Junior High Boys' Concepts of Themselves in School," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 4: 124-8, Summer, 1957.

²⁶ B.C. Finney and E. Van Dalsem, "Group Counseling for Gifted Underachieving High School Students," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 16: 87-94, January, 1969.

It was concluded that group counseling had a behavioral changing effect in this study.

At this point it should be mentioned that not all studies have shown behavioral changes due to group counseling. A case in point concerns a study by R.M. Laxer²⁷ concerning junior high school problem students involved in an eight week group counseling program. Several personality and academic measures were observed before and after counseling for the counseled and control groups. No significant differences for any of the variables were found. However, Laxer felt that since several important variables such as counselor experience, techniques used, and length of the counseling experience weren't controlled to a great degree, his results may not have been valid. Therefore, as supported by these studies, group counseling seems to be effective to a large degree in the changing of attitudes and behavior of the problem student.

Dropouts

Littlefield²⁸ in his work with dropouts, began an experimental vocational guidance project in Buffalo, New York. The project which operated for 27 months, included work with sixteen to eighteen year olds who were school failures and jobless. The program consisted of individual and group counseling of nearly 250

²⁷R.M. Laxer, "Counseling Small Groups of Behavior Problem Students in Junior High Schools," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 14: 454-7, Summer, 1967.

²⁸P.G. Littlefield, "School Dropout Demonstration Project," Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 14: 183-6, Spring, 1966.

youths, mainly boys, with eight to twelve in a group. The aim of the groups was to provide a climate which would encourage the youths to feel free to express their problems and feelings. A guideline of topics was developed by the project founders to guide sessions, such as employer-employee relations, job seeking techniques, and employment application and interview techniques. Group techniques included the use of films, role-playing, tours, and guest speakers. Generally, the group sessions centered on the problems and concerns common to most adolescents.

This type of program provided the dropout with a constructive outlet with which to give vent to his pent up feelings and a therapeutic climate in which he could try out new roles and more mature behavior. With a renewed self-confidence and an enlightened interest in life, goals which were once thought to be out of reach came again into view. Expression of thoughts of returning to school, enlistment in the Armed Services, preparation for the Equivalency High School Diploma Examination obtainment of a job, or utilization of training opportunities began to occur as a result of this group counseling vocational project.

Vocations

In a study by Sprague and Strong,²⁹ group counseling was used with high school students to assist them in choosing appropriate occupations. The specific goal of each group member

²⁹D.G. Sprague and D.J. Strong, "Vocational Choice Group Counseling," Journal of College Personnel, 11: 35-6, January, 1970.

focused on having the student improve his problem solving ability by working on his own and other member's cases and by having each student develop a case study on himself. The project used the case conference and small group approach. Students were given various interest inventories and from these developed their own cases, which they presented to the group. The group leader was a regular counselor and functioned as a facilitator for interpersonal interaction, as an expert in problem solving, and as a resource person on psychological testing as well as for problems related to vocational indecision.

The results showed that overall the students enjoyed the group experience and gave positive reactions. The personal case presentation method was viewed as definitely valuable. Over half of the group of students taking part made a definite vocational choice, while most of the rest were making progress in acquiring firm alternatives.

Parent Counseling

The main goal or idea behind group counseling with parents is that the counselor doesn't have the time and can't do as good a job counseling with each and every student as other significant adults in the boy's or girl's environment, namely the parents and teachers.³⁰ By directly helping the parents in group counseling to become better adjusted adults, the children are indirectly

³⁰M.C. Shaw, "Role of Pupil Services with Significant Adults," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 52: 76-87, January, 1968.

helped, since the parents provide guidance for the child's growth, development, and behavior. Also the child learns the nature of human relations from his parents.³¹

Several studies have been conducted which support these ideas and goals. Shaw³² held group sessions with parents and teachers of elementary and high school students. The main concern of the elementary and junior high parent groups was their children's educational development, whereas the high school parents discussed the parental role in educational and vocational decision making. As measured by teacher and administrator ratings, the children of the participating parents overall showed positive changes in grades earned, absences, and administrative and guidance referrals.

In a second study by Gazda and Ohlsen³³ with parent groups, their basic approach was the repeated underscoring of the positive wherever it was identifiable in the parents. Another concept that was used was the concept of limitations; the idea that although people have shortcomings, this fact doesn't make their total being worthless. The basic premise behind this study was that by helping the parents to change, the children would hopefully be also through interaction with their parents. The results seemed to bear out this contention. As reported by the

³¹J. Carlson, "Case Analysis: Parent Group Consultation," Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 4: 136-41, December 1969.

³²Shaw, loc. cit.

³³G.M. Gazda and M.M. Ohlsen, "Group Counseling: A Means of Parent Education," Adult Leadership, 14: 231-2, January, 1966.

counselees, a significant improvement developed in family relations. As rated by personality inventories, the children experienced increased congruency between their self and ideal-self perceptions, and showed improvement in behavior as evaluated by parents and teachers.

V. A DESCRIPTION OF GROUP COUNSELING

The primary goal of group counseling is the creation of an interpersonal helping climate which allows each individual to develop insight into himself and to achieve a healthier personal adjustment.³⁴ This goal is felt to be desirable by most. However, there are those who feel that the only meaningful goals are those set by the group themselves.³⁵ This group feels that the way to establish goals is by having the members state the problems bothering them. This can be accomplished by having members write a brief resume of their problems and signing it with a pen name. This is then read to the group by a different member. It should be remembered that at the onset of a group situation, a feeling of trust has not yet been established, which is the reason for the written problem and pen name. Then, after the group reacts to the problem initially, the person with the problem may feel the atmosphere and climate to be a helping one in which he can explain his problem to a greater degree and have the group work with it more fully. In this manner either a unified group goal can be set or separate goals for each group member can be developed.

The group counselor usually tries to help develop within the group a psychological climate of safety in which freedom of

³⁴W.C. Bonney, "Pressures toward Conformity in Group Counseling," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43: 970-3, June, 1965.

³⁵W. Vordenberg, "Technique for Goal Setting in Group Work," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 48: 479-80, February, 1970.

expression and reduction of defenses gradually occur. In such a climate, many of the feelings of each member toward others and himself are expressed. A climate of mutual trust develops both positive and negative. Each member moves toward greater acceptance of his total being. With individuals less inhibited by defensive rigidity, the possibility of change in the desired directions becomes less threatening. Also, with this reduction in defensive rigidity, individuals can hear and learn from each other to a greater extent. A resultant development in feedback from one person to another occurs so that each individual learns how he appears to others and what impact he has in interpersonal relations. These learnings in the group tend to carry over into relations with peers, other students, and superiors. Thus, the experience in the group affects the counselee's total life experience, hopefully in a positive manner.³⁶

Eventually, the group members will have talked about all the problems that they care to discuss. Should the group decide to break up before all members feel they can go on alone, it is up to those who need more help to decide what to do. They may seek help through individual counseling, join another group, or add members to their present group. In any case, the group terminates counseling whenever a majority of its members decide that the group has fulfilled their needs. However, members also are encouraged to consider the needs of those not ready to

³⁶C.R. Rogers, "Plan for Self-Directed Change in an Educational System," Educational Leadership, 24: 717-31, May, 1967.

terminate.³⁷

Role-Playing

Role-playing is a device for developing skills and insights in the realm of human relations by "acting out" situations which parallel real-life problems. It usually takes the form of psychodrama or sociodrama in a school setting. The basic difference between the two forms is that educational psychodrama concerns itself with the individual involvement of a person with other people, such as adolescent rebelliousness toward parental authority. Sociodrama deals with problems in a societal setting, such as undemocratic attitudes toward members of a minority group. These two group techniques of psychodrama and sociodrama can be applied at any age level in group counseling. The important considerations are that situations which are chosen for acting out bear a relationship to recognizable problems for the age group involved and that individuals are not subjected to traumatic experiences through situations that are beyond their depth and that cannot be utilized by the leader for wholesome learning within the group.³⁸

Role-playing can be used effectively in group counseling when the counselee: (1) is having difficulty describing a situation or his feelings about it to others, (2) wants to know how others

³⁷Ohlsen, op. cit., pp. 178-9.

³⁸Bennett, op. cit., pp. 110-11.

perceive him and his situation, (3) wants to know how others react to his proposed actions, (4) feels that he needs practice with social skills or that he needs practice in dealing with a difficult situation in order to develop the confidence to act.³⁹

³⁹Ohlsen, op. cit., pp. 174-8.

VI. PROPOSED PLAN

Initiating and developing a guidance program involves the contemplation of change in the present institutional structure. Most authors subscribe to Roeber, Smith, and Erikson's five principles of organization which are viewed as essential to the reconstruction of school guidance services: (1) administrative acceptance and support, (2) acceptance and involvement of school staff, (3) a clear definition of objectives, (4) an awareness and assimilation of existing services, and (5) the harmonious integration with the total educational program.⁴⁰

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the success of a given counseling program hinges upon the cooperation of guidance personnel, teachers, and administrators. Riccio,⁴¹ as well as many others, has suggested that many counseling programs fall short of their potentials because teachers and administrators either fail to understand the bases upon which a program is developed or don't see the relevance of the program's activities.

In order to determine whether a cooperative effort exists, there is a definite need for continuous and comprehensive evaluation of the counseling services by guidance personnel, the administration, and the classroom teacher.

⁴⁰V.F. Calia, "Organizational Theory and Research: Some Implications for Guidance Programs," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43: 757-63, April, 1965.

⁴¹A.C. Riccio, Organization and Administration of Guidance Services (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1963) pp. 163.

In one such evaluation by Graff and Warren,⁴² it was found that teachers and administrators held more unfavorable views of the counseling program than did the counselors. They viewed the counselor as a quasi-administrator in the school setting, and felt that the counselor acted more as an advisor than as a counselor. They believed that counselors were too busy with discipline and clerical duties to do educational and personal counseling.

In a study by Russell and Willis,⁴³ intermediate school teachers were asked whether they understood and supported the role of guidance in their school. In general, they agreed that they did. However, the survey revealed that they held varying opinions regarding their own roles and functions in guidance. A significant minority clearly didn't accept guidance as an important aspect of the school program.

Ripee, Harvey, and Parker,⁴⁴ also found widespread misunderstanding and misconceptions of the counselor's role. Amundson and Rosenblum⁴⁵ reported that there is a need for a

⁴²R.W. Graff and R.N. Warren, "Attitude Toward a School's Counseling Services as Seen by Administrators, Teachers, and Counselors," Journal of Secondary Education, 43: 320-3, November, 1968.

⁴³J.C. Russell and A.R. Willis, "Survey of Teacher's Opinions of Guidance Services," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 42: 707-9, 1964.

⁴⁴B.B. Rippe, W.E. Harvey, and C.A. Parker, "Influence of Counseling on Perception of Counselor Role," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43: 696-701, 1965.

⁴⁵B. Amundson and F. Rosenblum, "Classroom Teacher Perceives the Counselor," School Counselor, 15: 215-220, 1968.

better relationship between teachers and counselors, and need for further clarification of both the counselor and teacher role in guidance. Similar studies by Kemp⁴⁶ and Sweeney⁴⁷ found that counselors and administrators vary in their expectation of the counselor as a person.

As can be seen from these studies, there needs to be teamwork among the various segments of a school system in order to make a guidance program work effectively and change in positive directions. As well, the role of the counselor and attitudes toward the counselor and guidance program by other school personnel have to be clear and positive in nature. In order to accomplish these objectives and have a forward moving guidance program in particular and educational system in general, a plan has been developed for self-directed change within the school system. This plan was derived from a proposal presented by Carl Rogers.⁴⁸ The rationale behind the plan is that if there is change in the total educational system, the guidance program will change as well and hopefully in a positive direction.

This proposal involves the use of group counseling with main segments of the school system, namely administrators, counselors,

⁴⁶C. Kemp, "Counseling and the Need Structure of High School Principals and of Counselors," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 9: 326-8, 1962.

⁴⁷P.J. Sweeney, "School Counselors as Perceived by School Counselors and Their Principals," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 44: 844-49, 1966.

⁴⁸Rogers, loc. cit.

teachers, students, and parents. It could involve others as well, such as P.T.A. members and members from the community at large. The groups usually consist of ten to fifteen members and the counselor. The group is relatively unstructured, providing a climate of freedom for personal expression, exploration of feelings, and interpersonal communication. The aim of these group experiences is to improve the learnings and abilities of the group members in the areas of leadership and interpersonal communication. Of course another and very important aim is to bring about change in the organizational climates and structures in which the members work.

The plan could be applied to any educational system, from the elementary to the college level. For the present purposes it would be best applied at the junior or senior high school level. The main priority at this point is to have one or more individuals in positions of power, such as administrators or board members, who are willing to involve themselves in the group counseling experience. If these people are willing to experience the changes that develop through the experience, then they can make a reasonably informed judgment about the rest of the plan. This is a simple but very important base for the whole proposal that follows.

Administrators

Under this plan administrators and board members of the school system would cooperate in a one week intensive workshop. This would be held away from their offices in a secluded area

in order to free them from their usual responsibilities.

An experienced facilitator would serve as a catalyst and participate in each group, consisting of from ten to fifteen administrators. These small groups would constitute the core of the experience. However, general sessions in which stimulating educational topics could be presented also would be held. In these general meetings, cognitive data would be presented which would be added to the interpersonal areas with which each small group dealt.

The small groups would be mainly unstructured and deal with members' interpersonal feelings and relationships. In the eight to ten hours per day spent in intensive group meetings, the administrator would be able to study the problems he has faced as well as those he's created in his own organization. Through this confrontation, he would discover how he appears to others and also would have an opportunity for experimenting with and trying out new modes of behavior in a relatively safe group climate.

As a result of this intensive group experience, the administrator should be able to communicate better with superiors, peers, and subordinates, be less protective of his own beliefs and views, and find it less threatening to accept innovative ideas. He should also become more person-oriented and democratic in his working relations with faculty and staff, and at the same time find it easier to accept positive and negative feedback and use it constructively. Finally, working constructively with all involved, he should be able to spearhead a drive to lay the groundwork for altering the structure of the educational system.

Teachers

The teacher groups will follow the same basic plan that the administrators did. Generally speaking, 80-120 individuals can be involved at one time, with six to ten small groups as the core of the experience. Again, as in the administrator groups, participation in the project should be on a voluntary basis.

Through this experience the teacher should show many of the same changes listed for administrators. He should also be better able to accept the creative student and his ideas, better able to listen to and sympathize with students, be better able to work out problems with students rather than using discipline solely. It should also be hoped that the teacher will establish a more equalitarian atmosphere in the classroom, which would be a more positive working climate for both students and teacher alike. Here, as with administrators, the idea of accepting new and innovative ideas as well as being able to see someone else's point of view would have positive implications for the guidance services aspect of the whole educational setting.

Counselors

The counselor's group could consist of counselors or other guidance personnel from the various parts of the school system. If this is the case, the experience may help the counselors resolve their own problems and learn how to keep these problems from interfering with their success in counseling. It also enables counselors to realize further that others like themselves have similar problems.

Another group containing counselors could also be composed of two administrators, two parents, two teachers, two good students, and two failing students or dropouts. From this experience each separate group learns something from the other. The students learn that the adults are human also; the adults hear the dropout's contempt for school; the good student learns that the poor student also has strong points; and the parents realize that they can learn from the younger generation. Each separate group learns to see things from the others' point of view. Most important of all, flexibility of thought and action develops, and all realize that they can be and are a part of change.

Students

The group experience involving students may take the form of a whole class or course unit in participation. Everyone in any way connected with the class would be included, such as student, teachers, teacher aides, proctors, and the like. Again a facilitator would provide the climate of freedom for expression and for responsible choice. Students and teachers would be encouraged to discuss the problems the class has had. In this group experience students realize they are being heard and that they have an actual part in decisions that are made. As a result the student should feel more free to express both positive and negative feelings in class, fear authority less as he realizes that teachers too are human and have flaws, and find

that the learning process enables him to deal directly with the problems and meaning of life.

Parents

An intensive group experience might also be offered for officers and chairmen of the PTA, or for parents of students who have been involved in a class group experience. A weekend experience might be offered or a three hour evening session once a week, or a twenty-four hour marathon session. The purpose of such groups is to enrich parents' relationship with each other, the child, and the school, as well as to make clear to the parents the significance of the program being carried on in the school system. Although only a small number of parents could be reached in this manner, these few still may serve as interpreters of the program to the rest of the community.

Continuation of the Program

A capability for continuing change should be built into this educational change program. In this manner a larger percentage of the members of the school system will have the opportunity to participate in the intensive group experience. It is also important that the initial group of outside facilitators be able to withdraw. This aim can be achieved by having those who have participated in previous groups train as facilitators and thus replace the original ones. In this manner, a system has been established for perpetuation of change in the school

system. Further group experiences for faculty, parents, students and administrators can be held. Thus, the educational system will have incorporated into itself a facilitative function which will mean continuous openness to innovation and a continuing change.

Evaluation

A team composed of an administrator, a faculty member, and a student from the educational system would handle the evaluation. At least two assessments, one at the beginning, and the other at the end of two years, should be made by this group. If possible two or more of these teams should be used in order to compare results between teams as well. Areas such as the following would be assessed for change in the system: (1) the organizational and educational theories present in the operation of the school system; (2) the attitudes of superiors, subordinates, teachers, and students to each other; (3) the degree to which constructive educational innovations are being developed and employed; and (4) the degree to which open communication, trust, openness to new ideas, and flexibility of organizational structure exist in the system.

VII. DISCUSSION

One of the main priorities in a plan of this sort which deals with a whole school system concerns the various group experiences being held within a reasonably short space of time. This has to be the case so that the impact of the group experience will not be diminished. Also, the aim should be to hold at least ten separate workshops in the first school year of the program, with from one to ten groups in each of these workshops. In this manner, the number of people involved in the group experience will run into the hundreds. This is a large enough fraction of the total school system so that the effects of the experience will not be lost.

A serious drawback to this plan for educational change concerns funding. The two main expenses concern the cost of the facilitative professional staff that organizes the program and the cost of the workshops. The cost of the facilitators will decrease as the newly trained system facilitators take over these duties. However, the cost of the workshops still remains the same, about \$15 per day per person. If the school system isn't able to afford these expenses, funds could be asked for from such agencies as the U.S. Office of Education or similar groups concerned with improving existing educational conditions.

Three different groups, administrators, the community, and professional groups may have objections to the plan. Professional groups such as psychiatrists and psychologists may feel that people from within the groups trained as facilitators aren't well

enough qualified to deal in such emotion-laden situations. However, studies by Rioch⁴⁹ have shown that high quality interpersonal work can be carried out by housewives and others who are non-professionals.

Old line type administrators may be apprehensive that the plan will disrupt their smoothly operating system by causing too much change and ferment. The proposed plan will cause change and as a result problems will develop. However, it will substitute problems of a process-centered organization for those of an organization steeped in tradition and the static state. Arguments along this line may also be voiced by the community. In every community there are individuals and groups who are devoted to the past, to rigid views of the school, and who are frightened by the rapid change which characterizes the modern world. Because of their rigidity to change and newness, this group would be unlikely to go through an intensive group experience. Therefore, this segment of the community represents a significant problem to planned education. It can be only hoped that this fraction will be objective enough to permit change to begin in the system and accept it as the positive aspects appear.

The proposed plan is admittedly general in nature in relation to changes which will take place in the school system. It deals mainly with attitude change, increasing communication, and creation of a greater degree of open-mindedness among those concerned.

⁴⁹Margaret J. Rioch, "NIMH Pilot Study in Training Mental Health Counselors." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 33: 678-89, 1963.

Herein lies the plan's value with regard to uplifting the whole educational system and guidance program as a result. With a trusting, more open feeling, administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, and community will be able to see the other's point of view. Thus, all will have a broader, more informed base to use in making decisions. Attitudes will change among these various groups and more true communication will take place. As a result, all will work together to bring about positive change in administrative, teaching, and guidance functions. The whole school system will benefit from the cooperative, communicative and positive atmosphere which will have been created as a result of the group experiences of the proposed plan.

As W.C. Hulse⁵⁰ has said, "Man is a group animal. He operates primarily in group settings. He has learned to curb his egocentricity and replaces it by cooperative behavior. His participation within the group gains for him a sense of belonging and of security which is essential to his well-being."

⁵⁰W.C. Hulse, "Therapeutic Management of Group Tension," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 20: 834-8, 1950, citing from Merle M. Ohlsen, Guidance Services in the Modern School (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964), p. 149.

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GROUP COUNSELING AND A PLAN FOR
EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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ABSTRACT

One of the most promising ways yet discovered for facilitating constructive learning, growth, and change in individuals or the organizations they compose, is group counseling. The primary goal of these groups is the creation of an interpersonal helping climate which allows each individual to develop insight into himself and to achieve a healthier personal adjustment. The climate of openness, risk-taking, and honesty generates trust, which enables the person to recognize and change self-defeating attitudes, test out and adopt more innovative and constructive behaviors, and as a result, to relate more adequately and effectively to others in his everyday life situation.

Building on this definition, the first section was concerned chiefly with defining and describing group counseling from:

(1) a historical point of view, (2) its theoretical approaches, (3) the uses of group counseling in an educational setting, and (4) a basic description of group counseling, with the technique of role playing mentioned in this context also. Studies were cited which supported these group counseling areas.

Part two of this report was built around a proposal for change of attitudes toward the guidance services in particular and change of the educational system in general. The suggestion was to carry on group counseling with administrators, teachers, students, and parents to facilitate the desired change. The idea of working with these four groups in the school system was based upon the premise that in order to bring about change, a cooperative

effort must be made by all concerned. A discussion section followed the proposed plan. The merits and shortcomings of the proposal were considered in this section, and it was concluded that the strong points outweighed the shortcomings.