

THE EFFECT OF A SIX WEEK PROGRAM OF SYSTEMATIC TRAINING ON COUNSELLORS

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Abstract

A group of graduate students were trained according to a popular "helping" model which purports to increase the ability to be facilitative. It was found that graduates were more facilitative after training, were able to train others, and that this type of facilitation ability may be related to self-facilitation. Results should be interpreted in light of the fact that there was no control group and that the measures of facilitation were of a paper-pencil variety rather than simulations of actual interaction.

Résumé

Un groupe d'étudiants inscrits aux études supérieures ont reçu un entraînement selon un modèle populaire d'assistance qui réclame pouvoir augmenter l'habileté d'aider le client. On a observé qu'après leur entraînement, ces étudiants possédaient cette habileté à un degré plus avancé, étaient capables d'entraîner d'autres personnes, et que ce genre d'habileté pouvait s'apparenter à la facilitation de soi. L'interprétation des résultats doit tenir compte du fait qu'il n'y avait pas de groupe contrôle et que les mesures employées étaient du type "crayon-papier" plutôt que des simulations de véritables interactions.

The inclusion of didactic and experiential components has been recognized by most counsellor education programs in Canada as being superior to the use of only one component exclusively. Didactic components, because they are gained from similar textbooks, tend to have a commonality which the experiential components do not share. It seems that the experiential part of a counsellor training program depends on the background and philosophy of those in supervisory positions. One type of experiential training which is gaining acceptance is the one proposed by Carkhuff (1971). The model purports to increase trainee functioning in the "facilitative conditions." The basic conditions are empathy, warmth and genuineness. These are "taught" through a systematic progression of interpersonal skills such as attending, responding, and communicating. Many studies have been done to determine if this type of training has the effect of increasing the ability to be facilitative. Carkhuff, Kratochvil, and Friel (1968) reported that a group of trainees increased their ability to be facilitative as measured by the Discrimination Index (Carkhuff, 1969) but not

as measured by the Communication Index (Carkhuff, 1969). In a similar study Anthony and Carkhuff (1970) indicated that a group of rehabilitation counsellor trainees made gains in both the Discrimination and Communication Indices. Carkhuff and Berenson (1967) and Boak and Conklin (1975) had similar results with counsellor trainees. In a thorough discussion of some of the problems with research using Carkhuff's model, Gormally and Hill (1974) point out that other studies have measured facilitation through the use of audio taped stimulus statements and volunteer client interviews. Results showed that trainees increased on these measures as well as on the paper and pencil measures mentioned above. They also say that only through the measurement of actual client changes will the real utility of systematic training be established. The present study had three aims: to replicate previous studies to determine the facilitativeness of counsellor trainees after training, to determine whether trainees could effect changes in others immediately after training, and finally to investigate the relationship between two paper-pencil measures of

facilitation, facilitation as measured by a tape recorded interview, and facilitation as measured by self-development.

METHOD

Subjects

The counsellor trainees were eleven graduate students enrolled in a six week summer session practicum course in counselling at the University of Calgary. A second group of students who became the "clients" of the counsellor trainees were 53 undergraduates enrolled in the same summer session but in an introductory course in guidance and counselling.

Instruments

The Discrimination Index as set out by Carkhuff (1969) was used as one measure of facilitation. The index is composed of 16 client statements, each followed by four different counsellor responses. Respondees are required to rate each of the responses according to a 5 point scale. On this scale a rating of 1 indicates that the counsellor response does not communicate any of the facilitative conditions (empathy, warmth, and genuineness) whereas a rating of 5 indicates that all of the conditions are communicated fully. Respondee ratings are compared to the keyed ratings established by experts and a deviation score calculated. For example, if a respondent rates one of the counsellor responses as a level 3 and the keyed rating is a level 4, then the respondent's score is the difference between the two or, in this case a 1. By subtracting the respondent's rating from the keyed rating for all possible responses, totalling them and then dividing by the number of responses, a mean deviation score can be established. This score is the individual's Discrimination Score. Carkhuff does not present any reliability data for this index. Validity is presented in the form of normative data on several groups which indicate that the general population scores at 1.5, various groups of undergraduate students score 1.3 to 1.1, lay persons score 1.2, teachers score 1.0, beginning psychology graduate students score 0.8, experienced counsellors (not systematically trained) score 0.6, and experienced counsellors (systematically trained) score 0.4.

The Communication Index is a modified form of the Discrimination Index. It consists of ten client statements, but instead of rating counsellor responses, the respondent is required to produce

a response in writing following each of the ten client statements. These statements are subsequently rated by judges using the same 5 point scale as that used in the Discrimination Index. In this study 3 other graduate students who were previously trained in response rating acted as judges. An interjudge reliability of .90 was established before rating. A respondent's Communication Score is the average of the ratings for 10 responses.

Accurate Empathy Scale (Truax, 1972). This scale was derived from earlier versions of the same scale which have been extensively validated as reported in Truax and Carkhuff (1967). This scale is recognized in the research as one of the best available for the purpose of measuring Empathy even though there is currently some controversy about its validity (Conklin, 1975; Chinsky and Rappaport, 1972; Rappaport and Chinsky, 1972; and Truax, 1972).

Program Development. Counsellor trainees were asked to develop, for themselves, development programs following the guidelines as set down by Carkhuff (1974). These programs can involve any area of living including social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Graduates were required to state their goals (lose 20 pounds), method of goal attainment (e.g. diet, exercise, etc.), and a reinforcement contingency including what rewards were applicable for what gains in behaviour. Each of the graduate students were given a rating by the instructors of either 1, 2, or 3. These "subjective" ratings were measures of program development with a 1 meaning the individual was making behavioral gains as set down in the program, 2 indicating that the individual had written-up a program but as yet had not started on implementing it, and a 3 indicating that a program had as yet not been written.

Procedure

All data collection and training took place during a six week period.

Prior to systematic training, the graduate student group responded to the stimulus statements on the Discrimination and Communication Indices. They were exposed to training following the procedure outlined by Carkhuff (1971) and modified by Boak and Conklin (1974). Training was conducted during a 5 week period, comprising a total of 30 hours. Upon completion, the graduates again responded to the Discrimination and Communication Indices.

TABLE I
Means and Standard Deviation of Facilitation Measures for Graduate Students
(N = 11)

	\bar{X}	S.D.	t	Sig.
Empathy (tape recorded interview)	2.74	.34		
Program Development Rating	1.82	.83		
Discrimination Index — Pre	.62	.16		
Discrimination Index — Post	.42	.15	6.31	$p < .01$
Communication Index — Pre	1.47	.21		
Communication Index — Post	1.90	.23	5.62	$p < .01$

TABLE II
Pearson-Product Moment Correlations of Facilitation Measures for Graduate Students
(N = 11)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Empathy (tape recorded interview)	1.00	.35	.39	.16	.26	.52
2. Program Development Rating		1.00	.73*	.67*	.28	.67*
3. Discrimination Index — Pre			1.00	.78**	.38	.44
4. Discrimination Index — Post				1.00	.37	.49
5. Communication Index — Pre					1.00	.54
6. Communication Index — Post						1.00

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

After the first week of training the graduate students were given lessons in Program Development (Carkhuff, 1974) and asked to begin work on instituting a self improvement program. They were informed that progress in their programs would account for a portion of their course grade. Program Development was rated by the two instructors of the course on the last day of the six week session.

Each of the graduate students made a tape recording of one of their actual interviews with a client. They were encouraged to make several such tapes and retain one which in their opinion best demonstrated their counselling skills. These tapes were rated by the graduates and the instructors (Inter-judge reliability = .88) on the last day of the six week session. Tapes were rated according to procedures outlined in Conklin and Arnold (1976).

In summary, the graduate student group responded to the Discrimination and Communication

Indices before and after systematic training, produced a tape recording of an interview, and produced a self-development program.

In addition to the above, the graduate students replicated a program of systematic training with undergraduate students. This training was done during the sixth week of the summer session. Each graduate student was given a group of 5 undergraduates with whom to work for 20 hours. The undergraduates were pre- and post-tested with the Communication index in order to obtain a measure of facilitative ability.

RESULTS

Table I indicates mean and standard deviations on the measures given to the graduate group.

Table II shows the intercorrelations of the above measures. The data collected for the undergraduate group and a test of significance was as follows:

\bar{X} pre-test 1.18	S.D. pre-test .26	}	t = 34.6, p < .01
\bar{X} post-test 2.74	S.D. post-test .27		

DISCUSSION

The first purpose of the study was the investigation of the effect of training on the facilitation level of a group of students taking a graduate course in counselling. The present study confirmed earlier results (Anthony and Carkhuff, 1970) by showing that scores on Discrimination and Communication can be increased significantly through a program of systematic training. These results must be interpreted with caution because the design of the study did not include control groups. As a result, one cannot be certain that increases were due solely or even partly to treatment effects. In addition, the criteria (written responses to written statements) cannot be considered the same as helping clients and measuring changes in client behavior.

The second purpose of the study was to determine if after systematic training the graduates could have the effect of increasing the facilitation level of others by giving them the same training. In order to answer this question undergraduates were systematically trained by the graduates and tested on the Communication Index. The data show that the undergraduates increased their scores significantly on this index of facilitation. At the end of 20 hours they were able to write responses which were more facilitative. The same cautions should be applied here as above. That is, there were no control groups and the ability to write facilitative responses is not necessarily related to the ability of verbalizing the responses in an interpersonal relationship. It is necessary to replicate this study with the inclusion of control groups and criterion measures closer to actual counselling and interpersonal relating. Such a study is now in progress.

The third purpose of the study was the exploration of the relationship among several facilitation variables. One unexpected finding was the lack of a significant relationship between empathy and the other measures of facilitation as measured by the Communication and Discrimination Indices. This result, if upheld in future studies, could call into question a number of

uses of these Indices as measures of empathy. The finding also confuses an already complex issue (i.e. whether empathy is a unitary phenomenon or is composed of factors). This study may or may not lend support to the Conklin and Hunt (1975) study which found a generalized empathy factor and several specific factors, one being diagnostic acumen. With such a small sample (n=11) the correlations must be very large before they reach statistical significance, thus minimizing the possibility of confirming the result in Conklin and Hunt, or of detecting any other relationship.

Previously, little evidence had been reported for the reliability of the Communication and Discrimination Indices. The present study shows moderate correlations (stability coefficients) for Discrimination (r = .78) and Communication (r = .54).

Up to this point no known study has reported the relationship between self-improvement and other variables of facilitation. As can be seen the relationship between Program Development and Discrimination is a strong one as indicated by the correlation of .73. The ability to discriminate levels of facilitativeness does not appear to have anything in common to program development. A reason for the moderately high correlation could be proposed. It could be that self-facilitation (i.e. the ability to help oneself) is related to the ability to be facilitative to others. However, this result should be considered highly speculative because of the small sample and the subjective rating of program development used in this study.

It must be assumed that all findings in this study are tentative and that the investigation should be considered as exploratory. Some previous findings were confirmed indicating that "systematic training" can increase skills. It is not known whether this type of training is superior in this regard to other types because no control or alternative treatment groups were included in the design. There is some evidence to indicate that systematic training has the immediate effect of increasing one's ability to train others. In addition, facilitation as measured by

one's ability to discriminate among counsellor responses may be related theoretically to self-facilitation.

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