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THE EFFECTS OF COUNSELOR ACCURATE EMPATHY AND NON-POSSESSIVE WARMTH UPON CLIENT VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRESS

A substantial body of research has demonstrated the therapeutic potency of the therapist-offered conditions of empathic understanding, non-possessive warmth, and genuineness (Truax & Carkhuff, 1967; Truax & Mitchell, 1970). The extent to which these conditions account for constructive personality change within hospitalized schizophrenics (Rogers, Gendlin, Kiesler, & Truax, 1967), college underachievers (Dickenson & Truax, 1966), and elementary school pupils (Aspy, 1965) argues also for their potential contribution to the rehabilitation process.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the contributions of counselor accurate empathy and non-possessive warmth on the vocational rehabilitation progress of clients within a residential treatment center.

PROCEDURES

The present study was based on an evaluation of group psychotherapy for rehabilitation clients during a six-month period. The study was made possible only through an extensive reorganization of the counseling services in the residential center.

Counselors. Four master's degree, experienced counselors and four counselor aides, recruited from secretarial applicants and without special training, offered group psychotherapy to the clients on a weekly basis. It had been demonstrated in an earlier comparison (Truax & Lister, 1970) that the untrained aides were actually superior to the four professional counselors in effecting client rehabilitation progress when they were independently responsible for case load management.

Clients. One hundred sixty-eight clients were randomly assigned to 24 therapy groups of seven clients each. The sample was approximately two-thirds male, one-third female; three-fourths white, one-fourth Negro. Approximately 25 per cent had personality-behavioral problems as a major disability; 25 per

Est-ce que l'empathie, la chaleur et la sincérité pourraient aussi faciliter le processus de la réhabilitation professionnelle?

La thérapie de groupe dans un centre résidentiel.

Conseillers qualifiés et secrétaires agissant comme conseillers.

La diversité des problèmes présentés par les sujets.

La méthode d'analyse de l'interaction entre le conseiller et le groupe.

Les critères: le rendement au travail, les attitudes de coopération, le progrès en cours.

Un haut niveau d'empathie et de désintéressement était relié à un meilleur rendement au travail.

cent had spinal cord and orthopedic damage; 10 per cent had speech and hearing disabilities; 10 per cent were mentally retarded; and 30 per cent had miscellaneous rehabilitation problems.

Accurate empathy and non-possessive warmth. Two three-minute segments of counselor-group interaction were taken from the middle third of each tape-recorded therapy session. These excerpts were coded and placed on a master tape for rating on the levels of empathy and warmth using previously developed scales (Truax & Carkhuff, 1967). Judges were undergraduate students trained according to procedures described by Lawlis (1968). Intraclass coefficients (Ebel, 1951) of reliability were .74 ($p < .01$) for accurate empathy and .66 ($p < .01$) for non-possessive warmth.

Measures of rehabilitation progress. Client progress in rehabilitation was evaluated by five-point rating scales in use by the Arkansas Rehabilitation Service since 1960. Correlation coefficients of interjudge agreement based on 60 similar agency clients ranged from .43 for Quality of Work to .82 for Work Quantity, with a median r of .69, significant beyond the .001 level. While not empirically validated to date, the measures are reported by agency personnel to be substantially related to independent judgments of rehabilitation progress. Thus for each client, training supervisors responsible for vocational training gave monthly ratings on: (a) client work quantity or work production; (b) client cooperativeness in training and on the job; (c) positive client work attitudes; (d) quality of client work; (e) client dependability; (f) client's ability to learn; (g) client's progress in course during last month; and (h) overall progress in the course of training and work. Training supervisors made their ratings without knowledge of the levels of empathy and warmth received by the clients working under their supervision.

RESULTS

Analyses of variance were performed on the measures of rehabilitation progress with the 24 therapy groups divided into the 12 high and 12 low groups, based on the levels of accurate empathy provided by the counselors. The 24 groups were likewise divided into the 12 high and 12 low groups in terms of the levels of non-possessive warmth displayed by counselors. These results are presented in Table 1.

Those clients assigned to therapy groups in which counselors provided higher levels of accurate em-

pathy and non-possessive warmth were judged by their training supervisors to have made better progress ($p < .05$) than those assigned to groups led by counselors offering lower levels of these two therapeutic conditions. Higher levels of empathy and warmth were each associated with (a) higher work quantity, (b) higher quality of work, (c) greater learning ability, and (d) greater overall progress in vocational training. Fourteen of the 16 differences examined were in the direction supporting the effects of empathy and warmth, and eight of these differences were significant. The two differences which were opposite to the direction hypothesized failed to approach statistical significance.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that empathic understanding and non-possessive warmth are important sources of variance in client progress in vocational rehabilitation. These findings are particularly encouraging because they demonstrate that the measurable effects of empathy and warmth extend to vocationally and socially relevant behavior outside the psychotherapy process, *per se*. Thus the rele-

TABLE 1
 Results of Analyses of Variance for Effects of Accurate Empathy and Non-Possessive Warmth on Client Vocational Rehabilitation Progress
 Resultats des Analyses de la Variance pour les Effets de l'Empathie et du Desinterressement Chaleureux sur le Progres de la Rehabilitation Professionnelle du Client

Measure Critère de mesure	High Empathy Mean	Low Empathy Mean	Analyses of Variance — F test value	High Warmth Mean	Low Warmth Mean	Analyses of Variance — F test value
Work quantity Quantité de travail	4.54	3.82	4.72*	4.41	3.93	3.95*
Cooperativeness on the job Collaboration au travail	4.34	4.60	1.84	4.44	4.50	1.53
Postive work attitude Attitude positive vis-a-vis le travail	3.90	3.65	1.95	3.83	3.72	1.32
Quality of work Qualité du travail	4.18	3.76	5.33*	4.17	3.77	3.94*
Dependability Fiabilité	3.99	3.61	3.30	3.87	3.72	2.61
Learning ability Liabilité à apprendre	3.92	3.62	4.57*	4.04	3.50	5.60*
Progress in training during past month Progrès durant le mois	3.75	3.53	2.39	3.69	3.59	2.04
Overall progress in training Progrès total	3.82	3.38	5.36*	3.79	3.41	4.08*

* $p < .05$

La thérapie de groupe semble reliée à l'ensemble du processus de réhabilitation professionnelle. Il n'est pas nécessaire de même d'être un "conseiller très qualifié."

vance of group psychotherapy to the total process of vocational rehabilitation has received some empirical support.

It should also be emphasized that the counselors employed in this study were not highly trained professionals. The finding that counselors with moderate to very minimal training can effect constructive client change through group psychotherapy is consistent with previous findings (Rioch, et al, 1963; Poser, 1966) on the general effectiveness of minimally-trained psychotherapists. Although the master's degree counselors were more sophisticated about the process of psychotherapy and the understanding of psychodynamics, they were not demonstrably higher than the counselor aides on ratings of empathy or warmth.

In conclusion, these findings are consistent with a body of research which has suggested the therapeutic relevance of empathy and warmth across a wide range of clientele and treatment setting. In particular, this study demonstrates the relationship of these conditions to attitudes and behaviors observable outside the psychotherapy process, an essential but frequently omitted step in the evaluation of psychotherapy effectiveness. Finally, this study raises once more the insistent question of the independent contribution of length of training in psychotherapy to constructive changes in client functioning.

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