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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF DOGMATISM AND ITS RELATION TO GROUP RESPONSE

ABSTRACT: This is an exploratory study to determine the relationship of dogmatism and the concerns of group members. Subjects were administered the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale, Form E, and results tabulated by code. Each subject thereafter wrote an unstructured paragraph at the end of each group session about his feelings. These were similarly coded and, after they were analyzed and categorized, were matched with the dogmatism scores. It was found that those ranking high on the dogmatism scale were concerned to a significantly greater degree about the physical setting, the organization and structure of the group sessions, the topics discussed, the goals of the group, evaluation, and level of satisfaction with the group than were those scoring low on the dogmatism scale.

The results of several studies have shown that the degree of dogmatism (or closed-mindedness) has a marked effect on the values (Kemp, 1960; Talley, 1968), critical thinking (Kemp, 1962), self-perception (Kemp, 1964a), and manifest needs (Kemp, 1964b) of individuals. Rokeach (1954) postulated that the closed-minded individual would react to positive or negative authority very differently from the open-minded individual, and that he would make polarized cognitive distinctions in groups of people and opinionated rejection and acceptance of ideas that conflict or agree with his belief-disbelief system. It has also been demonstrated that closed-minded individuals are less able than open-minded ones to tolerate ambiguous situations, and they seem to perceive threat differently (Rokeach, 1960).

In light of these findings it was decided to make a comparative study of the feelings and concerns expressed by open- and closed-minded individuals in a potentially threatening and ambiguous situation. This situation appeared to be made-to-order in a group dynamics course in which there was very little content structure, there were to be marks given yet not based on group performance, and the instructor was present but exercised no more authority than any other member of the group. Furthermore, the content (or discussion) was to be generated by the group's behavior. It was felt that this situation constituted an ambiguous and potentially threatening atmosphere, because it differed very much from the conventional university classroom.

It was hypothesized that the closed-minded individuals would express more concern than the open-minded in regard to the structure

and content of the group course, satisfaction with the experience, goals of the group, and feelings toward individual group members and their ideas. It would seem that the closed-minded individuals would perceive the course as a potentially threatening situation.

METHOD

Subjects

Graduate students, enrolled in group dynamics classes required in the Counsellor Education Program at McGill University, served as Ss. The groups were heterogeneous as to age, sex, and work experience. The classes were conducted in accordance with the group-centered approach as formulated by Kemp (1970, p. 180). The groups, therefore, were minimally structured, with content and evaluation emanating from the group. The courses consisted of 12 group sessions of approximately 2½ hours duration. Group membership ranged from 12 to 15 in each group.

Procedure

At the first group session each member was administered the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale, Form E, which he marked anonymously, identifying it for himself with a number he chose. At the close of each group session, each member wrote a short personal report on his feelings and concerns about the session that day. These reports were done anonymously, but each member identified his paper for himself by putting on it the same number he used on the Dogmatism Scale.

RESULTS

The scores on the Dogmatism Scale were tabulated and ranked in order of degree of dogmatism. The 12 highest and 12 lowest scores were ascertained and their means obtained. The mean for the high dogmatics was 164.75 and for the low-dogmatics 88.7. In comparison with the expected population mean of 142 (Rokeach, 1960), the means were found to be significantly different $t = 2.58$ ($p < .025$) and $t = 3.23$ ($p < .005$).

The personal reports were analyzed by three independent judges. It was agreed by them that the concerns written on the reports seemed to fall into ten fairly discrete categories: (1) environment, (2) organization of the group, (3) content or topics of discussion, (4) process or level of interaction, (5) feelings toward individual members, (6) feeling toward the group as a whole, (7) role and attitude of the leader, (8) group goals, (9) evaluative techniques, and (10) level of satisfaction with the group experience. The judges then went through the reports and underlined the comments they believed fell into these ten categories. Then they were tabulated. One point was given to each complete categorical statement. The judges tabulated the results separately and afterwards compared

TABLE I

Comparison of Mean Number of Responses of High and Low Dogmatic Ss

Category of Response	\bar{X} of High Dogmatics	\bar{X} of Low Dogmatics	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
I. Environment (seating, light, room)	.42	.00	22	3.50*
II. Organization (structure, guidelines)	1.42	.33	22	4.36*
III. Content (topics, skills learned)	4.08	1.75	22	6.40*
IV. Process (level of interaction, feelings expressed)	3.75	3.41	22	.68
V. Feelings Toward Individual Members	2.00	2.83	22	.80
VI. Feelings Toward Group As A Whole	3.33	3.08	22	.50
VII. The leader (style, attitude, ability)	2.41	1.42	22	1.62
VIII. Goals (purpose, outcome)	1.08	.58	22	1.81*
IX. Evaluative Techniques	1.83	1.00	22	2.67*
X. Level of Satisfaction with the Experience	4.17	3.00	22	2.92*

**p* < .05 *N* = 24

their results. Where there was disagreement as to the category of the response, the tabulation was cast out. Thus each response in the final tabulation had to be agreed upon by all three judges. The mean number of responses in each category were then calculated and the scores thus obtained by the two groups of Ss were then compared.

Table 1 demonstrates the difference in the means and level of significance for each category.

The closed-minded Ss were found to respond with significantly greater frequency to the physical setting, the organization and structure of the group sessions, the content or topics discussed, the goals of the group, the evaluative technique of the group and its leader, and the level of satisfaction with the experience, than did the open-minded subjects. There was no significant difference between the two groups in their expressed concerns about the process or level of interaction, feelings toward individual members, feelings toward the group as a whole, or the leader's role or style.

DISCUSSION

These findings seem to indicate that in group sessions in which there is little or no structure, the expressed concerns of closed-minded and open-minded individuals will differ greatly. The way in which a group is organized will be of considerable concern to the closed-minded individual. Lack of defined structure appears to be threatening to these members, as well as difficulty in dealing with the ambiguity of a situation in which there is to be a discussion without a set topic presented. Closed-minded members need to know the goals and expected outcomes, otherwise the ambiguity will again be disturbing.

Closed-minded individuals appear to be more concerned with authority figures and thus will exhibit more concern about what is expected of them. They seem to have a need to express their level of satisfaction with the experience.

In applying these findings to group counselling sessions in which the counsellor (leader) assumes a non-directive or group-centered role, the implication is that the closed-minded individuals in the group may have difficulty accepting the ambiguity of the situation and may be greatly concerned about what is the "right" thing to talk about, what the group hopes to accomplish, and how the performance of the group can be evaluated or analyzed. Further research into the environmental and psychological factors that were exhibited as areas of concern by the high dogmatic Ss seems to be indicated. A challenging question for research arising out of this study is whether these areas of concern could be modified to meet the needs of high dogmatic Ss without having an adverse effect on Ss scoring low on the dogmatism scale, or destroying the principles of group-centered counselling.

RESUME: Il s'agit d'une étude exploratoire qui avait pour but d'établir la relation entre le dogmatisme et les inquiétudes des membres d'un groupe de sensibilisation. On a administré la formule E de l'échelle de dogmatisme de Rokeach. A la fin de chacune des sessions de groupe, on a demandé à chaque sujet d'exprimer ses sentiments par écrit. On a ensuite analysé et catégorisé les réponses, puis on a établi la correspondance avec les scores à l'échelle de dogmatisme. On a observé que les membres qui avaient obtenu des scores élevés à l'échelle de dogmatisme étaient significativement plus inquiets que les autres. Leurs inquiétudes avaient trait au contexte physique, à l'organisation et à la structure des sessions de groupe, aux sujets discutés, aux objectifs du groupe, à l'évaluation et au niveau de satisfaction.

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REVIEWES

ADOLESCENCE: SOME CRITICAL ISSUES

By John J. Mitchell. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston of Canada Ltd., 1971. Pp. 153. \$3.20.

Reviewed by Heleen J. Masciuch,
University of Alberta.

This is an essentially theoretical and very readable book in which Mitchell touches mainly upon the areas of Adolescent Sexuality, Alienation During Adolescence, Drugs and the Adolescent, and Healthy Behavior. Mitchell shows his bias toward humanism throughout the book and he has tried to cover some vital areas which have been noticeably absent in texts on adolescence in the past. This he has done quite well, although this reader felt it unfortunate that he did not go into an even broader discussion of these areas. However, this is also part of the strength of this book — due to its brevity and loose style, the reader tends to continuously think and reflect more deeply about the subject, tending to make a few hypotheses on his own.

The feeling that Mitchell seems to understand and care about adolescents comes through the book many times.

This book is useful for light reading on the subject of adolescents, or for an undergraduate psychology course dealing with this area.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT
IN THE SCHOOLS

By Edwin L. Herr and Stanley H. Cramer. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972. Pp. 356.

Reviewed by William E. Schulz,
Queen's University.

Herr and Cramer's explicit objective is to further vocational development. By carefully explaining the stages of their systems approach to vocational guidance, they succeed in stimulating the reader to redouble his efforts to institute an effective vocational guidance program in his school.