

stated that many of their colleagues were unsympathetic to the approach and were very open in their criticism toward L.S.I. Consequently, most of the teachers stopped talking to their colleagues about L.S.I., and slowly gave it up themselves. When the teachers were asked whether this loss of interest was due to the inadequacy of L.S.I. or whether it was due to the lack of support of services, they responded by supporting the latter interpretation. The teachers felt that L.S.I. is a useful technique, but it must be supported by the entire school staff. No teacher can employ L.S.I. methods successfully in isolation. Teachers felt that group supervision on a bi-weekly basis would have been enough to reinforce their efforts and provide direction in handling the behavior of selected students.

SUMMARY

Teaching L.S.I. theory and methods to large groups of teachers seems to result in mixed blessings. While most teachers accept the theoretical constructs of L.S.I., problems arise when they try to initiate it in their classrooms. Left on their own, teachers become aware of multiple forms of resistance that block their efforts and reduce their feelings of adequacy. If L.S.I. methods are to be taught as a basic part of the teacher training program for classroom teachers, then the university must have a continuous contact with the public schools or train school psychologists and counselors to perform this service. One solution presently being considered at Indiana University is to work with the entire staff of an elementary school.

4. Working Paper: Training Teachers in Life Space Interviewing*

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THE KEY to improved school mental health lies in the ability of the classroom teacher to deal effectively and hygienically with day-by-day life events. To that end the present program focuses on the core skill of life space or reality interviewing, following the conceptual framework of Redl.

The original practice was termed "crisis interviewing," since the technical development was derived in camp setting for disturbed, acting-out boys where this

method was used in individual and group situations ranging from minor disagreements to major mayhem. While a teacher might start working with such critical behavior situations, once these were under control, action would be directed to such perennial vexing problems as motivation, helping the unhappy and withdrawn children and interpreting typical growth-related problems of youngsters.

Teachers need concrete help on spe-

*Accepted for publication, November 1, 1961; condensation accepted, March 1, 1963.

cific situations, but they also need a theoretical framework so that their efforts are not idiosyncratic. Life space interviewing embodies a theory and method uniquely suited to the teacher's responsibility in group management, social adjustment and social learning.

We first introduce teachers to Redl's concept of milieu as a design for the analysis of life space. The teacher finds cues through reading the child's reactions in the setting. Little by little the nature of the pupil's perceptual bias and distortion become evident: The teacher sees life through the eyes of the pupil. Detailed studies are made to see how a child gives evidence of his inner feelings through his gesture, language and style of social interaction. While it is simple to appreciate aggressive intent when a pupil uses sarcasm or hits another, the signs are less obvious when the child defends against fear of failure, has covert mistrust of adults, and so on.

SETTINGS FOR TRAINING TEACHERS

There are two essential conditions for this training. First, the teacher must start with a recognized group or individual problem that he is interested in trying to work out. Frequently the initial problem chosen proves not to be the true critical problem and redirection is accomplished. The second essential condition is ample supervisory time. The teacher may at first take the child to work jointly with the supervisor or, at second best, take tapes or notes.

We employ more direct focus on the teacher's own reactions than is usual. Central frustration results when one avoids obvious aspects of the teacher's behavior. In fact, if there is a most subtle aspect of this work, it is the trainer's ability to approach the significance of

such personal reactions without giving psychological insult, the very thing we are hoping to teach the teachers to do. Most teachers have been far more ready to deal directly with elements of their behavior than we had originally judged. This has introduced a quality of psychological realism in the relationship that enhances rather than inhibits the supervisor's function. On those infrequent occasions when the teacher's behavior implied the need for therapeutic treatment, referrals were suggested. Parenthetically, the level of technical perfection and pureness of self-insight stated in the literature as necessary for therapists is unrealistic to expect of teachers. In place of this, it is possible to capitalize on the deep, intuitive capacities found in many teachers. Pupils do not await perfection in their teachers: They often respond well to moderation or mitigation of negative forces. This is not to say that the course is always smooth, for at times there are outcroppings of human relationships that make one wince. However, in our experience, most teachers are reasonable and, when they respond in poor fashion, it is usually out of frustration regarding their inability rather than serious personal maladjustment.

TRAINING PROCEDURES

We start by having the teacher describe the way the world looks through the eyes of the pupil under study. This description is worked over with particular attention to how one judges what the child's life space looks like to him. Consideration is given to properly limited goals for the teacher-pupil relationship, and to what eventual outcome might be anticipated. In many instances, the teacher must first clear plans with the administration or special personnel.

Life space interviewing has its own integrity and meaning as a process that will enable the on-the-line adult to come to grips with a problem without indulging in the typical morass of moralistic preaching. Our theoretical scheme illustrates how the instigating conditions, content, process, goals and closure of reality interviewing differ from those of traditional interviewing. Stress is put on the empathic nature of the teacher relationship, coupled with a noninterpreted recognition of deeper dynamics.

But teachers seek more than a theoretical framework: Operational steps are needed. First, the teacher makes certain conversational progress in a nonthreatening and nonjudgmental way. The perception of the pupil must be clearly expressed by him and on his own terms, distorted though it may be. When more than one pupil is involved, special attention is given to balanced or rotated listening. The pupil's psychological perception is sought rather than the usual "legal" truth of who did what first. The empathic manner of listening is the process by which trust is established.

Second, the teacher tests for depth and spread of the behavior: Are there other related problems? Is this really the central issue? Here the teacher assesses how the incident is an expression of the pupil's personality. Children frequently give deep and meaningful material at this stage, and teachers can learn to listen without probing or accepting responsibility for resolving that which is beyond their sphere of influence.

Third, comes the critical state, when the teacher asks, "Well what do you think ought to be done about this?" Here the interest is to explore how the pupil's value system is applied in the given situation. Of course, there is far more to

this, including the sensing of pupil anxiety and dealing with resistance that the pupil puts up to prevent any self-commitment.

Frequently, even at this early stage in the interview, the problem resolution is produced by the juxtaposition of various factors brought into the open through reasonable discussion. If not, then the teacher as a responsible adult goes to step four. By this time, aware of psychological ramifications in this situation, the teacher begins to highlight reality factors in the school milieu that have implications should the behavior continue. This is done by objective examination of various real features of the school environment in a factual manner.

Step five is the exploration of pupil motivation for change; that is, how does the pupil think he might be helped, and what role might the teacher play in supporting reasonable subsequent management of the behavior impulse in question? No one-shot magic or instant therapy is expected, and the need to return again and again to significant problems is emphasized.

Finally, in step six, the teacher develops a follow-through plan with the pupil. What will we have to do if this happens again? This must be both realistic and relevant. Any plan must be designed within the limitations of the school resources, and must acknowledge possible escape hatches. Pretense in the school milieu, or reluctance to come to proper grips with issues must be faced frankly. For example, a teacher cannot set up a "removal" plan if no one in this school is ever suspended, or suggest referral to therapy if none is available. Thus we are again at the point of beginning, the school milieu in which teachers' efforts take place. A clear rec-

ognition of this fact prevents a teacher from expecting to solve all the problems, or even thinking he should be able to solve them all.

In all stages, the specific content of the teacher's life space interviews are

analyzed and next steps are proposed, even to answers for anticipated specific response on the part of the pupil. Planning for anticipated responses is used to trial-test adult answers before actual confrontation occurs.

5. The School-Centered Life Space Interview as Illustrated by Extreme Threat of School Issues*

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THE SIX severely disturbed, acting-out boys who lived at the Child Research Branch of the National Institutes of Health for five years had come to us, in early preadolescence, feeling that they had been tried and found wanting by parents and society at large—especially that part of society represented by school.

Their school lives had reinforced their sense of worthlessness and inadequacy. So often and so deeply had the experience of failure and rejection been felt at school that they seemed to send out nerve-end antennae sensitive to any possible real or imagined threat. School was a structured network of such threats. Any assignment, any task, any direction, any teacher would be perceived as a means to expose them. Much of their hitting out with words, fists, feet, teeth or saliva, much of their withdrawal and abstraction, much of their perseveration, on the one hand, and flightiness of interest or concentration, on the other, was a response to the threat of exposure. As they grew older, the amount they had

not learned at school overwhelmed them, while the amount they had learned appeared microscopic in comparison. Since their disturbance was of a kind in which, much of the time, they were quite aware of what other contemporaries could do and were expected to do, their own appraisal of where they stood in relation to the rest of the world only confirmed their low opinion of themselves and made it doubly necessary for them to cover up their lacks by uncontrolled, violent behavior, by withdrawal, by grandiose delusions and acted-upon fantasies. Thus, it is not surprising that the life space interview should have been used so frequently in connection with school. The life space interview is a treatment technique dealing with an immediate incident or crisis, to gain insight or information on the spot. Since school was a mine of crises, the school setting provided innumerable occasions to use this technique.

In the course of developing both the life space interview and the education

*Accepted for publication, November 1, 1961; condensation accepted, February 25, 1963.

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