

artistry and personal maturity which are essential to counselling studies. Research skills alone may lead to some title "psychologist" but they do not lead to the title "clinical," "educational," or "counselling" psychologist.

DOROTHY R. FREEMAN,
*School of Social Work,
McGill University.*

GROUP LEARNING AND THE VOLUNTEER

In recent years there has been a rapid growth of Volunteer Bureaus in the United States and Canada. This indicates the extension of welfare services in the community through the use of volunteers. Such a development poses a challenge, as well as creating an opportunity, for professionals such as Social Workers, teachers, doctors and nurses to collaborate with and ensure more creative and productive use of these public-spirited citizens.

In the United States, training programmes for a wide range of service fields have been established for the better deployment of volunteer workers. In Canada a similar trend is gaining momentum. On the Canadian university scene, courses for the training of volunteers engaged in direct service to individuals, families or groups are a new development.

It may be of interest to share my own experience in providing such courses for volunteers over the past few years, through the McGill University Centre for Continuing Education, and in collaboration with the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal.

A lecture-and-discussion group meets for ten weekly periods. The group is limited to 15 members, to permit active participation and interaction. The heterogeneous composition of the group, ranging from 22 to 60 years of age, male and female, with widely varying backgrounds, socially, economically, ethnically, is at first somewhat disconcerting to the instructor or leader. As well, these volunteers represent a wide variety of hospitals, schools and social agencies. Around the table are, among others, a teen-age club leader, a "golden-age" friendly visitor, a lady working with ex-Mental Hospital patients, a big-brother tutor, a driver for "meals-on-wheels", a director of a used clothing depot, a volunteer librarian, and a representative of an anti-poverty group. The one factor common to all, and which provides the necessary group cohesion, is their interest in freely giving help to others, and the desire to improve the quality of that help.

These very differences enable the instructor/leader to engage the class in a richer, livelier process of sharing experiences, raising questions, challenging or accepting each other's ways of working. Thus, the process of "problem-swapping" and problem-solving in the helping process gets under way.

Each class member presents a current problem situation, facing him or her in the role of volunteer. This is analyzed by the group and by the leader. Group support and encouragement, as well as criticism and suggestions, even offers of new resources, come from all directions.

The attitudes of the group, particularly their resentment of the professional, are shared early on. This serves to demonstrate to the group how "clearing the decks" of negative feelings can facilitate the task at hand. Basic principles of helping and interviewing are drawn from current interaction in the group itself. The leader points up differences and similarities, provides information, extends ideas, and endorses the right of the volunteer to maintain his own value system while not imposing this on clients.

As an illustration of group interaction, one older lady, tied to a strict ethical code, objected firmly to the leader's emphasis on the non-judgmental principle. She pointed a finger at another member of the group, a young lady living in a commune, as likely having transgressed the Biblical injunction to "honour thy Father and thy Mother".

The group sprang quickly to the defence of the young lady. One said: "My client's husband ran off and left her with three kids. Should they honour their Daddy?" Another said she read stories to a hospitalized "battered" child—Should this child honour her parents? The elderly lady persisted. There is Black and there is White, and the Good Book has the answers. Finally, one member reinforced the leader's notions that to help others, one cannot act as "judge and jury", that one communicates in language the client understands. She too quoted the Bible: "Judge not, that ye be not judged". This brought a thoughtful silence from the older volunteer, who was then given support by the leader. It was pointed out that this controversy provided the group with an opportunity to differ openly and to respect differences.

This approach was seen as a positive, and was quickly related to other situations in which volunteers are involved. For example, the need to enlist the resentful parent of a child to be tutored, the need to understand the anger of the elderly patient being discharged from hospital; the importance of understanding and accepting feelings while not necessarily condoning behaviour become real to the group.

This acceptance of feelings becomes integrated into the many service aspects of the volunteers' daily work, as reported back to the group. The principle was even extended to enlisting "difficult" teachers, doctors and of course social workers.

The volunteers concluded that their service role had achieved more dignity, that they functioned more flexibly, with more initiative, at the close of the course. They became more comfortable in team work with professionals, and in expecting clarification of the tasks assigned to them. They recognized the need for on-going training, and in particular for further peer-group learning.

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