THE COUNSELING PROCESS IN PARENT-STUDY GROUPS BASED ON INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

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要旨

キーワード :

In Japan, a course for parent education based on Individual Psychology named "Passage" is provided. The name "Passage" comes from the initial letters of "PArent Study System on Adlerian Group Experiences". It also symbolizes a passage to happy family life through encouragement.

It is designed according to the Dreikursian method of parenting. The course consists of eight two and a half hour sessions. The number of members in a group is six to fourteen. Most of the members are mothers, fathers or school teachers. One or two trainers facilitate the group using a standard textbook.

After finishing the course, many of the participants join follow-up study groups which are held all over Japan. Usually a "Passage" trainer organizes and facilitates them as a leader. Most of the leaders are non-professionals, but all of them have completed the "Passage" training course.

Follow-up groups have various styles, but most of them deal with actual issues of members by a group counseling process. A participant presents her or his family issue, mostly a problem with children. The leader and other members help her or him to solve the problem, usually referring to the "Passage" textbook.

The Japanese Society of Adlerian Psychology provides many study opportunities for non-professional counselors and group leaders. For example, group leaders often undertake personal or group supervision by licensed psychotherapists. They participate workshops for counseling technique. Moreover, many leaders make use of the computer communication systems such as homepages, buletin boards, blogs, chat boards, messengers, and E-mails. A computer communication system was set up in 1988.

Purpose of this study

Although communication between leaders is active, leaders seldom visit other leader's groups. As a consequence, the actual conditions of follow-up groups were not well known. The purpose of this study is to describe the actual process of follow-up groups based on the data gathered in field-

work.

Method

As a preliminary study, we visited some groups to observe their meetings. The impression that we received was that the theory and philosophy of Adler-Dreikurs psychology were deeply accepted and digested in every group.

On the other hand, each group had a different character or atmosphere. In some groups the leader spoke a lot; in others members were talkative. In some groups they liked role playing; in others they did not. In some groups they treated early memories; in others never.

We felt that there was a common base in follow-up groups, but at the same time, wide variety. To describe these impressions in scientific words, we designed an ethnological study. We decided to study the verbal conversation process in group sessions. We asked some groups to record the whole process of some sessions, and four groups consented. One of us visited each group to observe and record sessions. Recordings of nine sessions were obtained.

	Speaker	Address	Speech	Style	Function	Topic	Remarks
1	Leader	All	Hello, does anybody have something to discuss?	Meta			deside client
2	Client	Leader	Yes. I am a little confused about my son.	Statement	Report		
3	Leader	Client	All right, go on.	Imperative			
4	Client	All	He is 14, and he does not study ～	Statement	Report		
5	Leader	Client	Please give us a recent example of the problem.	Meta			get episode
6	Client	Leader	Last night I told him to stop the games ～	Statement	Episode		
7	Leader	Client	What happened after that ?	Open Q	Q on Episode	Sequence	
8	Client	All	He shouted "Shut up !"to me and ～	Statement	Episode		
9	Member	Client	Does he always behave like that?	Open Q	Q on Episode	Sequence	
10	Client	Member	No, he didn't before. I think he ～	Statement	Report		

(Table 1)

This table shows a sample of the data. The first column shows the numerical order of the speech. The second column signifies the person who spoke. Persons are classified as leader, client （the person who presented the problem） and member （a person who did not present the problem, but helped the client to solve her or his problem）. The third column indicates the person to whom the speech was addressed. The fourth column is the content of the speech. The fifth column is the style of the sentence. It is classified as statement, imperative, open-ended question, closed-ended question, or meta-message. I will explain the meaning of meta-message later. The sixth column indicates the semantic function of the speech. The seventh column indicates when a new topic be-

gins. The last column gives remarks. In actual sessions, the total number of utterances ranged between 200 to 600.
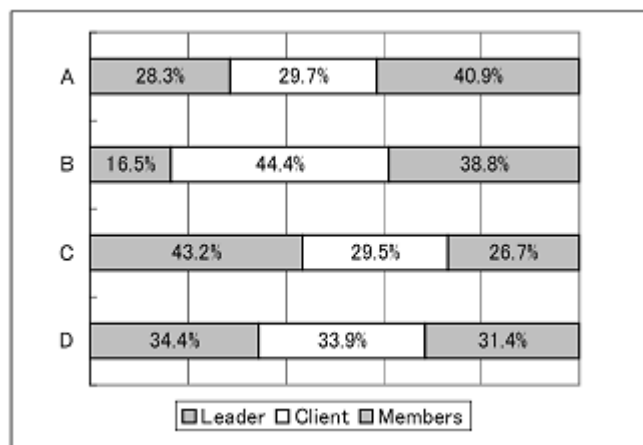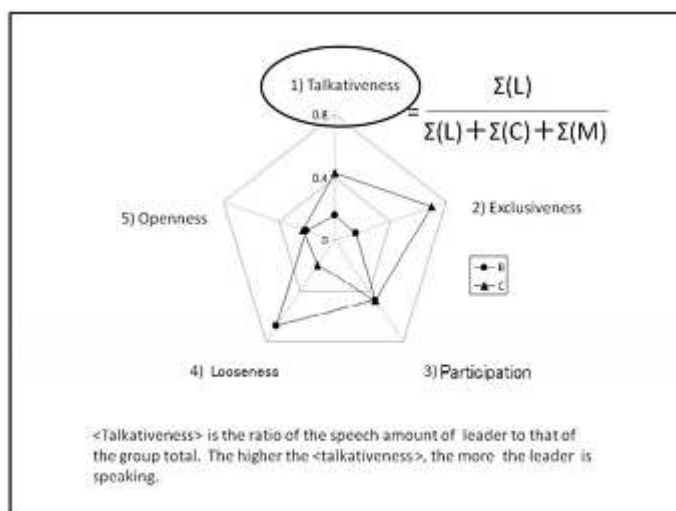

(Figure 1)

This figure shows the speech frequency of leaders, clients and members in one of the sessions of groups A, B, C and D. Look at the group B. The speech amount of the leader is 16%, while that of the client is 44%. Compared to this group, the leaders of group C and D are more talkative. In group C, the speech amount of the leader is 43%, and in group D, 34%.

The variety of the group process

To describe tendencies of groups, we decided on five indexes to specify communication patterns. The Figure below shows those five indexes. 1）leader's talkativeness, 2）leader's exclusiveness, 3）member's participation, 4）group looseness, and 5）group openness.
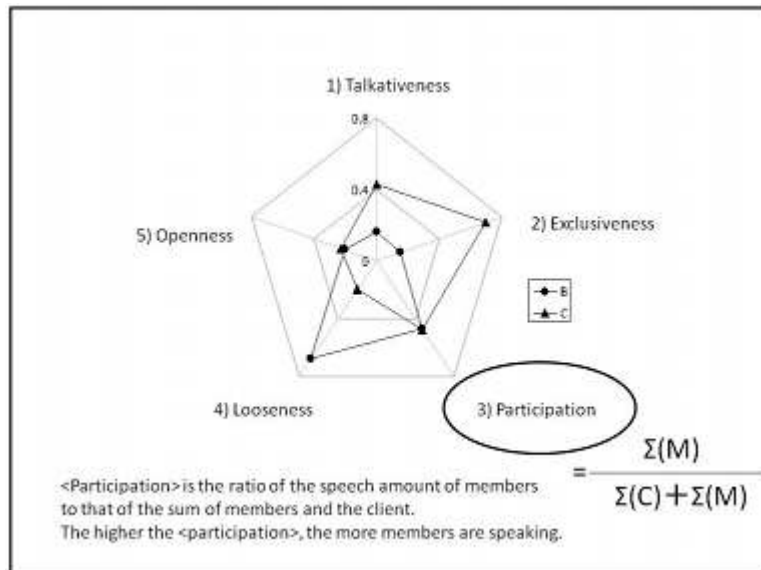

(Figure 2)

The talkativeness index is the ratio of the speech amount of the leader to that of the group total. The higher the talkativeness index, the more the leader is speaking.
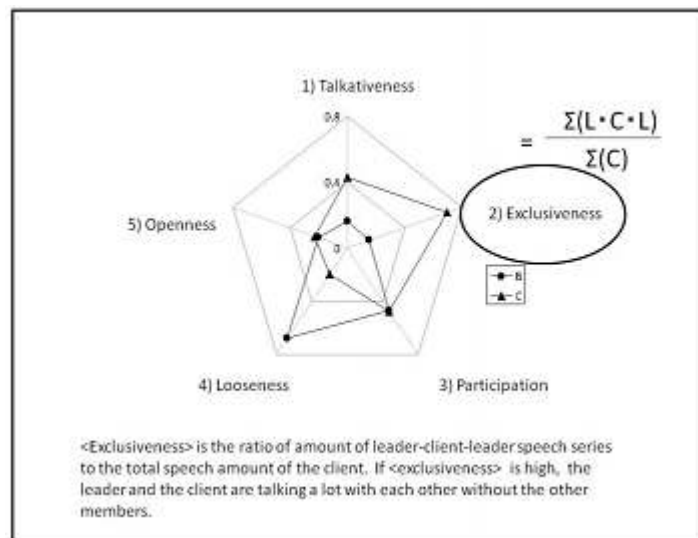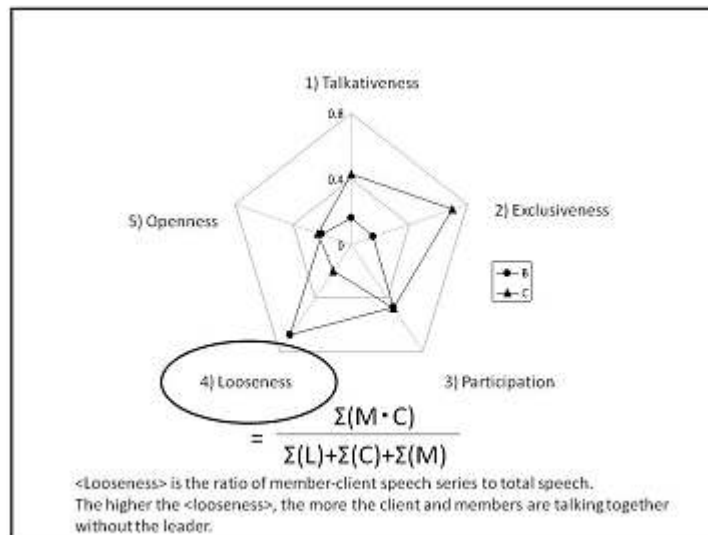
(Figure 3)

The exclusiveness index is defined as the ratio of amount of leader-client-leader speech series to the total speech amount of the client. When the client speaks after the leader, and sequentially the leader speaks after the client, the leader-client-leader speech series is counted. When the client speaks before or after another member, it is not counted. Therefore, if the exclusiveness index is high, this means that the leader and the client are talking a lot with each other without the other members.
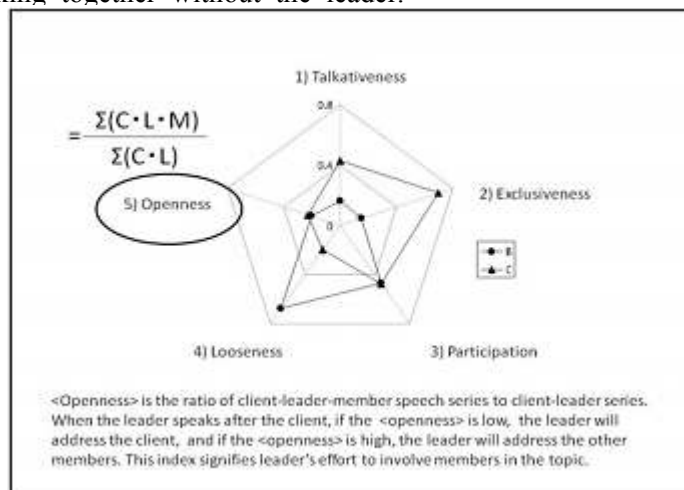

(Figure 4)

The participation index is the ratio of the speech amount of members to that of the sum of members and the client. Thus, the higher the participation index, the more members are speaking.

(Figure 5)

The looseness index is defined as the ratio of member-client speech series to total speech. When the client speaks after a member, a member-client speech series is counted. When the client speaks after the leader, it is not counted. Therefore, the higher the looseness index, the more the client and members are talking together without the leader.
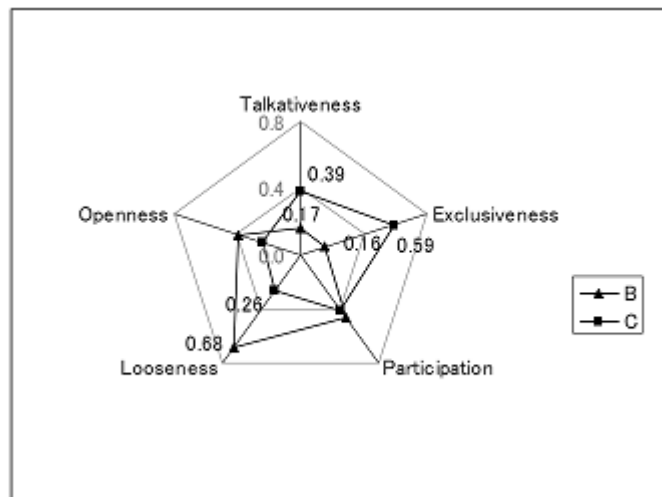

(Figure 6)

The openness index is the ratio of client-leader-member speech series to client-leader series. This is somewhat complicated. When the leader speaks after the client, if the openness index is low, the leader will address the client, and if the openness index is high, the leader will address other members. This index signifies leader's effort to involve members in the topic.

	Talkativeness	Exclusiveness	Participation	Looseness	Openness
A#1	0.23	0.24	0.5	0.55	0.25
A#2	0.28	0.25	0.58	0.46	0.42
A#3	0.2	0.24	0.53	0.61	0.34
B#1	0.26	0.25	0.45	0.49	0.25
B#2	0.17	0.16	0.47	0.68	0.2
C#1	0.43	0.7	0.48	0.2	0.23
C#2	0.39	0.59	0.41	0.26	0.15
D#1	0.34	0.61	0.48	0.32	0.13
D#2	0.4	0.63	0.41	0.22	0.23

(Table 2)

Table 2 shows the results of the nine sessions of the four groups. I will explain in more detail.
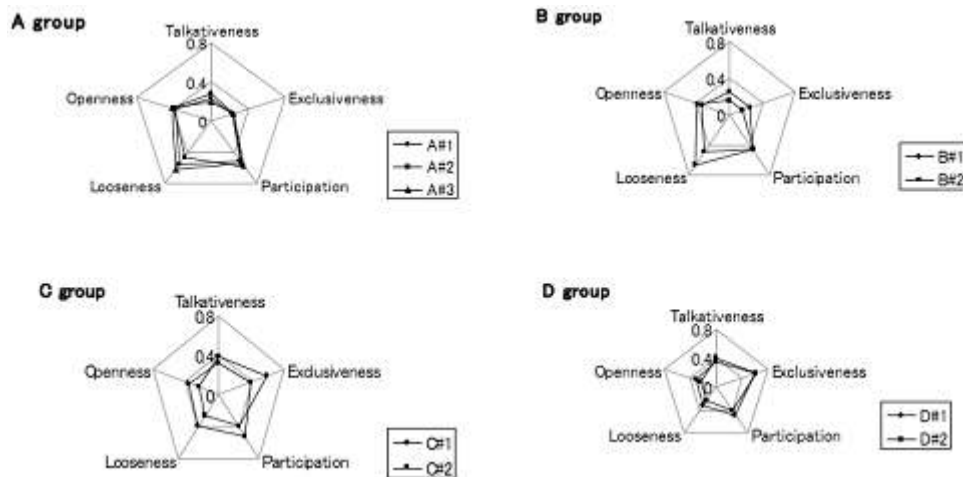

(Figure 7)

Figure 7 shows the indexes of session two of group B and session one of group C. For the participation and the openness indexes, the two groups gave similar values.

However we see quite different values between the two groups for talkativeness, exclusiveness, and looseness. The talkativeness index of group B is lower than group C, the exclusiveness index of group B is far lower than group C, but the looseness index of group B is much higher than group C.

From this we can say that group B is comparatively "loose," which means that members often chat away without the leader. On the contrary, we can say that the leader of group C is talkative and shows strong leadership.

(Figure 8)

These four figures show the indexes of all sessions of each group. Each group had a similar index pattern for all the sessions. This suggests that the leader may determine the tendency of the group.
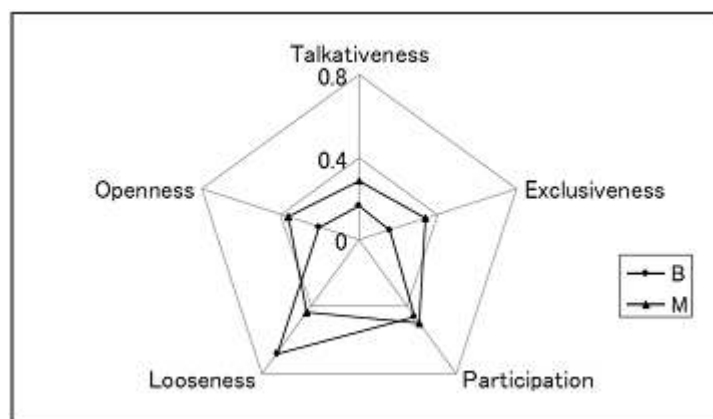
(Figure 9)

To examine this assumption, Masako Seino, one of the researchers of this study, facilitated a session of group B instead of the original leader. In Figure 9, B shows the indexes of the session facilitated by the original leader and M shows the indexes by Masako. As you can see, the indexes for the sessions with different leaders are different. From this we may hypothesize that the character of the group is strongly influenced by the style of the leader.

The basic structure of the group process

In this study we also analyzed the linguistic and semantic styles of the sentences used in the sessions in detail, but we do not have enough time to report everything here today. So now we will introduce the function of meta-messages.

		Leader's speech	The structure of the session
B#2	1	Is there anything you want to discuss?	Deciding client
	2	About your daughter? And how is she?	Gathering information
	3	Will you tell us a recent event?	Episode
	4	Does anyone have any ideas?	Discuss on alternatives
	5	What will you do to encourage her?	
C#1	1	Shall we discuss on your issue?	Deciding client
	2	What do you think about that?	Gathering information
	3	Where did it occur?	Episode
	4	Let us do role-playing. Who will be his wife?	
	5	How do you feel?(to the role of the wife)	
	6	Let's change the roles.	
	7	How do you feel now?(to the client)	
	8	All right, what will you do then?	Discuss on alternatives
	9	Let us try!	
	10	What do you think, watching the scene?(to all)	Sharing
	11	What do you think?(to the client)	
	12	Thank you all.	

(Table 3)

Here are two examples of the structure of sessions. The top sample shows the process of session two of group B, and the bottom sample is of session one of group C.

In the beginning of the session, both groups decided who should be the client. Then, the group gathered detailed information from the client about the problem. Next, the client was asked to vol-

unteer an episode. In group B, long discussion followed to understand the problem, while in group C, role playing was adopted. When the members had understood the client's issue enough, both groups discussed on alternative ideas on how to deal with the problem. Lastly, sharing was carried out in the group.

We analyzed the records of all sessions of every group and discovered a common structure in the group counseling process. Usually, a group session can be divided into five phases; 1) a report about the problem, 2) an episode related to the problem, 3) analysis of the episode, 4) discussion on alternative ideas, and 5) final group sharing.

These phases are initiated by "meta-messages." A meta-message is the leader's message which decides the direction of the next transaction. For example, "Would anybody like to share a recent event?" is a meta-message to initiate the report phase. "Could you please give us a recent example of the problem?" This is a meta-message to turn the context into the episode phase.

When the client has explained the episode sufficiently, the leader decides a method to deal with the episode. Some leaders may suggest to reading part of the "Passage" textbook. Some may suggest to employing role play. Other leaders may suggest the use of Andriessens' Lifestyle analysis sheet, while some may suggest some other method they like. Therefore, the meta-messsage for the third phase, the analysis phase, has variety.

After analyzing the problem, the leader asks the client, "Do you have an idea to solve the problem?" This meta-message initiates discussion about alternative ideas. If the client does not give an answer, the leader will address the other members asking a message something like, "Do you have any ideas?" When the client is content with an idea and makes up her or his mind to try it at home, finally, the leader asks the group, "Would anyone like to share anything about today's session?" This is the meta-message to begin the sharing phase.

These meta-messages are not instructed in the official training programs. They are spontaneously created by the leaders of follow-up groups. Of course, some models exist. Some Adlerian psychotherapists often provide opportunities of open forum counseling, while some of them demonstrate group counseling in front of observers. In these demonstrations, the therapists unconsciously use these meta-messages. The leaders have probably learnt this method from these kinds of models.
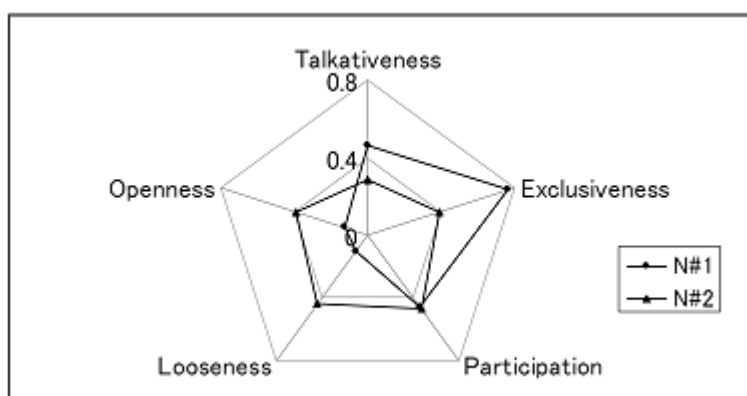
(Figure 10)

Figure 10 shows two demonstrations of group counseling sessions by Dr. Shunsaku Noda, a licensed training psychotherapist. Number 1 was a session carried out before this study. At that time, Dr Noda was not conscious of the function of meta-messages. Number 2 was carried out af-

ter he learned the results of this study, and he tried to operate only by meta-messages without uttering other sentences. The result was totally different. Later, however, he confessed, "The group flowed so beautifully. I learned that I can manage things with only meta-messages. But, that is not my style." As you may know he is a talkative kind of person.

We believe that it is useful to know the function of meta-messages with facilitating follow-up groups. However, the individuality of the leader lies rather in messages. Thus, the character of a group expressed by five indexes is related to leader's use of messages. Meta-messages construct the group process, and, at the same time, they give leaders a wide range of freedom to select their favorite style of messages.

In other words, the use of messages give tenderness to leaders. As far as the basic structure of Adlerian counseling is maintained, there are many ways to actualize the concrete process. Tenderness is realized when we have a systematic method in one hand and when we have freedom to develop the method in our own creative way in the other.

Conclusion

In conclusion, each group is unique, so there is no group process which is exactly the same, but there are the common basic principles described by meta-messages. To improve the quality of the group counseling process, it is necessary to know the functions of meta-messages and messages. At the same time, the individual style of counselors must be respected and encouraged, as long as they manage the process along the basic principles.

Acknowledgment

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