A Group Approach of Life-Style Analysis

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Abstract

This is a paper to report a group Life-Style Analysis process which utilizes cards and discussion. The purpose of the group is to help a participant to realize their Private Logic and to help him/ her to develop Social Interest (Gemeinschaftsgefühl).

A volunteer informant tells the group one of his/her Early Recollections. He/she is asked to separate it into paragraphs, and to write down each paragraph on a separate card (Paragraph Cards). Paragraph Cards are placed horizontally following the order of the original text.

Members of the group examine each Paragraph Card and discuss the emotion and the reason relating to each paragraph. Each idea is written on a card (Feeling/Thought Cards) and put under the corresponding Paragraph Card making a vertical column. A few Feeling/Thought Cards are made to each Paragraph Card by each member.

After preparing Feeling/Thought Cards to all the Paragraph Cards, members discuss to sort them by semantic similarity into stacks of Feeling/Thought Cards and give a title to each stack (Title Cards). A Title Card is put on the top of each stack of Feeling/Thought cards. Now each of the Paragraph Cards is followed by a vertical column of some Title Cards.

Then the members discuss to make a meaningful text by Title Cards. It is most likely that the group constructs a few meaningful texts (Logical Plots), for an Early Recollection. Each of the constructed Logical Plots is regarded as a candidate of the informant's Private Logic. The informant has freedom to select one among them.

In this method, even non-professional people can deal with a Life-Style topic in a safe and encouraging manner without giving any traumatic damage to the informant. It is not only useful to develop Social Interest of the informant but also of other group members through seeing with others eyes and feeling with others heart.

Key words: Adlerian psychology, Individual psychology, life-style analysis, early recollection group process, APPROACH

0. Introduction

Life-Style Analysis is one of the most important things for Individual Psychology. I think that it is a key to theories, therapeutic techniques and therapies themselves of Individual Psychology.

But in fact experienced counselors and therapists have been able to conduct Life-Style Analysis so far. And it is difficult for students to learn how to analyze Life-Styles.

I have been looking for a method that study groups could deal with Life-Style Analysis in a safely manner. In this paper I would like to introduce a group approach of Life-Style Analysis, which I have been trying. I named the method "APPROACH", which means "Adlerians Practical Program for Reviewing Opaque and Arcane CHoices" .

1. The Procedures of "APPROACH"

"APPROACH" is very simple. It needs only cards and pens.

(Step 1) Listening to the volunteer informant's Early Recollection

First, a volunteer informant of a group talks his/her Early Recollection. The leader asks questions to him/her if necessary and writes it down on the paper.

Then the informant separates his/her Early Recollection into some paragraphs which are meaningful to him/her. And the group writes each paragraph on a separate card (Paragraph Cards). Paragraph Cards are placed horizontally following the order of the original Early Recollection.

I will be using a sample episode to illustrate how "APPROACH" could work.

Let's assume that I'm the leader of the workshop and also that we have Mr. Suzuki as our volunteer informant.

I'll ask Mr. Suzuki to tell us one of his Early Recollections and it'll be written down on paper.

When I was 5 years old, I went to the athletic park with my mother and two children from the neighborhood. At that time, as I didn't have any friends particularly and I had not played with any friends ever, I was so happy. Usually, I didn't play with athletic equipments as I wasn't good at playing with them. But, in this occasion, I tried my best to catch up with my friends by climbing and pulling things up and we played with the same equipments. "It's cool! It's heavy, isn't it?" We talked to each other joyfully. I could get along well with them and I was very happy and I felt relieved.

Mr. Suzuki separated the text as follows:

i) When I was 5 years old,

ii) I went to the athletic park,

iii) with my mother and two friends from the neighborhood.

Paragraph Cards

| i) When I was 5 years old, | ii) I went to the athletic park, | ········· | xii) and I felt relieved. |
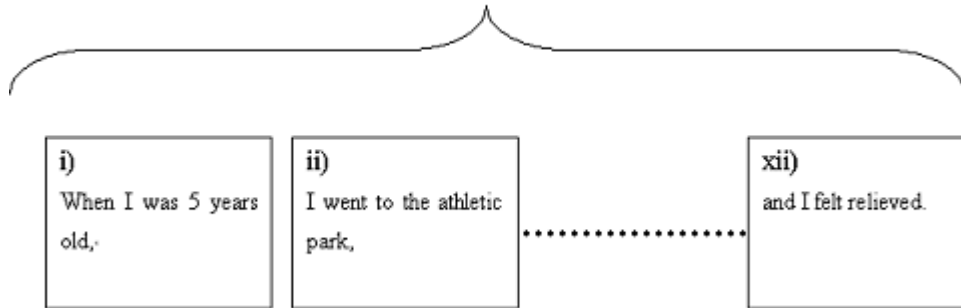
iv） At that time, as I didn't have any friends particularly

v） and I had not played with any friends ever,

vi） I was so happy.

vii） Usually, I didn't play with athletic equipments as I wasn't good at playing with them.

viii）But, in this occasion, I tried my best to catch up with my friends by climbing and pulling things up and we played with the same equipments.

ix） "It's cool! It's heavy, isn't it?" We talked to each other joyfully.

x） I could get along well with them

xi） and I was very happy

xii） and I felt relieved.

(Step 2) Brainstorming

Secondly, the group brainstorms possible feelings and thoughts arising from a paragraph cards. Before proceeding to this step, I often do a trick. For example, I tell the members as follows:

In fact the sentences on the cards which are in front of you are the fragments of an ancient document. We don't know what the text means. Let's try to guess and discover what it means.

I choose a Paragraph Card randomly and ask the members to write down how they would feel and why they would feel so on a card（Feeling/Thought Cards）. I also advise the members not to think too much and to write as many cards as possible. Feeling/Thought Cards are placed vertically below the Paragraph Card.
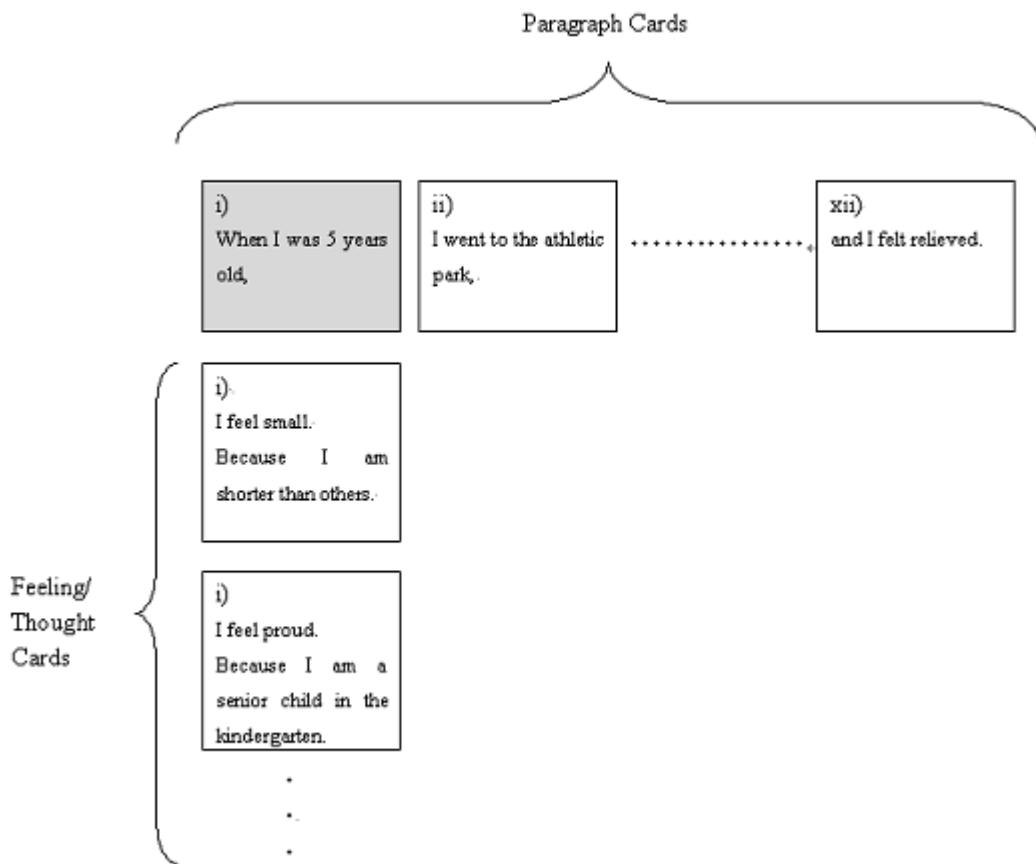
There must be many Feeling/Thought Cards on the table. Eventually, the group will have more than 100 cards.
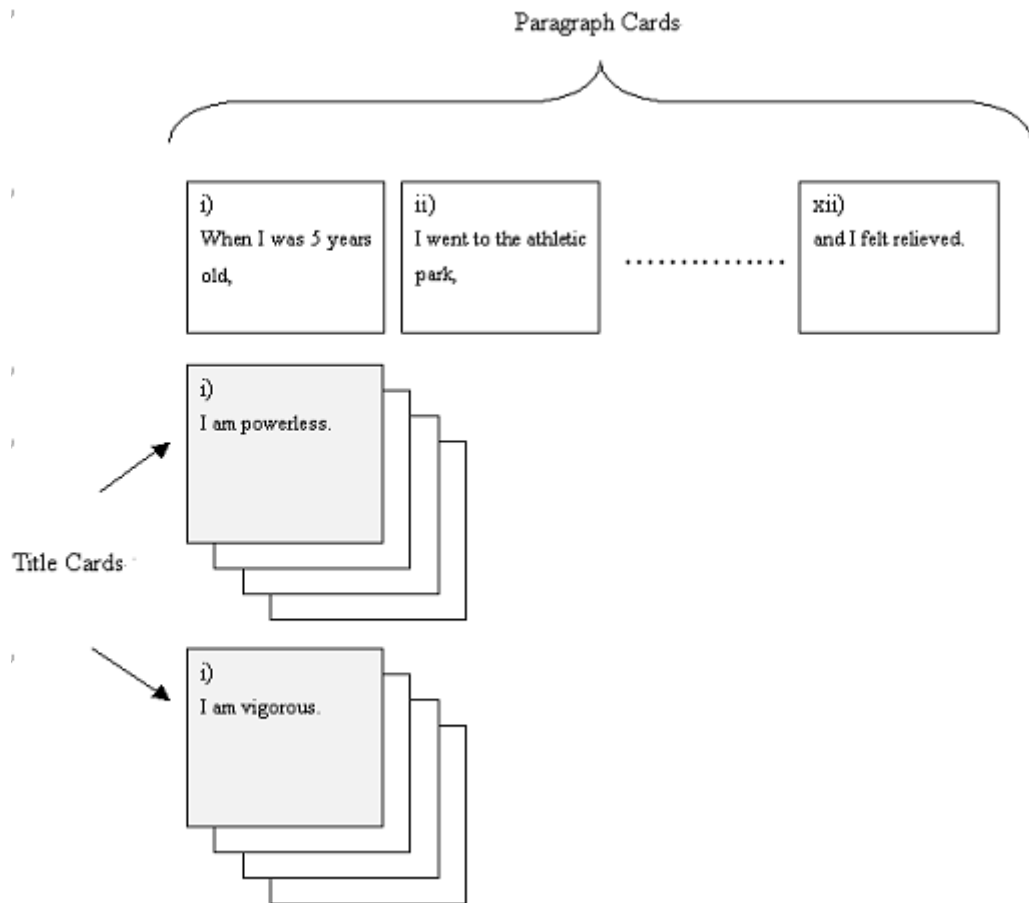
(Step 3) Discussion and Titling

Now we have many Feeling/Thought Cards to each one of the Paragraph Cards. As part of the third step, I choose a column randomly and ask the members to discuss Feeling/Thought Cards and sort them by semantic similarity into stacks. The members go through all the Feeling/Thought Cards. Then the members give a title sentence to each stack so that it could represent that stack of Feeling/Thought cards（Title Cards）.

(Step 4) Making a meaningful text out of Title Cards

After creating the Title Cards for all the stacks of Feeling/Thought Cards, as the forth step, the members discuss those Title Cards so that they can create a meaningful text by using the Title Cards. It is most likely that the members construct a few meaningful texts（Logical Plots）out of one early recollection. The following Plot A and B are examples of these Logical Plots:

Logical Plot A

Paragraph Cards

| i) When I was 5 years old, | ii) I went to the athletic park, | .... | xii) and I felt relieved. |

Title Cards

i) I am powerless.

i) I am vigorous.

i) I am powerless.

ii) I don't like playing outside.

iii) I am safe when I am with my mother.

iv) I haven't been able to have particular friends.

v) I don't say what I want to do.

vi) I am experiencing very special things.

vii) I don't want to do what I don't like or I am not good at.

viii) I tried desperately to catch up with my friends.

ix) I am happy when my friend talks to me.

x) I feel safe only when I can distinguish friend from foe.

xi) I feel safe only when I know my surroundings.

xii) I can get relaxed only when I am proved to be able to get along well with my friends.

Logical Plot B

i) I am proud of myself.

ii) I want to play outside freely and to my heart's content.

iii) I am happy to have friends to play together.

iv) I want to make a lot of friends.

v) I want to make friends to play together and talk with.

vi) I am happy to see my friends being happy.

vii) I have the courage to try challenges.

viii) I do the things in my own way.

ix) I have friends who talks to me.

x) I am happy for my friends to be happy.

xi) I am happy when I can share the same experience with my friends.

xii) I have my fellows around me. I am proud of myself.

I ask Mr. Suzuki to select one which he thinks best fits him.

2. Consideration

(1) What is a "Logical Plot"?

My observation through 32 cases lead me to think that "Logical Plots" contain the following descriptions:

a) What is the situation?

b) How does the informant think, feel, and behave in the situation?

c) What is the result?

d) What did the informant learn from the early memory?

e) How is the informant connected with others or the world?

I think you would agree with me in that all of these meet the requirements to be a Private Logic. Therefore, "Logical Plots" could be candidates of the informant's Private Logics.

In fact, when the members know each other well, some say "You are like that!". When an informant came back home and told his/her Private Logic to his/her family, all the other members of the family often said, "We knew you are such a person."

(2) How does the group construct the informant's Private Logic?

When Mr. Suzuki separated his Early Recollection into 12 paragraphs, he did it in an unconscious, opaque and arcane way. When he did it, there should be some reasons, which made him cut the whole story into 12 paragraphs. I think he cut it between his inner or psychological "scenes". In each scene, he needed to refer to his own standards of value to decide how he should respond to the situation. What members did when creating "Title Cards" was to guess what kind of standards of value Mr. Suzuki had referred to.

On the other hand, it's not true that there was a certain standard of value or Private Logic within Mr. Suzuki before the workshop began.

The "Title Cards", which are standards of value, are just fictitious stories created by guessing.

But once Mr. Suzuki selected the one which best fitted him, it turned up to be his Private Logic and he just accepted it. The power and collaboration within the group is so intense and supportive that Mr. Suzuki felt the Plots were real and reasonable and just accepted them.

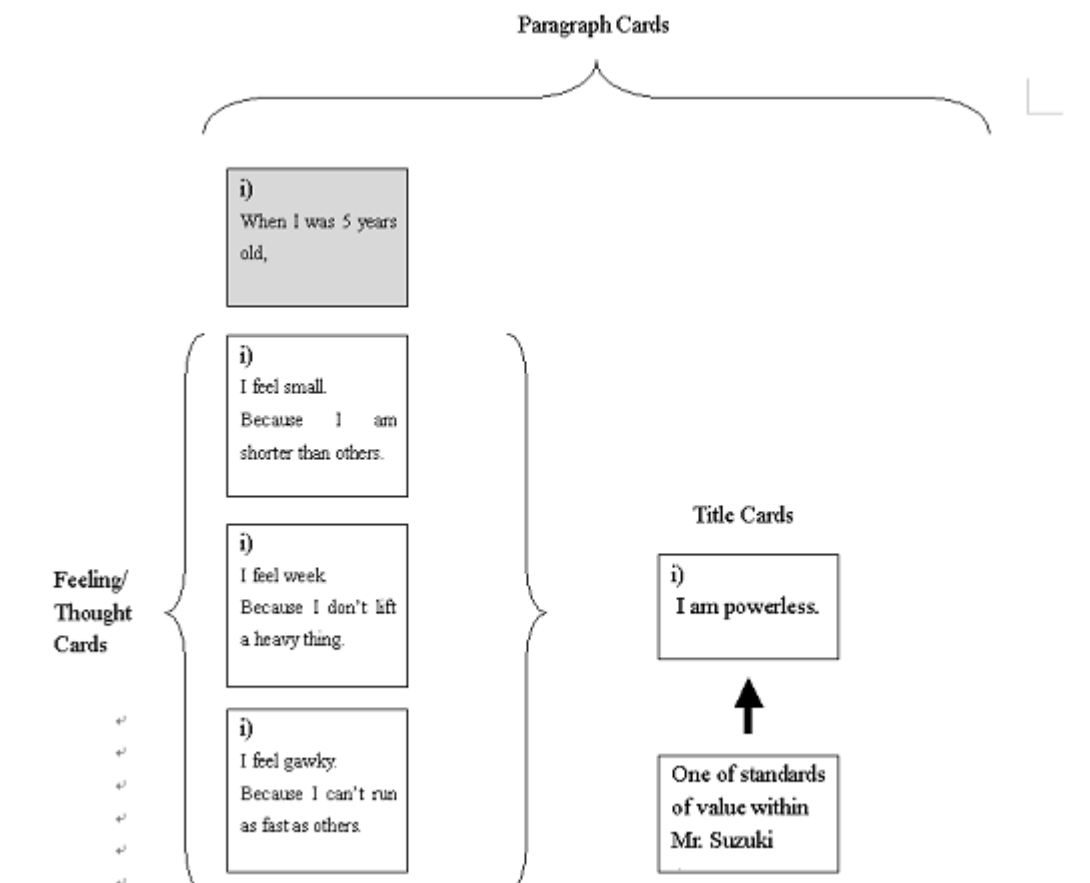Sometimes, some informants select a few or all of the "Logical Plots" as their Private Logic. In these cases, they explain as follows:
"I usually use this Private Logic, but in troubles I use another one. And in the most severe situations, I use the other one."

I think we can agree in that one person has only ONE Life-Style. When I applied the same procedures to Mr. Suzuki's Private Logics instead of to his Early Recollection, we had only one meaningful plot, which is considered to be his Private Meaning. In view of this, we'd also agree in that one Life-Style can contain multiple Private Logics, which are all based on one Private Meaning.

I think these cases well illustrate this theory. In other words, a person adopts one Private Logic from a pool of multiple Private Logics, depending on the situations.

Paragraph Cards

i)
When I was 5 years old,

i)
I feel small.
Because I am shorter than others.

i)
I feel week
Because I don't lift a heavy thing.

i)
I feel gawky.
Because I can't run as fast as others.

Feeling/ Thought Cards

Title Cards

i)
I am powerless.

One of standards of value within Mr. Suzuki

3. Features and Conclusion

There are four features.

One: "APPROACH" is simple and safe. It's safe because the group deals only with the written cards.

Two: It's very impressive to know that there are so many ways to feel and think. The members should learn through seeing with others' eyes and feeling with others' hearts.

Three: "APPROACH" helps the members to learn Individual Psychology in the atmosphere of Social Interest. They would need to develop the ability to cooperate with others in a democratic manner during the brainstorming and discussion. For the success of "APPROACH" workshop, it's critical
to further try to understand and live Individual Psychology.

Four: The effects of "APPROACH" would sometimes arrive later. Many informants and members recognized their first changes in their lives after 3 to 6 months since the workshop.

As a Conclusion, I'd like to point out the following two findings:

First, Through "APPROACH" the members could construct candidates of the informant's Private Logic.

Second, The members could experience and develop Social Interest (Gemeinschaftsgefühl).

4. Acknowledgment

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my fellows who have participated in my "APPROACH" workshops. My study wouldn't be realized without their cooperation. Secondly, I would like to express my special thanks to Dr. Noda. He timely and adequately guided me and gave me advices. And thank you for your reading.

Refereces

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