1982

A review of the literature on peer counseling programs

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Abstract

The field of counseling has rapidly expanded during the past two decades while seeking more effective and more efficient means of helping people meet individual and collective needs. Concurrently, American society has witnessed an intense increase in personal and social problems. Educational institutions have been plagued with acts of disruption and violence. The family system has been jolted by an unprecedented rise in the divorce rate which was recently projected at a ratio of one divorce for each two marriages (U. S. Dept. of Justice, 1975). The emotional well-being of the citizenry has often been questioned in light of the quantities of legal and illegal drugs or substances consumed each year. During 1974 the category of nonprescription sleeping aids alone yielded a retail sales volume of thirty four million dollars (U. S. Dept. of Justice, 1975). Such a demand has suggested that millions of people were seeking relief from various forms of emotional distress.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON PEER COUNSELING PROGRAMS

A Research Paper

Presented to

the Department of School Administration

and Personnel Services

University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

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June, 1982

This Research Paper by: Claude Bartley Snead, III

Entitled: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON PEER COUNSELING PROGRAMS

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

July 6, 1982
Date Approved

Robert T. Lembke
Director of Research Paper

July 6, 1982
Date Received

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July 14, 1982
Date Received

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The field of counseling has rapidly expanded during the past two decades while seeking more effective and more efficient means of helping people meet individual and collective needs. Concurrently, American society has witnessed an intense increase in personal and social problems. Educational institutions have been plagued with acts of disruption and violence. The family system has been jolted by an unprecedented rise in the divorce rate which was recently projected at a ratio of one divorce for each two marriages (U. S. Dept. of Justice, 1975). The emotional well-being of the citizenry has often been questioned in light of the quantities of legal and illegal drugs or substances consumed each year. During 1974 the category of nonprescription sleeping aids alone yielded a retail sales volume of thirty-four million dollars (U. S. Dept. of Justice, 1975). Such a demand has suggested that millions of people were seeking relief from various forms of emotional distress.

Much of the distress and unhappiness experienced by individuals has been attributed to feelings of loneliness, rejection, failure and hopelessness. Under those conditions the attempt to understand one's own personal identity, meaning and purpose became a more complicated process, and as such, constituted a significant problem to be dealt with by the helping professions.

During the 1960's rapid technological advances instigated changes in social structures and individual lifestyles. The personal strains attributed to those changes mounted quickly and presented the helping professions with the challenge of providing services to an increasing number of troubled people. The challenge was responded to through an increase in the number of professional helpers along with two major developments.

One major development was the encounter group movement. As an alternative to individual therapy, encounter groups received prominent exposure as a viable avenue for resolving personal issues and gaining a more meaningful comprehension of life. Although thousands of persons were joining encounter sessions this alternative was not a panacea for the problems of the times. For the individual therapist, encounter and other forms of group therapy did help alleviate the problem of insufficient time for a growing clientele. However, for many social institutions and agencies this form of treatment lacked practicality.

Another major development involved the utilization of paraprofessionals. While many unofficially recognized paraprofessionals had been assisting clients through various functions for many years, professional recognition of their effectiveness and potential assistance was given minimal thought until the late 1960's and early 1970's. Then, as the results of studies on paraprofessionals were published, evidence amassed which showed that persons could be trained as helpers in a relatively short period of time (Carkhuff and Berenson, 1967).

Within the past decade, especially in the educational arena, counselors have capitalized on the knowledge and experience gained through the previously mentioned developments. By combining principles

of group dynamics with formats for training paraprofessionals or lay persons, numerous programs have been initiated under titles such as peer group counseling, peer counseling, and adjunct counseling. An analysis of the developments, operations and results of programs such as those mentioned should contribute meaningfully to the advancement of the peer counseling concept. Thus, the undertaking of a project to review the literature on the concept emerged as a significant goal.

Statement of the Problem

Although numerous peer counseling programs have been implemented in a variety of settings throughout the nation within the past few years, a large number, most likely in the thousands, of schools and agencies have not yet established such programs. By failing to promote peer counseling those institutions have neglected the potential resources of a host of persons who could be trained to help their peers overcome personal and social difficulties. The neglect of those resources has undoubtedly left a multitude of persons to struggle along in a sense of hopelessness or futileness and thus has constituted a significant problem to overcome. The study attempted to provide a solution to the problem by presenting a concise review and analysis of literature along with recommendations which may assist counselors in developing, improving, or expanding peer counseling programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to conduct a review of literature which would determine the scope and components of past and current peer counseling programs through a consideration of the following factors:

(1) Settings and purposes of peer counseling programs

(2) Selection and training of peer counselors

(3) Maintenance and evaluation of peer counseling.

Emphasis was directed toward the selection and training of peer counselors for the purpose of determining patterns of training relative to particular settings and purposes. Several recommendations were provided which should enable future program organizers to develop peer counseling programs which are more efficient and effective than their forerunners. The findings will be made available to counselors, counselor educators and students in counselor education programs in an effort to promote the concept of peer counseling.

Definition of Terms

Peer -- A person who is approximately equal to another person or persons. This equality may be based upon education, age, sex, social rank or various other factors.

Adjunct -- A person who is associated or joined with another person in an auxiliary or subordinate relation. The words adjunct and helper are synonymous.

Helper -- A person who aids or assists another person.

Helpee -- A person who receives the assistance of a helper.

Counseling -- A relationship in which one or more helpees are assisted by one or more trained helpers through a process of developing new awarenesses and understandings which will lead to the resolution and/or prevention of problems.

Peer Counseling -- A counseling relationship in which the helpee(s) and the helper(s) recognize one another as peers.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to a review of programs which approximated the requirements of the definitions of terms previously presented. Under those definitions, programs which used peers only to distribute literature or to disseminate information from information booths were not included.

The study was limited by the resources available through library facilities at the University of Northern Iowa and at Augusta College. Furthermore, the study was restricted to a review of peer counseling programs conducted in the United States.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature was divided into four sections which represented the major categories of peer counseling settings: (1) elementary schools, (2) high schools, (3) colleges and universities, (4) agencies. Each section provided information on settings and purposes, selection and training of peer counselors, and maintenance and evaluation of programs.

Elementary Schools

Published reports on peer counseling in the elementary schools indicated that two distinct approaches had developed. One approach reflected by several articles (Ryan and Varenhorst, 1973; Schmitt and Furniss, 1975; Vassos, 1971; Winters and Arent, 1969) used junior high and high school students in big brother/big sister roles with elementary students. Scott and Warner (1974) contended that the big brother approach is not really peer counseling since "older students are utilized" with younger clients (p. 230). However, Ryan and Varenhorst (1973) stated that "the concept of peer had been extended to include all students in grades K through 12" (p. 56). Schmitt and Furniss (1975) referred to their peer volunteers as adjunct helpers while Vassos (1971) called her volunteers Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Regardless of titles assigned to those programs or volunteers, the author clearly perceived them as representations of peer counseling.

The other approach expressed by the literature (Gumaer, 1973; Kern and Kirby, 1971; McCann, 1975) used peer counselors and clients from the same age bracket or school class in individual or group counseling sessions. While the purpose of one program (Gumaer, 1973) was clearly indicated as an attempt to "improve racial relations among students," (p. 5) the majority of the programs were targeted toward students such as those whom Varenhorst (1973) referred to as "ordinary kids with everyday problems that make them miserable" (p. 40).

Selection of peer counselor trainees was accomplished through a variety of methods. Reports by Kern and Kirby (1971) and McCann (1975) showed how students, perceived by their peers to be leaders, were selected based upon sociograms completed by all members of a class. A program using student volunteers who were then screened by the school counselor was reported by Gumaer (1973). Other projects (Varenhorst, 1974; Vassos, 1971) were open to any student who wished to serve as a peer counselor. Crosson-Johnson (1976) explained that "some type of screening process is inherent in most programs, even those where the training is open to all students" (p. 7). A process of self screening apparently occurred in the program by Varenhorst (1974) where "commitment to the program was tested by holding the training sessions off campus in the evening" (Crosson-Johnson, 1976, p. 7). Rockwell and Dustin (1979) recommended that a combination of five selection methods be used depending on the goals of the training program.

Details concerning the curriculums for training peer counselors were presented by relatively few of the programs documented. Because the goals of each program differed, the training formats necessarily varied. Kern and Kirby (1971) utilized three one-hour training sessions

followed by weekly discussions once the peer counselors were working with clients. Two programs (Gumaer, 1973; Varenhorst, 1974) conducted twelve training sessions. The curriculum outlined by Varenhorst (1974) included eighteen hours of training covering a period of twelve weeks. Those twelve weeks consisted of four weeks each devoted to communication skills, decision making, and ethics and strategies of counseling. Scott and Warner (1974) concluded that "training peer counselors generally involves the development of interpersonal or human relations skills" (p. 230) and recommended "The Art of Helping written by Carkhuff (1973) as a useful tool." Other training manuals (Gray and Tindall, 1978; Samuels and Samuels, 1975) were recommended by Rockwell and Dustin (1979).

Most studies indicated that upon completion of training the peer counselors met with the school counselor either singularly or in groups to discuss problems and issues that had arisen. The program in Palo Alto reported by Varenhorst (1973) "made certain that the youngsters received constant direction and support by requiring them to attend weekly, ninety minute practicum group sessions" (p. 41). In the study by McCann (1975) peer counselors "always worked under the direct supervision of the school counselor, and student clients normally discussed problems in the presence of both the peer counselor and school counselor" (p. 185).

Evaluations of the programs were mostly based on subjective criteria. Winters and Arent (1969) noted "improved deportment for boys and improved appearance and personal hygiene for girls" (p. 201). Varenhorst (1973) cited individual cases where students had overcome shyness and made more friends. McCann (1975) observed that the program

"seemed successful in developing awareness of helping techniques such as reflective listening skills, supportiveness and attentiveness to the person who needs help, and a positive approach to problem solving" (p. 186).

Other programs (Gumaer, 1973; Kern and Kirby, 1971; Schmitt and Furniss, 1975) did incorporate some method of pre-and-post testing into their evaluations. Through an Analysis of Variance, Kern and Kirby (1971) found that "adjustment scores of students who had received help in a peer assisted counseling group were significantly higher than those of children in a counseling group conducted by a school counselor only" (p. 74). Gumaer (1973) used a pre-and-post questionnaire completed by teachers which produced results suggesting that "the children became more attentive and more active in class discussions and in some cases more thoughtful and sensitive to others" (p. 10). Schmitt and Furniss (1975) found that "eleven of the fourteen children remaining at the end of the project had shown significant improvement in their behavior rating" (p. 781).

In addition to student clients being helped, several studies mentioned personal growth and success with personal problems experienced by peer counselors. Riessman (1965) had concluded that a "helper therapy principle" exists whereby persons helping others make significant gains in their own lives (p. 28). Vassos (1971) stated that "it is not uncommon to find that both Big Sister and Little Sister experience emotional and social growth" (p. 213). Varenhorst (1973) related a case where a peer counselor "hadn't spoken to her mother in two years, yet having succeeded as a counselor, tried her techniques on her mother and broke the silence barrier" (p. 42). Although the literature did not

suggest that peer counseling was a panacea for all students involved, a conclusion could be made that for the individual helped the success rate may be viewed as 100 per cent.

High Schools

The volume of literature on peer counseling programs in secondary education suggested a more widespread utilization of peer counselors in junior and senior high schools than in elementary schools. Not only were more programs reported, but many were on a much larger scale. Hamburg and Varenhorst (1972) cited a program in Palo Alto, California which involved an entire school district with a population of almost 7,000 students. Capone, et. al., (1973) reported a program in New York City which had been expanded on a citywide basis to sixteen high schools, thus "covering all of the city in terms of neighborhood and student population" (p. 202). Olson (1979) stated that there were approximately fifty peer helper programs in Iowa high schools during 1979.

Purposes of the programs included improving social performances of disadvantaged students (Vriend, 1969), improving self concepts and facilitating interpersonal relationships (Frank, et. al., 1975), assisting educable mentally handicapped students (Schweisheimer and Walberg, 1976), and improving reading skills (McLaurin and Harrington, 1977). The single most common purpose, however, was focused upon the theme of drug abuse awareness and prevention (Capone, et. al., 1973; Hamberg, 1980; Olson, 1979; Pyle, 1977; Samuels and Samuels, 1975). In addition, several programs either stated or implied a rationale supported by Fink, et. al., (1978) which "involves the potential positive

effects of peer counseling on the social atmosphere of the school as a whole" (p. 80).

The processes of selecting peer counselors included various criteria and methods ranging from uncomplicated to sophisticated. McLaurin and Harrington (1977) stated that "actually, any student who expressed an interest in our program was accepted" (p. 262). Koch (1973) included students interested in psychology, counseling, and related helping areas. In a Mississippi high school program (Cooker and Cherchia, 1976) students were nominated by a faculty-student committee. "A cross section of the student body was sought from students with leadership ability among other students" (p. 465). One program (Hamberg, 1980) used students who had previously spent two years in adult-supervised "rap groups" and who exhibited leadership potential.

Sociometric devices and achievement typologies were used in several programs (Frank, et. al., 1975; Schweisheimer, et. al., 1976; Vriend, 1969) to identify students who had certain qualities and experiences suggesting potential as peer counselors. However, Frank, et. al., (1975) found that "the sociometric device proved to be more a popularity contest than a useful tool, thus requiring heavy reliance upon volunteers and rigorous screening interviews" (p. 267).

A surprising difference of opinion concerning selection criteria was noticed to exist between two programs where drug abuse awareness was the focal point. Samuels and Samuels (1975) warned that "if one of your kids is found to be experimenting with drugs, this could label all your peer group counselors and could be extremely detrimental" (p. 53). In the study reported by Capone, et. al., (1973) the selection criteria included "students who were nonaddicted, not pushers 'but may be experi-

menting or suspected of using soft drugs on occasion'....students from different experiences and attitudes toward drugs...'not all squares or heads,'..." (pp. 211-212). However, it appeared that both programs had attempted to select peer counselors who could complement the philosophy, purpose and format of their respective programs.

Training of peer counselors occurred during sessions prior to the beginning of the school day (Hamberg, 1980), during school hours as part of the curriculum (Dyer, et. al., 1975), or after school hours (Fink, et. al., 1978). A trend was observed whereby training sessions sixty to ninety minutes long were conducted weekly over a period of eight to ten weeks (Cooker and Cherchia, 1976; Frank, et. al., 1975; McLaurin and Harrington, 1977). A recommendation by Samuels and Samuels (1975) suggested "six hours of training weekly, or if not possible a two hour block once a week, for a total of eighteen to twenty-four hours of training before considering opening a rap room" (p. 71). Gray and Tindall (1978) proposed that a minimum of three and not more than fifteen training sessions of sixty to ninety minutes duration be conducted. That time frame was justified by research conducted by Allen (1973) who stated that "while an insufficient amount of training would not produce results, excessive training could alter the trainees' thoughts and values to the extent that they may no longer be considered peers by their contemporaries" (p. 340).

Methods for training used by Cooker and Cherchia (1976) were based upon Carkhuff's (1969) Helping and Human Relations. Ivey's (1968) microcounseling skills were used by Koch (1973) "to teach attending, reflection of feeling, and summarizing skills" (p. 290). The triad approach with "one student acting as facilitator, another the client,

and the third the observer to provide feedback" was employed by Pyle (1977) as "an effective means of teaching communication skills" (p. 280). Other components of training that were cited included role-playing and trainer modeling. Thoroughly documented training outlines were provided by Dyer, et. al., (1975) and Hamburg and Varenhorst (1972).

Most articles reviewed indicated that maintenance of peer counseling programs was conducted through individual and group sessions between peer counselors and supervisors. Crosson-Johnson (1976) referred to those sessions as "feedback groups" (p. 8). Frank, et. al., (1975) stated that "the keynote to this particular program was the extensive built-in structure, support and supervision given to the peer counselors by their supervisors" (p. 269). McLaurin and Harrington (1977) concluded that "it was important for the peer counselors to receive a great deal of personal attention and positive feedback" (p. 265). The program referred to by Pyle (1977) recommended that the "efforts of the peer counselors be continually affirmed and reinforced" and indicated that such was provided through "certificates of appreciation and a potluck dinner" (p. 281). Periodic meetings where outside personnel were brought in to share expertise or discuss counseling techniques were reported by Alwine (1974) and Koch (1973). In summary, critique, feedback and close supervision seemed to be the major tools required for ongoing maintenance.

Evaluations concerning effectiveness of peer counseling programs provided support for continuance of such, ranging from strong to weak. Several subjective appraisals appeared worthy of mention. Studies by Alwine (1974) and Hamburg and Varenhorst (1972) emphasized the value to

the educational setting. Hamburg and Varenhorst (1972) viewed their training program as "a significant experience in personal growth for the student participants" (p. 578) and one that..."does fill a perceived mental health need in the schools" (p. 580). Alwine (1974) concluded that "boundaries of race and cultural orientation are crosscut" and that the program served as a "positive force and another alternative to reaching understanding among a school population" (p. 464).

Results shown by Fink, et. al., (1978) indicated that two distinct systems of peer counseling existed. In the formal system, where teachers or staff had referred students, clients were willing to discuss academic problems but not personal home or school problems. In the informal system, whereby contacts were initiated by counselors and clients, those seeking help were willing to disclose social and family relationship problems. The authors concluded that "specific models of service delivery could be matched to particular goals and target populations of peer counseling programs" (p. 83).

Objective results were reported by Cooker and Cherchia (1976), Samuels and Samuels (1975) and Vriend (1969). Using measurements on academic performance, attendance and punctuality, and vocational and educational aspirations, Vriend (1969) found that students in a peer counseling group made significant gains while matched students in a control group suffered losses. Cooker and Cherchia (1976) provided evidence that high school students could be trained to function significantly higher than untrained students in a facilitating role, and that the training could be accomplished through eight hours total training. Samuels and Samuels (1975) reported "statistical significant gains in

attitudinal changes" (p. 182) through peer counseling involving rap rooms and drop-in centers.

Three articles cited evidence of personal benefits to the program trainer or supervisor. Hamburg and Varenhorst (1972) commented that "although the supervisors were professionally trained, they had learned much about adolescents while working with trainees" (p. 578). Koch (1973) attributed an "increase in counselor power" (p. 292) to the increase in individual attention to students made possible by the efforts and accomplishments of peer counselors. A personal benefit attained by Ehlert (1975) was "a clearer understanding of the thinking processes and rationale of the junior high school student" (p. 262).

Meager or weak results were indicated by three programs reviewed. A major problem identified by Capone, et. al., (1973) was that "neither students nor teacher facilitators had formulated a clear statement of plans or actions" (p. 243). The authors went on to make eleven recommendations considered essential to be put into effect in order for the program to continue. Schweisheimer and Walberg (1976) concluded that "considering the expenditure of large amounts of time and money, the impact of the program was modest if not questionable" (p. 400). McLaurin and Harrington (1977) reported that "some of the peer counselors seemed unresponsive, did not consistently attend training meetings, were haphazard in carrying out prescribed counseling steps, and lacked enthusiasm" (p. 264). That occurrence was attributed to a selection process that allowed any student to participate who so desired.

Colleges and Universities

Numerous settings for peer counseling programs on college and university campuses were revealed. Naturally many peer helper projects had been founded and housed in campus counseling center facilities. However, other areas of the campus were also ameniable to peer counseling. Stegura and Olson (1977-78) reviewed programs where peer counselors were used in Financial Aids Offices. Career Planning and Placement Offices provided settings identified by Knierim and Stiffler (1979) and Zehring (1976). A health care center was the site of a program related by Grant, et. al. (1973). An example of the type of programs which occurred in residence halls was provided by Jennings (1978).

Major purposes of programs included academic adjustment (Brown, 1965), human sexuality awareness (Guttmacher and Vadies, 1972; Johnston, 1974; Zwibelman and Hinrichsen, 1977), suicide prevention (Hoffer, 1972; Tucker and Cantor, 1975), study skills (Archer and Neubauer, 1981), social anxiety management (Barrow and Hetherington, 1981), and alcohol abuse prevention (Conover and Gonzalez, 1981). Specific groups identified as targeted recipients of peer help included potential college dropouts (Brown, et. al., 1971), commuter students (Hallberg, et. al., 1972; McKee, et. al., 1977; Pyle and Snyder, 1971), blacks (Westbrook and Smith, 1976), foreign students (Ho, 1974), gays (Barton, 1980), and older reentry students (Surdam and Glass, 1982).

Criteria for selection as peer counselors included grade point averages, prior communication skills training, results of psychological tests, class standing, willingness to make certain time commitments, and in several cases completion of a specified course or training program.

Archer and Neubauer's (1981) applicants were required to have a "2.5 grade point average or higher" (p. 50) while a "3.0 average was required" by Upcraft (1971, p. 828) and Zehring (1976, p. 46). The program referred to by Conover and Gonzalez (1981) was "limited to students who had completed a two hour credit course on alcohol use and abuse" (p. 178). Pyle and Snyder (1971) used the "Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) to assess dimensions relevant for a helping responsibility" (p. 260). The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was employed in the screening process by McCarthy and Michaud (1971) and by Edgar and Kotrick (1972) who also used the "Differential Aptitude Test (DAT) and in several cases the Rorschach Test" (Edgar and Kotrick, 1972, p. 256). Only one program (Westbrook and Smith, 1976) accepted all volunteers without screening. All other programs employed a combination of the screening devices mentioned and several programs conducted final selection upon completion of training.

Training programs for potential peer counselors were as brief as eight hours (McCarthy and Michaud, 1971) to as lengthy as sixty hours (Schotzinger, et. al., 1976). Hallberg, et. al., (1972) conducted a forty hour training program during one week. Schotzinger, et. al., (1976) implied that their extensive sixty hour training program occurred during "two weeks prior to the start of fall classes" (p. 44). The training group reported by Sandmeyer, et. al., (1979) "met for two hours weekly during a six week period" (p. 304). The program developed by Zehring (1976) required the helpers to train for "approximately ten to twelve weeks" (p. 46). By deleting the single most brief and single most lengthy, the average training time for programs reviewed was calculated to be approximately twenty-four hours. Therefore, training

time tended to support the contention that "helpers could be trained in a relatively short period of time" (Carkhuff, 1969, p. 4).

Although acquisition of specific information to disseminate to clients was necessarily a goal of programs supporting placement, financial aids, and campus housing settings, one goal common to all programs was to provide trainees with interviewing and communications skills. Delworth, et. al., (1974) utilized a "model similar to Ivey's (1971) microcounseling approach which included four major steps: explanation, demonstration, practice, and discussion" (p. 59). Pyle and Snyder's (1971) training was "built upon the core conditions of understanding, regard and genuineness" (p. 260). Westbrook and Smith (1976) required trainees to roleplay "videotaped interviews (à la Kagan's Interpersonal Process Recall [Kagan and Schauble, 1976] and Ivey's [1971] microcounseling techniques)"...(p. 206). The twenty-four hour curriculum presented by Hauer (1973) was based on Helping Skills: A Basic Training Program (Danish and Hauer, 1973). Surdam and Glass (1982) required trainees to "practice basic helping and peer counseling skills such as those presented by Carkhuff (1980) and Samuels and Samuels (1975)" (p. 85).

Several models for training peers to help others were presented by Delworth, et. al., (1974), Rockwell and Dustin (1979) and Walker and Gill (1980). Strategies focusing on the use of role playing techniques were presented by Baldwin (1973) and Ettkin and Snyder (1972). Paritzky (1981) explained in detail "the art of referral" and suggested that "this art should be incorporated into training of peer counselors" (p. 528). Brown (1965) implemented "a buddy system to permit experienced student counselors to assist in the training of peer

counselors" (p. 813). The training strategies and models reviewed were supported by both subjective and objective results and evaluations supplied by the respective authors.

Ongoing training and supervision on a scheduled basis facilitated maintenance of the peer counseling programs reviewed. Weekly maintenance sessions were reported by Archer and Neubauer (1981), Barrow and Hetherington (1981), Hallberg, et. al., (1972), Hauer (1973), Schotzinger, et. al., (1976), and Upcraft (1971). Biweekly meetings were conducted in programs cited by Ho (1974) and McCarthy and Michaud (1971). McCarthy and Michaud (1971) met with their helpers "as a group in a case centered approach to supervision" (p. 839). Edgar and Kotrick's (1972) program required "each trainee to meet with a supervisor for a discussion and training period subsequent to each therapy session between helper and helpee" (p. 256).

Hauer (1973) pointed out that ongoing training not only "enabled the adjuncts to augment their repertoire of skills and strategies but also enabled the program coordinator to assess the strengths of each adjunct" (p. 44). Bloland and Siegman (1977) contended that "the broader the exposures a peer counselor has...the greater the awareness of the complexity of human behavior and of the need for limits to be imposed..." (p. 175). Paritzky (1981) expanded on the theme of limitations in his article dealing with referrals. "Continual supervision provides peer counselors with opportunities to explore the need for a referral and to explore his or her own feelings (e.g.,...failure...) about suggesting and actually effecting a referral" (Paritzky, p. 531).

Edgar and Kotrick (1972) believed "supervision" to be "the most critical aspect of the training program" (p. 257). The authors referred to the "peer helpers requirements for help in 'throwing off' the effects of a counseling session" (p. 257). Paritzky (1981) supported Edgar and Kotrick's position with the statement that "continual supervision with a group of peer counselors tends to encourage the creation of a highly functional support group" (p. 531). Stressing the importance of supervision upon the peer counselors' motivation levels, the author further stated that "the enthusiasm and excitement that is present at the outset of training and help-giving stages needs to be nourished and fed even after the student-to-student services are firmly established" (p. 531).

Objective evaluations reflecting the impact of peer counseling upon the aspect of academic adjustment were reported in three articles. Using pre-and-post test data from experimental and control groups, Brown (1965) showed that entering freshmen who had participated in study skills counseling groups led by student counselors "scored significantly higher on study skills surveys and earned significantly higher grades than did matching uncounseled freshmen" (p. 815). That same format was used by Brown, et. al., (1971) with beginning freshmen who had been identified as potential dropouts. Again, results showed that "counseled students scored higher on study habits surveys and earned significantly higher grades than students in the control group" (pp. 242-44).

Schotzinger, et. al., (1976) found that students who had completed a peer led commuter orientation course received slightly lower grades than matched students in a control group. However, "the attrition rate for the experimental group was only 17 per cent compared to a 25 per cent rate for the control group" (p. 46). Since the goal of

the program was to reduce the attrition rate of commuter students, the program was viewed as successful.

Other statistical evaluations were submitted by Barrow and Hetherington (1981) and Edgar and Kotrick (1972). In Edgar and Kotrick's (1972) study, pre-and-post batteries of projective drawings by clients who received peer therapy were evaluated by clinical psychologists. The results of ratings concluded that "seventeen clients had improved, six were unchanged and one was deteriorated" (p. 257). Barrow and Hetherington (1981) compared pre-and-post test social anxiety scores of students who participated in social anxiety reduction workshops led by professionals or by student paraprofessionals. Social anxiety scores were significantly lower for both groups after the workshops but "neither group produced more change than the other nor did they incur differences in attrition rates" (p. 272). Although control groups were not utilized in either study mentioned, the results did support the contention that peer counselors could facilitate the social development of students.

Subjective evaluations were presented in a substantial number of articles. Ho's (1974) evaluation of an outreach program using foreign students as peer counselors with foreign student clientele indicated "successes in solving academic, financial, social, and family problems" (p. 66). Another outreach program (Barton, 1980) utilized a gay student counselor offering support to gay students. "Although the number of student responses to the program was not large, those who did receive counseling seemed to gain considerable self assurance and relief from anxiety" (Barton, p. 370).

Williams (1974) found that black peer counselors who had received ten hours of training "were as effective at facilitating self-disclosure and trust among black clients as were professional white counselors" (p. 524). Pyle and Snyder (1971) stated that "a number of freshmen from minority group backgrounds have mentioned that their continuance at the college has been influenced considerably by support from student counselors of the same background" (p. 261). The success of a program oriented toward older reentry students (Surdam and Glass, 1982) was evidenced by "a greater usage of facilities, increased attendance at programs, and a daily client load of approximately ten persons" (p. 85).

Economic feasibility and efficiency were cited as positive benefits in a number of articles. Zehring's (1976) program in a financial aids office was evaluated as "affordable in both professional time and budget, effective in meeting its goals, and exciting for the students participating" (p. 47). Stegura and Olson (1977-78) referred to another program in financial aids that "proved very useful during an employment freeze period" (p. 19). Knierim and Stiffler (1979) acknowledged that "the use of peer counselors allows the Office of Career Planning and Placement to significantly increase its impact on students through minimal costs in time and resources" (p. 58). Sandmeyer, et. al., (1979) explained that their peer assertiveness program had "provided an opportunity for almost three times as many students to participate in assertiveness-training groups as had been possible when only professional staff led groups" (p. 306). Walker and Gill (1980) mentioned that the success of and student satisfaction with their program had "allowed the college to reduce professional staff in a

time of limited budgets while maintaining quality in student services" (p. 173).

Agencies

The variety of settings outside of the educational arena indicated that peer counseling was available to the general public as well as to the student populace. Although some overlap could be seen, especially when considering crisis centers, agency settings could be classified either as youth oriented or as adult oriented. The few youth oriented settings reported in the literature included a job corps project (Jackson, 1972), youth crisis centers (Clark and Jaffe, 1972), and a "runaway house" sponsored by a youth bureau (Garbarino and Jacobson, 1978, p. 507). Adult oriented settings included a suicide prevention center (Dixon and Burns, 1975), a general hospital (Guggenheim and O'Hara, 1976), a mental health center (O'Donnell and George, 1977), a Vietnam veterans outreach project (Eisenhart, 1977), and several other community service projects (Gluckstern, 1973; Kaplan, et. al., 1976; Parham, et. al., 1980).

The purpose of youth crisis centers as identified by Clark and Jaffe (1972) was an "attempt to reach adolescents where traditional helping agencies had failed" (p. 676). The target group consisted of a "counterculture of youth discontent with and distrustful of the established social order, its values, structures and systems" (p. 675). Garbarino and Jacobson (1978) reported on a program to help maltreated youth who are often isolated from sources of adult assistance. "The sexually exploited youth is often cut off from help by shame and fear and by the disbelief of adults, especially the mother in cases where

the father is the abuser" (p. 506). In general, the youth oriented programs sought to reach alienated or isolated youth who "distrusted adults and perceived traditional social services as allied with the values of parents, school administrators and police" (Clark and Jaffe, 1972, p. 676).

Purposes of adult oriented programs were geared to more specific populations. Gluckstern (1973) helped coordinate a program to assist parents who had children with drug problems. Kaplan, et. al., (1976) reported a program called "Women-In-Self-Help (WISH)" which focused on "the needs, conflicts and problems of the woman within the traditional nuclear family" (p. 519). Guggenheim, et. al., (1976) used "hospital patients who had recovered from serious illnesses to assist patients with similar illnesses in the initial stages" (p. 1197). Lawrence's program (1977) served homosexual clients and their families. Eisenhart (1977) developed an outreach program to assist the "alienated Vietnam veteran populace" (p. 4). Time (1980) also reported on outreach programs to help Vietnam veterans. The Veterans Administration program called "Operation Outreach" was designed "because the VA's normal facilities have failed to help enough of the roughly 500,000 veterans who suffer from what government psychologists call 'P.V.S.'--Post-Vietnam Syndrome" (Time, 1980, p. 30). Parham, et. al., (1980) initiated a "widowhood peer counseling program" to help women adjust after the death of their spouses (p. 43). An overwhelming theme of adult oriented programs was to assist people who were experiencing isolation and/or alienation.

Processes for selecting peer counselors were mentioned by only a few programs. The only criterion mentioned by youth oriented programs

was that "teenage volunteers were trained" (Garbarino and Jacobson, 1978, p. 506). Adult oriented programs appeared to select volunteers who were compatible with the specific philosophy and target group of their respective programs. One Vietnam veterans' program often used "peer counselors who had overcome maladies such as post Vietnam syndrome" (Time, 1980, p. 30). Lawrence (1977) used gays to counsel gays. Parham, et. al., (1980) solicited older persons already involved in community organizations such as "Retired Senior Volunteer Program (R.S.V.P.)" (p. 44). Predominantly, agencies sought volunteers who had already experienced some of the problems which their clientele would present.

Specifics concerning training of peer counselors were not provided by any of the articles on youth oriented programs. However, Jackson (1972) did mention several pitfalls in the peer counseling approach and stated that those "pitfalls were due to his failure as a counselor to perceive adequately the demands of the program." One such "demand" which he specified was that "the peer counselor receive some prior training" (p. 284). Said statement seemed to imply that prior training had not been made available to the peer counselors in Jackson's (1972) program. Garbarino and Jacobson (1978) indicated that their teenage volunteers received "initial training prior to assignment to an agency followed by any additional training necessary" (p. 507). Neither the length of training nor the format employed were identified by either author.

The topic of training was much more thoroughly covered in literature on adult oriented programs. Gluckstern (1973) conducted a sixty hour training program which "incorporated Ivey's (1971) micro-

counseling format using both audio and video equipment" (pp. 677-78). Kaplan, et. al., (1976) emphasized the development of emphatic and objective listening skills to train female volunteers to "listen with a woman's ear" (p. 519). O'Donnell and George's (1977) volunteers "received fifteen hours of training in crisis theory, effective interpersonal communications and use of community resources followed up by a minimum of fifteen hours of closely supervised experience" (p. 5). Lawrence (1977) used didactic lectures, role plays, practice interviews and sensitivity training. The widowhood peer counseling program (Parham, et. al., 1980) was designed to teach basic counseling skills during twelve weekly two hour sessions of modeling and role plays. The Vietnam veteran counselors reported in Time (1980) underwent a weeklong training session "to rid them of their own postwar hangups and to help them determine when clients needed professional psychiatric help rather than some friendly counseling" (p. 30). Overall, the formats for training agency counselors appeared to be consistent with those used for training student volunteers in college settings.

As was the case concerning training in youth oriented programs, detailed information regarding maintenance of those programs was not made available. The sole reference to maintenance was provided by Garbarino and Jacobson (1978) who indicated that follow-up training was provided by the agency to which the volunteer had been assigned.

Information on maintenance of adult oriented programs was meager also. Gluckstern (1973) reported that "ongoing in-service training involved additional skill development and factual materials" (p. 679). O'Donnell and George (1977) stated that "ongoing refresher training is conducted for all volunteers at approximately six week

intervals" (p. 5). In the program described by Lawrence (1977), volunteers were initially required to do intake interviews under supervision of professional counselors, then allowed to solo with interviews reviewed by a committee. "After functioning for a period of three to six months the volunteers applied for counselor status" (p. 34). The widowhood counselors in the program cited by Parham, et. al., (1980) received "ongoing individual supervision" from a college graduate assistant. In addition, those volunteers received "continual training and support during weekly group staff meetings focusing on particular problems with clients and the development of counseling strategies and techniques" (p. 45). In general, maintenance of programs consisted primarily of ongoing supervision and scheduled in-service training sessions.

Evaluations of youth oriented programs were presented in subjective terms only. Jackson (1972) believed that peer counseling could produce benefits but was not necessarily easy to use nor flawless. He cited an example of a peer counselor who had experienced so much conflict with her multiple roles that she lacked the time and emotional energy to resolve her own problems. However, the author suggested that insufficient planning and maintenance had been responsible for weak results and stated that "the benefits of the approach were sufficient to encourage others to continue exploration of it" (p. 280). Garbarino and Jacobson (1978) concluded that peer counseling provided "a realistic strategy for breaking down the isolation of perpetrator - victim relationships from support systems" (p. 509). The tone of their article suggested that peer counseling could be very useful in a community's attempt to assist maltreated children and youth.

Adult oriented programs were evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively. Several authors (Eisenhart, 1977; Gluckstern, 1973; Kaplan, et. al., 1976) expressed the success and effectiveness of their respective programs in terms of growth of provided services. Gluckstern's (1973) program expanded from its primary role of assisting parents of drug-problemed children to include providing services to couples with marital concerns. Kaplan, et. al., (1976) reported an increase from an average of seventy-five calls monthly during the program's first three months of operation to an average of one hundred and seventy calls monthly by the end of the second year. Eisenhart's (1977) project which began in 1972 as a small, unfunded self-help group had by 1977 "provided services to several thousand veterans and their families and had developed over a quarter of a million dollars in funding to continue its programs" (p. 23).

In terms of quality, several authors (Guggenheim and O'Hara, 1976; Lawrence, 1977; O'Donnell and George, 1977) suggested that the peer counseling approach provided a quality of assistance not available otherwise. Guggenheim and O'Hara (1976) cited specific cases where patients who were severely depressed had benefited from peer counseling. The authors described peer counseling as "an important technique that can be used in an acute general hospital when staff motivation makes little impact on the patient" (p. 1199). Lawrence (1977) stated a belief that "not only are gay peer counselors effective with gay clients, but in many cases the assistance provided is far superior to that provided at a traditional mental health clinic" (p. 35). O'Donnell and George (1977) found that "carefully selected and trained volunteers can function as effectively as professional staff in providing services

for distressed callers and community mental health center clients" (p. 11).

Without exception, the literature on adult oriented programs suggested that peer counseling was a successful venture. Several sources (Lawrence, 1977; Parham, et. al., 1980; Time, 1980) mentioned the reluctance of their client population to seek help from traditional resources. Time (1980) quoted Max Cleland, VA Administrator, who stated in reference to Vietnam veterans "we find a lot of guys have turned off society and turned off the VA" (p. 30). The rejection of traditional services yet acceptance of peer counseling as documented by the literature provided evidence of the effectiveness of peer counseling in adult settings.

Chapter 3

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Although peer counseling has become fairly popular within recent years there are perhaps thousands of potential settings where peer counseling programs have not yet been developed. That lack of development reflects a waste of human potential for helping others overcome problems they face in modern society.

In an effort to overcome that problem a review of literature was made available to current and future members of helping professions. The review provided an analysis of purposes and settings of peer counseling, methods for selecting and training peer counselors, and procedures for maintaining and evaluating peer counseling programs. Hopefully readers will perceive the review as a significant resource of information and will be encouraged to sponsor such programs where they may be beneficial.

The literature revealed that the four primary categories of settings for peer counseling were (1) elementary schools, (2) high schools, (3) colleges and universities and (4) agencies. The review was developed through an analysis of literature on specific programs within each category of settings.

Literature on programs in elementary schools reflected that two distinct approaches had developed. One approach used junior high and

high school students in big brother/big sister roles with elementary students. The other approach utilized elementary students as peer counselors in individual or group sessions with clients of the same age group or class. The majority of programs were targeted toward students whom Varenhorst (1973) referred to as "ordinary kids with everyday problems that make them miserable" (p. 40).

Methods for selecting peer counselors varied from program to program. While some programs (Varenhorst, 1974; Vassos, 1971) allowed any volunteer to serve, other programs used sociograms (Kern and Kirby, 1971; McCann, 1975), or a screening process (Gumaer, 1973). The use of a combination of five selection methods was proposed by Rockwell and Dustin (1979).

Initial training was based primarily upon the development of human relations and communications skills and required as little as three hours (Kern and Kirby, 1971) to as much as eighteen hours (Varenhorst, 1974). Maintenance of programs was most often conducted through individual sessions between program coordinator and peer counselor on a need basis, and group discussions on a periodic basis.

While most of the programs were evaluated by their authors in subjective format, a few authors (Gumaer, 1973; Kern and Kirby, 1971; Schmitt and Furniss, 1975) provided pre-and-post data reflecting significantly positive changes in adjustment and behavior of clients. In addition to client benefits, personal gains by peer counselors were cited by two authors (Varenhorst, 1973; Vassos, 1971), thus providing support for Riessman's (1965) "helper therapy principle" (p. 28).

The literature on programs in high schools was more voluminous than that for elementary schools. The purposes of several programs

(Frank, et. al., 1975; McLaurin and Harrington, 1977; Schweisheimer and Walberg, 1976; Vriend, 1969) centered upon improvement of certain skills of specifically targeted students. However, more often the purpose focused on the prevention of drug abuse (Capone, et. al., 1973; Hamberg, 1980; Olson, 1979; Pyle, 1977; Samuels and Samuels, 1975).

Selection of peer counselor trainees was based upon various considerations. Cooker and Cherchia (1976) depended upon student and faculty nominations. McLaurin and Harrington (1977) accepted all volunteers. Several programs (Frank, et. al., 1975; Schweisheimer and Walberg, 1976; Vriend, 1969) used sociometric devices and/or achievement typologies. However, Frank, et. al., (1975) found the sociometric device to be primarily "a popularity contest" (p. 267) and thus not very useful. Samuels and Samuels (1975) "cautioned against inclusion" (p. 53) of kids with drug experiences for drug prevention programs while Capone, et. al., (1973) strongly "encouraged their inclusion" (pp. 211-12).

Training of peer counselors generally involved eight to ten weekly sessions lasting sixty to ninety minutes each. The methods for training most frequently mentioned were based upon approaches developed by Carkhuff (1969) and Ivey (1968). Thorough outlines were provided by Dyer, et. al., (1975) and Hamburg and Varenhorst (1972). The literature stressed the importance of maintenance through supervision and reflected the peer counselors' needs for critique, feedback, and moral support.

Subjective evaluations (Alwine, 1974; Fink, et. al., 1978; Hamburg and Varenhorst, 1972) indicated that peer counseling had been very effective and was viewed as an asset to the school environments involved. Empirical results reflected significant gains in "attitudinal

changes" (Samuels and Samuels, 1975, p. 182) and "academic and social measures" (Vriend, 1969, p. 903). Several authors (Ehlert, 1975; Hamburg and Varenhorst, 1972; Koch, 1973) cited benefits to the program coordinators as well as to student participants. The few programs indicating weak results (Capone, et. al., 1973; McLaurin and Harrington, 1977; Schweisheimer and Walberg, 1976) reflected problems due to deficiencies in selection methods and organization.

The volume of literature dedicated to peer counseling at colleges and universities far exceeded that of other categories of settings. While a majority were coordinated through counseling centers and residence halls, programs were also conducted in offices such as financial aids (Stegura and Olson, 1977-78), career planning and placement (Knierim and Stiffler, 1979; Zehring, 1976), and a health care center (Grant, et. al., 1973).

Purposes included academic adjustment, alcohol abuse prevention, human sexuality awareness, social anxiety management, study skills acquisition, and suicide prevention. Some programs were available to all students, while others were organized to assist members of specific groups such as black students (Westbrook and Smith, 1976), foreign students (Ho, 1974), gay students (Barton, 1980), or older reentry students (Surdam and Glass, 1982).

Selection processes were tailored to the requirements of each individual program and involved consideration of factors such as grade point averages, class standing, results of psychological tests, and prior training. Screening methods were incorporated into most programs prior to the onset of training and in a few cases upon completion.

Training formats varied according to the purposes of specific programs but always emphasized the importance of listening skills development and relationship building. Models or methods most often cited were based upon the works of Carkhuff (1969), Danish and Hauer (1973), Delworth, et. al. (1974), Ivey (1968), Kagan (1969), and Samuels and Samuels (1975). Programs reviewed required an average of approximately twenty-four hours of initial training time.

Maintenance was usually conducted on a weekly, biweekly or bimonthly basis. Both individual and group sessions between coordinators and peer counselors were held to review cases, discuss problems, and continue development of counseling techniques and relationship skills.

Evaluations consistently reflected positive results. Personal gains were made by clients and peer counselors alike. Institutional gains were reflected by a reduction of professional staff (Walker and Gill, 1980) and an increase in quality of service and quantity of students served (Knierim and Stiffler, 1979; Sandmeyer, et. al., 1979; Surdam and Glass, 1982). Overall, the literature indicated that peer counseling was both effective and efficient and thus an asset to the campus environments.

The literature on agency settings permitted the programs to be classified as youth oriented or adult oriented. Purposes under both classifications reflected an attempt to reach and serve individuals who were alienated or isolated from traditional helping sources. Clients of this nature included runaway youth (Garbarino and Jacobson, 1978), homosexuals and their families (Lawrence, 1977), Vietnam veterans (Eisenhart, 1977), and widows (Parham, et. al., 1980).

Details concerning selection of peer counselors were not provided by articles on youth oriented programs. However, many adult programs attempted to recruit and select volunteers who had experienced problems similar to those their clients would present. Thus gays counseled gays (Lawrence, 1977), widows counseled widows (Parham, et. al., 1980), and so forth.

Training curriculums were presented only in articles reporting adult oriented programs. Gluckstern (1973) conducted a lengthy sixty hour program which "incorporated Ivey's (1971) microcounseling format..." (pp. 667-68). Kaplan, et. al., (1976) trained volunteers to "listen with a woman's ear" (p. 519). Overall, training formats were similar to those used to train volunteers in college settings and maintenance was provided through periodic meetings to review cases and improve helping skills.

Evaluations of youth oriented programs were subjective only, but did indicate that peer counseling could be an effective means of helping youth. The effectiveness of adult oriented programs was described in terms of expansion of services offered, increases in numbers of clients, and "quality of services not elsewhere available" (Guggenheim and O'Hara, 1976, p. 1199; Lawrence, 1977, p. 35). All agency programs did appear to have the ability to attract and provide services to clients who otherwise may have gone without help.

Discussion

The literature revealed that peer counseling was an effective approach for providing help to people in need. Results reflecting success and efficiency of programs were reported both in subjective

format and hard empirical data. Admittedly, results were rarely based upon purely scientific methods involving procedures for control of all variables other than the peer counseling process. Therefore the cause and effect question could not be answered. However, the relationship question was answered. The literature did reveal that a positive relationship existed between the peer counseling process (the trial) and client growth (the outcome).

The organization and implementation of an effective peer counseling program requires time, energy, and some, yet often limited, financial expense. The literature did not suggest that peer counseling is a simple or quick approach to put into effect. On the contrary, the consensus of opinion reflected that the approach calls for commitment, for sacrifice, and most importantly for proper planning.

Hopefully, this review has for some provided the impetus for that planning. Furthermore, it is hoped that the following recommendations will facilitate the development of new peer counseling programs and improvement of current programs.

Recommendations

(1) Review specific references cited which refer to programs that approximate the type you wish to develop.

(2) Review one or more of the excellent training manuals available. Several are listed in the attached bibliography.

(3) Consult with other professionals who have developed programs and if possible make an on-site visit.

(4) Seek input from fellow workers, supervisors, and potential peer counselors and clients.

(5) Develop your own program rather than attempt a cookbook approach.

(6) Share your results through publications which allow others to benefit from your experiences.

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