

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ENHANCING COMMUNITY GROUP EFFECTIVENESS

BY



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a general description of the effective community group and to suggest how community groups can enhance their effectiveness.

It is suggested that groups are formed to solve problems and that a group's effectiveness is therefore a function of its ability to solve problems. The results achieved in problem solving are based on the following equation:

$$\text{Solution Quality} \times \text{Member Commitment} = \text{Results Achieved}$$

An inventory of qualities which affect a group's problem solving capacity in terms of solution quality and member commitment is developed. A process management cycle is presented as the means through which a group may develop and maintain those qualities suggested to be necessary for group effectiveness. This process management cycle includes activities of (1) setting process goals, (2) monitoring group operation, (3) diagnosing group problems and, (4) modifying group operation to correct those problems.

The successful operation of a process management cycle requires that group members possess process awareness and skill in giving feedback. A method for teaching process awareness and skill in giving feedback is suggested.

The importance of group process skills for the community worker is emphasized. The community worker also needs to develop skill in helping others develop group skills. It is therefore suggested that training for community work include group process and instructional skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Community Groups and Community Development

"In communities, the traditional American machinery for making decisions, solving problems, taking action is the community organization and its committees and meetings. Sound community growth and individual satisfaction depend on how well this machinery works, that is, how effectively people are able to share their common concerns, to reach wise decisions and to plan together." (2:1)

The community development specialist finds himself working with this machinery. In fact a major portion of community development work is devoted toward the creation, maintenance and repair of the social machinery of the community. (5,1)

The heart of this community social machinery is the small, face to face community group. Such a group may be a women's social club, a church group, a community league executive, a community improvement council or some similar body. It is through such groups that the individual attempts to influence the larger social aggregate to which he belongs. (6:101-2)

Thus it is evident that an essential part of the community development worker's knowledge and skill lies in the area of small group behavior. Jenkins has suggested two ways in which knowledge of group behavior (and skill in using that knowledge) contribute to the practitioner's expertise:

"(1) We can better understand the nature and condition of the particular group with which we are working at a particular time;
(2) We can better evaluate and select the techniques which we will wish to use in working with our groups." (4:7)

Community development aims at the creation of community competence--the community develops the ability to do for itself what it takes the community worker to help it do initially. (5,1) Hence, the community worker needs not only to develop some expertise in small group behavior himself but he also needs to be able to transfer his group knowledge and skills to the citizens who make up the groups with which he works.

Community Groups as Problem Solving Tools

Hare has suggested that groups are formed as problem solving tools. (3:19) Men organize their activities together in order to accomplish what they cannot do acting alone. The group is an invention which extends man's grasp allowing him to solve problems far too large or complex for a single person to solve.

Hare classifies groups according to the type or types of problems which they are organized to solve. The four types of problems suggested by Hare are summarized in Figure I.

Figure I

THE TYPES OF PROBLEMS WHICH GROUPS
MAY BE ORGANIZED TO SOLVE

	Task	Social-Emotional
Group	Type One	Type Two
Individual	Type Three	Type Four

(3:19)

TYPE ONE - Group Task - This type of problem belongs to a group and represents a task (i.e. "a publicly stated problem of the group." (3:19) An example of this type of problem might be the construction of a church for a congregation in a new town.

TYPE TWO - Group Social-Emotional - This type of problem also is located within a group but is of an affective nature. A group organized to share ethnic traditions is focused on this type of problem.

TYPE THREE - Individual Task - Problems of this type are located within the individual and are not focused on his affective needs. An example of this type of problem would be found in a group organized to help Italian immigrants learn to speak English.

TYPE FOUR - Individual Social-Emotional - In this case the problem is of an affective nature and lies within the individual. For example, a group may be organized primarily to assist recently divorced persons in coping with their new life as a single person.

All four types of problems are present in almost all groups. However, one type of problem is usually the focus of the group's purpose and operation. (3:20)

The important point here is that the essence of accomplishing a group's goal, whatever it may be, is the solving of a problem. The existence of the group itself may solve the problem as in a group for lonely housewives where the need for companionship is met by forming the group, or the group may be required to take some action such as petitioning city hall, organizing other groups and so on in order to solve its problem. This means that a group's effectiveness may be measured in terms of its problem solving ability. This is the starting point for chapter one. An inventory of qualities which affect a group's problem solving capacity is developed in the first chapter. This inventory is based in the literature on group functioning.

In the second chapter the idea of process management is introduced and elaborated. A process management cycle is presented as the means through which a group may develop and maintain those qualities suggested to be necessary for group effectiveness. This process management cycle includes activities of (1) setting process goals, (2) monitoring group operation, (3) diagnosing group problems and, (4) modifying group operation to correct those problems.

The third chapter suggests a method for a community worker to utilize in helping group members to develop the skills necessary for the carrying out of the process management cycle.

The final chapter summarizes the earlier chapters and discusses their implications for community work.

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Chapter One

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE GROUPS

Introduction

The present chapter describes those qualities which research indicates are characteristic of the effective group.

Likert (18) and others (20:277) have suggested that group effectiveness is a function of two factors: the quality of solutions to problems facing the group and the degree of member commitment generated to implement those solutions. This relationship is illustrated by the following equation:

$$\text{solution quality} \times \text{member commitment} = \text{results achieved}$$

Following this idea, the present chapter is organized into two sections: group characteristics which affect quality of solution and group characteristics which affect member commitment (see Figure II).

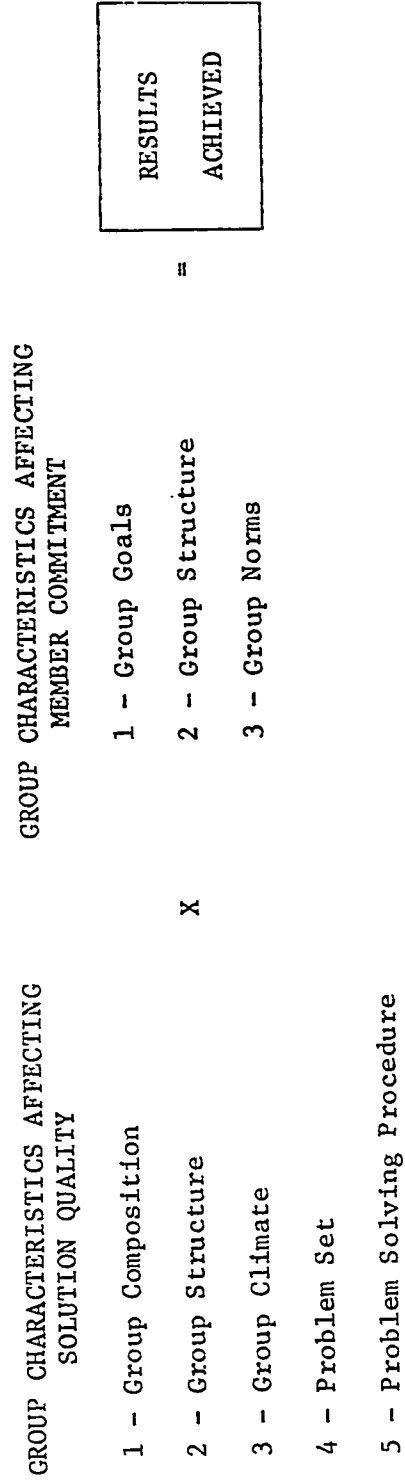
Group Characteristics Affecting the Quality of Solutions

In this section of the present chapter, the factors of group composition, group structure, group climate, problem set and problem solving procedure are discussed in terms of their effect upon the quality of solution which a group generates. These five factors have been specially chosen due to the amount of conclusive research available on them.

The degree to which a group possesses the information necessary to develop a quality solution limits the quality of the solution that the group can develop. Having the necessary information is a necessary

Figure II

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTIVE GROUP



but not a sufficient condition for developing a quality solution (10: 378-379). Three factors have been shown to be of significance in determining the degree to which a group has the necessary information to develop quality solutions. These three factors are: group composition, group structure, and group climate.

Group Composition

Group members are potential sources of the information which is necessary to produce a high quality solution in a given situation. Hence the group's composition effects the amount of information available to the group. Each group member possesses some information which he has on recall; he also has the ability to generate certain information based on his skills and his contacts.

Member heterogeneity affects the amount of information available to the group. If the group is composed of people with very similar backgrounds much of their information will be the same. Maier has suggested that heterogeneous group generally has much more information available to it (20:432). Hoffman (16) and Maier (20:432) have suggested that heterogeneous groups have better quality potential than homogeneous groups.

- A group of heterogeneous persons may also create potential difficulties. Maier mentions the possibility of intragroup conflict seriously hampering solution generation (20:435). As an illustration, Fiedler et. al. describe a study where groups were composed of a mixture of Calvinist and Catholic members. These participants were Dutch and their long standing religious conflicts immobilized their

groups (16:114). Excessive heterogeneity can create communication difficulties (lack of shared meanings) and conflict which may seriously impair a group's productivity.

Membership in a community group is usually voluntary and hence the group is faced with the necessity of developing ways to attract and retain members with the qualities which they particularly need.

A group of citizens, for example, who have organized themselves to obtain the use of a school building for recreational use on weekends might want to attempt to attract support from all the groups in the neighborhood: the community league, the Home and School Association, the local church congregations and so on. Such broad participation would insure a program proposal meeting the needs of the broad range of residents.

However, attracting such a broad range of people may seem to require the group to become all things to all people. Member loyalties and commitment may fall to the groups which send them. The dilemma is real: a community group needs to attract members who possess the variety of resources necessary for it to develop quality solutions; attracting and retaining a highly heterogeneous membership and developing their commitment to the group's purpose may diffuse the group's focus so much that it loses its impact. Hence, each community group must resolve this dilemma on the basis of its unique situation. The process management cycle suggested in chapter two can be used by the group in monitoring how the group's composition fits the group's task.

Group Structure

The manner in which a group is structured (how the members are related to each other) seriously affects how information possessed by individual members is communicated and utilized. The leadership patterns a group develops and the communication network it adopts have been demonstrated to be significant facets of group structure.

Leadership patterns have been the subject of much research and theory. It is beyond the scope of the present work to thoroughly examine the literature on leadership. Rather the variables of leader power and communication network have been selected for elaboration since they have been shown to be significant factors in the process of sharing information and utilizing it. [Gibb (12) provides a comprehensive review of the literature on leadership and the reader wishing a look at this general area are referred to him.]

Maier, through his many studies of group problem solving, has come to the conclusion that:

"an attitude favoring the use of power
short circuits problem solving."
(20:472)

In the group where power differences are in focus, the group spends much of its energy accepting or rejecting suggestions made by the powerful. Maier has demonstrated that suggestions made by those with power are poorly evaluated (20:274). Power persons tend to create a threat to those without power making it difficult for those without power to share information which may contradict or compromise the position taken by those in power (2:56-78).

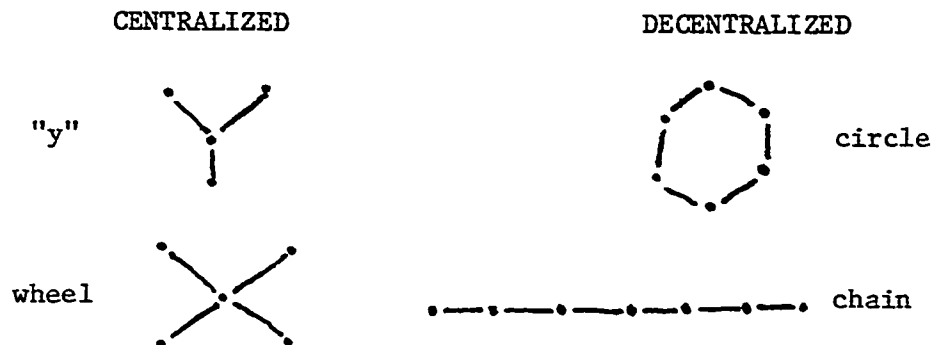
Several other pieces of research support the contention that the use of power inhibits the flow of information in a group. Zander, Cohen and Stotland studied the role relationships which obtained between social workers, psychiatrists and psychologists. They found that most communication by those with less power toward those with more power were aimed at protecting good relations (28). Cartwright and Zander report similar findings by Hurwitz et. al., Kelly, Lippit and Cohen (8:231).

Maier has prescribed a role for the group leader which de-emphasizes power differences (20:405-415). This role involves integrating and moderating activities. Integrating activities consist of pulling divergent information and ideas together and encouraging synthesis. Moderator activities involve drawing out minority view points and mediating conflicts in such a way that they do not become ego contests (20:405-415). Essentially this type of leadership attempts to keep the group focused on the problem to be solved and attempts to equalize power differences.

Shaw (26), Leavitt (17:228-241), and others have focused on the communication networks within groups. Communication networks are an expression of group structure which directly affects the flow of information within the group.

Communication networks are basically of two types: centralized and decentralized. There are several variations of these two basic types as shown in Figure III.

Figure III
COMMUNICATION NETWORKS



In summing up research on communication networks over the last twenty years, Shaw advances two hypothesis:

1. "A decentralized communication network is most efficient when the group must solve complex problems, whereas a centralized network is most efficient when the group must solve simple problems," (26:152) and,
2. "A centralized communication network is more vulnerable to saturation than a decentralized network." (26:152)

Complex problems are those which require that the information be collected in one place and operations must be performed upon it before the solution can be known (26:152) while simple problems are tasks that require only the collection of information (26:152).

Hence we can say that where there is only a limited amount of information to be collected, and where collecting the information is sufficient to solve the problem, a centralized communication net is most effective. Where the problem is complex and/or where it requires a great amount of information a decentralized net is best. This data

suggests that the community group facing a complex problem needs to maintain the maximum number of communication channels between its members if it is to fully generate and utilize the information within itself.

Group Climate

As the members of a group interact over time, they establish relatively stable patterns of relating to each other. These stable patterns or norms when taken together produce a group climate. Gibb suggests that the group climate effects the flow of information in a group: a supportive climate produces maximum information flow; and a defensive climate inhibits and distorts the flow of information (13).

Supportive or open group climates are characterized as non-evaluative, problem oriented, spontaneous, emphatic, equalitarian and provisional (13). Such a climate encourages group members to share the information which they possess and also to attempt to understand the information which others are trying to share. In an open supportive climate, members' fears of being judged, censured or punished for contributing information or ideas opposed to those contributed by others is minimized.

Problem Solving Set

Problem set refers to the assumptions and perspective which a group or individual carries into a problem solving situation. Luchins uses the words *einstellung* or habituation, as synonyms for set (19:202). Having the wrong set can seriously hamper or even prevent reaching a

high quality solution. The wrong set may prevent varying one's approach, testing alternative hypothesis and/or prevent drawing upon different kinds of information for the solution (10:373).

Luchins reports that by training M.A.s and Ph.D.s to solve relatively complex math problems with a particular approach, he produced an inability to solve similar problems which require a much simpler and more direct approach. Luchins concludes:

"Einstellung--habituation--creates a mechanized state of mind, a blind attitude toward problems; one does not look at the problem on its own merits but is led by a mechanical application of a used method." (19:202)

Gordon examined problem solving among scientists, particularly engineers. He found that they became locked into certain sets which prevented creative problem solving (14:21).

Gordon and his associates have developed an approach to developing solutions which are designed to avoid the limiting nature of set. He suggests a non-rational approach to understanding and working on any problem.

"Make the strange familiar and the familiar strange." (14:156-157) - Look for differences between the present problem and other problems; look for similarities. Use analogy, metaphor, fantasy, etc. (14:34-56).

Costello and Zalkind suggest several additional ways of avoiding the wrong set: look at the problem from several different perspectives; state the assumptions you are making about the problem and then consider alternative assumptions; once having found one solution look for a second or third solution; and, try another problem--a related analogous or auxiliary problem (10:374-377).

The set a group carries into its problem solving activity can seriously handicap the development of solution quality. Effective group performance rests in part on the group's ability to free itself from its habitual set(s) approaching each problem on its own merits.

Problem Solving Procedures

The literature on group discussion is rich with problem solving procedures or activity patterns (4:177). A majority of these patterns are based on the five steps in problem solving formulated by John Dewey: some of these patterns collapse the steps down to two or three while others expand them to nine or more. Dewey's steps are 1) recognition that a problem exists; 2) identifying the nature of the problem; 3) searching for possible solutions; 4) analyzing the adequacy of the tentative solutions; and 4) testing the most promising of the tentative solutions (11).

Bayless has suggested that a major distinguishing aspect of these patterns is the time arrangement between idea generation (Dewey's step three) and the development of solution criteria (Dewey's step four) (4:182). There is some experimental support showing that idea generation should precede and be separated from solution evaluation (27) (7). This is the pattern advocated by Osborn (22), Coon (9) and others which is usually referred to as "brainstorming."

Bayless using 24 discussion groups (192 subjects) attempted to ascertain if the pattern of discussion affected the "final" group product. He found that the ideas - criteria (brainstorming) pattern produced a greater number of "good" ideas (4:183). However, this

greater number of "good" ideas did not show up in any measurable degree in the final solution (4:183). Thus, Bayless concludes:

"This study provided no evidence that the pattern followed by a group in its problem solving discussion has a significant effect upon the quality of the 'final' group product. This suggests that the pattern per se may be a relatively unimportant variable for groups engaged in problem solving endeavors." (4:183)

This finding is further supported by Brilhart and Jochem who ran a similar study and again found that while the ideas--criteria ("brainstorming") pattern produced significantly more good ideas, it did not produce significantly better final solutions (7:175-179). Bouchard (5) and Hare (6) also report studies comparing various patterns of group discussion. They report that "brainstorming" is no more effective than other patterns.

Van de Ven and Delbecq (27:203) propose another procedure for problem solving which has experimental validation as producing better quality solutions than either group discussion without separating idea generation from the development of solution criteria or group discussion utilizing the brainstorming technique. They suggest a three stage process: 1) group members sit quietly in each others presence and write down all of the ideas that come to them individually; 2) group members share the ideas which they generate by each member reading one item from his list in round-robin fashion until all ideas have been expressed and written on a black board or chart pad--this is followed by a general discussion; 3) finally, group members silently choose the best solution and signal their choice by voting.

The most important point of Van de Ven and Delbecq's research is the finding that the group should adopt a procedure which fits its task: fact finding and information generation is best done by individuals working privately while information synthesis and evaluation are best done through group discussion (27:210).

Thus, a community group should adopt a procedure which fits the type of task it faces. The type of procedure chosen may have a strong influence on the quality of solution generated.

The preceeding material in this chapter has looked at group characteristics which affect the quality of the solutions and plans which a group develops. The remainder of this chapter is focused on characteristics of a group which effect member motivation and commitment to implement plans and solutions generated by the group.

Group Characteristics Affecting Member Motivation and Commitment

Not only must a group develop quality solutions to be effective, it must also implement those solutions. Whether a good idea is turned into effective action often depends upon the commitment and motivation of group members. Below, group goals and group structure are examined as to aspects of a group which significantly affect member motivation and commitment.

Group Goals

Numerous authors have suggested the importance of goal formation in the effective functioning of a group (26:330) (8:403-405). Goals need to be formed in such a manner that they are clear and that they are realistic.

Several studies suggest that member motivation and commitment are related to goal clarity. As examples, Shaw reviews studies by Cohen, and by Raven and Rietsema which deal with goal clarity. In the Cohen study, telephone operators were given job instructions of varying clarity. Raven and Rietsema studies the behavior of college students instructed to cut out paper pieces to be assembled into models by another group. These studies found positive relationships between goal clarity, goal path clarity and member motivation (26:330). Goal path clarity refers to the degree that the actions required to achieve a goal are clear and their proper sequence explicit.

The interpretations of this relationship are that clear goals allow more efficient mobilization of member energy, and that individuals are able to identify their activities as leading to a goal, if the goal is clear.

In addition to the need for goals and goal paths to be clear, there is some evidence that goal realism is an important factor affecting member motivation and commitment. March and Simon, for example, state that a person's level of satisfaction is related to his level of aspiration (21:49). In applying this idea to the group situation it is suggested that groups frequently set unrealistically high goals and, as a result of not being able to achieve these goals, experience dissatisfaction. It is further suggested that dissatisfaction stemming from inability to reach unrealistically high goals results in lower member commitment to the group and its decisions.

The process of forming clear and realistic goals (or of adjusting present goals in terms of clarity and realism) can be

seen as a problem solving activity. As such an activity, it can be seen how goal formation is dependent upon the factors discussed in the earlier part of this chapter.

Group Structure

Earlier in the present chapter, group structure was examined in terms of the relative power of the leader and group members as well as the communication network within a group. These aspects of a group affect member motivation and commitment as well as the quality of solutions generated in a group.

Influence

There is some evidence to suggest that a member's perceived influence is a prime determinant of his satisfaction. Maier studied college student satisfaction with distribution of reward points within a group which they were members. The group was given a certain number of points to be distributed among the group members in any way they wished.

"Satisfaction was found to be principally related, not to the number of points received nor to the degree of participation in the discussion, but to the extent to which the student felt free to express his ideas about the issue and to his satisfaction with the amount of influence he had over the solution." (20:296)

Schutz also indicates the importance of influence when he suggests that a major interpersonal need is control and that this need is a primary issue with which all groups have to deal. However, he further distinguishes between a person's need to express control over

others (E^C) with a person's need to be controlled (Wanted control, W^C). According to Schutz, a person can be from high to low on either of these continua, and the two continua are independent of each other (25).

Schutz' theory is important to the present work in that it supports Maier's research which suggests that "opportunity to influence" rather than "equal influence" is the important determinant of member satisfaction.

Findings with regard to member satisfaction in relation to position within a communication network also suggest that the importance of influence in achieving member commitment. Shaw reports that persons in more central positions who are more influential are more satisfied with the group's activity (26:330). This finding is qualified, however, by the suggestion that central persons may experience an overload of information which leaves them confused and unable to cope. In such a case, centrality has been shown to lower member commitment (1).

Group Norms and Member Needs

Since activity in community groups is usually voluntary, member motivation is not sustained by a regular payoff such as wages, the attractiveness of a community group is a function of its ability to meet member needs (8:411). It has already been suggested that most group members need some degree of influence in the group's problem solving and planning activity. Furthermore:

"It is evident that the members of a group ordinarily experience certain gains or losses when the group engages in goal-directed activities. These 'payoffs' as they are called in the language of game theory, may take various forms ranging from such intangibles as prestige, recognition and affection to something as concrete as money. The conditions or 'rules' that govern the awarding of payoffs will have important motivational consequences for the members and for the functioning of the group as a whole." (8:411-412)

Thus the norms or "rules" governing the manner in which members receive payoffs are of prime importance in determining member satisfaction and motivation. In the community group such norms take on added significance since tangible payoffs which can be more easily allocated are minimal with most payoffs being in terms of prestige, recognition, affection and so on.

Equity theory which conceptualizes relationships as being exchange oriented is useful in looking at the rules or norms governing "payoffs" to group members. The theory suggests that persons in a relationship tend to seek a balance between their inputs and payoffs they receive. Where the payoff ratio for one group member is greater or lesser than the payoff ratio for other group members, the person experiences dissonance; the greater variance, the greater the dissonance (24:4). Dissonance, in turn, leads to drives to reduce the dissonance which may include drives to terminate membership in the group.

This theory has been used for research purposes and has some experimental validation (23). It is suggested here that member satisfaction is partially, at least, a function of equity. Where the group member perceives himself as receiving less reward than is equitable in

terms of his contribution, his satisfaction and commitment will decline and he is likely to lower his input to create a balanced equity equation. Likewise, where the group member receives more than his perceived share of reward, he experiences dissonance and attempts to rebalance the equity equation (24:4).

Rasmussen, in studying student task teams, identified a three phase development of equity issues. Initially, the group resolves equity issues by assuming that all members will do equal work and receive equal pay. Following this initial resolution is a long middle period characterized by little or no attention to equity issues. During this period dissonance builds due to the growing awareness of different motivation and ability and hence differing amount of contribution by group members. In the third phase, equity issues re-emerge and are resolved by:

1. A renegotiated settlement which redresses equity imbalances;
2. An implicit settlement where one faction uses coercion to redress equity imbalances. The group in this state is unbalanced and characterized by partial participation and a dysfunctional emotionality; or,
3. Group dissolution (24:4-5).

Rasmussen's analysis is instructive in that he suggests ways of reducing the probability of dysfunctional equity imbalances. For example, in phase one the group leader can facilitate a realistic assessment of member motivation and ability by the group, then the initial equity balance will be more realistic and hence produce less dissonance.

Once dissonance begins to build, the skilled group leader, through early diagnosis can surface the equity issues and facilitate a more realistic resolution prior to the group becoming too dysfunctional through imbalance.

Whatever typology of human needs is used, it has been shown that group members are motivated to stay in a group and to devote their energies to it if they receive reward or need satisfaction. The suggestion is that groups must pay attention to member needs, particularly opportunities for influence and equity if they are to have their members committed and willing to use their personal resources in the group's interest.

Summary

The effective group is one which develops quality solutions to the problems it faces and then carries those solutions out. It has been shown that group composition, group structure and group climate affect the amount of information a group can generate and thereby partially determine the quality of solutions and plans that a group develops. Problem solving set and problem solving procedure affect solution quality as well.

Solution implementation relies on member motivation and commitment which has been shown to be affected by group goals and group structure. The norms a group develops with regard to how "payoffs" at its command are distributed are particularly important aspects of a group which affect member motivation and commitment.

The subject of the next chapter is process management: the development and maintenance of the group characteristics which have been the subject of this chapter.

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Chapter Two

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING GROUP EFFECTIVENESS

Chapter one described some of the characteristics which contribute to group effectiveness. The present chapter presents material on methods of developing and maintaining those characteristics in on-going community groups. The chapter is organized into two parts: the first part elaborates the concept of effectiveness to include group development and group maintenance processes; the second part introduces and develops the idea of process management and describes how this idea is operationalized.

Group Effectiveness

Chapter one suggested that an effective group is one which generates high quality solutions to the problems it faces and produces a high level of member commitment to implement those solutions. Chapter one suggested what is necessary for group effectiveness. We now move on to discuss how a group can develop and maintain what is necessary for its effectiveness.

The term "process management" will be used to denote the how of effective group action. In process management, the group sees its own operation as an on-going problem. Some of the group's energy is either continuously or regularly applied to enhancing the group's effectiveness.

Process management can be illustrated using the thermostat in a central heating system as an example. Some of the system's energy is spent in monitoring the temperature. As data about the system's

temperature is fed back to the system the heat producing elements are regulated in such a manner that the desired temperature is maintained (5:45).

Process management then addresses itself to problems such as how should the group structure itself? What modifications in group structure would increase solution quality? member commitment? and so on.

The Four Phases of Process Management

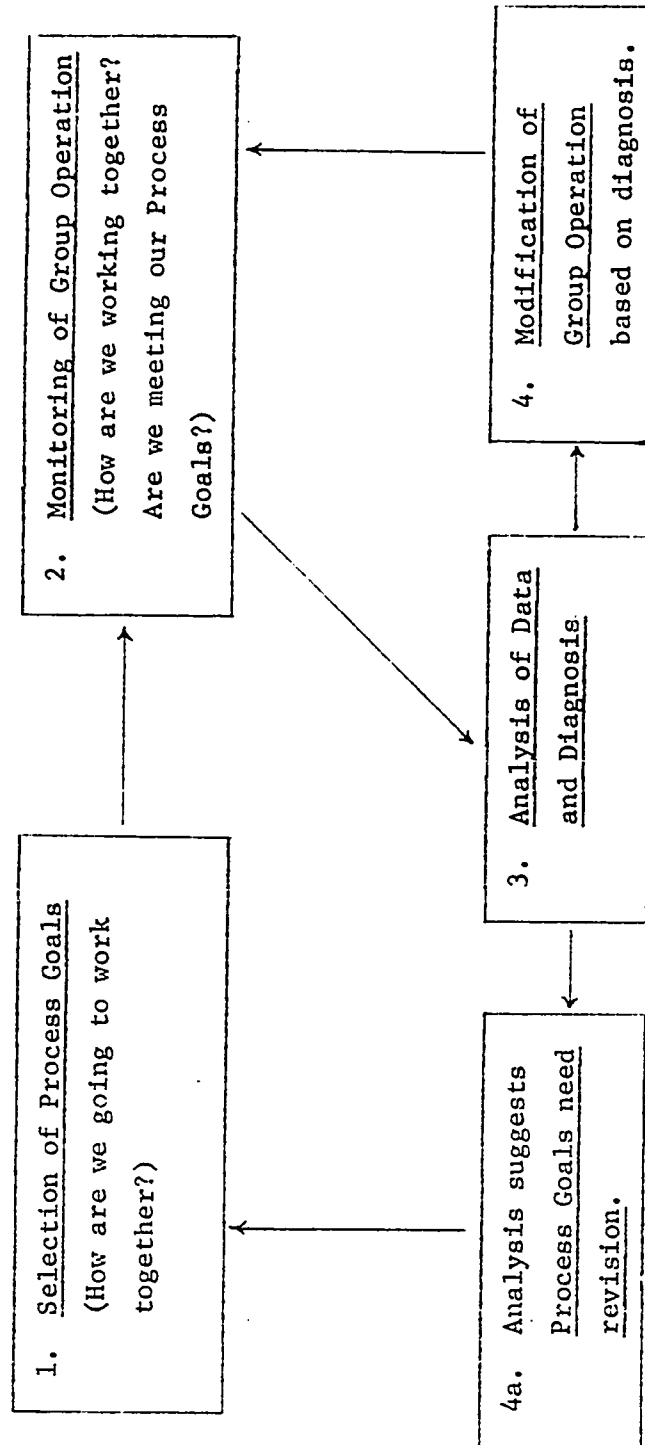
Going back to our illustration we can identify four separate phases in the process management activity: one, the temperature desired is programmed into the system; two, the system's operation is monitored; three, the data collected through monitoring is compared with the desired temperature; and, four, where there is a discrepancy between desired temperature and actual temperature the system is modified to bring about the desired change. These phases are illustrated in Figure IV. This four phase pattern is similar to suggestions made by Cadwallader (6) and Schein (12).

Phase one: Setting Process Objectives

In chapter one it was suggested that it is desirable that the group set clear and realistic goals (task goal) and that the goal path be clear and realistic (process goals). The effective group has reached agreement on both what it will work towards (task goal) and how it will work (process goal). Process goals like task goals are to be measured against the criteria of their quality (are they clear? are they realistic?) and their capacity to produce high member commitment.

Figure IV

THE FOUR PHASES OF PROCESS MANAGEMENT



Phase two: Monitoring

Monitoring is keeping aware of what is going on in the group. It is basically an observational activity carried out through looking and listening. To be useful it must be done by someone who knows what to look for. Monitoring has to do with collecting data relevant to the process problems faced by the group.

A number of observation systems have been constructed for use in monitoring group operation. Some of them such as Bales Interaction Process Analysis (2) have been used extensively in laboratory research and take an individual one or two months to fully master (2:256). Other systems are simpler and may be employed by individuals without any previous training. An example of such a simple system might be one which simply asks the observer to keep track of who talked and how often. This information may help the group to see how influence is distributed among group members. Thus such systems help the observer to focus on data relevant to those aspects of the group which have been selected for monitoring.

Phase three: Analysis and Diagnosis

This phase includes the assaying of data collected during the monitoring phase. The data is descriptive. It is the task of the group to explore its meaning. Chapter one suggests a number of categories which are useful in organizing the data for analysis. Figure V presents these categories in terms of questions which the group might ask itself in organizing and analyzing the data. Once the meaning of the data is fully explored, a diagnosis, (if there is a problem in how

Figure V

QUESTIONS TO AID IN THE ANALYSIS OF PROCESS DATA

I. Developing Quality Solutions

A. Generating Valid Information

1. Is the group composed of people who know, or have access to the information needed? How might more information be obtained?
2. How is the group structured? Does everyone have access to the information being provided by other group members?
3. Is the group climate supportive of open communication? Do members feel free to disagree or to share controversial ideas and feelings? How is this openness expressed?

B. Problem Solving Procedures

1. Is the group stuck on one way of looking at a problem? Are alternative approaches suggested and tried? Does the group use creative devices such as "making the strange familiar" or using fantasies? Are second or third solutions developed?
2. Does the group use a procedure for working on its problems (e.g. do individuals generate ideas privately but synthesize ideas through group discussion)? Does this procedure fit the problem? Does it fit the group's needs?

II. Developing Member Commitment

A. Group Structure

1. How is influence distributed in the group? Who talks most? Who seems to be best listened to by most group members? Do all group members feel they have an opportunity to influence the group--to be listened to and understood?
2. How are members rewarded for their efforts on behalf of the group? On what basis are "payoffs" divided? Do some members appear to do most of the work? How are the needs of individuals in the group being met? Are group members satisfied with the amount of work they are doing and the "payoffs" they are receiving?

B. Group Goals

1. Are group goals clear to group members? Are the goals accepted by group members? Are group goals realistically within the capacity of group members?
2. Are group process goals clear to group members? Are these process goals accepted by group members? Are these process goals within the capacity of group members?

the group is operating), which defines the problem should be developed. The diagnosis is then used as a basis for developing a solution to the process problem.

The diagnosis may, for example, suggest that inappropriate process goals were selected in phase one; if so, then the group should plan action to redefine its process goals in light of the new information. The data may also suggest that the group needs to alter its operation in a manner which more closely approximates the process goals, or alternatively the data may suggest that the group is performing well.

Several techniques have been suggested for analyzing data and developing a diagnosis and action plan. Schmuck and Schmuck (14), Fordyce and Weil (7) both suggest the use of force field analysis as a diagnostic and planning tool.

Force field analysis (see appendix 3) is based on the Lewinian concept of "quasi-stationary equilibrium." Lewin suggested that any situation could be understood in terms of the interplay of opposing forces. Thus by determining the forces which are active in a situation, plans can be developed for bringing about desired changes; selected existing forces may be reduced or increased, or new forces may be introduced. The preferred strategy would be to reduce forces opposing the desired change since this would also lower the tension in the system. The opposite effect, and increase in system tension, results when driving forces are increased (9).

Once a high quality solution to the process difficulty has been obtained and high member commitment generated the group can move to phase four.

Phase Four: Modification of the Group

Taking corrective action, once the earlier phases have been navigated successfully, may be a simple matter of members agreeing on some new procedure. Alternately, corrective action might include recruiting new members or altering the group's structure. The success of the fourth phase depends on the success of the earlier phases. If a good plan for change has been developed (high solution quality) and member commitment to implement the plan has been generated then the results achieved should be good.

Requirements for Operationalizing Process Management

The operationalization of an effective process management cycle depends on two minimal conditions existing in a group. The first is process awareness--that is the group members' ability to perceive what is happening in the group. The second necessary condition is the presence of action skills which lead to group modification (e.g. the ability to deliver direct feedback in a useful and non-threatening manner).

Process awareness calls for a different attitudinal set toward group behavior than is common in our society. Shepherd distinguishes the attitude of "everyday life" by suggesting that it relies on minimum experimentation and maximum routinization and generalization (16:9-20). By contrast, the "scientific attitude" is characterized

by a "posture of doubt" which leads to continuous search, exploration, and experimentation (16:9-20). Process awareness calls for adopting Shepherd's "scientific attitude."

Process awareness also requires a theoretical set which helps one to know what to look for and how to organize what one sees. Argyris (1) and Greenwood (8), for example, point out the need for "practice theory". "Practice theory" guides the practitioners data gathering, analysis and diagnosis activities. Without such a guide observation is random and interpretation arbitrary.

Process awareness has been suggested to be the most important of all group member skills:

"... the most important of all member skills is diagnostic sensitivity. Unless a member is aware of and sensitive to the fluctuating forces within the group, his actions will in all probability be inappropriate." (4:2)

Further support for the importance of process awareness comes from Shaw and Blum (15) who studied the use of feedback to produce awareness among group members of how other group members reviewed a particular problem and that problem's proposed solution. They concluded:

"... group effectiveness increases with increased awareness of member's satisfaction and that this effect is greater with difficult than with easy tasks." (15:158)

Action skill, the ability to take action leading to group modification is more difficult to describe. As the above quotation suggests, action skill requires process awareness; it also has to do with the ability to deliver accurate feedback in a non-threatening

manner. Helping the group to set process goals as well as task goals, and modelling needed member skills and helping others acquire them are action skills mentioned in the literature (13), (10), (16:100-121).

The community worker who has acquired process awareness and some action skill may work toward the transfer of such skills to the community groups with which he works, thereby improving their effectiveness. The transfer of skill may be formal (e.g. workshops, laboratories, etc.) or it may be informal coming through the workers modelling of skills and sharing of knowledge. The transfer of skill is a complex subject. However, the community worker needs to be able to develop his abilities in this area (11). The next chapter illustrates one approach to the development of process awareness and action skills. For a further look at skill development, the community worker is referred to Miles (10).

This chapter suggests that a community group, in order to develop and maintain its effectiveness must carry on a process management cycle. This cycle consists of four phases: (1) selecting process goals; (2) monitoring group process; (3) analyzing of data and diagnosing; and (4) taking corrective action. The implementation of such a process management cycle requires the group members develop process awareness and intervention skill. The community worker may work to develop group effectiveness through helping group members to learn process awareness and action skill.

The process management cycle provides a means for the community group to improve its operation in a systematic way. The group using process management is able to adapt to changing member needs,

changing task requirements, improved member skills and so on. Such a group has been called by Cadwallader "ultra-stable". (6)

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Chapter III

DEVELOPING PROCESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Introduction

The present chapter proposes a method for helping community group members acquire the skills necessary for process management. It suggests one way in which process awareness and action skill can be developed.

An instructional stratagem based on a theory of skill acquisition is introduced in the early part of the chapter. In later parts of the chapter this stratagem is utilized in organizing a skill development pattern. The issues of success and anxiety are discussed as they relate to the process of skill acquisition.

The Instructional Process

In chapter two, it was suggested that developing a group's process management capacity required that group members possess process awareness and action skill. Thus a community worker may find that his task is to help a group raise the level of process awareness and/or action skill among its members. Such a task is instructional in nature and hence requires the community worker to become engaged in an instructional process.

The object of such an instructional process is the acquisition of certain skills and information. Skill acquisition or "learning" has been the subject of much behavioral science research and theory. For the purpose of the present work, a simple but experimentally

validated model of skill acquisition is utilized in formulating an instructional design. This model of skill acquisition is briefly outlined below.

Fitts and Posner in discussing the nature of skill acquisition have identified three phases in the learning of a new skill: a cognitive phase, an associative phase and an autonomous phase. These phases have been identified in the acquisition of both language and psychomotor skills (4:11-15).

The Cognitive Phase

The first phase of skill acquisition is characterized by attempts on the part of the learner to understand the new skill. The learner tries to orient himself toward the activities which make up the skill through conceptualization. Hence it is during this initial cognitive stage that instructions and demonstrations seem to be most effective (4:11-12).

Williams reports an example of the use of instructions to speed up the acquisition of skill in flying an airplane. By helping the student to understand the skill through a cognitive map of the activities required, their sequence and relationship, he reduced the average time required to learn enough about flying to "solo" from ten hours to three and one half hours (4:11).

The Associative Phase

The second phase in learning a skill is the associative phase. In this phase the learner practices the new skill. As the skill is practised, he gradually eliminates errors and difficulties. This

phase involves a smoothing of the skill as the learner successively approximates the competent performance of the skill (4:12-14).

In this phase knowledge of results or feedback on performance is most useful to the learner. Through such feedback the learner can identify errors and attempt to correct them.

There is significant research supporting the importance of feedback in the acquisition of new skills. Smith cites a number of authors supporting his conclusion that frequent positive feedback is the instructor's main tool in shaping behavior (8:10).

It is through positive feedback that a feeling of success can be engendered and enhanced. "If behavior is goal directed, then the successful approach to the goal (indicated by feedback) can serve to sustain behavior (4:27)." A further example is cited by Duncan (3:273) who reports a study in which thirty-three teenage students studied their own behavior and attempted to modify that behavior. Keeping a personal behavior graph provided immediate knowledge of results which was sufficient reinforcement to modify behavior even when no other consequence or reinforcement was involved.

Autonomous Phase

In the final phase of skill development the learner achieves a sense of ownership over the new skill. This is called the autonomous phase. The skill requires less conscious effort. Fitts and Posner illustrate this phase with the youngster who learns to walk. As walking becomes an "owned" skill the child is able to walk with little or no conscious effort and can carry on the activity while investing his energy in other things such as talking (4:14-15).

When the learner has reached this third phase he is "autonomous"; he has no need for instruction or coaching.

These three phases suggest appropriate activities for the community worker as he works with a group. In introducing new skills the worker will want to help his client group to "understand" what the skill is and what it involves; he will rely on demonstrations, lecturettes and other cognitively oriented techniques. In the second phase the worker will emphasize the feedback of results and might use a tool such as video-tape to provide such feedback. In the autonomous phase the group member now owns the skill leaving himself and the community worker free to focus their energies on something else.

Developing Process Awareness

Initially the community worker focuses on helping group members to develop an understanding of process awareness. In this cognitive phase the emphasis is put on understanding: (1) what process awareness is; (2) how process awareness is useful; and (3) what is involved in acquiring process awareness (i.e. How one raises his level of process awareness).

The author has used a combination of experiential activity and discussion to aid the group member in understanding process awareness. This method is described below:

Two participants are asked to draw a circle together (one person draws the left half and the other person draws the right half) while blindfolded, another circle is drawn with blindfolds removed. The results are compared demonstrating the usefulness of being aware

of what your partner is doing when you are engaged in an interdependent activity. The parallel is drawn between the demonstration and general group activities such as goal formation and decision making where, similarly a high degree of interdependence is present. This begins to develop an understanding of process awareness and how it is useful. At this point a "handout" sheet describing process awareness (see appendix 1a) is given to the group.

Group members, after having read the "handout", are asked to discuss process awareness. Several group members are then asked to act as group observers. They are given an observation sheet and instructions to make note of who speaks to whom and how many times each person speaks. The remainder of the group is asked to carry on a discussion of process awareness. After fifteen minutes the group observers are asked to share with the group the data which they have noted. The discussion then focuses on "what does this data mean to us and how might we use it to improve our operation." A short lecturette summarizing process awareness and outlining how it is already being acquired by some group members may complete the cognitive phase.

During the introductory activities described above the learner has developed a cognitive orientation toward process awareness. The emphasis now shifts to the associative phase: sensing, observing, listening and recording, (the activities which are necessary to awareness) are practiced. The number of things of which the group member is aware is continually expanded.

Group members take turns practicing "being aware" and recording what they are aware of. The data recorded are shared and each learner is encouraged to compare his awareness with that of the others, noting where he may have blind spots or areas in which he may need more practice. Thus one method of getting the feedback of results necessary for developing process awareness is through comparing one's performance with that of others practicing the same skill.

A second way of providing feedback of results is through video tape recordings. A group session may be taped while the learners are practicing process awareness. When the video tape is replayed the learners check what they have noted against the tape as well as against each other.

Group members may have difficulty in distinguishing what they see happening to others and what they imagine is happening to others. For example a learner's notes may consist of statements such as "John was angry," "Susan wanted him to speak for her," "Bill was lazy," or "Wally was overly aggressive." Such statements convey much more about the observers "interpretation" of what is going on than they do about what the persons being observed are really doing. In a case where there seems to be much of this interpretation and little description an exercise such as Wallen's "Behavior Description" (see appendix 1c) can be effectively used to help a learner to differentiate what he sees or hears from what he infers. Once the learner begins to see and correct his own errors he is ready to begin working on giving feedback as a basic action skill.

Developing Skill in Giving Feedback

The cognitive phase of developing skill in giving feedback may begin with a variation of the demonstration used to introduce the concept of process awareness. Several group members are again asked to draw complimentary halves of a circle on the blackboard or chart pad. One of the two group members is blindfolded, the other is not. The person without the blindfold is allowed to give feedback to the person who is blindfolded and thereby coordinate their mutual efforts. This demonstration clearly shows that process awareness is only half of a two part pattern: the member's awareness of process in the group must be "feedback" to the group if the group is to derive maximum benefit from that awareness. This demonstration is followed by a lecturette incorporating something like the following:

Feedback requires two complimentary types of skills: sending skills and receiving skills. If "A" is to accurately communicate to "B", then "A" must encode his message accurately while "B" must decode "A's" message accurately. (There are several simple models which help to illustrate this point [1] [10]. The author prefers the model shown in Figure VI.)

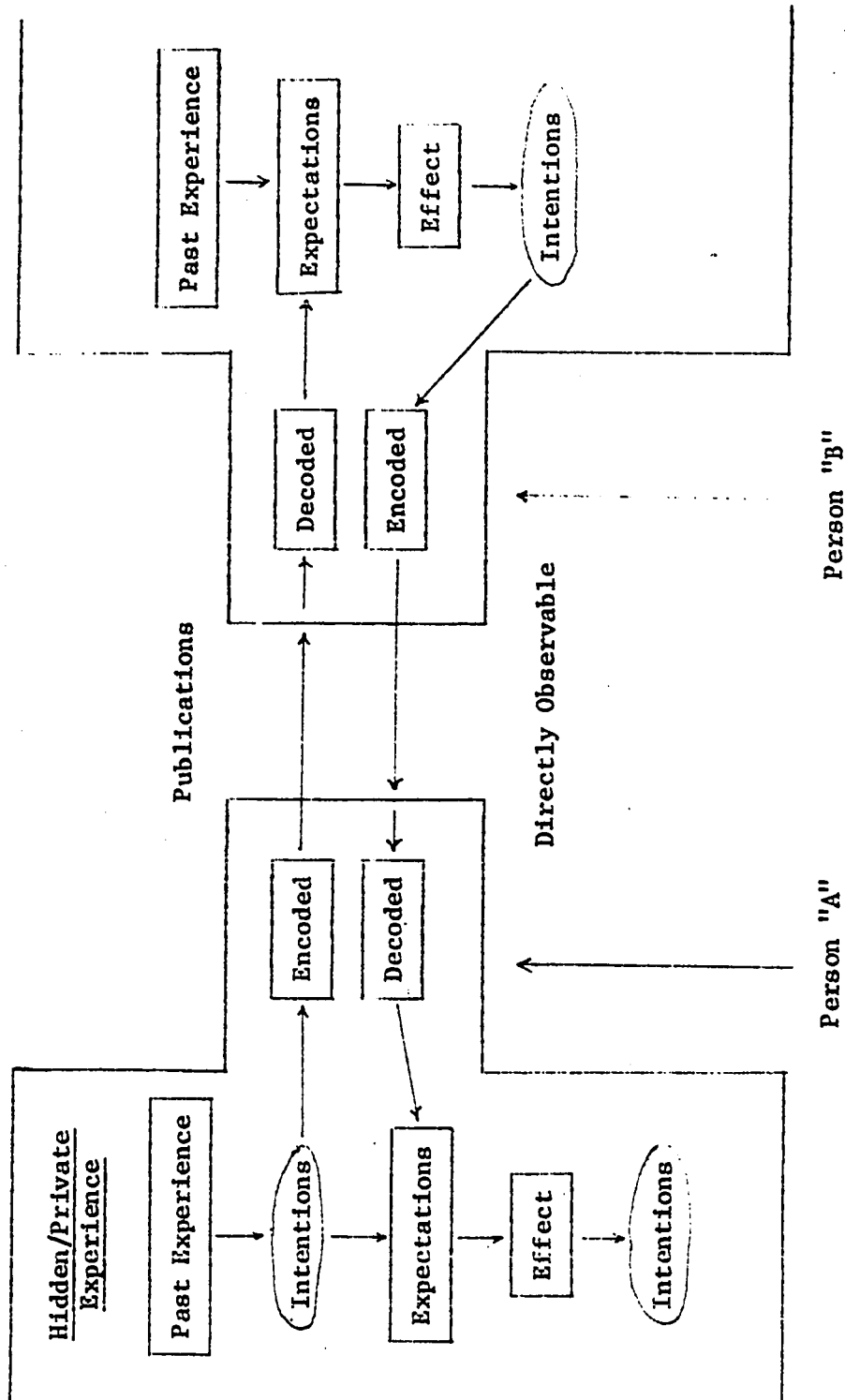
This model suggests that the giving of feedback, like most other human communication, involves both "hidden" and "public" operations. Hidden operations are the intentions and expectations which lead person "A" to develop the message he wishes to communicate to person "B". This message must be encoded, that is, it must be

put into some "publicly observable form," usually words and gestures. Person "B" must decode the message, this he does according to his "hidden" expectations of "B". "A's" a result of this decoding or interpreting "B" experiences, an "effect" which leads him to develop intentions toward "A" which are encoded and sent to "A" and so on.

At this point a handout entitled "The Giving and Receiving of Feedback" (appendix 2a) is given to the group members. After the group has been given time to read the handout they are asked to form trios and the Wallen exercise "Paraphrase" (appendix 2b) is introduced. In this exercise the learners are asked to practice sending and receiving. The trio members are able to provide each other with immediate and specific feedback on how well they are doing.

In the earlier work on process awareness, group members shared what they were aware of; they were giving each other feedback. Once the skills of paraphrase have been developed the group returns to a discussion format with process observers. The group is asked to discuss the value of giving and receiving feedback and some of the difficulties which they experience with giving or receiving feedback. After fifteen or twenty minutes, the process observers are asked to share their notes. The learners are encouraged to use paraphrase to insure the accurate encoding and decoding of information.

Figure VI
A MODEL OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION



Success and Anxiety

Managing learner anxiety is a prime element in facilitating the learning process (11:15). This is due to the crucial role the level of organismic stress plays in both the learners perceptual and performance capability as well as in his motivational state.

White (11:15) and Costello and Zalkind (2:156) cite evidence to indicate that excessive anxiety results in perceptual distortion. Such distortion lowers the free flow of accurate information thereby inhibiting problem solving and learning.

Fitts and Posner suggest that learning is most efficient when the organism is under enough stress that it becomes active (4:36-37). Miller and Dollard see anxiety as a "drive" which can be used to stimulate the organism to learn (6:19). However, the performance of the organism can be seriously impaired by excessive anxiety (11:15).

Thus the optional learning environment is not excessively anxiety producing; neither is it totally free from anxiety. Closely related to the learners level of anxiety is the degree of success he experiences in his learning activity. If the learner consistently fails his level of anxiety becomes excessively high and his perception and performance are impaired. Success, however, has been shown to produce positive learning motivation:

"Law of effect: One learns quickly those reactions which are accompanied by a satisfying state of affairs, one does not learn quickly those which result in an annoying state of affairs or learns not to make such reactions (5:25)."

This law of effect embodies a common sense notion which suggests the importance of success as an incentive toward continuing learning. Repeated failure seems to lower aspiration, produce discomfort and may stop learning altogether (5:26), (9:11, 12, 17), (6:32).

Thus the community worker must be continually aware of the learners level of anxiety and the degree of success he feels he is experiencing. Smith (8) has suggested that the idea of successive approximation (utilized by Skinner to "shape" behavior,) (7) provides a useful way of working with anxiety success balance.

Successive approximation refers to "taking short imperceptible steps" each of which more closely approximates the behavioral outcome which is ultimately sought. Such an approach takes steps which are small enough to insure success; yet the steps must be large enough to be experienced as meaningful (7).

The approach to developing process awareness and feedback skills outlined above attempts to utilize the principle of successive approximation. The learning of a complex operation, being aware of a group's processes and feeding what one is aware of back to the group is broken down into a number of component steps; first, conceptualizing process awareness, then practicing process awareness, then conceptualizing the giving and receiving of feedback and so on until the whole operation is finally mastered.

There is, however, no special reason to have the steps remain consistently the same regardless of the situation. The effective community worker will vary the pattern of learning experiences to fit

the specific individuals level of threat and need for success. Thus for some groups working through the material suggested in this chapter might take eight to ten hours while for other groups it might take more or less time.

Too, the skill development activity described in this chapter assumes a client group which has developed some commitment to developing process management skill and hence is ready for engaging in a focused learning activity; much of the community workers work is likely to be with less ideal situations. The community worker may find himself working for months with a group in simply trying to help group members to be a little more aware of how their group is operating.

Summary

In this chapter we have presented a pattern for helping individuals to develop process awareness and feedback skills. This pattern was based on a model of skill acquisition which emphasized two primary phases of learning activity: (1) the cognitive phase characterized by the development of an "understanding" of the skill, and (2) the associative phase characterized by practice of the skill and emphasizing the feedback of performance results to learner. Finally, the importance of success and anxiety in learner performance was discussed. Successive approximation was suggested as a way of managing the anxiety/success balance.

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Chapter Four

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a general description of the effective community group and to suggest how community groups can enhance their effectiveness.

It suggests that groups are formed to solve problems and that a group's effectiveness is therefore a function of its ability to solve problems. Thus, the effective group is one which develops quality solutions to the problems it faces and then carries those solutions out. Group composition, group structure and group climate affect the amount of information a group can generate and thereby partially determine the quality of solutions and plans that a group develops. Problem solving set and problem solving procedure affect solution quality as well.

Solution implementation relies on member motivation and commitment which has been shown to be affected by group goals and group structure. The norms a group develops with regard to how "pay-offs" at its command are distributed are particularly important aspects of a group which affect member motivation and commitment.

In the second chapter the idea of process management is introduced and elaborated. A process management cycle is presented as the means through which a group may develop and maintain those qualities suggested to be necessary for group effectiveness. This process management cycle includes activities of (1) setting process goals, (2) monitoring group operation, (3) diagnosing group problems and, (4) modifying group operation to correct those problems.

The implementation of a process management cycle requires that group members be aware of how the group is operating and are able to feed back information about the group's operation to other group members.

Chapter three suggests a method which the community worker might utilize in helping group members to develop process awareness and skill in giving feedback. This method relies on a three phase learning pattern beginning with a cognitive orientation to the skill to be learned, then giving the learner an opportunity to practice the skill under conditions which provide him with feedback on his performances, and concluding when the learner has enough competence that he can go on practicing the skill and improving it autonomously. The importance of managing learner anxiety and the learner's experience of success is stressed.

Implications for Training in Community Work

This study has several implications for the training of community workers. Schein(11) has coined the term process consultation to refer to the work of a professional helper who attempts to assist groups in improving their operation. Such a helper concerns himself primarily with a group's process: how it structures itself, what procedures it uses, what norms it develops, and so on. This is the role suggested for the community worker in this thesis.

In the introduction it was suggested that such a process oriented community worker must possess group process skills and the ability to transfer these skills.

Group process skills are of two types as suggested in chapter two: process awareness and action skill. The community worker must acquire these skills if he is to be able to transfer them to others. Thus, an important aspect of the training necessary for doing community work is in group process.

Of equal importance for the process consultant is the ability to help others acquire group process skills. The process consultant role is primarily instructional in nature and thus another important aspect of training for community work is in the theory and practice of instruction and skill development.

Limitations on the Transferability of Research

Authors working in the area of small group research have noted several limitations to the applicability of laboratory research to ongoing social groups. Shaw (13:336) and Cartwright and Zander (5:6) make such a qualification in their summaries of the research on small group behavior. These qualifications are based on the following considerations: (1) laboratory groups are of a short duration and created specifically to study particular aspects of group behavior and, thus, are dissimilar to ongoing groups which are organized to accomplish a social task; (2) research tends to focus on a limited number of dimensions of group behavior while ignoring variables such as other groups in the group's environment. These two considerations are discussed below.

Laboratory groups often consist of university students organized for a two to six hour experiment (13:336). Such groups have a very select population and lack "ongoingness." The group members

of a community group in contrast may vary to a much greater extent in age, in education and usually their group will last for months and even years. According to Shaw (13:337) this consideration should lend to caution in applying the findings from laboratory groups to ongoing groups, but should not prevent the application to ongoing groups. Further research on existing ongoing groups might clarify this problem.

Secondly, scientific research generally requires the selection of a limited number of variables for study. The author is reviewing the literature on small group behavior found many different conceptualizations of the key dimensions of group behavior. Those dimensions selected for inclusion in this thesis were selected on the basis of their wide mention in the literature and the consistency of findings reported about them. Other dimensions such as: the level of trust in the groups (6); the personality of group members (13:169-179) (7:169-265); group size (7:224-245) (3:199-204); the group's developmental process (15); group members willingness to take risks (4); interpersonal attraction among group members (9) (10); group cohesiveness (9); conformity and social pressure (8) (12); the physical environment of a group (14) (13:117-154); the group's social milieu (political and economic as well as social environment); and so on.

Thus, the propositions advance in this thesis are limited by the number of aspects of group operation examined. These considerations suggest that the community worker must look at a group not only in terms of the perspectives provided in chapters one and two, but

also in terms of the groups environment. Furthermore, each group is unique and hence to generalize about what is always good is not warranted by the research.

Limitations on the Transferability of Instructional Methods

The material in chapter three illustrates one way of attempting to transfer group skills to a community group. The intervention pattern proposed focuses on developing member skills as opposed to simply focusing on building effective teamwork between group members. This choice to emphasize individual skills which are transferable from group to group reflects a bias of the author. An alternate approach would be to build the group's coping pattern by stressing the acquisition of group norms and patterns which are functional for the group's task. For example, in working with a police squad one might encourage the learning of rules and patterned reactions as opposed to encouraging awareness and feedback skills.

The community worker must adapt his methods, or alternately, develop new ones to fit each particular group situation. Thus, the transferability of methods from one situation to another should be done with caution. In order to assess each group situation and develop appropriate patterns of intervention the community worker needs to possess diagnostic skill. Education for community workers ought to help community workers develop such skill.

Conclusion

Community groups can improve their effectiveness. Group members can acquire process awareness and skill in giving feedback. These abilities can be used to manage the group's process in such a way that the generation of member commitment and quality solutions is insured.

It is the author's belief that working with community group members to improve their process awareness and their feedback skills is a fundamental part of community work. This belief rests on a further belief that:

"A democratic society derives its strength from the effective functioning of the multitude of groups that it contains. Its most valuable resources are the groups of people found in its homes, communities, schools, churches, business concerns, union halls, and various branches of government. Now, more than ever before, it is recognized that these units must perform their functions well if the larger systems are to work successfully." (5:vii)

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APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1a

PROCESS AWARENESS

Process awareness provides the basis for effective interaction between group members. Through accurately perceiving what is happening in the group, members are able to coordinate their activities with each other. Process Awareness involves three things: (1) the acquisition of a "scientific attitude", (2) the development of an observational system and (3) the development of observational skill.

(1) The acquisition of a "scientific attitude."

Process awareness calls for a different attitudinal set toward group behavior than is common in our society. Shepherd distinguishes the attitude of "everyday life" by suggesting that it relies on minimum experimentation and maximum routinization and generalization. By contrast, the "scientific attitude" is characterized by a "posture of doubt" which leads to continuous search, exploration, and experimentation (1). Process awareness calls for adopting Shepherd's "scientific attitude."

(2) The development of an observational framework

Process awareness also requires a theoretical set which helps one to know what to look for and how to organize what one sees. Argyris and Greenwood for example, point out the need for "practice theory." "Practice theory" guides the practitioner's data gathering, analysis and diagnosis activities. Without such a guide observation is random and interpretation arbitrary (1).

A group might begin to build such a framework by focusing on questions relating to one particular aspect of group operation. For example, questions such as the following focus on member satisfaction and commitment as a result of member influence:

- a. Who talked to whom? How often did each member talk?
- b. Did group members appear to listen to some members more than others? What behaviors indicate this?
- c. How were decisions made in the group? By majority vote? By one or two dominant members? By general agreement or consensus?
- d. Was dissatisfaction expressed by some after the decision was made? How was this dissatisfaction expressed? Through verbal means? By non-commitment activities such as withdrawal, interrupting frequently, private discussion with other malcontents, etc.?
- e. and, etc. . . .

(3) The development of observational skill

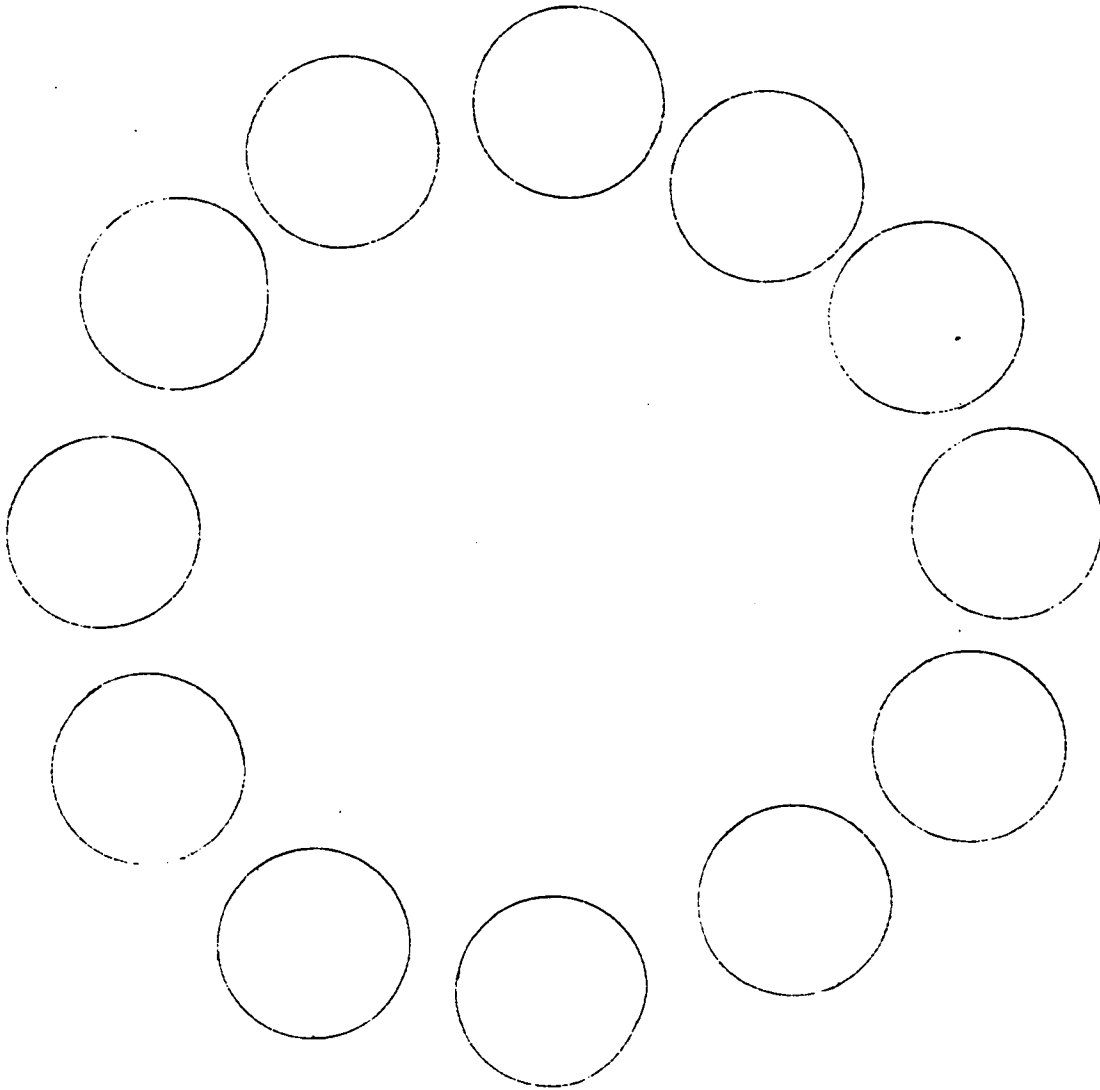
Skill in identifying what is happening in a group comes through practice. Group members must learn to distinguish what they see and hear from what they imagine what they have seen and heard to mean. The group member describes what he sees and hears in specific and concrete terms rather than making generalizations, inferences or evaluations.

Appendix 1b

GROUP OBSERVATION RECORD

GROUP: _____

DATE: _____



NOTE EACH GROUP MEMBERS POSITION BY HIS INITIALS. RECORD WHO TALKED TO WHOM BY DRAWING ARROWS CONNECTING SPEAKER AND LISTENER.

Appendix 1c

BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION

A Basic Communication Skill for Improving Interpersonal Relationships

The Problem: If you and another person are to discuss the way you work together or what is happening in your relationship, both of you must be able to talk about what each of you does that affects the other. This is not easy. Most of us have trouble describing another's behavior clearly enough that he can understand what actions of his we have in mind.

Instead of describing the other person's behavior we usually discuss his attitudes, his motivations, his traits and personality characteristics. Often our statements are more expressive of the way we feel about the other's actions than they are informing about his behavior. And yet we may be unaware of our feelings at the time.

Let's suppose you tell me that I am rude (a trait) or that I don't care about your opinion (my motivation). Because I am not trying to be rude and because I feel that I do care about your opinion, I don't understand what you are trying to communicate. We certainly have not moved closer to a shared understanding. However, if you point out that several times in the past few minutes I have interrupted you and have over-ridden you before you could finish what you were saying, I receive a clearer picture of what actions of mine were affecting you.

The Skill: Behavior description means reporting specific, observable actions of others (1) without placing a value on them as right or wrong, bad or good, (2) without making accusations or generalizations about the other's motives, attitudes, or personality traits.

You try to let others know what behavior you are responding to by describing it clearly enough and specifically enough that others know what you observed. To do this you must describe visible evidence --actions that are open to anybody's observation. Sometimes, for practice, it is helpful to try beginning your description with "I see that..." or "I noticed that..." or "I heard you say..." to remind yourself that you are trying to describe specific actions.

Examples:

"Jim, you've talked more than the others on this topic.
Several times you cut others off before they had finished."

NOT: "Jim, you're too rude!" which names a trait and gives no evidence.

NOT: "Jim, you always want to hog the center of attention!" which imputes an undesirable motive or intention.

"Bob, you've taken the opposite of nearly everything Harry has suggested today."

NOT: "Bob, you're just trying to show Harry up." which is an accusation of undesirable motivation.

NOT: "Bob, you're being stubborn." which is name calling.

"Sam, you cut in before I had finished."

NOT: "Sam, you deliberately didn't let me finish." The word "Deliberately" implies that Sam knowingly and intentionally cut you off. All that anybody can observe is that he did cut in before you had finished.

Several members of the group had told Ben that he was too arrogant. Ben was confused and puzzled by this judgment. He was confused because he didn't know what to do about it; he didn't know what it referred to. He was puzzled because he didn't feel arrogant or scornful of the others. In fact, he admitted that he really felt nervous and unsure of himself. Finally, Joe commented that Ben often laughed explosively after Ben made a comment that seemed to have no humorous aspects. Ben said that he had been unaware of this. Others immediately recognized that this was the behavior that made them perceive Ben as looking down on them, and therefore, arrogant. The pattern, thus, was as follows. When he made a statement of which he was somewhat unsure, Ben felt insecure--Ben's feelings of insecurity expressed themselves in an explosive laugh after Ben made the statement--the other person perceived Ben as laughing at him--the other person felt put down and humiliated--the other expressed his feeling of humiliation by calling Ben arrogant. Note that Ben had no awareness of his own behavior which was being misread until Joe accurately described what Ben was doing. Ben could then see that his laugh was a way of attempting to cope with his own feelings of insecurity.

To develop skill in describing behavior you must sharpen your observation of what actually did occur. You must force yourself to pay attention to what is observable and to hold inferences in abeyance. As you practice this you may find that many of your conclusions about others are based less on observable evidence than on your own feelings of affection, insecurity, irritation, jealousy, or fear. For example, accusations that attribute undesirable motives to another are usually expressions of the speaker's negative feelings toward the other and not descriptions at all.

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APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2a

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback of process data. This requires skill in clearly communicating information back to the group. This can be very difficult if the process observer is perceived as a threat per se or if he becomes a threat through his manner of communicating. Ideally, feedback is:

1. Directly verifiable by the group members themselves,
2. Minimally attributive, that is it sticks to what is readily observable without suggesting motives or making other inferences;
3. Minimally evaluative, that is it leaves evaluation up to the group members as much as possible.

Power equalization. In order to reduce the threat naturally associated with feedback the activity requires that the person or persons giving feedback be perceived by other group members as no more powerful than they (the group members) are. The degree of power which a person is seen as having can be lowered by:

1. discussion of member power focusing on the interdependent nature of group functioning and the resultant power of each group member;
2. the manner in which a person participates: active listening, minimally attributive and evaluative feedback equalize power while disregard for members or other distancing strategies increase power differences,
3. the manner in which a person participates in decision making is particularly important--high handed or distancing (e.g. blocking) activity increases perceived power differences,
4. a person holding formal power by office or assigned position may delegate or "release" his power to the group,
5. group members can be taught process management skills so that everyone can share in the feedback activity,
6. group members can be encouraged to and supported in articulating their needs and making demands on the group,
7. through establishing member equity (input = output) power is seen to be something which is rational and hence understandable and useable

TYPES OF FEEDBACK

1. Behavior Description - The description of what you have observed others doing.
2. Self Reflection - The report of how you feel, how you are being affected by what is going on in the group, what you want to do, what you intend to do, etc.
3. Process Observations - The description of the group's operation e.g. "Tonight we avoided discussing our lack of new members even though we all agreed last week to do so," "our process goal was to make decisions by consensus—we just made a decision by majority vote," etc.
4. Feedback from the External Environment - The description of how individuals, groups or other elements of the group's external environment are reacting to the group.

GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

1. Describe what happened. Don't make judgments about what should have happened.
2. Feedback belongs to the person or group to which it is directed, let them use it however they want to use it.
3. Focus on the relationship, rather than the personality. How do the group members relate to each other rather than what kind of people they are.
4. Don't make blanket generalizations. Accurate information about a specific action is most useful.
5. Be aware of your own bias and reactions. A report of your experience of other's activity is always subjective.
6. The usefulness of feedback is often dependent on the degree of openness and trust in the group. Accepting feedback involves some risk.

"A group has two things in common with a machine or with any organism anywhere."

1. IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO.
2. IT MUST BE KEPT IN RUNNING ORDER TO DO IT.

FEEDBACK IS ESSENTIAL IF WE ARE TO KEEP A GROUP IN GOOD RUNNING ORDER AND GETTING SOMETHING DONE.

Appendix 2b

Paraphrase

A Basic Communication Skill for Improving Interpersonal Relationships

The problem: Tell somebody your phone number and he will usually repeat it to make sure he heard it correctly. However, if you make a complicated statement most people will express agreement or disagreement without trying to insure that they are responding to what you intended. Most people seem to assume that what they understand from a statement is what the other intended.

How do you check to make sure that you understand another person's ideas, information, or suggestions as he intended them? How do you know that his remark means the same to you as it does to him?

Of course, you can get the other person to clarify his remark by asking, "What do you mean?" or "Tell me more." or by saying "I don't understand." However, after he has elaborated you still face the same question. "Am I understanding his idea as he intended it to be understood?" Your feeling of certainty is no evidence that you do in fact understand. (See "On Misunderstanding.")

The Skill: If you state in your own way what his remark conveys to you, the other can begin to determine whether his message is coming through as he intended. Then, if he thinks you misunderstand, he can speak directly to the specific misunderstanding you have revealed. I will use the term "paraphrase" for any means of showing the other person what his idea or suggestion means to you:

Paraphrasing, then is any way of revealing your understanding of the other person's comment in order to test your understanding.

An additional benefit of paraphrasing is that it lets the other know that you are interested in him. It is evidence that you do want to understand what he means.

If you can satisfy the other that you really do understand his point, he will probably be more willing to attempt to understand your views.

Paraphrasing, thus, is crucial in attempting to bridge the interpersonal gap. (1) It increases the accuracy of communication, and thus the degree of mutual or shared understanding. (2) The act of paraphrasing itself conveys feeling—your interest in the other, your concern to see how he views things.

Paraphrase

Learning to paraphrase: People sometimes think of paraphrasing as merely putting the other person's ideas in another way. They try to say the same thing with different words. Such word-swapping may merely result in the illusion of mutual understanding as in the following example.

Sarah: Jim should never have become a teacher.
Fred: You mean teaching isn't the right job for him?
Sarah: Exactly!! Teaching is not the right job for Jim.

Instead of trying to reword Sarah's statement Fred might have asked himself, "What does Sarah's statement mean to me?" In that case the interchange might have sounded like this.

Sarah: Jim should never have become a teacher.
Fred: You mean he is too harsh on the children? Maybe even cruel?
Sarah: Oh no. I meant that he has such expensive tastes that he can't ever earn enough as a teacher.
Fred: Oh, I see, you think he should have gone into a field that would have insured him a higher standard of living.
Sarah: Exactly! Teaching is not the right job for Jim.

Effective paraphrasing is not a trick or a verbal gimmick. It comes from an attitude, a desire to know what the other means. And to satisfy this desire you reveal the meaning his comment has for you so that the other can check whether it matches the meaning he intended to convey.

If the other's statement was general, it may convey something specific to you.

Larry: I think this is a very poor textbook.
You: Poor? You mean it has too many inaccuracies?
Larry: No, the text is accurate, but the book comes apart too easily.

Possibly the other's comment suggests an example to you.

Laura: This text has too many omissions; we shouldn't adopt it.
You: Do you mean, for example, that it contains nothing about the Negro's role in the development of America?
Laura: Yes, that's one example. It also lacks any discussion of the development of the arts in America.

If the speaker's comment was very specific, it may convey a more general idea to you.

Ralph: Do you have 25 pencils I can borrow for my class?
You: Do you just want something for them to write with?
I have about 15 ball-point pens and 10 or 11 pencils.

Sometimes the other's idea will suggest its inverse or opposite to you.

Stanley: I think the Teacher's Union acts so irresponsibly because the Administration has ignored them so long.

You: Do you mean that the T.U. would be less militant now if the Administration had consulted with them in the past?

Stanley: Certainly. I think the T.U. is being forced to more and more desperate measures.

To develop your skill in understanding others, try different ways of (1) conveying your interest in understanding what they mean, (2) revealing what the other's statements mean to you. Find out what kinds of responses are helpful ways of paraphrasing for you.

The next time someone is angry with you or is criticizing you, try to paraphrase until you can demonstrate that you understand what he is trying to convey as he intends it. What effect does this have on your feelings and on his?

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Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
1968

APPENDIX 3

Appendix 3

DIAGNOSIS BY USING PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESSES

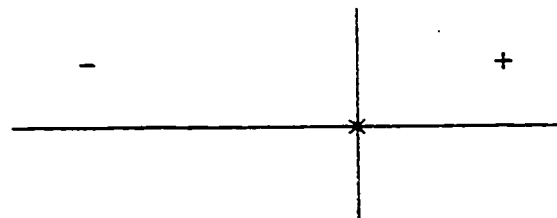
Theory

A problem is a falling short of an ideal state.
It provides a block to the achievement of a goal.
Problem identification and problem solving is
integrally connected to goal and goal achievement.

A problem can be identified by locating it on a scale between
minus (-) and plus (+).

Example:

The horizontal line
represents movement
toward the goal



The vertical line represents the
present conditions, a problem.

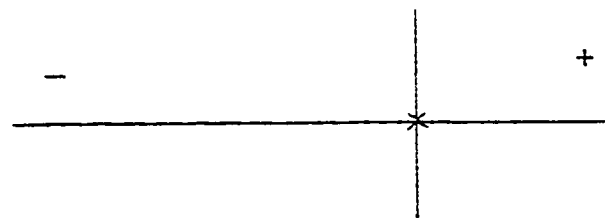
In stating a problem it is most helpful to be concrete, to spell
it out in specifics.

The horizontal dimension, that is, the goal being strived for,
needs to be stated operationally. To state the goal operationally,
words should be used to describe "a condition that will exist," or how
things will be different. The way the goal is stated helps to deter-
mine the nature of the goal in relation to proximity or distance from
the present moment of analysis and action planning.

Goals must be both measureable and significant. Goals can be
identified in at least three domains:

- a. cognitive
- b. attitudinal
- c. behavioral

Goal
Dimension

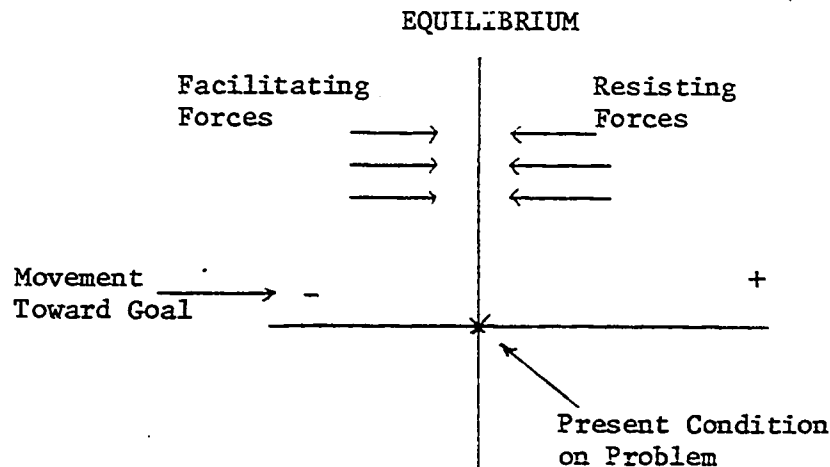


Problem Dimension

At this point the process of identification of problem (goal)
compels the consideration of causal factors, that is, force fields.

The concept of equilibrium involves a state of balance between opposing forces. It can be applied to problem analysis-diagnosis.

A problem exists in a field of forces. The present condition or problem stays in equilibrium because of a set of opposing forces.



The equilibrium can be changed by adding facilitating forces or by increasing their strength and/or by reducing, ignoring or changing restraining forces.

In many instances the tendency of problem solvers is to add to or increase the strength of facilitating forces. This action causes an increased push or counterdrive from the restraining forces. It appears to be a more effective approach than reducing or changing the restraining forces.

Diagnostic Process

This diagnostic process is called force field analysis. The analysis is not complete until diagnostic techniques have been applied to the forces. Forces are submitted to evaluation and scrutiny: Are they valid? How do we know? How significant are they? What is their strength? How can we find out? Can they be changed, reduced or redirected? What will help or hinder in an attempt to change them?

In order to carry out such evaluation it is important to construct data gathering instruments or diagnostic tools. The decision made on the kind of questions to ask depends on three things: What do we need to know about the forces; what do we want to know; and what use do we intend to make of the information?

The process of data gathering allows evaluation of the forces with more reliability. A value or a weight for each force can be established. The weighing of forces is crucial to arrive at the selection of one or more forces of significance and workability.

Forces can be weighed by using plus (+) or minus (-) ratings, or by using arbitrary number ratings. The ratings show the degree of strength significance and workability.

Once a force has been identified as significant and changeable, the process calls for BRAINSTORMING action alternatives. This is a free and spontaneous flow of ideas without evaluation or interruptions. It is followed by an evaluation of the action alternatives. A variety of diagnostic tools and approaches is used for testing feasibility and practicality of the action proposed. This evaluation can include further application of force field analysis by listing forces that may help or hinder the implementation of the action alternative.

Planning the implementation of an action alternative, then, can take into consideration the forces that will hinder and help as the design for the activity takes form. The design of the plan for action can be more accurate toward reducing or preventing restraining forces and maximizing the helping forces.

Evaluation of the completed action project includes the use of diagnostic tools that measure progress toward the achievements of the goal.