But if my faculty doesn't understand, doesn't believe in, doesn't agree with my ideas, regardless of merit, my ideas haven't much chance of really being carried out effectively—and so I wait. I continue to work vigorously for those things which I believe—those things which seem to me to be best for the young people with whom I work."

Without elaboration several other questions about time, complexity, conflicts, and skills might be listed: How does a school faculty find time to work on problems? How are new teachers inducted into a process which has been underway for some time? How are parents involved in or at least informed regarding the school's purposes and plans while these are in the process of change? How are conflicts in value and differences of opinion resolved if action is demanded? How does a faculty summarize, report, and evaluate its efforts? What kinds of group skills are desirable or necessary so that the process is effective and efficient?

The need for effective skills in the group process increases as schools travel farther along the path previously indicated. The skill patterns seem complex, but so are the behavior patterns of a football team as it tries to reach the opponent's goal. If the school faculty would spend the same amount of time analyzing and practicing individual and group skills in making school changes as the football coach and the team do in preparing for the season's schedule, much would be gained. Goals would be clarified, difficulties would be anticipated, morale would be considered, skills would be practiced, cooperative effort would be rewarded, and discouragement would be reduced.

**Stereotypes and the Growth of Groups**

HERBERT THELEN and WATSON DICKERMAN

Individuals concerned with productive group discussion and action have been interested in the activities of the First and Second National Training Laboratories in Group Development, held during the summers of 1947 and 1948. Those concerned with research in this vital area of group processes will be interested in this article growing out of the Second Laboratory and its implications for leadership. The authors are Herbert Thelen, associate professor of educational psychology, University of Chicago, and Watson Dickerman, assistant professor of education, University of California, Berkeley. Both were Laboratory staff members in 1948.

VARIED SOCIAL MECHANISMS differ in the explicitness of their policies of operation. In an association which operates according to a constitution, by-laws, and parliamentary procedure, policies of operation are comparatively explicit. In an informal group, such as a club or discussion group, policies of
operation are much less explicit. Members do have concepts, frequently at a stereotypic level, about policies of operation — how the leader is to be chosen, how decisions are to be made, how status among the members is to be determined. But these concepts differ considerably from member to member, and often conflicts, which reduce the group's productivity, result. These conflicts are the more difficult to reconcile because the members of the group do not realize that they are the direct result of the varying concepts which the members hold about the group's operational policies. Or, if they realize this, they assume that each one's concepts about these policies are within his area of freedom of belief and, thus, nobody's business but his own.

Groups in Action

What are these stereotypes about the operation of groups and how are they related to the stages by which a group grows in productivity? Groups which were in operation for three weeks at the 1948 session of the National Training Laboratory on Group Development serve to illustrate stereotypes at various stages of group growth. We shall try to describe both the phases in the development of these groups and the stereotypes about policies of operation which accompanied these phases. Our data are the sound recordings of the discussions of the eight groups at different stages in their development and the daily written records of the observer in each group.

In the light of what happened in these eight groups at the NTL, a group may perhaps be seen as going through four phases as it grows in ability to operate efficiently. In the first phase various members of the group quickly attempt to establish their customary places in the leadership hierarchy. In effect, this may be thought of as an attempt to establish the "peck order" of the group. Next comes a period of frustration and conflict brought about by the leader's steadfast rejection of the concept of peck order and the authoritarian atmosphere in which the concept of peck order is rooted. The third phase sees the development of cohesiveness among the members of the group, accompanied by a certain amount of complacency and smugness. This third phase seems to be characterized by a determination to achieve and maintain harmony at all costs. Insofar as this effort is successful, it results in an atmosphere of deceptive "sweetness and light," which, nevertheless, is sufficiently permissive to enable the members to assess their own positions, modes of interaction, and attitudes in the group. This phase is unstable because it is unrealistic, and it gives way to a fourth phase. In the fourth phase the members retain the group-centeredness and sensitivities which characterized the third phase, but they develop also a sense of purpose and urgency which make the group potentially an effective social instrument.

We turn now to an effort to identify some of the stereotypes about policies of operation which seem to characterize these four phases of the growth of our groups.

Phase One—Individually Centered

- Every group needs a strong, expert leader.
Good group membership consists of active, oral participation; those who do not talk are not good group members.

The group is wasting its time unless it is absorbing information or doing something active—listening to lectures, receiving bibliographies, making long lists on the blackboard, role playing, working in sub-committees, passing resolutions.

The group cannot become cohesive or efficient until each member has certain "necessary" information about the other members—occupation, title, job responsibilities, age, education, family, hobbies.

The group's observer makes his assessment of the group's process by using his intuition. He gives the members interesting information about themselves.

Any expression of feeling, particularly of aggression or hostility, is bad. It upsets the group and should be squelched.

The chief function of the leader is to manipulate the group toward the goals which he knows are appropriate for it because of his competence and authority.

Each member sees the other members primarily as individuals rather than as parts of a group. Each must be dealt with individually through the kinds of appeals which are persuasive for him.

Phase Two—Frustration and Conflict Among Stereotypes

The stereotypic conflicts which characterize this phase are perceived quite differently by the members of the group at the beginning of the phase and at its end. At the beginning the leader is seen as a frustrating figure because he has refused to fit the stereotypes which characterized Phase One. This results in the direction of a good deal of hostility against him, which may be expressed quite overtly. By the end of Phase Two, this and other stereotypic conflicts are seen as simply the verbalization of the ambivalences of members of the group.

In other words, they are seen as representing unsolved problems which plague all of us but which we manage to repress if our group has a strong leader who is willing to act as such. These conflicts seem to the writers to pose some of the most fundamental problems that individuals have to solve before they can become secure as members of a group. Typical stereotypic conflicts which characterize Phase Two follow:

- We must have a leader who is strong to the point of being dominating and autocratic versus We must have a leader who is permissive to the point of being laissez faire.

- Our troubles of operation would disappear if only the leader would tell us the theory of group dynamics versus Our troubles can disappear only when we have acquired skill in formulating a theory about and assessing the operations of our group.

- Democratic group process requires a strong leader who is subject to criticism and recall by the group at any time versus Democratic group process requires a chairman whose primary job is to conciliate interpersonal conflicts among the active members of the group.

- Efforts to assess our own group processes are an invasion of the sacredness of individual personalities versus Assessment of group process is a sounder starting point for intelligent group action than is attention to motivations and attitudes of individual members of the group.

- Our basic problem is that members do not take enough initiative and responsibility versus Members who exhibit initiative and willingness to assume responsibility are competing with the leader.

- A decision by majority vote is binding on all members of the group versus No individual should be coerced into going along with what he thinks is wrong.

February 1949
Leadership is a role vested in a single competent member of the group versus Leadership is a complex function which should be distributed among all members of a group.

The first problem, which runs through most of these conflicts, appears to be the notion that the answer must be either A or B. Such thinking is most fruitless when neither A nor B is satisfactory. Members of a group must learn to ask, "Under what conditions is this policy wise?" rather than, "What policy is wise under all conditions?" The latter alternative is, of course, a legitimate question. But its answer would require appraisal of each of the alternative policies, followed by identification of the essential criteria for answering the first question. The answer to the second would probably be: any policy is wise if it satisfies this list of criteria; and the list of criteria would then have to be given.

It seems likely that the members of a group must reorient their ideas about how knowledge should be formulated. The notion that a set of generalizations about psychological phenomena can be given is less tenable than the notion that the legitimate content of psychological knowledge is only description and rationale for a set of procedures by which appropriate policy can be determined in a given situation. We are asserting, in effect, that content knowledge in the area of group dynamics consists not of generalizations about psychological phenomena per se. Rather, it consists of generalizations about how to proceed in determining right conduct. Generalizations of the first kind enter into generalizations of the second kind only insofar as they help us to speculate about whether or not a suggested method of procedure will have the consequences required by the criteria.

A second major problem which a group faces, in the light of the conflicts which have been described, is how to ask the right kind of questions—those which will lead to fruitful answers.

For example, an important question is: What is the relationship between an individual's rights and his duties to society? An unfruitful way to get at this relationship is to ask: What are the rights of individuals? The question might better be phrased: What are the characteristics of individual participation which most facilitate those types of interaction through which both the individual and his society can develop in desirable directions? The change in wording makes a sine qua non of neither the inalienable rights of individuals nor the demands of society. Instead, it focuses attention on the kinds of individual action which can contribute most both to his own individual growth and to a healthy society.

A third problem is partly one of insight of the group's goal and the steps necessary to reach it, and partly one of skill in communicating such insight to one another. Many of the conflicts arose because members of the group felt forced to take untenable positions—for example, on the nature of good leadership or the characteristics of democratic group process. When one has taken an untenable position, he is vulnerable to attack and is likely to become defensive because even he can see that his position is weak.

By the development of insight about goals and of skill in their communication, could each member's responses...
have contributed to the sequential solution of the problems the group was trying to solve rather than frittering away the group's time and strength on inconsequential flank skirmishes? For example, it may be that these destructive side battles could have been avoided if the members had seen the group's goal in terms of a series of sub-goals, each of which was to be reached through group action. One such sub-goal might be the existence of enough permissiveness so that members could alleviate their anxieties rather than project them into stereotypic conflicts. Another might be orientation in the methodology of action research so that members would acquire more know-how about solving problems. Another might be the acquisition of skill in making group decisions. Surmounting each of these sub-goals would carry the group forward progressively toward the final goal instead of encouraging endless and fruitless stereotypic conflicts.

Phase Three—Attempted Consolidation of Group Harmony

During this phase, the group's major purpose appears to be to avoid conflict of the sort that was so debilitating during the second period. This requires the development of skill in playing supportive roles, conciliating roles, integrating roles. It also requires the members to become more responsive to subtle cues and to take more responsibility for indicating agreement or disagreement with tentative notions, rather than flat rejections or acceptances of proposed solutions. Perhaps the major pitfall to be avoided at this point is that of glossing over significant differences for the sake of apparent harmony.

During the third period, then, we find the following stereotypes dominant:

- The goal of the group is cohesiveness, not productivity.
- Group-centered behavior is essentially a kind of polite behavior which avoids upsetting the group. Each individual must curb his impulses in such a way that conflict does not become open.
- The leader is essentially a laissez faire chairman.
- Planning or steering committees should be used to make concrete proposals for the group's consideration.
- A person who is silent must be brought into the discussion so we can tell if he is unhappy.
- Our most important goal is satisfaction for each individual in the group. We must work at this objectively and with considerable self-assessment. The self-assessment, however, must not reveal apparent individual weaknesses but rather the difficulties of a normal individual who is struggling with difficult problems.
- Our leader may be seen as a fairly worthy person to have brought us to this pleasant position but, nevertheless, we will divide the job of chairmanship among ourselves.

During this third phase there is a marked increase in the sense of individual responsibility for satisfying group needs. One might see the preceding period of frustration as one in which every individual became highly involved emotionally in the group's process; in it, it is no longer possible to sit back to judge or to be amused. On the other hand, the desire to avoid further bitterness and conflict acts as a strong disciplining influence and stimulates the development of skill which the members did not previously possess—those skills which allow a person to participate and yet avoid conflict. The former leader
is now reinstated, not as a leader but as a resource person; and the group discussion shows fairly clearly that it is rejecting the concept of leadership as a personal role in favor of the concept of leadership as one aspect of good group membership—a function which is shared by all.

In a very real sense, the test of whether the preceding experiences of the members of the group have resulted in understanding may well be whether they move out of this stage in which "we all love each other with qualifications" but in which also significant skills are developing, to a later stage in which the group becomes a social instrument geared for action, directed outward toward improvement of its environment rather than inward toward the adjustment of members to the present environment. Until this moving on to a later stage takes place, it is as if the group were operating with some elements of phantasy, primarily in regard to its own goals. This phantasy is perilously close to the institutionalization of complacency on the one hand and to fear of ideational and other conflicts associated with solving action problems on the other.

It is probable that the only way in which this socially reinforced complacency can be broken down is through each individual's objective self-assessment. This will enable him to realize that if this period is too prolonged it will become an obstacle to any further growth on his part. It is necessary, then, for skills to be developed in a new functional area—skills which will enable each individual to realize his own needs for action in the group as distinguished from skills required for the individual to realize his needs for position and security. Along with this, at the conceptual level, must come the understanding that security is not a sufficient goal in itself, but is the necessary condition for effective action.

Phase Four—Individual Self-Assessment, Flexibility of Group Processes, and Emphasis upon Productivity in Problem Solving

We present the apparent stereotypes of this fourth phase with somewhat less confidence than those of the other phases because most of our groups did not go on into the social action stage. They did not actually tackle problems of adjusting their own environment. One had the feeling that the Laboratory ended with the groups in the middle of a phase, with things yet to happen. It is quite possible, also, that even if there had been time for this fourth phase to completely develop, other still more mature phases may lie beyond it. There are, however, a number of impressions that most of the observers seemed to concur in, which suggest directions such as those described in the preceding paragraph and which require the development of skills beyond those required in the third phase.

The two most obvious characteristics of this fourth phase are the attainment by the members of much greater objectivity with regard to individual roles in the group, and the attainment of much greater ease in making decisions and much more flexibility in controlling group processes. For a third characteristic of the fourth phase, namely, participation as a group in problem-solving activities designed to change or modify the social scene through direct impact.
on it rather than merely through the changed attitudes and skills of individuals, we have less evidence than expectation. But there is some reason to believe that readiness for this kind of activity is developing.

Another difficulty encountered in trying to describe the stereotypes which govern this fourth phase is that stereotypic thinking was much less frequent, and in many of the group members there was a definite feeling of revulsion whenever anyone attempted to produce a capsule evaluation as to whether the chairman was behaving in a “democratic” manner or not. It is as if the conceptualization had been driven down into a much deeper level, whose complexity made verbalization difficult. Permissiveness had developed at the level of individual thinking; that is, individuals are now free to theorize about these processes in their own way.

It is the introduction of this element which takes the method of control out of the laissez faire area in which there is considerable permissiveness of specific behaviors but very little permissiveness of conceptualization and thinking about behaviors. It is because of the deeper, more personalized conceptualizations that frustration and impasse due to conflict can be avoided in a climate having this second sort of permissiveness.

The stereotypes that we can identify, then, in the fourth phase, should probably be thought of not as verbalizations whose relation to operation is vague and conflicting in the minds of members, but rather as principles of operation which have developed inductively and more or less consciously as by-products of the individual’s attempt to meet his own needs in the group. Among these notions are:

- Each individual has a personality of his own which is different from that of other group members and is not to be judged as either good or bad.
- The nature of this personality determines the efficiency and ease with which individuals will be able to play different roles in the group.
- If a member of a group is to grow in ability to participate in the group, other members must help him by demonstrating their expectation that he will grow and their approval of his growing ability to formulate perceptions about group process.
- This, in turn, means that all individual perceptions and differences among them have to be treated as realities. It also means that we cannot assume that any one individual’s perceptions are the “right” ones.
- Contributions of each individual must be assumed to be relevant to the problem under consideration. It is up to the group to find out what the relevance is. Only thus can the goal directions of each individual be continually woven into the goal direction of the group as a whole.
- Although the deeper meanings of each individual’s contribution cannot be taken for granted, enough rapport has developed that the members know about what to expect from each individual. It is only when these expectations are violated by the introduction of novel and threatening elements into the situation that a serious problem arises.
- The question of “What is our purpose at this point? What is the problem we are trying to solve?” is recognized as one of the most helpful questions that can be asked instead of one of the most obstructing questions which should, at all costs, be avoided and resented.
- In a sense, every member is expected to play all roles at appropriate times. The question of which roles should be form-
ally structured by the group and assigned to particular individuals and for what periods of time remains unanswered. The members seem to feel that the answer lies in analysis of what roles are needed by the group for the solution of the problems at hand and of the interests and needs of individuals for playing these roles.

- The place of ethics, as a source of guidance for the group, lies in making the formulation of criteria for success in particular situations easier. It does not, in itself, provide the policies for running the group.

A Hypothesis Proposed

The identification of the four phases of group growth which have been discussed amounts to stating a hypothesis about the course of group growth:

Beginning with individual needs for finding security and activity in a social environment, we proceed first to emotional involvement of the individuals with each other, and second to the development of a group as a rather limited universe of interaction among individuals and as the source of individual security. We then find that security of position in the group loses its significance except that as the group attempts to solve problems it structures its activities in such a way that each individual can play a role which may be described as successful or not in terms of whether the group successfully solved the problem it had set itself.

It is not our contention that these four phases develop in sequential order. We have attempted to identify some of the stereotypes which seem to us to represent the perceptions of the members of these groups at different stages in the development into groups. We do not claim that this particular course of development of stereotypes about policies of operation would be found in all groups under all conditions. We do feel that identification of the members’ stereotypes about policies of operation would help many groups in their growth as individually satisfying social milieux and as effective social action instruments.

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