

Share-20: Group Work Treatment

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PROFESSIONAL educators have for many years sufficiently belabored the question of the black child and his academic performance. In November 1967 at a Washington, D.C., National Conference on Equal Educational Opportunities, a research body on Student Achievement presented the dismal finding that no program devised for the ghetto school has yet succeeded in improving the academic levels of black children. While the statement itself excites some natural questions, its implications are tragic.

Innovative approaches to solving the problems of the black child's in-school performance must constantly be sought. Saturated tutorial programs are obviously more of what the black child has already not responded to in his ghetto school. An entirely different approach has recently been piloted in Chicago's Englewood, a black ghetto community. The problems that are manifested in Englewood are not unique but are indeed typical of any black ghetto.

Thousands of ghetto youngsters exist in physical and mental repression and chaos which significantly influence the sociability and educability patterns in the community. The mechanics of going to school, very often, are the most real aspect of the child's educational experience. That is, input, performance, potential, competition, and success play no real part in the education process of

the nation's black child. School has been reduced to a mechanical experience achieved in its entirety on a day to day basis, with Monday bearing no relation to Tuesday and Tuesday bearing no relation to Wednesday and so forth. The countless forces that work against the black child's success are present and actively festering in Englewood, District 20 of the Chicago Public Schools.

To Defy Negative Forces

In an effort to defy the consequences of such negative forces, a program called Share-20 was designed and implemented nearly three years ago. Share-20 is based upon the T. J. Mallison Study of Toronto, Canada. This project was funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act under Title III. An amount in excess of \$800,000 was appropriated to the public schools for the program's administration. The funds are budgeted and controlled, however, at the project level for needs deemed fit, with no red tape interference. Share-20 is a group work treatment project aimed at improving the academic level of the child in quite a roundabout way.

In September 1967, a search through 20 schools for pupils between grades 3 and 11 whose IQ's measure average or above and who yet were demonstrating at least a six months' gap between their indices of ability

and their indices of performance, yielded over 1500 normal, healthy, academically able pupils who for some reason failed to live up to their potential. Many children retrieved in the search were two, three, or four years behind their ability. Some children had IQ measures of 135 or greater and yet were found to have an excessive academic deficiency. Obviously dull wit was not the factor contributing to these pupils' low academic performance. The cause, most assuredly, lies in typical personal and social problems.

Share-20 divided its pupils into small groups of not more than 10 pupils meeting similar criteria of grade, age, sex, and potential-performance gap. Through the medium of the small group theory, even in Englewood (the original study used middle class white Canadian subjects) the program sought to eliminate the stereotyped problems of the children or sought to help them understand how to live with those problems which would not dissolve. Share-20 staff members were fully aware that if these pupils could be set even somewhat "free" from social and personal inhibitions, or at least brought to the point where they could recognize what factors do indeed frustrate their successes, then this modification would provide an additional margin for academic achievement.

Aims of Share-20

In general, the aims of Share-20 were:

To improve, through the use of comprehensive active programming involving cultural, educational, social, and personal concerns in a small group atmosphere, the in-school performance

To assist the pupils in discovering their dormant talents (black youths have not attached concepts of talent to their race)

To have the pupils identify and respond to the factors in the home, school, and community which enhance their successes and failures

To provide a positive image of identity for each black youngster through the presentation of Afro-American life, history, and tradition and present-day achievements of black leaders.



photos courtesy of the author

Pupils develop strong companionships with peers.

As a definite subgoal, the program sought to develop a resource pool of more than 70 college students to be trained as group workers. College students were selected on a variety of criteria. Two of these criteria were that they be currently enrolled in a school of sociology, education, psychology, or a related field of study and that they be indigenous to the community.

There are six decentralized programming sites in Englewood. Each serves a geographic cluster of schools, having each pupil meet twice or three times weekly in a session with his or her group and group worker. The group atmosphere mellows in all directions. Few limitations are defined within the groups and few limitations are defined for the groups. For example, a sufficient portion of the \$800,000 is budgeted so that a group, at the expense of the program, may encounter an experience rather ordinary for many persons but completely foreign to the typical black child of that community. An example



Project Share-20 stresses the group concept for youngsters to experience support, identity, and all the processes of membership in a society.

might be a live stage performance enjoyed during a full-course meal in the Chicago downtown area or on the North side of the city. Here, children may observe that there is no density of blackness and that the lifestyle is dramatically different. For these children, new concepts of reality are allowed to bud. Indeed a simple experience, yet it is one of profound impression for the child who is none too aware that more than his own community exists.

Within the groups, behaviors exempli-

fied by students are often found to be superficial reactions to their real problems. Without question, identification of these real problems, whether simply low motivation, poor judgment of self as a capable person, inability to adjust to peers and family, anti-school symbolism, or lack of input because the schools demand too little, is constantly being sought through the medium of the group. Each child knows that he must become aware of his own situation before any improvement can be anticipated.

Evaluation of Project

Throughout the entire district, school administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents have reported strikingly significant feedback with regard to modification of pupil behavior. A lineage account, so to speak, is gathered on the individual and is maintained as supportive data. Pupils have shown that they can perform at higher levels in school. Socialization within the schools has shown a great deal of improvement. Parents have reported that their youngsters are "acting much better."

Extensive documentation and reporting is done on all sessions of the meeting of each group of pupils as an aid to research. Each child (experimental and control) was given a Stanford Reading Achievement Test and the California Test of Personality in December of 1968 and 1969. The final testing period was to be in June 1970. By testing both the control and the experimental groups, changes that occur as a result of normal maturation can be distinguished from changes that can be attributed to Share-20 or other factors. The California Test of Personality measures changes in 12 components of personality, including self-reliance, sense of personal worth, school relations, and feeling of belonging.

In order to measure the typical low concept of the black child, Human Motivation Institute, Inc., a black consultant firm, devised a self-concept instrument geared specifically for the children in Englewood. The institute established the self-concept criteria and plans to evaluate the student responses to an interview schedule; review each Share-20 student's social, personal, and educational background; and compare movement amounts in terms of the self-concept criteria found in students who participate in the group treatment project. Twenty percent of the population (10 percent experimental and 10 percent control) was interviewed in January and was to be interviewed again in June. In addition, all student report cards are being duplicated and compared in a search for any possible trends.

Share-20 has been found to be the single most influential entity of its sort introduced



Socialization is constantly stressed among groups in an effort to minimize hostilities.

into the community. Share-20 has led hundreds of black youths into never experienced horizons as well as provided them support to release their anxieties. It has dramatically altered concepts of the dignity and worth of the black person.

The individual, being a total composite of all his past experiences and a creature of habit, cannot be readily defined or fashioned into order by certainty of any single existing formula. Our American society is in full realization of this thesis. And it is the task of this American society to explore new methods of allowing any individual his full opportunity to actualize. Share-20 exists as a unique entity in pursuit of this ideal.

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