

improved coping with stress. These involve understanding, assessing, predicting, and labeling stress factors. Such cognitive structures, particularly help to reduce ambiguity.

The elementary classroom then to maintain an ecological balance must offer an *effective and cognitive support structure to all youngsters*.

The third and final classroom subsystem with which we can deal is the "reward structure." The reward structure determines the contingencies that intervene between effort expended and need satisfaction. The development of "industry" or "competence" is essentially dependent upon a belief or attitude that we can term "effort-optimism." This is essentially a set or approach to a learning experience or opportunity for growth that yields a prediction that the expenditure of effort will in fact yield important need satisfactions. The key in the elementary school in terms of the reward system is to ensure the highest probability that effort expended will lead to increase in self esteem. Any aspect of the environment that systematically interferes with that connection, be it a grading system, a teacher or peer bias, or a random distribution of rewards, upsets the ecological balance inherent in the system.

We have described briefly a set of principles and propositions from developmental psychology and applied to educational environments in the form of a set of ecological principles.

If these principles are to yield any values in improving the quality of elementary school environments, some kind of monitoring or environmental management function must be built into the educational system. In the Division of Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota we are now engaged in the exciting task of beginning to prepare workers who can perform this function. At this point we are uncertain about the exact job titles under which they will operate or the final role relationship within which they will be integrated into the school. We believe, however, that they can offer a needed expert who can enhance the qualities of educational programs.

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SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE DESIGN OF A COLLEGE STUDENT T-GROUP TOWARD ENHANCING THE WILL TO LISTEN

This tendency toward modernization—in society makes life problematical for the *individual*. There is already mounting evidence that he is alienated, lonely, anxious, and desperately seeking purpose and identity. . . . It is becoming increasingly clear that organizations have to develop mechanisms for the two over-arching tasks: (1) better means for human *communication* and *collaboration*, particularly between levels of hierarchy and between divergent specialists, and (2) better mechanisms for coping with externally induced stress and changes, *adaptability*.

(Shein & Bennis, 1967, p. 6)

Elsewhere, Bennis (1966) has developed the thesis that "reality testing" is crucial to this above *adaptability*. It is this writer's contention that ability to

listen is crucial to all these above needs and that listening is not as well developed in this culture as generally assumed. Nichols and Stevens complain of false assumptions such as: "bright people listen well and dull ones poorly," also, "We have assumed that learning to read will automatically teach one to listen (1957, p. 6)." Nichols and Stevens suggest we build the kind of aural experience that can produce good listening habits and they attribute poor listening to the differential rates of thinking and speaking. That is, people have *spare time* to think between the spoken ideas. They suggest that a listener is in danger of spending more and more time thinking on a sidetrack idea until the thread of conversation is lost to the extent that this sidetrack becomes more attractive. This is an everyday type example and this paper will explore some of the uses and abuses of this spare time during listening.

Attention to the spoken word was given much formal status by Korzybski (1941) who espoused the notion of "a language of personality maladjustment." In Wendell Johnson's words:

You have to use a certain kind of language—or you have to use language in a certain way—if you are going to worry, or to regret, or to hate, or to develop and maintain an inferiority complex. . . . To speak of attitudes, fears, hatreds, anxieties, conflicts, likes and dislikes, self-evaluations, delusions, etc., is to indicate, even though obscurely as a rule, those kinds of behavior in which language plays a heavy, often a very dominant, role. (1946, 234-4)

The Nichols & Stevens article dramatically demonstrates the everyday deficiency of people as listeners and cites testimonials about this problem. Schein & Bennis point to the importance of this endeavour saying: "The basic learning . . . requires that the delegate listen to reactions of others and pay attention to them . . . To listen and to pay attention is to expose oneself to danger from within oneself." They state, furthermore, that understanding laboratory process requires an examination of the forces which reduce the threat from within and promote the willingness and ability to listen to the reaction of others (1967, p. 286). Schein and Bennis elaborate on the problem with willingness and ability to listen and enumerate six sources of "tension [which] preoccupy the delegate and force him to cope; his attention is focused on reducing the tension rather than on learning about himself (p. 301)."

It would seem fruitful to quote and examine these six types of tension enumerated by Schein & Bennis in terms of actual T-Group experience and, where pertinent, to invoke other theoretical considerations.

*"(1) . . . dilemmas created by the unfreezing of forces—"**

Mr. A, in an early silence, attempted to assert his importance thus: "If someone would make some room, I'd get down off this bloody chair." The situation was such that most members of the group, at that moment, were sitting on the floor but more to the point there was no need to "make some room" and, as it turned out, shuffling members barely moved. The tone of this remark is lost on paper but had it occurred some hours later it would have been picked up as a rather curious thing to say and indeed at thing to be explored. However, at that moment the information was barely received and certainly not thoughtfully received.

It would seem that people were trying not to listen lest some very embarrassing situation would arise. The silence was indeed long enough to

*These quotations from Schein & Bennis are italicized by the writer as headings.

produce some unfreezing; and the closedness of the members was demonstrated by the unresponsiveness to this person who turned out later to be a very lonely person. Argyris, (1968) in his recent article "Conditions for Competence Acquisition and Therapy," uses systems theory to describe how people become more and more closed to communication as the situation becomes more uncertain and threatening to one's selfrespect. In the silence mentioned above there was no social order in which to act and thus the dilemma precluded any analysis of Mr. A's remark. The unfreezing dilemma does seem to make people defensive about themselves and prevents them from focusing on other members' signs and signals.

"(2) . . . *the heightened consciousness of self that brings with it the possibility of discovering something within himself that will prove to be unacceptable.*"

This writer has experienced the effects of a complicated denial of the unfreezing tension and has also observed this in others. It might be called *unresponsiveness as a response*. Indeed, the tension is denied so thoroughly that the person believes and reports that he was completely neutral to a situation when he in fact, could be observed to manifest this tension. This writer has observed this unresponsiveness as a response in himself and several others during early non-verbal exercises. The prospect of unacceptable discovery can be demonstrated by Miss B's remark: "even if you were to criticize someone, you would be gentle." This is interpreted by the writer as an awareness of potential for some negative criticism and yet an openness to feedback from a respected source. Mr. A in a very similar situation said: "I'm aware of what you're going to say." This latter remark closed the door on further discussion so that Mr. A himself might remain closed. Argyris points out: "unhealthy aspects of an individual exist, when he has become primarily a closed system and when there seem to be no validatable reasons, in the present, for his closed orientation" (p. 176). Yet another example of this prospect of discovery of "something within himself that will prove to be unacceptable" is Mr. C, a member, would rarely look other members in the eye. This would be especially the case when the group would interlock arms and stand silently looking into each others' eyes. It was as if someone would lay claim on his affections and that this would be too costly. Duncker is quoted by Fritz Heider (1958) as to this sort of situation: "Seeing has the phenomenal characteristics of 'being open to,' more generally 'participating in' . . ." (p. 22).

"(3) *The actual possibility of getting honest reactions to himself from others.*"

Mr. A, in a moment of pressure, expressed the threat of honest reactions:

I don't know that I know what it is. . . . It has been a long and painful process to come this far but one might reverse the process and tell everyone to bugger off. . . . At this point I want to call a halt to the whole procedure. . . . (other members momentarily changed the subject) . . . I don't want to quit but I am afraid to go any farther. I'm afraid of trusting the group any further. . . . I'm afraid of ending up all over the floor and we won't be able to put me together . . . when you really know what I'm like you won't like me.

It was clear that the danger in this group not liking him would have been in their tendency to be honest about it to him. The obvious problem is extant here; that is, Mr. A knew full well that he could not hide behind the societal norm of diplomacy but feared those doubts (also inculcated by a competitive society) would be confirmed. This societal condition is implicit

in the warning by Halleck in a recent popular magazine: "At their worst, sensitivity-group participants sharpen their social maneuvers or styles while ignoring the human purposes that brought them together" (1969, p. 72). The prospect of honest feedback is indeed real in the T-Group and is threatening because it is contrary to the comfortable norm of diplomacy.

"(4) Defensive reactions to feedback already obtained . . ."

Mr. A provides an example of this defensiveness also: "It's not good enough to be competent and helpful; you need a quality of gregariousness and warmth. I'm sorry. I can't have gregariousness and warmth." This example followed a rather indirect feedback to him on his aloofness and was sufficient to defend against further feedback which seemed to be coming as he forced this above statement as a blunt interjection. This defensiveness is the easiest to carry out as the person who has just given the feedback has also placed himself in a threatening situation and open to criticism for misinterpreting the object of his feedback. While in this example the feedback was terminated, it might be easy to see that if the feedback had continued Mr. A's attentiveness would be questionable to say the least.

"(5) The belief or assumption that he may not be able to change behavior which is unacceptable to others . . ."

Mrs. C was passive for a number of weeks. This writer had pointed out that the group had not been actively involved in the here-and-now and that there seemed to be little intense interaction. This writer went on to suggest that each person might have some social skill which could be practiced in the group with the aid of a role-playing exercise. Mrs. C missed the latter part of the statement and remarked hotly: "I don't understand why it has to be intense. If your orientation towards the world and towards people is to be less passionate and being more controlled, why should you be forced by group pressure to be intense and to relate to other members of the group in that way?"

Mrs. C, as it turned out had been concerned about her tendency to lose control of her side of an argument and thus lose the argument by default. Her mode was to maintain apparent calm even when she was internally distraught. This usually did not work to her satisfaction either as she would know about it when she was about to lose control of her trend of thought in the argument. To Mrs. C, intensity meant the opposite to control and indeed seemed impossible in the context of her present life. It may be added that her defensiveness was short lived when she was given the opportunity to role-play at being less passionate in an argument.

"(6) . . . the belief or assumption that feedback is always evaluative and always deals with inadequacies or with things that are wrong."

While Schein & Bennis make a case for this type of defensive inattention in more industrial settings, it is this writer's belief that this is not a problem in the college setting where volunteers for T-Groups are more aware of the meta-goals of this sort of training. The writer has only seen this assumption in persons who come for therapy.

Aside from these above tensions, Schein and Bennis mention that people tend to have developed a pattern of defenses and filters which are peculiar to the particular personality. Also, they agree with Nichols and Stevens on two other points. People make the erroneous assumption that they are able to listen reasonably effectively and therefore do not need additional knowl-

edge or skill training in this area. "A fourth, and perhaps most important barrier of all, is the tendency to maximize *self-esteem* and to devalue, from the outset, what others attempt to tell us." (Schein & Bennis, p. 307).

It is this writer's contention that trainers as well as participants take for granted the ability and will to listen to a much greater extent that can be justified. Moreover, it seems imperative that this important aspect of group interaction be built into the training design. Aside from Sullivan's theoretical formulation of the problem, "Selective-inattention"; Argyris (1968) put it this way:

the most important requirement in obtaining transfer of learning is to generate, along with the knowledge of any specific behavior, the basic skills needed to diagnose new situations with others involved to generate the competent behavior appropriate to the situation. (p. 150)

Clearly, listening is implicit in the skills for this kind of diagnosis.

A design for listening: Let us reflect on the clientele. It would seem the college students are attracted to a group where they might learn about their 'personal growth'. There is little likelihood that they would be concerned about their ability to integrate organizationally. Their immediate needs are to function in a variety of interpersonal situations and toward the fulfillment of various needs. Here is a fundamental difference from the concerns of the organization client who would be using his new skills in fewer situations and with more focus on his work group. Recently, J. R. Gibb (1969) reflected some of the considerations which are also pertinent to college students:

Modern man has so truncated his living that it is deprived of the full range of feelings. Modern education builds forces that cause atrophy of feelings and emotions. In full growth thoughts are enriched by feelings and feelings are enriched by thoughts. It is precisely in the full and unprogrammed interplay of the role-free structure that this integration of all facets of life can best occur. The fabric of social control is woven from caring, love, and emergent commitment and interdependence—not from role obligations, responsibilities, and duties. (p. 57)

The role free structure to which Gibb refers is that offered by Schein and Bennis' "Scanning-oriented" trainer. Scanning-orientation provides a greater likelihood that the delegate will learn through scanning other members. The "identification-oriented" trainer provides modelling for members who identify with the trainer. While this latter orientation provides for more rapid unfreezing, identification-oriented trainers offer less likelihood for personally relevant behaviors and attitudes to be refrozen.

Thus far, one would have the impression that design of no design would be optimal for college students. This is not the case. Despite the difficulties of a completely scanning-oriented staff in the unfreezing stage, there is danger of this above false assumption that delegates listen reasonably effectively and need *no* additional work in this area. Moreover, Schein and Bennis feel that scanning-orientation is second best when time is short (3 days or less) and/or when there is little or no isolation. Practical considerations mediate as to when and where the lab will be conducted. Students can't afford the time nor money for the two week residential in complete isolation. Although, it would seem wise to use all available time and money to approach this condition.

In view of this above discussion the following might be toward the optimal for most college settings with limited resources. The student might be given the set that his group experience will be offered in two phases:

Initiation and Development. The initiation stage might consist of an all day session or, better still, a weekend encounter with an identification type trainer actually leading the group through intense unfreezing exercises. These exercises might be of the sort described by Schutz (1967); such as "doubling," fantasy, free association, milling and other verbal and non-verbal devices. "If the individual is to be internally committed to the new learning he must have come to the conclusion that his old modes of behavior are no longer effective, a conclusion that needs to be based on actual experiences in the learning situation in which he used old modes and found them wanting." (Argyris, 1968, p. 149). Therefore, these exercises need to be interspersed with actual lectures on faculty communication and with emphasis on those defenses and other human responses which inhibit listening. A scanning-oriented trainer would complement the identification-oriented trainer and the scanning-oriented trainer would be able to give much needed therapeutic support in the unfreezing phase. This early stage is marked by "closedness" and "defensiveness." Students could be warned against this sort of eventuality in themselves and in others and it would be emphasized that if ". . . he is defensive, he will not tend to give competent feedback or be able to receive with minimal distortion, feedback that is helpful—" (Argyris, p. 169). Other content of the lectures might consist of knowledge from the field of semantics and semantic analysis, as outlined by Luchins (1964): "Because language may hide or blur the impact stimuli have on our sensations, semanticists have developed exercises for nonverbal apprehension of reality." (p. 42). It must be emphasized that there is no reason for anyone to be "turned off by lack of movement in the group." There is always something to attend to, even a nervous foot during a silence. Students need to be shown the importance of the non-verbal cues in conversation and the importance of 'accidental' choice of words:

The acquisition of interpersonal competence requires that the individual learn to minimize the contradictory messages that he intentionally or unintentionally communicates to others. . . . The area of nonverbal behavior is especially important in competence acquisition. Individuals tend to be unaware of the messages that they communicate to others by their facial expressions, body position, and body tenseness. If these are viewed as being beyond the control of the sender, the receiver may place a heavy reliance on them especially when the trust in the relationship is low. (p. 159) . . . One can see how the therapists have developed such techniques as free association, dream analysis, and analysis of slips of the tongue. If one is dealing with a relatively closed system, he may need to utilize devices to diagnose what is behind the wall of psychological defenses that keep the individual from behaving more competently. (Argyris, p. 169)

Students could be instructed to listen for this sort of information which really would be helpful to even the most closed member of the group. In the classroom, a trainer could provide jargon and examples. The jargon is the mental shorthand for concepts which take hours to describe but which are constantly exemplified in the group situation. If the student has specific things to listen for he will be rewarded for his attentiveness. Habitual listening-with-care would contribute to differentiation of specific others in the social environment, since this is done by gathering idiosyncratic information about each group member. "This is the level of interpersonal differentiation demanded in any truly empathic relationship." (Dunnette, 1969, p. 35). Fur-

thermore, Dunnette supports listening training indirectly with this following statement about empathy:

I believe a major goal of most T Groups is to make perceivers more aware of their own perceptual filters, to help them know more fully how they are perceived by others, and to help them be more aware of and sensitive to the attributes of Specific Others in their social worlds. . . . I hypothesize that T-Group perceivers ought to learn to know each other more emphatically. (1969, p. 39)

In the same publication, Dunnette's research supported this hypothesis and, more important, it indicated that empathy is a skill which can be learned with fair ease.

It is not enough for trainers to be cognizant of the problem. This writer has been keenly aware of the issue for some time and still found, during a time of little activity in the group, that thoughts drifted away to problems outside the group. Each member must be aware of this danger in the hope that at least two or three are attending to it at all times. It would seem that, this being the case, there would be far fewer flat or dead spots in the history of a group. Lakin, Liberman and Whitaker (1968) make the conventional list of inclusions in training designs for psychotherapists but their notion of vicarious exposure to groups through tapes, films, and live observation might be introduced here as a part of the initiation phase. It would seem that if groups had a high standard type of vicarious exposure, they might work harder to achieve this standard in their own group and during a much shorter period of time. The initiation phase might be given some closure by having the identification-oriented trainer offer some summary of what has happened and some reflections as to where and on what **THE GROUP HERE-AFTER** might choose to work. Also, at this point, it would be useful for each member of the group to have some understanding of the difference between competence acquisition and therapy so they might be clear in their understanding of various processes to follow. As to this, Argyris has succinctly articulated the basic assumptions:

[In therapy] 1. the individual is so closed that he cannot learn very much about his problem by focusing on his here-and-now behavior. Indeed, the here-and-now behavior may be a facade hiding the underlying problems. 2. The individual probably became closed as a result of threatening experiences in his early life. He has managed to lose awareness of these experiences in order to live with himself as a relatively competent individual. 3. Conditions 1 and 2 make the individual a poor risk in providing help to others. In short, the therapist and the patient (rightly) mistrust the patient's capacity to portray himself accurately; and yet the therapist, and perhaps the patient, assumes that the individual can be helped to do so. (1968, p. 172)

In addition to previous comments on competence acquisition, each student would be assumed to have a constructive intent and each capable of learning from the others in the group.

Hopefully, better than half of the students would be unfrozen and have recognized some psychological safety by the end of the initiation phase. It would be imperative at this point for the identification-oriented trainer to relinquish his dominant role and force himself into the periphery if not leaving the group completely. It has been this writer's experience that where such a strong point of focus remains in the group, very little personal learning takes place and there seems to be a reluctance to leave the safety of the group to apply the new learning in the real world outside the group.

Once the developmental phase has been defined as started, the scanning-oriented trainer must use his special strengths to resist the group's temptation to return to the structured initiation phase. This stage will test the courage of the students and reward their every effort. Equipped with their expectations as to listening and need for empathy and their responsibility as to the progress of the members, students would be better prepared to make use of short periods (2 or 3 hours) twice a week. It might be expected that not so much of the first hour of a two hour period would be wasted.

Competence, then, will increase as a function of the degree to which the person systematically seeks out attitudes and behaviors that, on the one hand, fit into his own personality and, on the other hand, are more effective in helping him achieve his goals without thwarting the goals of others. (Schein and Bennis, p. 310)

Also, Argyris concludes that ". . . individual learning cannot be separated from group effectiveness, and (happily) the conditions required for each are overlapping but highly consonant." (1968, p. 162)

Transfer of learning is the central aspiration and criterion of competence acquisition. If a student can sharpen his listening skills and develop a generalized predilection toward empathy, perhaps, some of the 'contagious' enthusiasm of his professors would be picked up. Obviously, if this were the case, learning in general would be more rewarding and therefore more frequent.

In Summary: This paper has intended to show that both society and the individual student needs a deliberate and conscientious attention to the development of listening skills. It is felt that the T-Group setting is an excellent vehicle for this development. Finally, a tentative design was proposed through attention to key factors of content and style of training.

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- Note:* Quotations of group members were transcribed from tape-recordings of actual T-Group sessions.