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THE RELATIONSHIP OF AN INSTRUMENTED
T-GROUP AND PERSONALITY TO
CHANGES IN SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of a self-administered, instrumented sensitivity training method (PROCESS) was examined in terms of personality and changes in self-concept and self-actualization. Subjects included thirty-two third-year University students in Psychology, ten Nursing graduates in a University Nursing Studies programme, and five maximum security psychiatric patients. For the students, a marathon approach was used. A Case Study was made with the patients to subjectively compare group development in PROCESS to the developmental stages occurring in leader-led T- and Encounter groups.

All three groups showed a decrease in discrepancy between their perceived Actual behaviour and their perceived Preferred behaviour from before to after their group experience. A holdout control procedure was used. The change was primarily accounted for by a change in Actual, and not Preferred behaviour. All three groups increased their mean scores on POI self-actualization scales, but the control groups' mean scores also increased over the experimental period. Women improved more than men in self-concept, but not in self-actualization.

The predicted relationships between affiliation motivation and improvements in self-concept and self-actualization did not occur. Subjects with high PRF Affiliation did not improve more than subjects with low Affiliation. The PRF personality variables of Cognitive Structure and Social Recognition were negatively related to the pre- and post-measures, thus contaminating the findings. Rigid thinking and concern about others' attentions were related to lower self-concept and self-actualization scores.

Difficulties with the Hawthorne effect, repeated testing with reflective measures, and the relationship of affiliation to Maslow's hierarchy, were discussed. Methodological, ethical, and theoretical problems with the study of self-administered, instrumented sensitivity groups were summarized. Adequate follow-up studies with behavioural criteria for effective changes as a result of experiencing groups

seem to be the greatest need.

In a subjective analysis of the group development, several stages of Bennis' and Shepard's, Schutz', and Tuckman's theories of group development were observed. PROCESS seems to be an innovative and viable alternative to traditional psychotherapeutic groups, with a more positive orientation, at least for normally intelligent patients as well as being an effective form of sensitivity training for university students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, as modern man has become increasingly socially alienated, there has been an upsurge in the human relations movement. However, many questions still remain unanswered as to its effectiveness as a method of producing change and personal growth in those participating in such training. Frequently, the concept of "self-actualization" is associated with personal growth.

Maslow's (1970) motivational theory suggests that man's primary instinctive motives consist of five sets of interrelated basic needs which are arranged in a hierarchy ranging from lower to higher ones. The motive for self-actualization is the highest need in Maslow's hierarchical system. Maslow describes self-actualizing people as being realistic, able to accept themselves and others, spontaneous, autonomous, creative, and able to enter into mature love relationships (Murray, 1964). He sees self-actualization as the ultimate goal of all sensitivity training (Maslow, 1970). Sensitivity groups attempt to assist people to grow and develop to their maximum potential by focusing on their immediate experience and by exploring ways in which they respond to and affect one another during the course of the group's development (Vicino et al., 1973). The degree of success in attaining this ideal depends on many variables, including group atmosphere, personality characteristics of the participants, and style of leadership (Back, 1973; Shaffer and Galinsky, 1974).

The present thesis involves a study of the interaction effects of certain personality variables combined with treatment (a form of sensitivity training called PROCESS) and their effect in producing change in self-concept and self-actualization in a group of university students. The changes produced in the student group will be examined and compared with similar changes produced in a group of maximum security psychiatric patients.

Sensitivity Training Defined

Back (1973) illustrates his reluctance to operationally define the difference between T- and Encounter groups by referring to both methods under the heading "sensitivity training." His distinction between the two methods is basically a geographical one. He refers

to a T-group as the "technique developed at Bethel by the National Training Laboratory" (Back, 1973, p.6) and Encounter is the term he associates with Esalen and the Western Behavioral Science Institute.

Schutz, on the other hand, defines Encounter as "a method of human relating based on openness and honesty, self awareness, self-responsibility, awareness of the body, attention to feelings and an emphasis on the here-and-now" (Corsini, 1974, p.401). Rogers (1973) explains that originally the T-group emphasized human relations skills but that it has now become much broader in its approach. He sees the Encounter group as emphasizing personal growth and development as well as improving "inter-personal communication and relationships through an experiential process" (Rogers, 1973, p.12). He states that a sensitivity training group may resemble either of the above groups. Yalom (1970) stresses that the term Encounter group has many aliases including the names sensitivity training, T-groups, marathon groups, personal growth groups, etc. He feels that there are many similarities among these groups but marked procedural differences which would preclude classifying them as identical. He does make a distinction between the T-group and the Encounter group classifying "encounter" as being more unstructured, relying more on physical contact and nonverbal exercises and generally emphasizing the experience rather than "change per se" (Yalom, 1970). This definition tends to be in fairly close agreement with Schultz' concept of what constitutes an Encounter group.

Shaffer and Galinsky use the terms "T-group", "sensitivity training group", and "Human Relations laboratory" interchangeably. They briefly define the "T-group" as "an intensive effort at inter-personal self-study, and an attempt to learn from the raw experience of member participation in a group how to improve interpersonal skills and to understand the phenomena of group dynamics" (p.189). They do point out that originally the T-group model was much more structured with a "more specified theoretical learning thrust" (p. 269) than the Encounter model and with a much more strict here-and-now focus than the Encounter model. However, since the late sixties there has been an increasing tendency to use the terms interchangeably so that many leaders now conduct their groups as "sensitivity-training groups

without any clear decision as to which of the two models they are primarily using" (p.269).

The preceding arguments would tend to indicate that T-groups, Encounter and marathon groups, to name a few, may generally be considered to belong to the same "sensitivity-training" family thus making it possible to draw parallels and connections between studies examining the effects of these groups in producing various types of change in their participants.

The Problem

Vicino et al. (1973) have developed and evaluated a programme of eight self-administered exercises for personal and interpersonal development, called PROCESS. This instrumented group approach was of interest to the author of the present thesis since it appeared to be an effective way of providing an experience equivalent to a traditional T-group without the necessity of having a professional trainer. It possesses the additional advantage of providing the experimenter/trainer with an opportunity to deal with a greater number of participants than would be possible using the more traditional methods.

Despite the promise shown by PROCESS, its original developers made a number of methodological errors in their original evaluation of it. Although the participants tended to improve their self-concept, and self-perception, which were both measured by the "Who Am I" questionnaire, none of the three personality measures (the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale; Bills, Vance and McLean Index of Adjustment and Values; and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale) showed significant differences between the groups. The experimental groups did not receive significantly better scores than the control groups on the personality scales. Since the groups were significantly different on the pre-measures using the "Who Am I" questionnaire, with experimentals having higher discrepancy scores between "Actual" and "Preferred" self than controls, and since "after-only" personality measures were used, the two groups may also have differed initially on the personality dimensions being measured.

Several other problems occurred in the evaluation of PROCESS. No standardized measures of self-actualization were taken, nor were other data, such as the "Who Am I" discrepancy scores, analyzed in terms of the personality variables. To extend the knowledge of

possible interactions of personality variables with treatment procedures, the Vicino et al. experiment was partially replicated by the author of the present thesis with selected self-actualization and personality measures.

The author of the present thesis was also interested in this instrumented T-group because of its possibilities as a form of treatment for psychiatric patients. Some of the advantages of using this particular form of sensitivity training included the fact that it could be used without requiring the presence of a professional trainer, appeared to be effective in producing positive growth in people without overly traumatizing them, and would provide the opportunity to give a larger number of patients access to this active form of treatment. More details of the advantages of this particular group approach for psychiatric patients will be discussed in the chapter dealing with its use for the maximum security psychiatric patients.

A second problem involves the dearth of literature on the use of sensitivity groups with maximum security psychiatric patients. Although some therapy groups have been conducted with this population (Mowit, 1972; Truax et al., 1966), the present author was interested in an exploratory examination of one small sample who experienced PROCESS on the same self-concept and self-actualization measures taken of the experimental and control groups.

The Instrumented Approach

The instrumented group consists of a self-administered approach in which technology is used to stimulate group interaction (Seligman and Desmond, 1973). Rather than attempting to introduce some other sensitivity training method, PROCESS was chosen for several reasons. First, by comparing the stated objectives of PROCESS with those of the more traditional forms of sensitivity training, it seemed that the two sets of objectives are identical: (1) Both types of group experience aim at improving the interpersonal skills of members by increasing self-awareness and one's ability to understand others (Corsini, 1974; Shaffer and Galinsky, 1974; Vicino et al., 1973). (2) Each attempts to deal with issues which are of personal and interpersonal relevance (Lakin, 1972; Shaffer and Galinsky, 1974; Vicino et al., 1973). (3) Both types of groups make some attempt

to act as agents of change (Vicino et al., 1973; Yalom, 1970).

(4) Development of increased awareness and skill in analyzing group process is also common to both as is the desire to impart insight and increased ability to be accepting of one's self and others (Lakin, 1972; Shaw, 1971; Vicino et al., 1973).

Secondly, Vicino et al (1973) reviewed several theoretical arguments: (1) participants have greater responsibility for their own learning; (2) learning may transfer more readily into other situations, as compared to groups which depend on trainers; (3) learning data are collected systematically, and hence become more meaningful to participants.

Thirdly, instrumented groups do result in changes comparable to traditional trainer-led groups, usually on measures of self-concept. For example, Thomas (1971) compared an instrumented group to a traditional T-group, an Encounter group, a Case Study group, and a control group. In instrumented feedback groups, based on the Managerial Grid developed by Blake and Mouton, members respond to questions on IBM cards, analyze the responses, plot results on charts, and make the results accessible to group members (Seligman and Desmond, 1970). Information includes group structure, level of support and trust, group accomplishment, development and cohesion, decision making procedures, and rankings along certain psychological dimensions.

The seventy college students were randomly assigned to treatment groups and given the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, the Fundamental Interpersonal Orientation-Behaviour (FIRO-B), Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale, the Alexander-Husek Differential, the Giffin Trust Differential, and the Analysis of Skills as pretest and posttest measures, yielding twenty change scores. The Encounter group showed significant changes over all of the other groups in 11 of the 20 scores. However, the instrumented and T-groups, together with the Encounter group showed significant changes in thirteen of the twenty scores, as compared to the Case Study and control groups, but showed no significant differences between each other. Of interest for the absence of the Hawthorne effect, (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939), whereby the control groups do not receive special attention other than the pre- and post-measures, there were no significant differences between the Case Study and control groups.

Another example with a different instrumented approach, the Bell and Howell Encountertapes, also illustrates the efficacy of the self-administered technical approach (Bollet, 1972). Pretesting

and posttesting with the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) and the Interpersonal Check List, Bollet showed similar results for 127 graduate students divided into seven leaderless groups matched with eight leader-led groups. The leaders in the leader-led groups followed a verbatim transcript from the Encountertapes to standardize treatment, but unfortunately, no control group was used to which the instrumented or leader-led groups could be compared.

In contrast to Thomas' (1971) finding that an Encounter group showed the greatest extent of significant changes, Rudman (1971), using Encountertapes, showed the opposite. The ninety students were divided into three each of Encounter groups, Encountertape groups, and control groups. The change in self-concept (Tennessee Self-Concept Scale) for subjects in the Encounter groups was not significantly greater than the change in self-concept for subjects in the control group; however, there was markedly greater change in the Encountertape group subjects than in the control group subjects. In this study, therefore, the instrumented approach was more successful in producing change than the more traditional approach.

An improvement on the previous study was made by Dye (1972) in controlling for the Hawthorne effect. Fifty-six nursing student volunteers were randomly assigned to an Encountertapes group, an affect-oriented sensitivity group, a cognitively oriented communications group, a placebo group, and a control group. The placebo group maintained journal recordings of critical incidents in their lives as nursing students. As measured by the Tennessee Self Concept Scale and compared to the control groups, the three treatment groups improved significantly but not greater than each other, thus lending further support to the comparability of self-administered, instrumented sensitivity training groups to traditional trainer-led groups.

There are other advantages to the self-administered, instrumented T-group. Professional trainers are not required, and each group receives standardized treatment. The last point requires further elaboration. Many sensitivity training experiments which showed changes on various measures involve different trainers for the various small experimental groups. Some studies found opposite results for at least one of the small experimental treatment groups, so that treatment is not necessarily consistent across groups. For example, when Gordon (1972) compared two interpersonal feed-back-oriented groups led by two different Encounter leaders, one group moved in the direction of self-actualization with significantly greater Feeling

Reactivity (Fr) on the POI than the controls, and tended to adopt Self-Actualizing Values (SAV) more than the waiting-list controls. In the other group, however, an opposite pattern was discovered. The experimental subjects slightly decreased in self-actualization as compared to the controls on the POI Self-Regard (Sr) and Time Competence (Tc) scales. To what extent group atmosphere and/or the style of the leader had an effect on the scales could not be determined. Undoubtedly, the leadership style of the trainer can have significant effects on the outcome of group treatments (Foulds, 1970; Lieberman et al., 1973; Truax, 1966.) For example, Truax (1966) has shown that the leader's degree of accurate empathy, unconditional positive regard, and self-congruence are related to constructive self-concept changes, as measured by Q-sort data.

Instrumented Groups and Personality Measures

A few studies with instrumented groups seem to have omitted or had difficulty with measures of self-actualization and personality. Solomon, Berzon and Weedman (1968) who devised a series of booklets which were used as structuring materials to guide the interaction of self-directed personal growth groups, found that participants in these self-directed groups showed significant, positive increases in self-concept compared to "no-experience" controls. As in the Vicino et al. study (1973), Solomon et al. failed to take measures of self-actualization, although Vicino et al. did attempt, albeit unsuccessfully, to measure the effects of personality. In addition the Solomon et al. materials were too cognitive, too structured, and did not allow for sufficient interaction. A later study by Solomon et al. (1970) evaluated a less structured set of audiotapes emphasizing experiential rather than cognitive learning. The materials were designed to increase participants' awareness of the interrelationships between their own feelings and behaviour, and the feelings and behaviour of others. In comparison to no-experience controls, the group participants experienced increased openness, increased sensitivity to others, increased self-motivation, and increased self-acceptance, as measured by a series of daily pre-post measures. But again, the authors failed to use standardized measures of self-actualization and personality.

Like leader-led T-groups, self-administered, instrumented sensitivity training groups seem to concentrate on changes in self

concept. Simmons (1973) varied the intensity of the experience with the Human Development Institute (HDI) Encounter tapes for three leaderless groups composed of school personnel and church members. Differential gains occurred on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, strongly favouring the high intensity group (a ten-hour marathon). Unfortunately, Simmons did not compare the three groups to a control or a Hawthorne group.

One author (Becker, 1973) did include a standardized personality measure. He used the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) to divide forty-two volunteer vocational rehabilitation clients into an introverted and extraverted group, after which he divided them into an experimental and a control group. After the experimental group met over a two-day weekend with the Encounter tapes, no significant differences were found among any of the groups, introverted or extraverted, experimental or control, on such measures as the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and a personal distance measure. Becker's findings may have been unsuccessful because of the choice of subjects. Most of the previously mentioned studies used college students whose basic needs in Maslow's hierarchy could be considered relatively satisfied as compared to the vocational rehabilitation clients whose security needs may not have been adequately met due to lack of job opportunities, thus making them less likely to reach the self-actualization level. In addition, the EPI may be a poor choice for measuring extraversion in the "American" sense of sociability, whereas Eysenck favours the "European" definition which tends to identify the concept with relation to impulsiveness and weak superego controls (Lanyon, 1972). Presumably Becker, working with American clients, was thinking of sociability.

Another measure of introversion-extraversion, the 16PF, was used by La Salle (1971) in controlled treatment with the Encounter tapes and a programmed text of personnel relations. Interestingly, the Hawthorne effect was controlled by a placebo treatment for one control group consisting of the article "Learning To Be Free" by Carl Rogers. With the seventy-five volunteer undergraduate students randomly assigned to groups, there were no significant differences between any of the four groups (Encounter tapes, Programmed Text, placebo, control) on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale. Also, Pearson product - moment correlations failed to attain statistical significance for the expected relationship between self-concept change and extraversion. It would seem that extraversion is not a relevant personality variable in sensitivity training groups. Since the groups were run

over a period of six weeks, the intensity of the experimental approaches may not have been sufficient to raise self-concept scores. It was noted above (Simmons, 1973) that high intensity groups improved most on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale.

To minimize the Hawthorne effect other than by using a placebo control group (Parisi, 1972; Thomas, 1971) it has been suggested that a "holdout" control procedure should be used, in which the control groups receive the same treatment as the experimentals, but after the experiment has been completed (Link, 1972; Massarik, 1973; Vicino et al., 1973). However, to shorten the delay for the controls in receiving treatment and hence attention, the experiment should be conducted in a brief period. Marathon or massed groups generally seem to be as effective as spaced groups among college student populations, using a wide variety of measures of change (Counseling Centre Staff, 1972; Fanning, 1972; Lathey, 1972; Miller, 1973; Schwartz, 1971; Shapiro, 1971).

Affiliation Motivation

Gibb and Gibb (1968) who observed many leaderless groups contend that, "An experienced group trainer, leader, or therapist can often be helpful; but our experiences have indicated that the strongly motivated leaderless group is even more powerful in producing personal and group growth" (p. 108). Although they did not specify which motives, the Gibbs' may have implied affiliation motivation (nAff). Murray originally listed nAff as one of the twenty social motives or "psychogenic needs" (Murray, 1964). These motives were arrived at by studying a small number of subjects very intensively with interviews, questionnaires and specially designed psychological tests such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). McKeachie (1961) sees nAff involving "concern with establishing, maintaining or restoring a positive affective relationship with another person" (p. 127). Several studies suggest that people who have high nAff would benefit more from a group treatment which is high in affiliation cues than people with low nAff.

French and Chadwick (1956) hypothesized that a subject's internal motivation level would be a determinant of the level reached in the experimental situation and that those subjects with high internal nAff would be more affected by the environmental cues than those with low internal nAff. Using the Test of Insight as a measure of nAff, the authors divided 144 male officer training candidates into high

and low nAff groups, on the basis of scores above or below the median for the group. Later, the experimental group of candidates met together for a lecture on being well liked and sensitive to other's reactions. They then rated each other and themselves on scales of popularity and desire to be well liked.

The talk and ratings were designed to arouse affiliation cues. The non-aroused control group completed a test of military attitude at the same time. Immediately after the period, both groups were again given the Test of Insight to determine pro-affiliation and anti-affiliation scores for dependent variables. As compared to the control group and men with low nAff, the arousal condition did result in significant increases in pro-affiliation scores for the men with high nAff. French and Chadwick failed to note that by using the Test of Insight both as a main effect variable and as a dependent variable, a contamination of results was inevitable - subjects with high nAff initially would be expected to give a high number of affiliation responses on the same test!

French (1958) later improved on her choice of dependent variable, by using a number of phrases correctly reconstructed by a group into a short story. In the later study, she provided "feeling" cues to half the four-person groups all of whose members had high nAff, by periodically praising the group on how well they worked together, how they supported one another, and so on. As compared to the groups whose members had high internal nAff but were given task-oriented cues such as how efficient they were, the "feeling-cued" groups obtained significantly higher phrases' scores. The other groups formed of people with high achievement motivation were eager to complete the task and argued violently. In contrast, the affiliation groups were quieter and less intense, showing more friendly interest in one another and in the experimenter. Since a sensitivity training group provides many "feeling" cues, it would be expected that participants who have high nAff would benefit more than those who have low nAff.

Stock (1964) reports on an unpublished early paper by Miles which found that TAT nAff seemed to be indirectly related to unfreezing of old behaviour patterns, involvement in the T-group, and the clear reception of feedback for 34 members of the 1958 Laboratory for Elementary School Principals. Further details are not provided, so that the nature of the effect of nAff on the group performance is not known. In a later unpublished paper, Miles (Stock, 1964) found that feedback in human relations workshops which referred to warm,

friendly behaviour facilitated change for participants who had high nAff. But again, the measures of change were not stated.

Statement of Hypotheses

The theory and research reviewed suggest two hypotheses:

- (1) As compared to control groups, experimental groups that experience PROCESS will improve their concept of themselves and will increase in self-actualization.
- (2) There will be a positive linear relationship between nAff and improvement of self-concept, and between nAff and self-actualization scores. Subjects with high nAff will improve more in self-concept and self-actualization than subjects with low nAff, after both groups have experienced PROCESS.