

Group Dynamics and Personality Dynamics

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As you have viewed the accelerated development of research and theory in social psychology during recent years, I imagine many of you have raised the question as to whether fruitful research can be carried out and whether important conceptual tools and applied techniques can be forged through studies of interpersonal relations and group behavior which tend to neglect more or less completely the dynamics of personality structure and functioning. I believe this is a very important question which needs to be examined by the philosopher of science, the research scientist, and the practicing therapist or educator. In the brief period we have, I would like to discuss several aspects of the question both as a scientific problem and as a problem having implications for the therapeutic and educational practitioner.

A two fold task for scientific understanding and for therapy

I believe that both the scientist and the therapeutic practitioner may have one or both of two objectives:

1. He may have the objective of understanding and predicting or influencing the behavior of the individual as he lives in, acts on, and adjusts to his personal and social environment.
2. He may have the objective of understanding and predicting or influencing the behavior of the group as it functions as a problem-solving unit, interacting with and adjusting to its environment of other persons, groups, and economic, political, and technological structures.

No matter which of these two "targets" for understanding and influence we have, the determinants of behavior are manifold and have their sources to some degree in the intrapsychic forces of personality dynamics, and in the forces of interpersonal interactions, and in the relationship of the member to the group, and in the properties of the group as a whole, and in the relationship of the group to its larger cultural, economic, and political environment. When we are focused on the behavior of a specific individual we face the question of how much of the dynamic field of determining factors is located "inside the skin" of the person and how much of the determination actually derives from external forces such as the relationship to the group, the characteristics of the groups of which the person is a member, the power position of the person as it is determined by his position in the class structure, etc. When we are focused on the behavior of a specific group we face the equally important question of how much of the behavior of the group can be understood and predicted in terms of the properties of group structure and functioning and the nature of the group activity, and how much of the group behavior determination must be discovered through an analysis of the personality dynamics of the individuals making up the group. At the present time the research in the field of group dynamics is focused both on the behavior of groups as groups and also on the determinants of individual behavior and adjustment which derive from simultaneous membership in groups making conflicting demands.

Sufficient research has now been completed to make it seem clear to us that there is a vast area of fruitful research and theorizing to be carried through here without becoming involved in the specific complexities of personality structure and functioning. However, our strong interest in the integration of the social sciences and in applied social science makes it of great interest to us to try also to watch continuously for the points in research and theory where group behavior theory and group membership theory comes into necessary relationship with personality theory. Locating these points more precisely will aid greatly in ensuring fruitful inter-disciplinary research and theorizing. Certainly much exciting collaborative research and theory development can be anticipated during the next few years.

Some current emphases in group dynamics research

Before focusing more fully on one or two illustrations of current research in order to examine the question raised at the beginning of these remarks, I would like to indicate briefly the types of phenomena and problems which are currently being investigated in the field of group dynamics. These illustrations come from the five research programs of the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the University of Michigan and from other research centers such as the Laboratory for Human Dynamics at the University of Chicago, the Social Relations Laboratories at Harvard and the University of Minnesota, the Human Relations Research Center of New York University, and the Conference Research Program at the University of Michigan.

Some samples of group phenomena under investigation are the following:

1. How the cohesiveness of the group determines the type and amount of influence which the group exerts on its members.
2. How the type of group task determines patterns of competition and cooperation between members.
3. How the presence or absence of certain roles in the group influences the degree of efficiency of group problem solving.
4. How inadequacies of communications determine distorted inter-member and inter-group perceptions and attitudes.
5. How participation in a group decision determines changes in member attitudes and behavior.
6. The ways in which groups resist attempts to change their ways of functioning.
7. The conditions under which there is or is not a contagious spread of ideas and behaviors through a group.
8. Determinants of high and low influence positions in the group structure.

A variety of other studies are focused on the analysis of individual behavior as it is determined by the relationship of the person to the group and to other members. The following types of analysis have been made or are being made in a sample of studies:

1. The extent to which an individual's attempt to influence other persons is determined by his perception of his own position in the group structure.
2. The extent to which a person's acceptance or rejection of influence from others is determined by one's perception of power of the other person.
3. The ways in which influence patterns are determined by the nature of the interpersonal relationship.
4. The extent to which a person's experience of spontaneous creativity is determined by his perception of his acceptance by the group.
5. The relationship between one's sensitivity to social stimuli and the strength of one's need to belong to a group.

Unlike the typical social psychological or sociological projects of five or ten years ago, most of these current projects involve controlled quantitative observation and experimental manipulation -- varying some particular aspect of the social situation in a planned way while controlling other aspects, and comparing the results with other groups where no experimental variable is introduced. These studies involve both laboratory experiments in such facilities as an experimental club room for children with one way observation, and also controlled field experiments in such settings as the factory, the summer camp, the housing project, and leadership training work shops.

Although the experimental method is now being widely used in the study of human behavior, including group behavior, a great many doubts have been expressed as to whether experimentation will prove to be as helpful in the solving of human problems as it has been in the solving of physical engineering problems of dealing with the physical universe. "Experiments are too artificial; they can't actually create and study the kind of problems we are most interested in" is a frequent observation. It has become evident to us that, just as in physics, any good experiment must be artificial in the sense of being different from each and every unique social situation going on in "real life". Only by pushing more deeply to try to single out some one or few basic common characteristics of all, or a great number, of these "real life" social situations for intensive analysis can an experiment hope to provide new understandings of general principles of individual and group behavior. In another sense the experiment must be prevented from being "artificial". The experiment must create situations where individuals or groups are carrying out activities which are important and worthwhile -- where hostilities, frustrations, and affections exist with "real life" intensity. So our typical task in trying to study a particular hypothesis about the dynamics of group behavior, or of individual behavior

as influenced by the group, is to figure out an experimental situation which will be adequately artificial in singling out one or a few basic common factors of many real life situations to isolate and study, while holding constant many other factors which would be influencing what happens in any particular real life phenomenon; but at the same time being sure that we create situations which are "real" in the intensity with which life is lived in these experimental situations. One other important aspect of current research methodology should be pointed to, I think. This is the current recognition of the importance of careful calibration of the human observer or interviewer as a measuring instrument. Methodological research on the training of observers and interviewers is throwing light on ways in which we can measure more and more complex aspects of social phenomena with higher degrees of reliability and validity of quantification, and also throwing light on the impossibility of doing competent research with typical impressionistic record keeping procedure.

Two illustrations from current research

Now I would like to look more concretely at the type of contribution which research in group dynamics can make to our common task of individual and social change without taking personality dynamics as the central framework for research analysis. I would like to use two illustrations from current research, one from research which is focused on a group phenomenon and its determinants, and the other which is focused on individual behavior and its group determinants.

Illustration one: the functioning of group standards

Personal experiences or clinical observations would lead most of us to assume that one of the ways in which groups differ from each other is in the nature of the standards or codes which a particular group sets up to guide and restrict the behavior of its members. On the other hand there has been very little actual research which has measured the nature of group standards and has studied the way in which these standards are formed and maintained and actually operate to effect the behavior of group members. A recent study by Festinger, Schachter, and Back¹ in a housing project has revealed some interesting facts about the determinants of group standards. In discussing the findings of this study, we will be defining a group standard as a force or influence on the group member toward behaving or thinking or feeling in a particular way or avoiding a particular behavior, and where this influence comes from in the group (rather than parallel influences from the environment on all members). We will have to distinguish between uniformities of member behavior which are related to the influence of a group standard and uniformities of member behavior which might result from other causes such as a common stimulation from the environment, etc. The 100 families of the Westgate Housing Project were housed in nine courts of single dwelling units. They were families of university veteran students and represented a remarkably homogeneous population with no discoverable differences in the characteristics of the residents of one court as compared to another. They had moved in at

1. Social pressures in informal groups: A study of a housing project: New York; Harpers, 1950.

approximately the same time and the assignment of houses to particular families had not been made on any kind of a selective basis. In spite of this and other types of homogeneity, an interview study revealed that differences between the courts existed to a rather marked degree on opinions and activities concerning participation in the Westgate Tenants Organization or neighborhood council. Representation on the council was on the basis of courts and called for action from each court. Some courts supported the organization, others were overtly hostile, while others were quite indifferent. It seemed worthwhile to try to discover whether these differences among the courts might be related to differences in type and strength of group standards. Interviews in all 100 of the households four months after the organization of the Westgate council made it possible to classify all residents as either favorable or unfavorable in attitude toward the council and as either active or inactive in their actual participation in council activities. It was possible to characterize each court as predominantly favorable-active or favorable-inactive or unfavorable-inactive. Once the predominant pattern for a court was located, the number of people in the court who conformed to or deviated from the court pattern could be computed so that it was possible to determine whether courts showed any important degree of homogeneity within courts as compared to among courts and whether this homogeneity could be attributed to the existence of group standards. Analysis indicated that five of the courts showed a favorable-active pattern, one court a favorable-inactive pattern, and three courts an unfavorable-inactive pattern. Not only did these wide differences exist among the courts, but there was a high relative degree of homogeneity within courts indicated by the small proportion of deviates from the court attitude and activity pattern. There were obviously opposing sub-groups within the housing project with regard to both attitude and activity. The investigators felt it was reasonable to suspect that court standards were operating, but they could not feel very secure about this until they could find some explanation of why different courts each composed of the same kinds of people in the same kinds of circumstances had reacted so differently from each other toward the neighborhood organization. As a next step in revealing the dynamics of this situation, the investigators hypothesized that in order to be able to create and maintain group standards, a group must have power over its members. This power of the group to influence its members has been assumed to reflect the amount of group cohesiveness in this study. If the group uses this power to make the members think and act in a particular way, i.e., to behave in terms of group standards, then the homogeneity of the attitude and activity patterns of a particular court should be related to the degree of cohesiveness of the group. If, therefore, a relationship was found to exist between the degree of cohesiveness and the amount of homogeneity of the behavior pattern of members, then it would be a further indication of the existence of group standards and also would give us insight into an important determinant of group standards. One way of measuring the power of a group over its members (and its cohesiveness) is to measure the desire of the members to stay in the group, that is, the attractiveness of the group for the members. If a person wants to stay in a group very much, he will be susceptible to influences coming from the group and will be willing to conform to the rules which the group sets up. The sociometric questionnaire used in the housing project made it possible to determine the extent to which the residents of a particular court chose their friends within the court as compared to directing their

choices outside. The hypothesis that high group cohesiveness would determine effective group standards, would suggest that the higher the percentage of in-group choices, the lower should be the number of deviates in attitude or activity within a particular court. This hypothesis was upheld by a correlation of $-.53$. The investigators were dissatisfied, however, with their measure of group cohesiveness. The measure seemed to lack precision as a genuine group concept. The major uncertainty lay in the inability to distinguish between the cohesiveness of the whole group and the cohesiveness of sub-groups within the group. For example, a group of eight people all making choices within the group might not have high cohesiveness as a total group. As an extreme illustration, there conceivable might be two sub-groups of four people each, every member within each sub-group choosing every other member but without any choices at all between the sub-groups. In this case, each of the sub-groups may have great cohesiveness but the cohesiveness of the group as a whole would be quite low. This effect of tendencies toward sub-group formation was taken into account by correcting for the number of mutual choices which occurred. With this correction the correlation between degree of group cohesiveness and amount of deviation from court standards went up from $-.53$ to $-.74$. It seems pretty clear from this and other checks that the investigators were actually measuring the existence and strength of group standards as determiners of member behavior and had discovered one of the important determinants of the strength of group standards in a second group phenomenon, group cohesiveness.

I imagine your curiosity follows that of the investigators in raising the question as to why certain individuals seem to be able to resist the influence of the group and why certain groups have the power to develop and maintain group standards to a higher degree than other groups. From their field observations the investigators postulated that there were probably at least three conditions conducive to deviancy of members from the group standard and lowered group cohesiveness.

1. First of all there might not be sufficient communication between the particular member and others in the group. Under these conditions, the member might not learn of the existence of a particular group standard and pressures from the group might not be brought to bear on the member. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Z in Miller court remarked "We don't have much time for things like the tenants' organization and haven't had anything to do with it. Some are active and others aren't. There aren't any particular people we are particularly friendly with. Everyone is in the same boat, though, and people are generally friendly. It's been very nice living here and people are nice, too. We live on the corner, though, and seem to be left out of a lot of things because of that."

2. Another condition would be that the influence of some other group to which the person belongs may be stronger than the influence which the court group is able to exert. Under these conditions, the person who appears as a deviate is a deviate only because we are measuring him as a member of this particular group. He may not deviate with respect to some other group to which he actually feels that he belongs and in which he is a conformer. For example, Mr. and Mrs. M. in Carson court said "We think the organization is fine and Mrs. M. is the chairman of the Social Committee which is holding

its first big event tomorrow night. I don't see much of the others in this court. My real friends are in the next court, over there, in Tolman court. There are only two people living in this court that do anything for the organization. It's generally understood that the others have different interests. The people in Tolman court are more active. Carson court people aren't as sociable as people in Tolman court."

3. A third condition may be that the group may not be sufficiently attractive to the member even though he is not actively a member of other groups. Under these conditions the influence which the group can exert will be relatively weak and will be unable to overcome personal considerations which may happen to be contrary to the group standard. For example, Mr. and Mrs. V. in Williams court remark "We don't have any opinion at all about the organization. We're bad ones for you to interview. We have no need for an organization because we're pretty happy at home. We're socially self-sufficient. Others in the court felt it was wonderful and they discovered many that felt that way. We have friends in this and other courts, but our main interests are in the home."

In analyzing the first hypothesis, "the non-communication hypothesis", the investigators found that the thirty six deviates reported considerably less communication with other residents in their court than did the sixty four conformers. On checking, the investigators also found that the deviates had less communication with persons in other courts as well as in their own court. A special study was made of the ten families whose houses faced on the street running through the project rather than in toward the courtyard areas. It was found that seven of these ten residents were deviates and that their relatively small degree of geographical isolation resulted in their receiving and giving only one third as many sociometric choices as was true of others in the courts. The importance of relatively small degrees of ecological isolation in determining non-communication and lack of adherence to group standards has been confirmed in two other studies in apartment type dwelling situations. Many of the deviates, however, did not have the disadvantage of being corner house dwellers. They had no physical barriers to communication. The second type of analysis showed that significantly more of the non-physically isolated deviates had their major social life centered mainly in groups outside of the housing project, as contrasted to a comparable group of non-deviates.

In experimental laboratory studies which have tested certain hypotheses growing out of this field study Schachter² has revealed the tendency of groups with high cohesiveness to be more active in the rejection of deviates than groups of lower cohesiveness and Back³ has shown that in groups with higher cohesiveness, the members are more active in their attempts to influence each other and there is a greater total amount of change or acceptance of these influence attempts between members. Other experiments testing other related hypotheses are in progress at the present time.

2. Deviation, rejection and communication. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, Ph. D. thesis, 1950.

3. The exertion of influence through social communication. Cambridge: MIT Library, 1949.

Where in these experiments have the investigators arrived at a point of needing a more thorough analysis of individual dynamics in order to achieve a more adequate interpretation of the phenomena under investigation by them? This seems to me to be a question which we must ask frequently if we are to discover the points at which we can hope for the most fruitful and motivated collaboration between researchers in group dynamics and students of personality dynamics. In the study just reported, it seems to me the investigators came to such points as the following:

1. There were families in unfavorable ecological positions in their neighborhoods who were not isolates in their social communication and in their conformity to the standards of the group. What characteristics did these persons have which enabled them to overcome the restraining forces to social relations in this situation?

2. Also, some persons were discovered in most courts who were deviates but who had favorable communication locations and who had no conflicting loyalties due to membership in other groups. They just seemed to be encapsulated in their social relations within the court and outside the court and to show no evidence of a need to belong to the group. Why should they have this low group belongingness need?

We seem to be in need of systematic theorizing in the field of personality dynamics on the determinants of need to belong to the group and the determinants of high levels of initiative in overcoming barriers to the establishment and maintenance of social communication. I'm not sure whether these will seem like very important theoretical and practical issues to those of you who are pioneering in the field of personality dynamics. All I can report is that problems of the personality variables related to non-participation, non-communication, and need to belong to a group are points where we have found it important to seek for additional explanatory data from personality dynamics.

We must move on to our second illustration.

Illustration two: changes in individual behavior as determined by group variables.

In our first illustration we summarized an investigation of the group phenomena of group standards and group cohesiveness and indicated ways in which such individual behavioral determinants as membership in more than one group, and communication-isolation had to be reckoned with as important determinants of these group phenomena. In the second illustration I would like to take an example of an individual behavior phenomenon and look at some of the determinants which seem to be located in the group situation. Certainly a very common problem for many of us is the problems of stimulating change in individual behavior toward more effective functioning as the result of training or therapeutic activities on our part. I would like to review some of the findings of recent research on certain group determinants of individual change or non-change in such situations. In one study⁴ thirty four community leaders had their attitudes and behavior measured before and after

4. Lippitt, Ronald. Training in Community Relations. New York: Harpers, 1939.

an intensive two-week work shop which emphasized human relations diagnosis and skills. Figure 1 summarizes some of the findings on work shop effects at the time of the follow-up study six months after the training period. This figure summarizes the self observations of the thirty four trainees and the observations by sixty two community co-workers who collaborated as research observers. We found a significant change in the average level of leadership activity per delegate and a general increase in perception of own power to take actions which would have significance for community welfare. Our primary interest, however, was in trying to discover some of the reasons why certain leaders showed relatively little change and others showed great changes in behavior and attitude. Our research design was set up with the hope of clarifying certain aspects of this question.

One hypothesis we had was that the power position of the leader in the community would have an important relationship to the extent to which he accepted and utilized his training, as it would be revealed by changes in leadership behavior. To test this hypothesis, leaders of differing power position or "influence potential" were recruited from a number of different communities. An "influence potential" index was computed for each leader from pre-workshop data concerning his position in the hierarchy of his community organization, the position of that organization in the community structure, and the number of different influential positions which the particular person held in the community. Figure 2 indicates that community power position was a significant variable in determining the effect of the workshop on the activity level of the community leaders. During the training period the trainers observed that those in high power positions in their community structures seemed to have either a high readiness to accept the training or to show a very strong resistance, one or the other. An interesting confirmation of this observation comes from the self-observations of the trainees as to their own change as the result of the workshop. Sixty six percent of the (high power influence) trainees perceived themselves as among the most changed, while the other thirty three percent perceived themselves among the least changed. None of them fell in the medium change category which included fifty percent of the medium power and fifty percent of the low power trainees. It would seem then, that objective power position in the social structure resulted in a perception of own power to act which in turn was reflected in a readiness to accept new learnings which implied changes of behavior in the community or was reflected in strength to resist this training influence if it seemed undesirable for some reason. Also, with the same amount of reeducation those in more favorable power positions were able to change their behavior more significantly in the community arena.

A second hypothesis which we had was that the individual leader is too small a unit of social structure to successfully create innovations in the community pattern and to stand up under the community pressures and frustrations which tend to block efforts at social change. For many types of change in individual behavior the person is not the appropriate unit of therapy or re-education. Our hypothesis was that much greater effect would follow and would be maintained if teams of three or four or more leaders from the same community were trained to work together and to support each other. To test this hypothesis teams of six community leaders were recruited from four communities which had roughly comparable problems of inter-group tension and community pathology and single community leaders were recruited from other communities. These singleton leaders were comparable in power position to

the most influential persons in the four community teams. The teams and the individuals received the same training program during the two week period and showed comparable acceptance of and resistance to the program during that period, as far as could be ascertained from the observations of the trainers. During this period two of the community teams were judged to have developed a very cohesive team structure while the other two teams were judged to have developed a relatively weak cohesiveness. Figure 3 indicates the amount of change in leadership pattern discovered six months after the training institute. The average member of the strong teams showed a significantly greater increase in leadership score than the average member of the weak teams which in turn had a significantly higher increase than the average isolated leader. The question had been raised during the workshop period as to whether the development of cohesive teams might result in an increase in dependence of the individual team members in initiating activities on their own in the community structure. The data revealed that although members of cohesive teams collaborated more frequently in the initiation of new activities than in less cohesive teams, they also initiated new activities on their own as frequently as members of the less cohesive teams and the community isolates. I am sorry we do not have time in this brief presentation to discuss the growing amount of evidence from other studies concerning the importance of the supportive face-to-face group or even larger units of social structure as the units of training or therapy rather than primarily focusing on the individual.

Let's pause in this summary to ask, where in this type of research have we come up against problems of interpretation requiring extension of our analysis into the field of personality dynamics to get more adequate understanding of the total field of forces determining change in individual behavior? Here are some of the points as I have observed them:

1. Why did certain persons in high power positions show the strongest resistance to personal change while others showed the greatest openness to change?
2. Why did certain persons show marked changes in their attitudes and intentions but little change in behavior pattern while in other persons there seemed to be a close communication between changed intentions and behavior change?
3. Why did certain of the community leaders, in fact most of them, show a strong need to belong to the training group and to accept influence from the group standards about the learning situation, whereas a minority were able to resist this group influence and gave evidence of no strong need to be accepted by the group?
4. There seems to be growing evidence that perception of self, particularly perception of own power to act, seems to be a highly important variable in determining the extent to which a person will attempt to influence others and accept influence from others. What are some of the important determinants of this type of self perception and determinants of the extent to which it is distorted or realistic?

Again I would be curious to know whether these problems are important ones from the point of view of the theorist of personality dynamics? To date, in our projects we have been relatively unsuccessful in attempting to leap from

personality test analyses to social behavior in the group situation. The results have been very disappointing and we are inclined to believe that a large area of intervening personality variables related to social functional personality will have to be measured and conceptualized before we are able to close many of the exciting gaps between our understanding of group dynamic determinants of behavior and intra-psychic determinants of behavior. I would certainly be eager to hear the thinking of some of you here today on this point. (I am inclined to agree with Dr. Ackerman that research on the social and inner-personal determinant of social role will prove to be one of the most fruitful areas for research in bridging the gap here.)

To summarize then, it does seem clear to us from such explorations as the two illustrations reported that it is possible to investigate systematically the ways in which group properties and the nature of the member-group relationship contribute to the determination of group behavior and of individual behavior. Such investigations is usually facilitated by experimentally holding other variables relatively constant — such as large variations in personality structure (although the effect of this variable in reality may be great) or by selecting situations for study where the group factors are emphasized in their potency. In any particular educational or therapeutic situation, however, we must face the diagnostic task of discovering and interpreting the total range of personality and group and environmental factors which may be potent in a specific problem situations, and we must make some judgments concerning the relative importance and "treatability" of these variables. It may seem to many of us at first thought that even though group factors may be very important in determining the problem situation of our client individuals or groups, still we must be content to deal largely with the personality variables that can be effected through active relationship to the individual or individuals involved. But here I think we are beginning to see many new potentialities for therapeutic and educational practice in manipulating group variables and getting much more satisfactory results than in our previous practice which has focused more or less exclusively on personality centered variables. It seems probable to me that as we begin to recognize scientifically how potent these group centered variables are, we will become more and more motivated to work out in professional practice more adequate techniques for gaining access to these variables and working directly with them. There are many evidences that this is already beginning to happen, as I would like to illustrate with one final example:

Each summer the National Training Laboratory in Group Development works intensively with 100 leaders from labor, industry, government, education, and community services. Our diagnostic and training staff includes psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and skilled social action practitioners. In our efforts to help these 100 clients to change their patterns of functioning to more effective ones in their various life situations we find that certain changes in orientation to themselves and their own motivational dynamics can be most effectively facilitated by personal counseling relations with psychiatric personnel. Other needed changes in interpersonal behavior patterns can be best treated by the organization of small groups that meet for two or three hours a day, using their experience in the group as the clinical material for analysis under the leadership of trained group psychologists. Still other needed changes in

action-skills and social strategy effectiveness can be treated best by small laboratory groups where problems of action are analysed and practiced by the use of role-taking techniques under the leadership of social scientists who are trained in social action skills. Still other personal changes can only be stimulated if the total sub-culture of the client is temporarily altered. So we have located the summer laboratory in a very isolated setting where it is possible to create a consistent "cultural island" where a style of life and of cultural expectations can develop which will stimulate and support personal analysis and change. Leadership in this development of a therapeutic sub-culture is taken by applied anthropologists and professional community organizers. The realities of organization and community structure are also taken into account by having most of the clients come in teams of two or more representing their particular settings -- communities, college staffs, hospitals, agencies, etc. A staff of trained research scientists carry out a variety of research projects at all levels of this social therapeutic process.

I believe it will take a great deal of research by therapeutic teams like this to discover what combination of environmental, group, and personal factors must be worked with in any particular type of change-problem in order to ensure therapeutic effectiveness.