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A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN UNSTRUCTURED, A
SLIGHTLY STRUCTURED, AND A MODERATELY STRUCTURED
PERSONAL GROWTH GROUP IN PRODUCING SELF-
ACTUALIZATION CHANGES

by

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A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

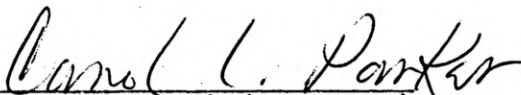
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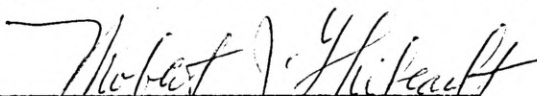
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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the effects of an unstructured, a slightly structured, and a moderately structured personal growth group in producing self-actualization changes in the participants.

Subjects were undergraduate students from Montana State University who participated in either an As-If control group or an unstructured, a slightly structured, or a moderately structured personal growth group during Spring quarter, 1975. The Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1966), designed to measure self-actualization, was administered at the beginning and at the end of Spring quarter. T-tests were used to compare positive gain scores on the twelve subtests of the POI for all four groups. An analysis of variance was used to compare gains between and within the four groups.

Six t-tests showed significant positive gains at the .05 level of significance and most other gains were in a positive direction. No significant differences were found between groups. These results indicated that the amount of structure in a personal growth group does not affect the amount of self-actualization which occurs among group participants.

It was recommended that further research be conducted to clarify the effect of demand characteristics, since this seemed to be a complex factor which may have affected the results. Use of a different test instrument and use of a behavioral design specifying behaviors indicative of self-actualization would also be desirable. It was recommended that further research vary the length of time that the group met and utilize a larger number of groups.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The argument concerning encounter groups being an effective tool for inducing change in interpersonal relationships or a dangerous fad can be seen throughout the literature (Apfelbaum & Apfelbaum, 1973; Haigh, 1971; Koch, 1971; Rogers, 1970). Rogers (1968) stresses that encounter groups can be criticized or sought after, but the impact and permanence that such groups have in our society cannot be ignored or underestimated. Groups are becoming more popular and widespread as people seek help through these groups instead of through more traditional therapeutic channels (Benne, 1964; Rogers, 1970; Yalom, 1970). The rapidity of growth in the popularity of encounter groups makes it difficult to subject such groups to systematic empirical study, yet this same growth indicates an urgent need for research that will demonstrate what happens to group participants in an encounter group experience.

Lakin (1972) has distinguished two main trends in encounter, one toward interactional awareness and one toward expanding experiencing. The primary focus in developing interactional awareness has been on insight and growth, the person in the system, his interactions, his effect on the

group, and the group's effect on him. The trend toward expanded experiencing has been one of exploration by the participant of his personality. The focus has been on the improvement and enhancement of the individual, the development of self-actualizing qualities and of openness and flexibility, and the movement away from defensiveness and the use of facades. The degree to which a substantial number of a group's participants show a positive change in self-actualizing behavior, becoming more open and flexible, leads to the evaluation of the group as either a success or a failure.

There seem to be two main designs for facilitating personal growth in group participants. There is an unstructured design based largely on the theoretical framework of Carl Rogers and which emphasizes the withdrawal of conventional leadership so that the group is free to develop its own natural course (Winn, 1970; Cooper, 1971; Coulson, 1972; Insel & Moos, 1972; Rogers, 1967). The other design uses structured exercises and techniques as a means of facilitating interaction between members and as a means of exploring behavioral alternatives (Kaplan & Spock, 1971; Lifton, 1972; Parloff, 1970; Pino & Cohen, 1971; Brown, 1969; Nevrus & Hruskka, 1969; Zweben & Hammann, 1970).

provided in different groups, largely at the discretion of the leader. Positive changes in the participants are reported for both designs, but it would appear that more research needs to be done comparing these two methods to determine which one is the more effective at producing positive gains for the participants.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was the comparison of an as-if control group, an unstructured group, a group which provides a low amount of structure, a group which provides a moderate amount of structure in the form of different encounter exercises and techniques. Groups were compared to see which method of facilitation produces the most change in the self-actualizing behavior of the participants. The study was conducted at Montana State University over the period of spring quarter, 1975, using Montana State University undergraduate students as subjects.

APPLICATION TO EDUCATIONAL THEORY

Recent research (Luke, 1972; McCardel, 1973) has indicated that the role of structure in facilitating self-actualizing behavior in the participants of encounter groups

is not clearly understood. There is a general lack of comparative research on the effectiveness of using an unstructured or a structured design to facilitate personal growth. However, encounter group techniques and structured exercises, as well as the more client-centered approach advocated by Rogers (1970) are currently being used in groups conducted in schools and universities throughout the country, including Montana State University. This study attempted to clarify the effect that the structure of a personal growth group has on the growth of the participants in it, and attempted to compare the effectiveness of an As-If control group, an unstructured group, a group which provides low structure, and a group which provides a moderate amount of structure in producing positive benefits for the participants. It was hoped that the results would help leaders of such groups decide on the most effective course of leadership for their group.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Will undergraduate students at Montana State University demonstrate positive changes in self actualization during one quarter of a personal growth group

experience, as it is measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1966)?

2. Will the measured self-actualization changes be significantly different for those students who are in an unstructured group, a slightly structured group, a moderately structured group, or an As-If Control group?

3. Will the moderately structured group be more effective in producing positive changes in self-actualization than either the unstructured, the structured group, or the As-If control group?

GENERAL PROCEDURE

Chapter II provides a review of studies selected to provide a synopsis of the controversy over the effect of structured exercises in facilitating personality changes in participants of personal growth groups.

Chapter III describes in detail the investigation procedures. The Personal Orientation Inventory (hereafter referred to as POI) (Shostrom, 1966) was administered at the first and last meetings of the groups. The data generated by statistical comparison was analyzed and significant values related to self-actualization changes reported.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

This study was delimited to Spring quarter, 1975. Due to this time delimitation, no follow-up test will be administered, giving the conclusions drawn from this study limited application.

The subjects were delimited to undergraduate students at Montana State University. Sampling for this study involved solicitation of subjects from undergraduate classes in the College of Education. Since the College of Education prohibits the compulsory participation of students as research subjects, the participation of students was limited to volunteers. This limitation precluded the inference of conclusions beyond the sample studied.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms personal growth group, encounter group, and T-group were considered to be synonymous terms used to denote a group of seven to fifteen participants who meet for a short, specified period of time, focus on interpersonal interaction during that time, and then disband.

The terms structure, structured exercise, exercise, and technique were considered synonymous terms and were

defined as a leader intervention that includes a set of specific orders for behavior which limit the participant's behavioral alternatives.

Positive self-actualization changes and growth will be considered synonymous terms in this study.

SUMMARY

Despite the limitations of this study, an attempt was made to compare an As-If control group, an unstructured, a slightly structured, and a moderately structured personal growth group to see if there was a difference between groups in the degree of positive self-actualization changes the participants experienced.

It was hoped that this study would contribute to the design of more effective personal growth groups on the Montana State University campus.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The following literature review will represent a partial sample from the numerous journals, periodicals, and books available in the Montana State University library during the winter and spring quarters of 1975. The review will be organized around a brief introduction to the laboratory approach to personal growth and the relevant empirical research that has been conducted on group processes, and on the use of an unstructured design for facilitating personal growth and the use of a design which utilizes structured exercises and techniques as a means of facilitating personal growth. The purpose of this review is to provide background information relating to the investigation of the problem. Later comparisons will be made in Chapter V.

THE LABORATORY APPROACH

The laboratory approach began in 1946 when a training-research workshop was held, headed by Kurt Lewin, to develop more local leaders who could deal effectively with inter-group tensions. The focus of the three small groups was

group discussion, supplemented by role playing to define the behavioral aspects of the problems and then find alternative ways of responding to solve these problems (Benne, 1964; Yalom, 1970).

After this workshop similar laboratories were held which utilized small discussion groups called "basic skill training groups," a name evolving into "T-group," by 1949. In 1950 the National Training Laboratory, as part of the National Education Association, which was sponsoring these laboratories, was established as a year-round organization. NTL has been characterized by its flexibility and willingness to research its own activities.

Gradually the T-group evolved from a focus which included change in community and institutional systems to a focus primarily on interpersonal behavior. Several specific areas of learning have been identified which are important to participants in achieving interpersonal growth: (1) an increase in self-insight and self-awareness about one's own emotional reactions and behavior; (2) an increase in sensitivity to the behavior of others; (3) an increased understanding of the concepts and processes that facilitate or inhibit group functioning; (4) the clarification and development of personal values and goals; (5) heightened

skill at perceiving social and interpersonal relationships; (6) an increase in behavioral skills which in turn increase member satisfaction, effectiveness, and output; (7) learning how to learn, or the process of continually analyzing one's own interpersonal behavior to help achieve more satisfying interpersonal relationships (Benne, Bradford, & Lippitt, 1964; Campbell & Dunnette, 1968).

Today another emphasis has emerged for the T-group, that of personal development or "group therapy for normals" (Benne, 1964; Rogers, 1970; Yalom, 1970). This model stresses individual growth and development more than interpersonal development and is largely concerned with the development of the fully actualized self. Open and authentic behavior between persons encourages self-disclosure and lowered facades, alleviating some of the isolation that many people feel by giving them an experience of universality. Through the process of reciprocal feedback members are able to learn to relate honestly to themselves and to others. As a result the defensiveness of group members is decreased, and the participant experiences a strengthened ego and an improved self-image. The participant is encouraged to retain these gains by learning to become what Maslow (1967) has termed the "self-actualizing person."

According to Maslow (1967) self-actualization is the process of using one's capabilities to the fullest extent possible, "actualizing" one's potentialities. The self-actualizing person experiences fully with total absorption in the moment. To be self-actualized is to be involved in the process of making choices which lead to growth rather than making choices in order to avoid circumstances out of fear. Taking responsibility, being honest, and looking within oneself for answers is self-actualizing behavior. A person who is self-actualized listens to his self, letting it emerge, and he expresses his own tastes and opinions. During the process of actualizing himself the person learns to recognize peak experiences and moments of joy. At the same time, he learns to identify his defenses and give them up as he moves toward greater self-actualization. The self-actualizing person has a natural spontaneous response to life and he behaves in a way that is expressive and enhances his relationships with other people.

The goal of the T-group is not to teach every participant the same values and behavior, but rather to generally improve the adaptive capability for all members based on a more accurate self-image, a more accurate

perception of relationships with other people, and an increase in behavioral range and flexibility through behavior experimentation. Each individual is encouraged, within the context of the group, to explore his interpersonal behavior and develop ways of improving it.

GROUP PROCESS

Groups typically proceed through certain stages of development (Bennis, 1964; Bennis & Shepard, 1965; Gibb & Gibb, 1967; Modlin & Faris, 1956; Rogers, 1967; Schein & Bennis, 1965; Schutz, 1958; Tuckman, 1965; Yalom, 1970). During the initial stage members are concerned with attempting to define the situation and their role in it. There is usually confusion, a lack of continuity, and polite surface interaction as members try to reduce the ambiguity of the situation. Members are dependent on roles developed outside the group during this time and on the leader to whom they look for structure.

The second stage is characterized by conflict, rebellion, hostility toward other members or the therapist, and a general lack of unity. A struggle emerges to establish a social hierarchy and satisfy the group's need for leadership and control. Negative comments and criticism are frequent

as members judge each other's past and present experiences in order to establish positions in the group.

After the period of conflict, the group moves into the third stage which is characterized by the development of group cohesion. An adequate communication system has been established and a goal has been formed which includes all members. There is an emphasis on mutuality, role interdependence, and emotional integration. The group is concerned with intimacy and closeness as a result of an increased level of trust and self-disclosure.

During the fourth and final stage the group develops an internalized structure and norm system. Members are acceptant of other members and show understanding of their personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. There is now an atmosphere of positive interdependence in the group.

These stages are fluid for the group and a group may retreat to earlier stages occasionally and repeat portions of the process according to the problems being encountered. The entire process may be repeated as new situations arise within the group.

THE UNSTRUCTURED DESIGN FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

Carl Rogers (1970) is one of the leading proponents for the use of the unstructured design in encounter groups.

According to this model, the leader tries to listen as carefully, accurately, and sensitively as he can to each individual and responds to the meaning and feeling behind the individual's expression. Conventional or formal procedures of customary leadership are withdrawn. There are no requirements and the group is free to choose its own course.

The underlying assumption of this method is that all of the natural ingredients for learning are in the group itself and that if the group is left to its own devices these natural processes will take over (Coulson, 1972; Lakin, 1972; Rogers, 1970; Winn, 1970). People will interact in their characteristic way, deeper relationships will evolve, and problems in relating to each other will be resolved. The trainer may actively intervene by calling attention to processes or by clarifying communication. The central concept is that the group experience helps individuals create their own solutions to understanding and coping with their behavior and that of others.

The tension and anxiety that members feel due to the ambiguity and lack of specific structure forces the participants to try to relate to each other. In the unstructured situation anxiety is the motivating force for the

participants as they struggle to create some meaning and purpose for the group. As norms and shared meanings in the situation are developed the anxiety level of the participants decreases and operates as a reinforcer for the participants. This facilitates the "unfreezing" process so that feedback, a primary process for learning from other people, can have a maximum effect (Campbell & Dunnette, 1968; Lakin, 1972; Schein, 1964).

In order for the unstructured design to be effective, a climate of psychological safety must be established (Bradford, 1964; Rogers, 1970; Schein & Bennis, 1965). The leader and the group must act in a supportive and nonevaluative way. Schein and Bennis (1965) have identified four conditions which facilitate a climate of psychological safety: (1) the group must meet for a relatively long time in an isolated environment, (2) the group should be as heterogeneous as possible so that members are not likely to meet again, (3) continual reinforcement that the group is supportive, nonevaluative, and non-threatening should be given by the leader, and (4) an attitude should be established on the part of the members that the T-group is sort of a temporary game which can be played with relative abandon because it is not a permanent situation.

The unstructured design has been shown to be effective in producing positive changes in group participants. Schutz (1966) administered the FIRO-B questionnaire and an open-ended questionnaire to 71 participants who engaged in a two week long human relations training laboratory. These training groups were characterized by a lack of structure. The questionnaires, which were administered before, after, and six months following the groups, supported the hypothesis that the training laboratory changes people selectively, depending on their initial personality. The overly dominant become less dominant, the overly affectionate become more discriminating. In addition, 96% of the participants reported a positive change in their behavior toward others, 95% reported a positive change in their feelings toward others, 90% reported a positive change in their self-concept, and 72% reported a positive change in the behavior of others toward them.

Rogers (1967) sent follow-up questionnaires to 481 individuals who had participated in groups organized or conducted by him. Most participants were followed up after a period of three to six months. Only 0.5% of the participants reported that they had changed in a negative way from the unstructured group experience, while 14% reported that

they had not changed, 14% reported that initially they had experienced some positive change that had since disappeared, and 57% reported that they experienced a continuing positive change as a result of their group experience.

Rogers' theoretical framework was used as a model for setting up the group situation in a study done by Insel and Moos (1972). An encounter group of seven members was matched with a control group of seven members, both selected from a group of 25 volunteers. The encounter group met twice weekly for 1½ hours per session for eight weeks. The control group did not meet, but the Eysenck Personality Inventory (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1964) and the Conservatism Scale (Wilson & Patterson, 1970) were administered to both groups at the close of the second meeting of the encounter group and again at the end of the last meeting. The group leader tried to provide conditions of accurate empathy, non-possessive warmth, and genuineness in order to fulfill the 'necessary and sufficient conditions for personality change' as described by Rogers. The results showed that the experimental group members changed significantly more in their self-ratings than the control group, moving from being rigid, affected, cold, insincere, and devious, to being more flexible, natural, warm, sincere, and direct.

Cooper (1971) studied two groups of eight members each who met for a seven day residential T-group. The POI was administered two weeks before and on the last day of the T-group. Both groups followed an unstructured design where the participants decided the topics of conversation and what kinds of problems they wished to deal with. Leaders drew attention to behavior in the group by occasional interventions in the form of tentative interpretations. T-group members showed significant changes between pre- and post-test scores in the direction of becoming more independent and self-supporting, more flexible in the application of self-actualizing values, more sensitive to their own feelings and needs, more spontaneous, and more accepting of aggression.

It appears that the unstructured design is effective in producing positive changes in group participants. However, those who advocate the use of the unstructured design claim that it is the most effective design for producing change in group participants (Boy, 1971; Coulson, 1972; Rogers, 1970; Winn, 1970). This assumption remains to be demonstrated.

THE STRUCTURED DESIGN FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

The use of various exercises and techniques to facilitate personal growth in a group appears to be a common practice.

The literature suggests that such techniques induce cohesiveness, rapid group formation, and acceleration of the development of conditions necessary for behavior change in participants (Parloff, 1970). A structured exercise or technique has been defined by Lieberman et al. (1973) as a leader intervention that includes a set of specific orders or prescriptions for behavior which limit the participant's behavioral alternatives.

Lifton (1972) has classified exercises according to some "common denominators." Exercises are generally designed to focus on one of the following things: (1) remove one or more sensory sources of information to help people become more attuned to potential communication values in the sense being emphasized, (2) demonstrate the degree to which we actually trust others, (3) show how cooperative group effort makes support of an individual possible, (4) focus on freeing people to express deep feelings in socially approved ways, (5) help people recognize their need to be part of a group, as well as their need to be by themselves, (6) demonstrate the degree of bodily tension and postures generated by specific problems, (7) relive emotionally meaningful incidents through role-play or psychodrama in order to change current feelings, (8) use mediums such as

song, dance, or painting to help express feelings which are difficult to express verbally, (9) help people feel more worthwhile by focusing on a group effort to supply the person with an emotion which he perceived to be missing in his life, and (10) make people aware of their manipulative behavior toward others by putting them into situations where they must react to others and either exhibit or inhibit control. Elmore & Saunders (1972) believe that encounter techniques and structured exercises facilitate depth of involvement and effort, as well as enabling people to overcome resistances and defenses to insight more rapidly than the use of only verbal techniques. However, they emphasize that the techniques must be used for a specific purpose, for example, to identify and highlight trust problems through the use of the falling backwards exercise.

This is consistent with the finding of Homans (1950 p. 112) that "If the frequency of interaction between two or more persons increases, the degree of their liking for one another will increase and vice versa." Accordingly, an increase in group activity will be followed by an increase in both interpersonal attraction and interaction. If an individual finds himself in a position where he must participate in group interactions to obtain his outcomes,

then if the group's efforts are a success, participation in the group is a reinforcing experience which increases his attraction to the group and develops cohesiveness.

The use of techniques to facilitate personal growth in groups is also consistent with the principles of operant conditioning (Kaplan & Sadock, 1971; Marshall & Colman, 1974). Kaplan & Sadock (1971) use structured techniques as a bridge between psychoanalytic and behavioral group psychotherapy since these exercises allow for the application of operant conditioning principles where the therapist uses covert and overt responses to reinforce the member's adaptive pattern of behavior and inhibit maladaptive patterns of behavior. Such reinforcement may also take place between members of a group. Marshall & Colman (1974) have tried the application of operant conditioning as an analytic tool in studying encounter groups. These authors view the encounter group as an operant environment with specific behavior contingencies where the participants agree to try new ways of perceiving and responding to others by joining the group. The task of the participant is to "identify the appropriate discriminative stimuli for social reinforcement and adapt his familiar behavioral repertoires to new contingencies" (Marshall & Colman, 1974). The leader

initially supplies cues, models alternative behaviors, and either rewards or punishes according to his concept of encountering.

This theory can also apply to exercises. An exercise sets up an operant environment with specific contingencies. First there is the reinforcement structure which is the involvement of the person in the experience and the feedback process afterward. Next, there is a behavioral requirement which is participation in the exercise itself, and finally the behavior modifications and learning processes (change in attitude) which take place as a result of the exercise. An exercise should be effective in producing behavior change only to the extent that it generates behavior that can be reinforced in the group and to the extent that it generates behaviors which act as reinforcers in the group.

Those who adhere to the unstructured design as the most effective means of promoting growth criticize the use of exercises as being 'gimmicky'. Coulson (1972) views exercises as a contrived way of producing new expectations for the participant to live up to without giving the individual a chance to know himself better and to decide for himself about himself. Winn (1970) says that the trend toward design and structure seems to run counter to beliefs

about how learning occurs since true change seems to occur when the individual is free to choose to be responsible for his behavior and not when he is being manipulated. Boy (1971) views the use of structure and exercises by a leader as evidence that the leader is not able to respond verbally at the affective level and so must use techniques to manipulate group members into expressing what he cannot facilitate or manipulate himself.

However, when Rosenberg (1952) studied the influence of role playing on three groups of people, the role player, members asked to identify with certain role players, and members who simply observed the role playing, the results indicated that members who were the role players had the strongest positive and negative feelings about the situation, were most active during the post role-play analysis, and showed the greatest behavioral change. Similarly, role playing in combination with feedback has been shown to be effective in increasing self-insight, the capacity to conceptualize a new role, and role flexibility (Stock, 1964).

Snortum and Ellenhorn (1974) studied a number of non-verbal exercises which were designed to produce specific types of emotional experiences and concluded that a discriminating selection of nonverbal exercises can be used

effectively to enhance emotional awareness. The sense of touch is often involved in nonverbal exercises. Boderman, Freed, and Kinnucan (1972) randomly assigned 21 college women to a touch or no-touch condition to test the assumption that touching a person increases the liking for that person. In the touch condition a subject was paired with an experimental accomplice in three bogus ESP experiments, the last of which involved mutual touching for 110 seconds. The no-touch condition was identical except the touching was eliminated. The total evaluation scores of the accomplice by the subjects showed that the subjects who touched the accomplice perceived her as a significantly more attractive person than those who did not touch her.

Several studies have reported positive outcomes for groups which have utilized exercises. Foulds (1970) administered the POI to three groups of undergraduate college students at the beginning of the first group session and one week following the last group session. One group was a nontreatment control group and the other two groups engaged in sensitivity training for nine weekly sessions of four hours each in which the facilitator used a variety of techniques at appropriate times, including sensory awareness, nonverbal exercises, Gestalt awareness training, psychodrama,

guided fantasy, directed daydreams, and psychomotor experiences. Significant positive changes occurred in both experimental groups on eight out of twelve scales, while no significant changes occurred in control group scores. In a similar experiment, Foulds (1971) found that a group utilizing a variety of structured exercises showed statistically significant changes on eight out of twelve scales on the POI, and again changes in the control group mean scores were non-significant. Koile and Draeger (1969) found that 44 undergraduate students who participated in a four-day human relations laboratory changed their self-rating in a positive direction from the beginning to the end of the laboratory experience on a 30-item semantic differential measurement. Brownell (1970) reported that groups of undergraduates utilizing "warm-up techniques" consisting of verbal and nonverbal sensitivity training exercises administered only at the first meeting of the group were not statistically different from placebo and control groups, but the "warm-up" groups thought that the techniques were beneficial to cohesiveness and ease of talking in the group.

In a study by Brown (1969) high- and low-anxious probationary college freshmen were randomly assigned to three

treatments, which were varied in the degree of structure. The result indicated that high-anxious subjects benefited most from an unstructured group experience and that low-anxious subjects benefited most from a structured group experience. A similar study by Gilbreath (1967) showed that male underachieving college volunteers in leader-structured groups showed a significant increase in ego strength and in grade point average when compared with the group-structured or the control group. A three-year follow-up investigation (Chestnut & Gilbreath, 1969) revealed that the only difference which persisted was that which indicated that high-dependent male underachievers who have experienced a leader-structured treatment do better than similar subjects who have received a group-structured counseling treatment. It would appear that some people do benefit more from a group which has some structure imposed upon by the leader.

Aronson (1971) compared two leaderless T-groups, one using an audio-tape program which included focused activities and one which used the same tape with the activities deleted. The group using the tape which included the activities tended to be less sad, to have smaller self-self-ideal discrepancies, to actively include others more,

and expressed more liking for their initial microlab than the other group. A similar study compared groups given a program of eight self-administered exercises for personal and interpersonal development called PROCESS with control groups and found that the participants in the experimental groups improved their self-concept, were more able to see themselves as their peers did, and reacted more favorably to the total experience than those in the control groups (Vicino, Krusell, Bass, Deci, & Landy, 1973). Pino and Cohen (1971) found that a leader-guided trainer style was more effective in producing trainee self-references than a group-centered style.

It is apparent that groups which utilize structured exercises and techniques as a means of facilitating personal growth are effective in producing positive changes in participants. There is a lack of conclusive evidence which compares the difference in effectiveness of an unstructured and a structured group experience and more conclusive comparative studies are needed to determine the relative merits of each approach.

SUMMARY

Both the unstructured design and the structured design for facilitating personal growth in a group situation appear to be effective methods for producing positive change in participants. Advocates of the unstructured approach criticize the structured approach for being 'manipulative' and therefore not conducive to change and learning in the participants. The unstructured approach is more 'natural' and lets the group and individuals proceed at their own rate of self-discovery. Advocates of the structured approach believe that it is more effective in producing cohesiveness and that exercises facilitate awareness of self and others in a quicker and less anxiety-arousing way. It would seem that providing structure does induce cohesiveness faster and is therefore a more efficient way to induce change in participants than the unstructured approach. Research on structured groups indicates a wider range of applicability at this time. However, there is a lack of research comparing these two designs and more conclusive studies are needed to compare the effectiveness of these two approaches.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The problem of this study was the comparison of an unstructured, a slightly structured, and a moderately structured personal growth group in facilitating changes in self-actualization.

The material to be presented in this chapter will appear in the following order: A description of the population and sampling procedure, a definition of the treatments, the method of collecting data, the method of organizing the data, the statistical hypotheses, the statistical procedures chosen to analyze the data, precautions taken for insuring accuracy, and a summary of the chapter.

POPULATION DESCRIPTION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The population for this study was undergraduate students of Montana State University who are enrolled in either Educational Psychology 208 or Psychology of Adjustment 220, during spring quarter, 1975. Sampling for this study involved solicitation of subjects from these two courses. Participation in the study was voluntary since the College of Education prohibits the compulsory participation of students as research subjects.

TREATMENT DESCRIPTION

The Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1966) was administered to all subjects during the first meeting of their group and again during the final meeting of their group. Four groups of subjects were compared, those in a moderately structured group, those in a slightly structured group, those in an unstructured group, and those in an "As-If" control group. The moderately structured group was defined as a group whose leader utilizes one or more structured exercises per session. The slightly structured group was defined as a group whose leader utilizes exercises occasionally, but not during every session. An unstructured group was defined as a group whose leader utilizes no exercises. The As-If control group was defined as a group in which the subjects are not exposed to the experimental variable to which the effect has been attributed, but are instructed to act as if this were the case. Subjects are not merely passive receivers in an experimental situation, but will try to behave in a manner that will validate the experimental hypothesis (Orne, 1962). The As-If technique is described by Orne as a technique which controls for the interaction effects of demand characteristics and the experimental variable.

Leaders were all graduate students in the counseling program who had had prior experience leading encounter groups, and who were predisposed to use either moderate amounts of structure, slight amounts of structure, or no structure when they led a group. This controlled to some extent the conflict between leadership style and the amount of structure being used in the group.

Each group with the exception of the As-If control group, met once a week for an approximately two-hour session during the entire spring quarter. Each group had either 6 or 7 subjects. No measures were taken to control any of the influencing categories external to the group, such as family, friends, church groups, etc., which might have influenced or precipitated self-actualizing tendencies in the population members.

METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

The Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) was the major data-collecting instrument employed in this study.

The procedure was as follows:

1. The investigator secured permission for sufficient time during the first meeting of each group to verbally solicit subjects to participate in the study. Subjects

were then asked to complete the POI. Subjects were asked to put the last four digits of their social security account number on the answer sheet for purposes of statistical analysis.

2. The investigator asked subjects to complete the POI again during the last meeting of the group, following the same procedure used the first week.

The As-If group met one time. Subjects were instructed to take the POI. Subjects were then instructed to pretend that they had been in a group experience during the quarter. A short general description of personal growth group experiences was presented and subjects were asked to retake the POI, answering "as if" they had participated in such a group.

CHOICE OF THE INSTRUMENT

The Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) designed by Everett Shostrom (1966) was used. The POI was created to provide a comprehensive measure of values and behavior seen to be of importance in the development of self-actualization.

The POI consists of 150 two-choice comparative value and behavior judgments. The items are scored twice, first for two basic scales of personal orientation, inner directed

support (127 items) and time competence (23 items), and second for ten subscales each of which measures an important element of self-actualization. The POI takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and is essentially self-administering. The items were printed in a reusable test booklet and the answers were recorded on answer sheets designed for hand scoring.

Norms

Norms for the POI are presented for college students and for selected occupational and clinical groups. A sex difference was obtained for only the Time Competence scale and then only with college students.

Reliability

Reliability coefficients for the major scales of Time Competence and Inner-Direction are .71 and .84, respectively, and coefficients for the subscales range from .55 to .85. In general the POI has been found to be as reliable as most other personality measures.

Validity

Shostrom (1964) reported that the POI significantly discriminated between clinically judged self-actualized and

non-self-actualized groups on 11 of the 12 scales. Shostrom and Knapp (1966) demonstrated concurrent validity by administering the POI to two groups of outpatients in therapy, one beginning therapy and one in advanced therapy. Analysis of the POI scores showed all 12 POI scales differentiated between the criterion groups at the .01 confidence level or higher. Fox (1965) administered the POI to a group of 100 hospitalized psychiatric patients. All scales significantly differentiated beyond the .001 confidence level the hospitalized sample from the nominated self-actualized sample and from the normal adult sample.

The POI has been shown to correlate with some other personality measures, although there are no other instruments available that are specifically designed to measure the concept of self-actualization. The POI correlates with some of the scales on the MMPI at the .01 level of significance. Knapp (1965) found that the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) had a significant correlation with the POI when administered to undergraduate college students. Dandes (1966) reported a multiple correlation of .54 between POI scales and the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory in a sample of 128 teachers.

METHOD OF ORGANIZING DATA

A table which depicts t-tests for pretest-posttest gain scored on each subtest of the POI (Table 1) was used to organize data. In addition, a table was used which depicts the analysis of variance results by subtest, including source, sums of squares, mean squares, and F-ratios.

STATISTICAL HYPOTHESES

As stated in Chapter I, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Will undergraduate students at Montana State University demonstrate changes in self-actualization during one quarter of a personal growth group experience in either an unstructured, slightly structured, or moderately structured group, as measured by the Personal Orientation Inventory (Shostrom, 1966)?
2. Will the measured self-actualization changes be significantly different for those students who are in an unstructured group, a slightly structured group, a moderately structured group or an As-If control group?
3. Will the moderately structured group be more effective than either the unstructured or the slightly structured group?

From these questions evolved the following statistical hypotheses:

H₁ - There would be a significant positive difference between pre-test and post-test gain scores of the subjects on one or more of the scales measured by the POI.

H₂ - There would be a significant difference between pre-test and post-test means between the unstructured, slightly structured, moderately structured and As-If control groups on one or more of the scales measured by the POI.

H₃ - There would be a significant difference in the effectiveness of the four groups, with the moderately structured group being superior to the slightly structured group, which would, in turn, be superior to the unstructured group, which would be superior to the As-If control group.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The first hypothesis was tested by computing t-tests for correlated data for each of the scales between Time 1 and Time 2, for each subject.

The second hypothesis was analyzed by computing a simple one-way analysis of variance on each of the POI scales for each group and then computing F-tests for each.

The third hypothesis was to be analyzed by the use of the Scheffé method.

The level of significance was defined at the .05 level. This is conventionally a way to guard against both Type I and Type II errors. The consequences of making the Type II error of retaining a false null hypothesis, i.e., that no self-actualization changes occur among subjects over the quarter and that there was no difference between the unstructured, slightly structured, moderately structured, and As-If control groups was considered of no greater impact in terms of publishing misleading information than was mistakenly reporting that significant differences did exist between the variables being studied.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN FOR ACCURACY

All statistical calculations were performed by the computer.

SUMMARY

The Personal Orientation Inventory was administered to undergraduate students enrolled in two classes, Educational Psychology 208 and Psychology of Adjustment 220, at Montana State University during spring quarter, 1975. Subjects

completed the POI at the beginning and end of the quarter. All subjects participated in one of four groups, either an unstructured, a slightly structured, or a moderately structured personal growth group, or an As-If control group. T-tests were used to compare pretest-posttest gain scores for the twelve subtests of the POI. A simple one-way analysis of variance and F tests was used to detect differences between groups. If these differences had proven to be significant the Scheffé method would have been used to determine which group was most effective. Data was presented in tabular form based on the .05 level of significance in Chapter IV of this paper.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to attempt to clarify the effect that the structure of a personal growth group has on the growth and self-actualization of the participants in it. Four groups were compared: an As-If control group, an unstructured group, a slightly structured group, and a moderately structured group.

The pretest-posttest gain scores for all four groups were compared by means of t-tests on the twelve subtests of the POI. A summary of the t-tests for all groups is presented in Table 1. Inspection of Table 1 shows that t-tests reached significance at the .05 level on the Inner-Directed, Existentiality, and Capacity for Intimate Contact subtests in the slightly structured group. The As-If control group showed significant changes between pretest and posttest gain scores on the subtests of Self-Actualizing Values and Spontaneity. The moderately structured group showed a significant gain on the subtest of Time Competence. No significant gains were reported for the unstructured group, although most of the subtest in this group showed slight positive gains. All gains for the slightly structured and the As-If control group were in a positive direction. Most

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF ONE-TAILED T-TEST RESULTS FOR ALL
GROUPS AND SUBTESTS

Subtest Scales	Unstruc- tured	Slightly Structured	Moderately Structured	As-If Control
Time Competent	.95	1.75	2.12*	1.51
Inner Directed	.58	3.27*	.40	1.61
Self-Actualizing Value	-.35	.91	.61	2.23*
Existentiality	.86	3.95*	-.80	.25
Feeling Reactivity	1.2	.88	.65	1.75
Spontaneity	-.13	1.58	.22	2.01*
Self-Regard	-1.4	1.46	0	1.87
Self-Acceptance	.06	1.79	1.50	1.07
Nature of Man	-.75	.59	-.59	.54
Synergy	.75	0	.20	1.00
Acceptance of Aggression	.86	1.93	1.25	.80
Capacity for Intimate Contact	1.7	2.98*	-.70	1.11

*df-22 Critical value of $t = 2.074$ at .05 level of
significance

gains were in a positive direction for the moderately structured and the unstructured group, although there were a few subtests in each of these groups which showed a slight change in a negative direction.

The hypothesis that there would be a significant positive difference between pretest and posttest means of the scales measured by the POI was supported. However, since significance at the .05 level was reached on only six out of the 48 t-tests, it can be concluded that the positive change which occurred was minimal.

The hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between pretest and posttest means between the unstructured, slightly structured, moderately structured, and As-If control group was not supported. A simple one-way analysis of variance was computed. A summary of the analysis of variance for all subtests is presented in Table 2. The critical value of $F_{.95}(3, 22) = 3.05$. None of the obtained F-ratios exceeded the critical value. No further analyses were conducted. The amount of structure did not make a difference in the gain received from the group experiences for the subjects. The As-If control group was not significantly different from the other groups.

TABLE 2
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE SUMMARY TABLE
SUBTEST SCALES x GROUP

Subtest	Source	df	S.S.	MS	F
Time Competence	Between	3	12.93	4.31	.635
	Within	22	149.52	6.79	
	Total	26	168.00		
Inner-Directed	Between	3	769.90	256.63	2.065
	Within	22	2733.97	124.27	
	Total	26	4247.00		
Self-Actualizing Value	Between	3	6.77	2.25	.429
	Within	22	115.69	5.25	
	Total	26	128.00		
Existentiality	Between	3	.00	.00	.000
	Within	22	.00	.00	
	Total	26	26.00		
Feeling Reactivity	Between	3	15.03	5.01	.512
	Within	22	215.30	9.78	
	Total	26	235.00		
Spontaneity	Between	3	19.49	6.49	.876
	Within	22	163.11	7.41	
	Total	26	184.00		
Self-Regard	Between	3	50.78	16.92	2.323
	Within	22	160.33	7.28	
	Total	26	213.00		
Self-Acceptance	Between	3	19.25	6.41	.370
	Within	22	381.09	17.32	
	Total	26	409.00		
Nature of Man	Between	3	3.05	1.01	.471
	Within	22	47.59	2.16	
	Total	26	83.00		
Synergy	Between	3	.63	.21	.118
	Within	22	39.40	1.79	
	Total	26	57.00		
Acceptance of Aggression	Between	3	26.94	8.98	.971
	Within	22	203.40	9.24	
	Total	26	239.00		
Capacity for Intimate Contact	Between	3	90.80	30.26	2.455
	Within	22	271.23	12.32	
	Total	26	379.00		

Critical value of F (df 3, 22) = 3.05 at .05 level of significance

The third hypothesis that there would be a significant difference in the effectiveness of the four groups was rejected on the basis of the analysis of variance. Since no significant differences appeared between the four groups it would be impossible for the moderately structured group to be more effective than the other three groups.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

The problem of this study was the comparison of an As-If control group, an unstructured group, a slightly structured group, and a moderately structured group. Groups were compared to see which method of facilitation would produce the most change in the self-actualization of the participants as measured by the POI. The sample consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in two classes, Educational Psychology 208 and Psychology of Adjustment 220, at Montana State University during Spring quarter, 1975. Subjects completed the POI at the beginning and the end of the quarter.

Statistical comparisons were made by means of the t-test and a simple one-way analysis of variance. Analysis of the results was at the .05 level of significance. The null hypotheses were compared with the statistical evaluations and either accepted or rejected.

CONCLUSIONS

The hypothesis that there would be a significant positive difference in pretest-posttest gain scores on one or more

scales of the POI was supported. Six t-tests showed significant positive gains and most other gains were in a positive direction, although they did not reach significance. The hypothesis that there would be a significant difference between pretest and posttest means between the As-If control group, the unstructured, the slightly structured, and the moderately structured groups was rejected. Since no significant differences were found between groups, the hypothesis that there would be a significant difference in the effectiveness of the four groups was rejected.

The fact that the As-If control group was not significantly different from the other three groups and, in fact, showed significance on two subtests and slight overall change in a positive direction, might be related to the use of the POI as the instrument and the instructions to the As-If control group (see Appendix A, p. 49). The POI is a test which can be "faked" to produce certain scores (Braun, 1966, 1969; Braun & Labaro, 1969; Fisher, 1973, Warehime & Foulds, 1973). Knowledge of the characteristics of self-actualized persons as defined by the POI, in addition to the motivation to make a good impression are necessary in order for individuals to distort their POI scores appreciably in the direction of self-actualizing persons (Braun & LaFaro,

1969; Warehime & Foulds, 1973). Although the As-If control group instructions were not explicit about self-actualization, the type of interactions an encounter group member would be engaged in was described and the subject may have surmised the intent from the nature of the instructions. This might account for the finding that there was no difference between the As-If control group and the other three groups.

The results indicated that the amount of structure in a personal growth group does not affect the amount of self-actualization which occurs among group participants. However, the group leaders may have offered some basic conditions which were conducive to positive gain. There is some research which indicated that group leaders who provide high support and caring, as well as information about how to change are most effective in producing positive changes in group members (Yalom et al., 1973). Rogers' (1970) contention that warmth, acceptance, and unconditional positive regard shown by the therapist for group members produces positive change may also have been operating in all but the As-If group due to the attitudes of the leaders. This attitude may be more important than the techniques and amount of structure used in producing self-actualization in

group participants. The fact that all groups showed at least slight positive gains on most subtests may have been due to the provision of these conditions by the leaders.

Time may also have been a factor which influenced the results. Possibly had the groups been of longer duration, more differences between the groups would have appeared.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further research are as follows:

1. Utilize a different test instrument or provide a battery of instruments to measure self-actualizing changes in group participants.
2. Demand characteristics may have been operating to some extent in the report of positive benefits from personal growth groups. Further research is indicated in this area to clarify this effect.
3. Vary the length of time of the groups to isolate the effect time may have had in influencing the results.
4. Utilize a behavioral design which specifies certain behaviors which are indicative of self-actualization. Use observers to record the specific behavioral changes in participants of groups with varying amounts of structure.

5. It would be desirable to run a larger number of groups so that the various group structures are duplicated.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Now imagine that you have been involved in an encounter group which has met once a week for two hours all this quarter. During this time the group has focused primarily on developing sensitivity to and awareness of the self and of others. You have worked on improving your interpersonal relationships by trying to be more spontaneous and more open and honest. You have given others in the group feedback about how their behavior affects you, and others have, in return, given you feedback on how your behavior affects them. Through this process you have learned how other people see you as a person and you are now better able to look at your own interpersonal behavior and analyze it to help you achieve more satisfying interpersonal relationships. Throughout the quarter the group members have developed mutual trust and feelings of closeness and intimacy with each other. Take some time now to imagine this group experience and what it has been like.

(2 minute pause)

Now I would like for you to retake the POI. This time answer the questions as if you had just been through the group experience I have described to you.

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