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A GROUP DYNAMICS APPROACH TO THE
TREATMENT OF NONCONFORMISTS IN THE NAVY

by

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A GROUP DYNAMICS APPROACH TO THE
TREATMENT OF NONCONFORMISTS IN THE NAVY^{1, 2}

by

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ABSTRACT:

In an attempt to bring about attitudinal and behavioral change in the nonconformist, confines of a correctional institution for Navy and Marine offenders were placed in small closed communities. Men were selected for the research companies on the basis of fitting a certain level on a scale of interpersonal maturity. Groups were composed of high social maturity men, low maturity men, or half low maturity men and half high maturity men. Twenty confined men, with three Marine supervisors, lived in the same quarters, ate together, participated in competitions as a unit, and shared work, educational and recreational experiences. The attempt was made to keep all interpersonal interactions within the group. It was hypothesized that forcing the delinquent to live with and

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 2. The report constitutes a chapter in the March 1959 Edition of the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science.

about four months and between fifty-five and sixty percent of the men are restored to military duty at the termination of their confinement.

It is often assumed that the man who has offended against a military law is not the same sort of person as the civilian delinquent. While it is true that the majority of military men are confined for absence offenses, which are not civilian crimes, there is considerable evidence that civilian and military delinquent groups of comparable age show very similar attitudes and nonconformity patterns.¹

FRAME OF REFERENCE

The frame of reference for this research program is a theory of sequential levels of interpersonal maturity. The case for an interpersonal relations approach to delinquency has been steadily gaining ground. Donald Bloch² has described delinquent behavior as an effort to handle interpersonal anxiety. Croft and Grygier³ have been able to show that the social relationships of truants and juvenile delinquents vary markedly from those of their non-

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1. The following point to similarities in the two populations: offenders in both populations have similar juvenile records; norms on a delinquency potential test are very similar for prisoners in the State of California institutions and Camp Elliott; a delinquent high school population showed test scores much more similar to the Camp Elliott population than to the non-delinquent high school population.
 2. Bloch, D.A., The Delinquent Integration. Psychiatry, 1952, 15: 297-303.
 3. Croft, I.J. and Grygier, T.G., Social Relationships of Truants and Juvenile Delinquents. Human Relations, IX, 4, 1956.

new emphasis from the methodological work of Cronbach¹. He has stated that we need to know much more about the "sets" that people bring with them into interpersonal situations. More needs to be understood about the nature of the delinquency proneness, in terms of interpersonal "sets", before we can study the effect of interpersonal interactions in determining delinquent behavior. The maturity levels theory maintains that these "sets" are extremely important and further suggests that there are anxiety-laden interpersonal problems which form the core of the individual's social understanding in his efforts to integrate what is going on between himself and others as well as between others.

This theory of interpersonal maturity has been described in detail elsewhere². Seven successive stages of interpersonal maturity characterize psychological development, ranging from the least mature, which resembles the interpersonal interactions of a newborn infant, to an ideal of social maturity which is seldom or never reached in our present culture. Each of the seven stages or levels is defined by a crucial interpersonal problem which must be solved before further progress toward maturity can occur. All persons do not necessarily work their

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1. Cronbach, L.J. Proposals Leading to Analytic Treatment of Social Perception Scores. In Person Perception and Interpersonal Behavior. Edited by Tagiuri, R. and Petrullo, L. Stanford, 1958, 353-378.
 2. Sullivan, C.E., Grant, M.Q. and Grant, J.D., The Development of Interpersonal Maturity: Applications to Delinquency. Psychiatry, 1957, 20: 373-385.

to get what he wants. In contrast to the Level 2, he is at least aware that his own behavior has something to do with whether or not he gets what he wants. He still does not differentiate, however, among people except to the extent that they can or cannot be useful to him. He sees people only as objects to be manipulated in order to get what he wants. His manipulations may take the form either of conforming to the rules of whomever seems to have the power at the moment ("If you can't lick them, join them."), or of the type of maneuvering characteristic of a "confidence man" ("Make a sucker out of him before he makes a sucker out of you."). He tends to deny having any disturbing feelings or strong emotional involvement in his relationships with others.

Maturity Level 4: An individual whose understanding and behavior are integrated at this level has internalized a set of standards and values by which he judges his and others' behavior. He is aware of the influence of others on him and their expectations of him. To a certain extent, he is aware of the effects of his own behavior on others. He wants to be like the people he admires and may feel guilty about not measuring up to his internalized standards. The conflict produced by the feelings of inadequacy and guilt may be internalized with consequent neurotic symptoms or acted out in anti-social behavior. Because the Level 4 tends to be uncomfortable about himself and because he is able to internalize values, he appears more amenable to treatment than previous maturity levels described.

Maturity Level 5: A person who functions at this level is able to see patterns of behavior; he may see himself and

he feels no need to change and since he most certainly would run away from any therapy relationship which made him feel anxious.

Since almost all delinquents are acting-out personalities, the task in treatment becomes one of putting the offender in a non-panic-producing correctional situation, which keeps him concerned about and facing his problems, in an attempt to bring about personality change in him. Acceptance of a need to change or grow results from a challenging uncomfortableness. Since this prerequisite for personality change - this uncomfortableness - is absent or easily dissipated, it needs to be created or maintained for the acting-out person. However, intense anxiety leads to rigidifying panic where no personality change can occur. Therefore, the goal of the treatment program was an attempt to create in a correctional situation a program which would produce in the subjects a challenging uncomfortable-ness without rigidifying panic.

The Camp Elliott research subjects were placed for nine or six weeks in groups of twenty in small closed communities called Living Groups¹. The twenty men, with three supervisors, lived together in the same barracks, ate together, worked on a farm as a unit, held classes together, participated as a team in recreational activities. The group was "closed", not only in the sense that no new members were admitted nor old

1. Grant, J. Douglas, A Group Dynamics Approach to Treating Acting-out Personalities. Presented at the 8th V.A. Clinical Research Conference in Berkeley, November, 1953.

A psychologist was assigned to each team of three supervisors to act as a consultant. The psychologist was available to the confinees and supervisors for individual conferences, although every effort was made to keep as much as possible of the interpersonal relationships for group discussion. The consultant's main function was to conduct 90 minute, 5-days-a-week group therapy sessions attended by the twenty men and the supervisors. These sessions were the heart of the attempt to encourage social maturing through the "forced" working through of the anxiety provided by the close, continuing interpersonal relationships. The psychologist's job was to prevent the challenging uncomfortableness from becoming rigidifying panic, yet not to allow subjects to flee the group. The focus in the group discussions was the interpersonal interactions within the group. An attempt was made to create a self-study atmosphere in which group members were encouraged to notice some interpersonal dealing of self with others or among others - to notice this interaction and to bring it to the group for discussion.

For the reader familiar with methods of psychotherapy, nine or six weeks may seem an impossibly short time in which to bring about personality change. Without presenting these short periods as ideals, it is worth remembering that the "treatment" here was a twenty-four-hour-a-day process, a much more intensive experience than is usual in psychotherapy.

The closed Living Groups may be seen as the primary family situation revisited. Group therapy has often been likened to a family constellation with the therapist representing

Six of the groups included only maturity levels 2 and 3, here to be called the low maturity subjects. The remaining fifteen groups included maturity levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. (Nine of these mixed maturity groups operated for six weeks rather than nine in order to handle scheduling difficulties.) A third aspect of the experimental design was the duration of the supervisor-group relationship. Eighteen of the groups had the same supervisory team for the entire research period while the other nine groups changed supervisors and consultant every three weeks.

The Living Groups were described to all incoming offenders at Camp Elliott, and ninety-eight per cent of all the eligible men volunteered. In order to be eligible, the subject had to have a good chance of being restored to duty and have at least six months left on his enlistment time in order that follow-up information would be available on him; and he had to have sufficient confinement time to be able to complete the research program. Eligible volunteers were tested on a battery of personality tests given routinely at Camp Elliott¹. Two psychologists independently assessing the test profiles, made estimates of each volunteer's maturity level². If the two psychologists agreed that the subject appeared to fit the maturity

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1. Gunderson, E.K., Group Testing Diagnostic Manual, First Revision, U.S. Naval Retraining Command, Camp Elliott, San Diego, 1956.
 2. Ives, Virginia, and Grant, M.Q., Initial Steps in the Measurement of Interpersonal Maturity. Sixth Technical Report, Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Naval Retraining Command, Camp Elliott, San Diego, 1956.

Camp Elliott Living Group Study
 ONR Project 1535(00)
 Principal Investigator: J. Douglas Grant

Table I
 PERCENTAGE RESTORATION SUCCESS BY MATURITY CHARACTERISTICS
 OF THE LIVING GROUP AND SUPERVISORY EFFECTIVENESS

Supervisory Team	Predicted Supervisory Effectiveness	High Maturity Only		Low Maturity Only		High Maturity Mixed		Low Maturity Mixed		6-week High Maturity Mixed		6-week Low Maturity Mixed		Total High Maturity		Total Low Maturity		Total High & Low Maturity	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
T Company	First	19	68.0	18	39.0	9	78.0	9	56.0	42	69.0	17	35.0	70	70.0	44	41.0	114	59.0
R Company	Second	19	68.0	17	41.0	8	88.0	12	67.0	38	71.0	18	61.0	65	72.0	47	55.0	112	65.0
S Company	Third	18	67.0	13	77.0	10	50.0	10	40.0	33	61.0	25	60.0	61	61.0	48	60.0	109	61.0
Sub-total		56	68.0	48	50.0	27	70.0	31	55.0	113	67.0	60	53.0	196	68.0	139	53.0	335	61.0
RSP Co's	Fourth	20	65.0	20	70.0	10	60.0	10	60.0					30	63.0	30	67.0	60	65.0
STR Co's	Fourth	16	69.0	33	51.0	10	60.0	7	86.0					26	65.0	40	58.0	66	61.0
TRS Co's	Fourth	14	50.0	17	65.0	10	80.0	9	67.0					24	63.0	26	65.0	50	64.0
Sub-total		50	62.0	70	60.0	30	67.0	26	69.0					80	64.0	96	63.0	176	63.0
TOTALS		106	65.0	118	56.0	57	68.0	57	61.0	113	67.0	60	53.0	276	67.0	235	57.0	511	62.0

by the maturity characteristics of the group; i.e., high or low maturity subjects did as well following mixed maturity group experience as they did following groups composed of only low or only high maturity subjects. (3) Totaling results for all subjects over all conditions, the duration of the supervisor-group relationship did not affect the success rate. (4) Again, totaling over-all experimental conditions, no significant differences were found which can be attributed to predicted supervisory effectiveness. (5) However, the interaction between the predicted supervisory effectiveness and the maturity of the subject significantly (Analysis of variance, $P =$ less than .05) affected restoration success. The relationship between the subject's maturity and restoration success, varied markedly and consistently with the amount of exposure to the supervisory teams in the order of predicted effectiveness. For subjects spending time only with T company supervision, predicted most effective, the relationship between maturity of the subject and restoration success was high ($r_t = .45$; $N = 114$). For subjects supervised by R company only, predicted second most effective, the relationship was present but lower ($r_t = .29$; $N = 112$). For S company subjects, supervised by the predicted least effective team, the relationship vanished ($r_t = .01$; $N = 109$). If the Living Group experience was under supervision that change every three weeks, there again was no relationship ($r_t = .01$; $N = 176$). Under conditions of changing supervision, only when the last six weeks were spent with the predicted most and next most effective teams, did some relationship again emerge. This interaction between the nature of supervision and the relationship between maturity and

impossible, to demonstrate relationships between treatment situations and post-institutional behavior. As long as the data of the Camp Elliott research is viewed as a study of single variables, its findings are comparable to earlier correctional studies; i.e., no demonstratable situational (supervisory effectiveness) effect and only a low, though significant, classification (maturity) effect. It is when the interaction of the situational and classification variables are considered that one finds productive relationships with restoration behavior. It now appears likely that, in many of our correctional studies, the classification and situational effects have been masking each other. Future studies need to consider kinds of subjects, over kinds of supervisors, over kinds of programming. This study has demonstrated for delinquency research the point that Cronbach^{1,2} has been emphasizing for social research in general.

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1. Cronbach, L.J., The Two Disciplines of Scientific Psychology. The American Psychologist, 12, 1957, 671-684.
 2. Cronbach, L.J. and Gleser, G.C., Psychological Tests and Personnel Decisions, Urbana, 1957.