

## DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE IN SMALL GROUPS<sup>1</sup>

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50 articles dealing with stages of group development over time are separated by group setting, as follows: therapy-group studies, T-group studies, and natural- and laboratory-group studies. The stages identified in these articles are separated into those descriptive of social or interpersonal group activities and those descriptive of group-task activities. Finally, 4 general stages of development are proposed, and the review consists of fitting the stages identified in the literature to those proposed. In the social realm, these stages in the developmental sequence are testing-dependence, conflict, cohesion, and functional roles. In the task realm, they are orientation, emotionality, relevant opinion exchange, and the emergence of solutions. There is a good fit between observed stages and the proposed model. Further study of temporal change as a dependent variable via the manipulation of specific independent variables is suggested.

The purpose of this article is to review the literature dealing with the developmental sequence in small groups, to evaluate this literature as a body, to extrapolate general concepts about group development, and to suggest fruitful areas for further research.

While small-group processes have been given great attention in recent years by behavioral scientists, the question of change in process over time has been relatively neglected. Perhaps the major reason for this is the overwhelming tendency of the small-group researcher to run groups for short periods of time and thus avoid the "problems" created by temporal change. Laboratory studies of developmental phenomena are quite rare. The majority of articles dealing with sequential group development come from the group-therapy setting and human relations training-group setting, neither of which features strict experimental control nor manipulation of independent variables. Moreover, the only major theoretical statements of group development which have appeared are those of Bales (1953), Schutz (1958), and Bach (1954).

In an attempt to bring the facts and the issues into sharper focus, existing research in

the area of small-group development will be cited, and a framework within which this phenomenon can be better understood and further investigated will be presented. This framework will also serve to integrate the variety of studies cited in a meaningful way.

### CLASSIFICATION MODEL

The classification approach adopted for distinguishing between and within developmental studies is a threefold one. The delineations are based on (*a*) the setting in which the group is found, (*b*) the realm into which the group behavior falls at any point in time, that is, task or interpersonal, and (*c*) the position of the group in a hypothetical developmental sequence (referred to as the stage of development). It is this last delineation that allows not only for the separation and ordering of observations within each setting, but for the development of additional hypotheses as well.

#### *Setting*

Classification according to setting allows for the clustering of studies based on their similarity of features, for example, group size, group problem area, group composition, duration of "group life," etc. More similarity between observations made in the same setting than in different settings is expected.

In the *group-therapy setting* the task is to help individuals better deal with their personal problems. The goal is individual adjust-

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ment. Such groups contain from 5 to 15 members, each of whom has some debilitating personal problem, and a therapist, and the group exists for 3 months or more. The developmental data for such groups consist of the observations of the therapist and those professional observers that are present, usually as trainees. Such data are highly anecdotal in nature and reflect the clinical biases of the observers. Furthermore, such accounts are usually formulated after the fact and based on the observation of a single group. Since the bulk of the literature reviewed comes from this setting, its generality must be limited by the limitations of the setting and the mode of data collection.

In the *human relations training-group (T-group) setting*, the task is to help individuals interact with one another in a more productive, less defensive manner, and to be aware of the dynamics underlying such interaction. The goal is interpersonal sensitivity. Such groups contain ordinarily from 15 to 30 members, usually students or corporation executives, and one trainer or leader, and endure from about 3 weeks to 6 months.

The most striking differences between therapy- and training-group settings are in the areas of group composition, task, goal, and duration of group life. Such differences can account for different findings in the two settings. The most striking similarity is in the manner of data collection. Data in the training-group setting are highly anecdotal, subjective, collected by the trainer and his co-workers, and often based on the observations of a single group. Again, this serves to limit the generality of these findings.

The *natural-group setting* is distinguished on the basis that the group exists to perform some social or professional function over which the researcher has no control. Members are not brought together for self-improvement; rather, they come together to do a job. Such groups may be characterized either by appointed or emergent leadership. Presidential advisory councils and industrial groups represent examples of natural groups. Similar limitations to generalization based on the manner of data collection and number of groups observed applies in this setting as in the previous settings.

The *laboratory-task setting* features groups brought together for the purpose of studying group phenomena. Such groups are small (generally under 10 members), have a short life, and may or may not have leaders. In this setting, groups are given a task or tasks which they are to complete. Quantitative data are collected and analyzed based on multiple-group performances.

The last two settings have been combined due to the small number of studies in each (the dearth of group development studies in the industrial area is notable), and also because theoretical statements are reviewed which are generalized to cover both areas. All studies will be classified into one of the three setting categories according to best fit.

#### *Realm: Interpersonal versus Task*

Within the studies reviewed, an attempt will be made to distinguish between *interpersonal* stages of group development and *task* behaviors exhibited in the group. The contention is that any group, regardless of setting, must address itself to the successful completion of a task. At the same time, and often through the same behaviors, group members will be relating to one another interpersonally. The pattern of *interpersonal relationships* is referred to as *group structure* and is interpreted as the interpersonal configuration and interpersonal behaviors of the group at a point in time, that is, the way the members act and relate to one another as persons. The content of interaction as related to the task at hand is referred to as *task activity*. The proposed distinction between the group as a social entity and the group as a task entity is similar to the distinction between the task-oriented functions of groups and the social-emotional-integrative functions of groups, both of which occur as simultaneous aspects of group functioning (Bales, 1953; Coffey, 1952; Deutsch, 1949; Jennings, 1947).

In therapy groups and T groups, the task is a personal and interpersonal one in that the group exists to help the individuals deal with themselves and others. This makes the interpersonal-task distinction a fuzzy one. A further problem with this distinction occurs because the studies cited do not distinguish between the two realms and often talk about

interpersonal development at one point in the sequence and task development at another point. The distinction will be maintained, however, because of the generic difference between the reaction to others as elements of the group task versus the reaction to others as social entities. Failing to separate stages by realm obscures the continuity of the developmental process. While the two realms differ in content, as will be seen, their underlying dynamics are similar.

#### *Proposed Developmental Sequence*

The following model is offered as a conceptualization of changes in group behavior, in both social and task realms, across all group settings, over time. It represents a set of hypotheses reflecting the author's biases (rather than those of the researchers) and the perception of trends in the studies reviewed which become considerably more apparent when these studies are viewed in the light of the model. The model of development stages presented below is not suggested for primary use as an organizational vehicle, although it serves that function here. Rather, it is a conceptual statement suggested by the data presented and subject to further test.

In the realm of group structure the first hypothesized stage of the model is labeled as *testing and dependence*. The term "testing" refers to an attempt by group members to discover what interpersonal behaviors are acceptable in the group, based on the reactions of the therapist or trainer (where one is present) and on the reactions of the other group members. Coincident to discovering the boundaries of the situation by testing, one relates to the therapist, trainer, some powerful group member, or existing norms and structures in a dependent way. One looks to this person, persons, or standards for guidance and support in this new and unstructured situation.

The first stage of task-activity development is labeled as *orientation to the task*, in which group members attempt to identify the task in terms of its relevant parameters and the manner in which the group experience will be used to accomplish the task. The group must decide upon the type of information they will need

in dealing with the task and how this information is to be obtained. In orienting to the task, one is essentially defining it by discovering its "ground rules." Thus, orientation, in general, characterizes behavior in both interpersonal and task realms during this stage. It is to be emphasized that orientation is a general class of behavior which cuts across settings; the specifics of orientation, that is, what one must orient to and how, will be setting-specific.

The second phase in the development of group structure is labeled as *intragroup conflict*. Group members become hostile toward one another and toward a therapist or trainer as a means of expressing their individuality and resisting the formation of group structure. Interaction is uneven and "infighting" is common. The lack of unity is an outstanding feature of this phase. There are characteristic key issues that polarize the group and boil down to the conflict over progression into the "unknown" of interpersonal relations or regression to the security of earlier dependence.

*Emotional response to task demands* is identified as the second stage of task-activity development. Group members react emotionally to the task as a form of resistance to the demands of the task on the individual, that is, the discrepancy between the individual's personal orientation and that demanded by the task. This task stage will be most evident when the task has as its goal self-understanding and self-change, namely, the therapy- and training-group tasks, and will be considerably less visible in groups working on impersonal, intellectual tasks. In both task and interpersonal realms, emotionality in response to a discrepancy characterizes this stage. However, the source of the discrepancy is different in the different realms.

The third group structure phase is labeled as the *development of group cohesion*. Group members accept the group and accept the idiosyncracies of fellow members. The group becomes an entity by virtue of its acceptance by the members, their desire to maintain and perpetuate it, and the establishment of new group-generated norms to insure the group's existence. Harmony is of maximum importance, and task conflicts are avoided to insure harmony.

The third stage of task activity development is labeled as the *open exchange of relevant interpretations*. In the therapy- and training-group context, this takes the form of *discussing oneself and other group members*, since self and other personal characteristics are the basic task inputs. In the laboratory-task context, exchanged interpretations take the form of opinions. In all cases one sees information being acted on so that alternative interpretations of the information can be arrived at. The openness to other group members is characteristic in both realms during this stage.

The fourth and final developmental phase of group structure is labeled as *functional role-relatedness*. The group, which was established as an entity during the preceding phase, can now become a problem-solving instrument. It does this by directing itself to members as objects, since the subjective relationship between members has already been established. Members can now adopt and play roles that will enhance the task activities of the group, since they have learned to relate to one another as social entities in the preceding stage. Role structure is not an issue but an instrument which can now be directed at the task. The group becomes a "sounding board" off which the task is "played."

In task-activity development, the fourth and final stage is identified as the *emergence of solutions*. It is here that we observe constructive attempts at successful task completion. In the therapy- and training-group context, these solutions are more specifically *insight* into personal and interpersonal processes and constructive self-change, while in the laboratory-group context the solutions are more intellectual and impersonal. Here, as in the three preceding stages, there is an essential correspondence between group structural and task realms over time. In both realms the emphasis is on constructive action, and the realms come together so that energy previously invested in the structural realm can be devoted to the task.

The next section presents a review of relevant studies separated according to setting. The observations within each study are separated according to stage of development and realm,

## STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN THERAPY GROUPS

### Stage 1

*Group Structure: Testing and Dependence.* Of the 26 studies of development in therapy groups which were reviewed, 18 identified a beginning stage as either testing or dependence or both. Bach (1954) speaks of *initial situation testing* to determine the nature of the therapy environment and discover the kinds of relationships the therapist will promote, followed closely by *leader dependence* where group members relate to the therapist dependently. Barton (1953), Beukenkamp (1952), and Mann and Semrad (1948) identify an initial stage in which the group tests to determine the limits of tolerance of the therapist and the group.

Researchers emphasizing the more dependent aspects of this initial stage are Bion (1961), who describes groups operating with the basic assumption of *dependency*, Cholden (1953), who has observed dependency in therapy groups of blind individuals, and Stoute (1950), who observed dependency in larger classroom therapy groups.

Others have observed this stage and have used a variety of names to label it. Corsini (1957), in an integration of other studies, identifies *hesitant participation* as an initial stage, in which members test the group and therapist to discover how they will respond to various statements. Grotjahn (1950) refers to an initial period of orientation and information, while King (1959) labels initial testing and orienting behavior in activity-group therapy as *acclimatization*. Powdermaker and Frank (1948) and Abrahams (1949) describe the initial period as one of orientation and testing where group members attempt to relate to the therapist and to discover the structure and limits of the therapy group. Schindler (1958), using bifocal-group therapy, labels the initial stage as *attachment to the group*, in which individuals discharge old ties and establish new ones. Taylor (1950) talks about qualifying for acceptance by the group at the start of therapy which implies both testing and conforming.

Four of the studies reviewed describe a stage preceding the testing-dependence stage

which will be referred to as Prestage 1. Thorpe and Smith (1953) and Osberg and Berliner (1956), in therapy with hospitalized narcotic addicts, describe an initial stage of resistance, silence, and hostility followed by a testing period where patients attempt to discover what behaviors the therapist deems acceptable. Shellow, Ward, and Rubenfeld (1958), who worked with institutionalized delinquents, described two such stages of resistance and hostility preceding the testing stage, while Martin and Hill (1957) theorized about a stage of isolation and "unshared behavior" preceding one of stereotypic responding to fellow group members and a dependent orientation toward the therapist.

Three of the four studies identifying a Prestage 1 were specifically based on observations of groups of antisocial individuals (drug addicts and delinquents) who probably must be won over to the situation and their initial extreme resistance overcome before the normal sequence of therapy-group development can begin. This would account for Prestage 1.

The remaining studies did not identify an initial stage of testing-dependence but dealt either with task development (to be discussed below), or offered as an initial Stage 1 which is postulated here as a second stage. Finally, a study by Parker (1958) described an initial stage of *cohesive organization* in which subgroups are formed, rules followed, and harmony maintained—a description which is difficult to fit into the testing-dependence category.

*Task Activity: Orientation and Testing.* During the initial stage, task development is characterized by indirect attempts to discover the nature and boundaries of the task, i.e., what is to be accomplished and how much cooperation is demanded, expressed specifically through (a) the discussion of irrelevant and partially relevant issues (Bion, 1961; Coffey, Freedman, Leary, & Ossorio, 1950; Martin & Hill, 1957; Osberg & Berliner, 1956), (b) the discussion of peripheral problems (Stoute, 1950), (c) the discussion of immediate behavior problems (Abrahams, 1949), (d) the discussion of symptoms (Bach, 1954; Taylor, 1950), (e) griping about the institutional environment (Mann & Semrad, 1948; Shellow et al., 1958; Thorpe & Smith,

1953), and (f) intellectualization (Clapham & Sclare, 1958; Wender, 1946).

This stage is also characterized by more direct attempts at orientation toward the task as illustrated in (a) a search for the meaning of therapy (Cholden, 1953), (b) attempts to define the situation (Powdermaker & Frank, 1948), (c) attempts to establish a proper therapeutic relationship with the therapist through the development of rapport and confidence (Dreikurs, 1957; King, 1959; Wolf, 1949), (d) mutual exchange of information (Grotjahn, 1950), and (e) suspiciousness of and fearfulness toward the new situation which must be overcome (Corsini, 1957).

### Stage 2

*Group Structure: Intragroup Conflict.* Thirteen of the 26 studies of group therapy reviewed identified a stage of intragroup conflict (in 11 cases as a second stage and in 2 as a first stage). Abrahams (1949) identifies an interaction stage typified by defensiveness, competition, and jealousy. Bion (1961) discusses a *fight-flight* period in which members conflict with the therapist or attempt to psychologically withdraw from the situation. Grotjahn (1950) identifies a stage of increasing tension, while Parker (1958) talks about a *crisis period* where friction is increased, anxiety mounts, rules are broken, arguments ensue, and a general structural collapse occurs. Powdermaker and Frank (1948) discuss a second stage featuring sharp fluctuation of relationships, sharp reversals of feelings, and "intense but brief and brittle linkages." Schindler (1958) talks about a stage of psychodramatic acting-out and localization of conflicts in the group, while Shellow et al. (1958) describe a stage characterized by ambivalence toward the therapist which is expressed through the formation of conflicting factions in the group. Stoute (1950) describes a second stage beginning with derogation and negativity, while Thorpe and Smith (1953) describe a stage beginning with disintegration, distance, defenses out of awareness, and disrupted communication. King (1959), in activity-group therapy, describes a second stage of *benign regression* characterized by extreme acting-out and unacceptable behavior. Martin and Hill (1957) theorize about a stage of

polarization featuring the emergence of subgroups following a stage of interpersonal exploration.

Coffey et al. (1950) identify an initial stage of defensiveness and resistance where members clash with one another. However, these authors also see "pecking orders" being established during this period; perhaps their initial stage includes Stages 1 and 2 as postulated in this review. Mann (1953) describes an initial phase of "working through of hostility" followed by a stage of "working through of anxieties." The hostility phase is characterized by disruption and fragmentation which are reduced gradually in the anxiety phase.

The remaining studies fail to identify this stage. Some of them jump from Stage 1 directly to Stage 3, while others deal with task development as concerns the first two stages of therapy-group development.

*Task Activity: Emotional Response to Task Demands.* The outstanding feature of this second task stage appears to be the expression of emotionality by the group members as a form of resisting the techniques of therapy which require that they "expose" themselves and of challenging the validity and usefulness of therapy (Bach, 1954; Barton, 1953; Cholden, 1953; Clapham & Sclare, 1958; Mann, 1953; Mann & Semrad, 1948; Martin & Hill, 1957; Stoute, 1950; Wender, 1946). Furthermore, mention is made of the fact that this is a period of extreme resistance to examination and disclosure (Abrahams, 1949; Barton, 1953), and an attempt at analysis of this resistance is made (Wolf, 1949). Others emphasize ambivalence toward the therapist (Shellow et al., 1958), the discussion of sensitive areas (Powdermaker & Frank, 1948), psychodrama (Schindler, 1958), and resistance via "putting one on" (Thorpe & Smith, 1953).

### Stage 3

*Group Structure: Development of Group Cohesion.* Twenty-two of the 26 studies reviewed identified a stage in which the group became a cohesive unit and developed a sense of being as a group. Bach (1954), Barton (1953), and Clapham and Sclare (1958) identify a stage during which ingroup con-

sciousness is developed and establishment and maintenance of group boundaries is emphasized. Bion (1961) discusses the basic assumption of *pairing* in which the emphasis is on cohesion, but the unit is the pair as opposed to the whole group. Coffey et al. (1950), Corsini (1959), and Taylor (1950) describe a stage following the stage of intragroup hostility in which the group becomes unified and is characterized by the existence of a common goal and group spirit. Parker (1958) and Shellow et al. (1958) see the stage of crisis and factions being followed by one featuring consensual group action, cooperation, and mutual support. Mann and Semrad (1948), Grotjahn (1950), and Powdermaker and Frank (1948) describe a third stage characterized by group integration and mutuality. Noyes (1953) describes a middle stage of group integration, while Stoute (1950) and Thorpe and Smith (1953) see the stage of intragroup hostility grading into a period of unity, support, and freedom of communication. Martin and Hill (1957) theorize about a stage featuring awareness that the group is an organism preceding the final stage of development. Abrahams (1949) describes the development of "we-consciousness" in the third stage, while Mann (1953) sees the third stage as one of personal mutual exploration and analysis during which the group attains unity.

The notion that the group becomes a simulation of the family constellation (that is, through transference members react to one another as members of their family), with the unity and cohesion generally accepted in that structure, fits as a close parallel to the stage of development of group cohesion being postulated. Beukenkamp (1952) describes the middle stage of *reliving the process of the family constellation* where the group becomes a familylike structure, while King (1959) utilizes a similar description (that is, family unity in the group) for the final stage in activity-group therapy. Wender (1946) and Wolf (1949) both describe a stage preceding the final stage in which the group becomes the new family through the displacement of parent love.

Studies that fail to identify this stage are those that deal primarily with task develop-

ment or those that integrate it as part of the final stage.

*Task Activity: Discussing Oneself and Other Group Members.* Many researchers observed probing and revealing by group members at a highly intimate level during this period and labeled it as (a) confiding (Clapham & Sclare, 1958; Coffey et al., 1950; Thorpe & Smith, 1953), (b) discussing personal problems in depth (Corsini, 1957; Mann & Semrad, 1948; Osberg & Berliner, 1956; Taylor, 1950), (c) exploring the dynamics at work within the individual (Dreikurs, 1957; Noyes, 1953), and (d) exploring the dynamics at work within the group (Bach, 1954; Martin & Hill, 1957; Powdermaker & Frank, 1948).

Beukenkamp (1952) observed that recalled material was related to the family; Abrahams (1949) observed the process of common ideation; and Shellow et al. (1958) and Wolf (1949) emphasized patients' discussion of topics related to transference to the therapist and to other group members which took place during this period.

#### Stage 4

*Group Structure: Functional Role-relatedness.* Only 12 of the therapy studies are at all explicit in their identification of this stage. Almost all of the therapists discuss the final stage of development of the therapy group in task terms as the therapeutic stage of understanding, analysis, and insight. The group is seen as serving a therapeutic function, but the nature of this therapeutic function is not spelled out. This is a stage of mutual task interaction with a minimum of emotional interference made possible by the fact that the group as a social entity has developed to the point where it can support rather than hinder task processes through the use of function-oriented roles.

Bach (1954) and Bion (1961) both refer to the group in its final stage as the *work group*. As such it serves a function supportive of therapy. Wender (1946) and Abrahams (1949) see the group as creating a therapeutic atmosphere in the final stage, while Wolf (1949), Stoute (1950), and Corsini (1951) describe this stage as one of *freedom and friendliness* supportive of insightful behavior and change. Both Coffey et al. (1950) and Dreikurs (1957) see the group as a thera-

peutic force producing encouragement and integrating problems with roles. Martin and Hill (1957) identify the group as an *integrative-creative-social instrument* in its final stage which facilitates problem solving, diagnosis, and decision making. Osberg and Berliner (1956) describe the self-starting stage where the group environment supports analysis, while Mann (1953) discusses a final stage of *personal mutual synthesis*.

Other therapy researchers failing to specifically delineate this final stage in social development have tended to lump the third and fourth stages together and not make the distinction between the development of cohesion and the "use" of cohesion (via functional roles) as a therapeutic force. Such descriptions were included in the section on the third stage. The small number of investigators identifying this final stage is most likely due to the high visibility of task functions occurring during this time period which obscure and minimize social processes occurring simultaneously.

*Task Activity: Emergence of Insight.* There seems to be overwhelming agreement among the observers of therapy-group development that the final stage of task development is characterized by attainment of the desired goal, insight into one's own problems, an understanding of the cause of one's abnormal behavior and, in many cases, modification of oneself in the desired direction (Beukenkamp, 1952; Bion, 1961; Clapham & Sclare, 1958; Coffey et al., 1950; Corsini, 1957; Dreikurs, 1957; King, 1959; Noyes, 1953; Schindler, 1958; Stoute, 1950; Thorpe & Smith, 1953; Wender, 1946; Wolf, 1949). Others (Abrahams, 1949; Bach, 1954; Barton, 1953; Cholden, 1953; Grotjahn, 1950; Shellow et al., 1958; Taylor, 1950) place more emphasis on the processes of attempting to develop insight and change during this last period as opposed to the development of such insight and change itself.

Two additional therapy-group studies are worthy of inclusion, both of which utilized a technique for collecting and analyzing data which was highly dissimilar to the approach used in the other therapy-group studies, namely, interaction-process analysis (Bales, 1950). Psathas (1960) found that groups phase from *orientation to evaluation to con-*

*trol*, based on an analysis of early, middle, and late sessions. Talland (1955) failed to observe this phase movement based on an analysis of the first eight sessions.

#### STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN TRAINING GROUPS

##### Stage 1

*Group Structure: Testing and Dependence.* Nine of the 11 training-group studies reviewed that deal with the development of group structure identify an initial stage characterized at least in part by testing and dependence, with the emphasis on the dependent aspect of this stage.

Herbert and Trist (1953), Bennis and Shepard (1956), Bradford and Mallinson (1958), and Bradford (1964a) describe the initial group phase as one characterized by the strong expression of dependency needs by the members toward the trainer, and attempts at group structuring to work out authority problems by the quick acceptance of and dependence on such structure and arbitrary norms. Thelen and Dickerman (1949) discuss initial stage establishment of a leadership hierarchy catering to the dependency needs of the members. Hearn (1957) sees group members making an attempt to structure the unknown and to find their position in the group in the earliest group stage. Here again, structure reflects the expression of dependency needs.

Miles (1953) describes a first stage characterized by *establishment of the situation* through interpersonal exploration and testing, while Semrad and Arsenian (1961) identify an initial phase during which group members "test" the central figure and "test" the situation.

Whitman (1964) describes a beginning stage in which the chief "vectors" are dependency and hostility. It would appear that Whitman has identified a first stage which combines the first two stages proposed in this article.

The two studies that do not yield an exact fit to the proposed scheme are those of Barron and Krulee (1948) and the Tulane Studies in Social Welfare (1957) which identify an initial period characterized by the emergence of leadership and orientation, respectively. Insofar as these authors see the authority area as

being of central concern and emphasize the orientation aspects of the first stage, there is overlap with the scheme proposed herein. Moreover, orientation as a first stage fits the hypothesized initial stage for task activities; perhaps the observation in the Tulane studies (1957) of a member orientation as an initial stage is better classified in the task-activity area.

*Task Activity: Orientation.* Bradford (1964b) identifies an initial stage of *learning how to learn* which is characterized by acceptance of the group's goal and orientation to the techniques to be used. Herbert and Trist (1953) label their initial stage as *discovery*, in which the members orient themselves to the consultant or trainer who serves an interpretive and educational role. Stock and Thelen (1958) discuss an initial stage characterized by little "work" and a variable amount of "emotionality," during which time the members are concerned with defining the directions the group will pursue.

As can be seen, initially interpersonal problems are dealt with via dependence, while task problems are met with task-orienting behavior (i.e., what is to be accomplished and how).

##### Stage 2

*Group Structure: Intragroup Conflict.* Ten of the 11 studies identify intragroup conflict as a second stage, while the remaining study (Whitman, 1964) describes an initial stage encompassing both dependence and hostility, in that order.

Barron and Krulee (1948) and Bradford (1964a) discuss a second stage characterized by group cleavage and conflict. Both studies identify the emergence of polarities during this stage—members favoring a more active, less defensive approach versus those who are more passive and defensive and seek "safety" via structure. Thelen and Dickerman (1949), Hearn (1957), the Tulane studies (1957), and Bradford and Mallinson (1958), as well, identify a similar polarization and resultant conflict, frustration, and disruption during the second stage.

Herbert and Trist (1953) describe a second stage characterized in part by resistance, while Miles (1953) identifies anarchic rebellion during this stage of *anxiety, threat, and resistance*. Semrad and Arsenian (1961)



identify rivalry for the position of central figure and emotional struggles in this period, while Bennis and Shepard (1956) see a similar power struggle in which counterdependents seek to usurp the leader, resulting in a conflict between counterdependents and dependents.

There appears to be general agreement that the dependency stage is followed by a stage of conflict between warring factions representing each side of the polarized issue: dependence versus independence, safe retreat into the familiar versus risky advance into the unfamiliar, defensiveness versus experimenting.

*Task Activity: Emotional Response to Task Demands.* Bradford (1964b) identifies a second stage in which individuals *learn how to give help* which requires that they remove blocks to learning about themselves, reduce anxiety, and express real reactions. Stock and Thelen (1958) see emotionality occurring in considerable excess of work during this period. The Tulane studies (1957) describe the second stage as one of experimental aggressiveness and hostility where individuals express themselves freely.

Thus, self-change and self-denial necessitated by the learning task is reacted to emotionally, as is the imposition of the group on the individual. Often the two (representative of the two realms) are difficult to separate.

### Stage 3

*Group Structure: Development of Group Cohesion.* All of the relevant T-group development studies see the stage of conflict and polarization as being followed by a stage characterized by the reduction of the conflict, resolution of the polarized issues, and establishment of group harmony in the place of disruption. It is a "patching-up" phase in which group norms and values emerge.

Hearn (1957), Miles (1953), and Thelen and Dickerman (1949) identify a third stage characterized by attempts to resolve conflict and the consequent development of group cohesion and mutual support. Semrad and Arsenian (1961) and the Tulane studies (1957) each describe two phases in their temporal sequences which would be included in Stage 3. In the case of the former, their first cohesion phase is characterized by group cohesion processes and their second by the development of

affection bonds; in the latter, the first cohesion stage features the emergence of structure, roles, and "we-feeling," while the second features increased group identification on a conscious level and vacillation in role acceptance. Whitman (1964) talks about a middle phase, following conflict, described as the development of a new group culture via the generation of norms and values peculiar to the group as an entity. Bradford and Mallinson (1958) describe Stage 3 as one of reorganization, in which reforming and repair take place and a flexible organization emerges.

Bradford (1964a) describes a third stage in which the group norm of "openness" emerges, and a fourth stage in which the group generates additional norms to deal with self-revelation and feedback. Furthermore, Bradford (1964b) identifies a third stage as one of developing a group climate of permissiveness, emotional support, and cohesiveness in which learning can take place. This description would appear to subserve both interpersonal and task realms.

Bennis and Shepard (1956) describe a third stage in which resolution of authority problems occurs, and a fourth stage characterized by smooth relations and enchantment as regards the interpersonal sphere of group functioning. Finally, Barron and Krulee (1948) identify the third stage as increasing member responsibility and changing faculty role in which a definite sense of structure and goal orientation emerge in the group.

*Task Activity: Discussing Oneself and Others.* Herbert and Trist (1953) identify a second stage labeled as *execution*, in which the group settles down to the description of a single basic problem and learns to accept "the examination of what was going on inside of itself as a regular part of the task . . ." Stock and Thelen (1958) describe a third task phase in which the group shows a new ability to express feelings constructively and creatively. While emotionality is still high, it now contributes to work.

While the social function of the third stage is to cause a unique and cohesive group structure to emerge, the task function is to attempt to use this new structure as a vehicle for discovering personal relations and emotions by communicating heretofore private feelings.

#### Stage 4

*Group Structure: Functional Role-Relatedness.* There is some tendency for T groupers, as there was for the therapy groupers, to emphasize the task aspects of the final stage, namely, the emergence of insight into the interpersonal process. In doing this, it is made implicit that the group as a social entity characterized by task-oriented role-relatedness makes the emergence of such insight possible by providing support and an opportunity for experimentation and discovery.

Bradford (1964a) sees the group becoming a work organization which provides member support, mutual acceptance, and has strong but flexible norms. Hearn (1957) discusses mutual acceptance and use of differences in the collaborative process during the fourth and fifth group stages, while Miles (1953) sees group structure as tending "to be functional and not loved for itself alone" as it was in the preceding stage. The support function is further emphasized by Miles when he says,

in groups where the interpersonal bonds are genuine and strong . . . members give one another a great deal of mutual evaluative support, which seems to be a prime requisite for successful behavior change [p. 94].

Semrad and Arsenian (1961) describe a final phase of productive collaboration, while Thelen and Dickerman (1949) identify the group as an effective social instrument during this period. Barron and Krulee (1948) see, as one group function occurring during the final two meetings, the sharing and refining of feelings through the group process.

Bennis and Shepard (1956) see the stage of group cohesion being followed by another period of conflict, in which the issue is intimate social relations versus aloofness. The final stage is then one of consensual validation in which group interpersonal problems are solved and the group is freed to function as a problem-solving instrument.

The Tulane studies (1957) describe the stage following the emergence of cohesion as one in which behavior roles become dynamic, that is, behavior is changed as a function of the acceptance of group structure. An additional stage is also identified in this study in which structure is institutionalized by the group and thus becomes rigid. Perhaps this

stage, not identified by other researchers, would most apply to groups with a long or indefinite group life.

The remaining T-group studies describe task development exclusively during the final group phase.

*Task Activity: Insight.* Bradford's (1964b) fourth stage is one in which members discover and utilize various methods of inquiry as ways of group development and individual growth, while, in his fifth and final stage, members learn how to internalize, generalize, and apply learnings to other situations. Herbert and Trist (1953) label their final stage as *evaluation*. Stock and Thelen (1958) describe the fourth and final stage as one characterized by a high degree of work in the absence of affect. The issues are dealt with in a less excited way.

The overall fit between stages of development postulated in this paper for application in all settings and those delineated by T groupers is highlighted in the fourfold scheme presented by Golembiewski (1962), based on his examination of some T-group development studies already reviewed in this paper. Golembiewski describes his stages as: (a) establishing the hierarchy; (b) conflict and frustration; (c) growth of group security and autonomy; (d) structuring in terms of problems facing the group rather than in terms of stereotypic role prescriptions.

#### STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN NATURAL AND LABORATORY GROUPS

Few studies or theoretical statements have concerned themselves with the developmental sequence in natural groups or laboratory groups.

#### Stage 1

*Group Structure: Testing and Dependence.* Modlin and Faris (1956), studying an interdisciplinary professional group, identify an initial stage of *structuralization*, in which members are dependent upon roles developed outside of the group, well-established traditions, and a fixed hierarchy of responsibility.

Schroder and Harvey (1963) describe an initial stage of *absolutistic dependency*, featuring the emergence of a status hierarchy and rigid norms which reduce ambiguity and foster dependence and submission.

Theodorson (1953) observed a tendency initially for only one leader to emerge and for group members to categorize one another so that they could define the situation and reduce ambiguity.

Schutz (1958)<sup>2</sup> sees the group dealing initially with problems of *inclusion*—to join or not to join; to commit oneself or not. The group concern, thus, is boundary problems, and the behavior of members is individually centered. This description is somewhat suggestive of testing.

*Task Activity: Orientation.* Bales and Strodtbeck (1951) and Bales (1953), using Bales' (1950) interaction-process categories, discovered that leaderless laboratory groups begin by placing major emphasis on problems of *orientation* (as reflected in Bales' categories: "asks for orientation" and "gives orientation"). This orientation serves to define the boundaries of the task (i.e., what is to be done) and the approach that is to be used in dealing with the task (i.e., how it is to be accomplished).

### Stage 2

*Group Structure: Intragroup Hostility.* Modlin and Faris (1956) describe *unrest* characterized by friction and disharmony as the second stage, while Schroder and Harvey (1963) identify a second stage of *negative independence* featuring rebellion, opposition, and conflict. In this stage the greater emphasis is on autonomy and individual rights. Theodorson (1953) observed more friction, disharmony, and animosity early in the group life than during later periods.

Schutz (1958) postulates a second stage in which the group deals with problems of *control*. This entails a leadership struggle in which individual members compete to establish their place in the hierarchy culminating in resolution.

In the task area, the stage of *emotional response to task demands* is not delineated, presumably due to the impersonal and non-threatening nature of the task in these settings. When the task does not deal with the

self at a penetrating level, extreme emotionality in the task area is not expected.

### Stage 3

*Group Structure: Development of Group Cohesion.* Modlin and Faris (1956) identify *change* as the third stage, characterized by the formation of the concept of the group as a functioning unit and the emergence of a team "dialect." Schroder and Harvey (1963) refer to Stage 3 as *conditional dependence*, featuring a group concern with integration and an emphasis on mutuality and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Theodorson (1953) observed the following group tendencies over time (i.e., tending to occur later as opposed to earlier in group development): (a) discovering what is common to the members and developing a within-group "parochialism"; (b) the growth of an interlocking network of friendship; (c) role interdependence; (d) mutual involvement and identification between members with a concomitant increase in harmony and solidarity; and (e) the establishment of group norms for dealing with such areas as discipline.

Schutz (1958) postulated a third stage wherein problems of *affection* are dealt with. Characteristic of this stage are emotional integration, pairing, and the resolution of intimacy problems.

*Task Activity: Expression of Opinions.* Bales and Strodtbeck (1951) and Bales (1953) observed that the orientation phase was followed by a period in which major emphasis was placed on problems of *evaluation* (as reflected by categories: "asks for opinion" and "gives opinion"). "Evaluation" as a descriptor of the exchange of opinions appears to be comparable to the third task stage in therapy- and training-group development which was heretofore labeled as "discussing oneself and others." Because the therapy and training tasks are personal ones, task opinions must involve self and others. When the task is an impersonal one, the content of task opinions varies accordingly.

### Stage 4

*Group Structure: Functional Role-Relatedness.* Modlin and Faris (1956) identify *integration* as the fourth and final stage in which structure is internalized and the group phi-

<sup>2</sup> The classification of Schutz's theory as one primarily descriptive of natural and laboratory groups is arbitrary. Some would argue that Schutz is working in the T-group tradition.

losophy becomes pragmatic, that is, the unified-group approach is applied to the task.

Schroder and Harvey (1963) postulate a final stage of *positive interdependence*, characterized by simultaneous autonomy and mutuality (i.e., the members can operate in any combination, or as a unit), and an emphasis on task achievement which is superordinate to social structure.

Theodorson (1953) sees the group as developing into a subculture over time, along with the development of member responsibility to the group.

Schutz (1958) does not identify a fourth stage; rather, he sees his three postulated stages in continually cycling over time.

*Task Activity: Emergence of Solution.* The third and final phase observed by Bales and Strodtbeck (1951) and Bales (1953) is one in which major emphasis is placed on problems of *control* (as reflected by categories: "asks for suggestion" and "gives suggestion"). The purpose of suggestions is to offer solutions to the task based on information gathered and evaluated in previous developmental periods. This then represents an analogue to final stages in therapy- and training-group task development where the emergence of insight yields solutions to personal problems.

These authors do not identify a period of task development in laboratory groups comparable to the second task stage in therapy- and training-group development which features the expression of emotional material. Again, because therapy and training tasks are personal ones, this will be reflected in the content of discussion, specifically by the manifestation of resistance prior to dealing with the personal task at a level of confidence and honesty. This task stage does not appear to be quite relevant in laboratory discussion groups, and its existence has not been reported by Bales and Strodtbeck (1951) or Bales (1953).

Philp and Dunphy (1959) have further substantiated the findings of Bales and Strodtbeck (1951) and Bales (1953) by observing the same phase-movement pattern in groups working on a different type of discussion problem.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Philp and Dunphy

(1959) present evidence which indicates that sex of the participants does not affect the pattern of phase movements.

Finally, Smith (1960) has observed that experimental groups show early concentration on matters not related to the task, and, only later in the development sequence, concentrate on task-relevant activities. Again, this finding suggests a strong similarity between task development in laboratory groups and in therapy and training groups, since, in the latter settings, constructive task-relevant activity appears only late in the developmental sequence.

#### DISCUSSION

The literature that has been reviewed can be criticized on a number of grounds. First, it may be pointed out that this literature cannot be considered truly representative of small-group developmental processes, since certain settings have been overrepresented, primarily the therapy-group setting, and others underrepresented, primarily the natural-group and laboratory-group settings. This shortcoming cannot be rectified within the existing literature; rather, it must serve as a stimulus for further research in the latter group settings. Furthermore, the inequality of setting representation necessitates caution in generalizing from this literature. Generalization must, perforce, be limited to the fact that what has been presented is mainly research dealing with sequential development in therapy groups.

A second source of criticism concerns the extent of experimental rigor characteristic of the majority of studies cited in this review. Most of the studies carried out in the therapy-group, training-group, and natural-group settings are based on the observation of single groups. Furthermore, these observations are qualitative rather than quantitative, and as such are subject to the biases of the observer, ordinarily the therapist or trainer. This is not to suggest that the therapy-group setting is not appropriate for studying group processes, but that the study of such processes should be more subject to methodological considerations. A good instance of the application of

ment, namely, orientation to evaluation to control. However, Talland (1955) failed to get this phase movement in therapy groups.

<sup>8</sup> As mentioned earlier, Psathas (1960), working with therapy groups, observed the same phase move-

such considerations is the study of Psathas (1960) conducted in the therapy-group setting. Psathas coded group protocols using Bales' (1950) scheme of interaction-process analysis. After satisfactory reliabilities were obtained, the data could be considered as highly quantitative and objective, and could then be subjected to statistical analysis. Approaches of equal rigor are recommended for other studies conducted in the therapy-group setting and other settings as well.

A final criticism concerns the description and control of independent variables. Since most of the studies in the therapy-, training-, and natural-group settings used a single group, the control and systematic manipulation of independent variables was impossible. In the absence of the manipulation of independent variables and the consequent discovery of their differential effects within studies, these effects can only be approximately discerned by comparing studies. However, many independent variables are likely to vary from study to study, for example, group composition, duration, etc., and little light will be shed on the effects of these variables on the developmental process. Therefore, no conclusions about the specific effects of independent variables on developmental phenomena will be drawn, and further work along these lines is encouraged.

In order to isolate those concepts common to the various studies reviewed (across settings), a developmental model was proposed. This model was aimed at serving a conceptual function as well as an integrative and organizational one. The model will be summarized here.

Groups initially concern themselves with orientation accomplished primarily through testing. Such testing serves to identify the boundaries of both interpersonal and task behaviors. Coincident with testing in the interpersonal realm is the establishment of dependency relationships with leaders, other group members, or preexisting standards. It may be said that orientation, testing, and dependence constitute the group process of *forming*.

The second point in the sequence is characterized by conflict and polarization around interpersonal issues, with concomitant emo-

tional responding in the task sphere. These behaviors serve as resistance to group influence and task requirements and may be labeled as *storming*.

Resistance is overcome in the third stage in which ingroup feeling and cohesiveness develop, new standards evolve, and new roles are adopted. In the task realm, intimate, personal opinions are expressed. Thus, we have the stage of *norming*.

Finally, the group attains the fourth and final stage in which interpersonal structure becomes the tool of task activities. Roles become flexible and functional, and group energy is channeled into the task. Structural issues have been resolved, and structure can now become supportive of task performance. This stage can be labeled as *performing*.

Although the model was largely induced from the literature, it would seem to withstand the test of common sense as well as being consistent with developmental theory and findings in other areas. It is not unreasonable to expect "newness" of the group to be greeted by orienting behavior and resultant unsureness and insecurity overcome through dependence on an authority figure, as proposed in the model. Such orienting responses and dependence on authority are characteristic of the infant during the first year (Ilg & Ames, 1955), the young child when first apprehending rules (Piaget, 1932), and the patient when first entering psychotherapy (Rotter, 1954).

After the "newness" of the group has "worn off," the members react to both the imposition of the group and the task emotionally and negatively, and pose a threat to further development. This proposal is mirrored by the rebelliousness of the young child following his "obedient" stages (Ilg & Ames, 1955; Levy, 1955).

Such emotionality, if overcome, is followed by a sense of "pulling together" in the group and being more sensitive to one another. This sensitivity to others is mirrored in the development of the child (Ilg & Ames, 1955; Piaget, 1932) and represents an essential aspect of the socialization process (Mead, 1934).

Finally, the group becomes a functional instrument for dealing with the task. Interper-

sonal problems lie in the group's "past," and its present can be devoted to realistic appraisal of and attempt at solutions to the task at hand. This interdependence and "marriage to reality" is characteristic of the "mature" human being (Erikson, 1950; Fromm, 1941) and the "mature" 9-year-old child (Ilg & Ames, 1955).<sup>4</sup>

The suggested stages of group development are highly visible in the literature reviewed. The fit is not perfect, however. Some of the studies identify some but not all of the suggested stages. In some of these cases, two of the suggested stages have been welded into one by the observer. For instance, Barton (1953) describes three stages; the first and second fit the first two conceptual stages closely, while Barton's third stage is descriptive of the third and fourth conceptual stages insofar as it is characterized by both the emergence of cohesiveness and the working through of problems. In other cases, one or more of the hypothesized stages have been clearly missing, and thus not recognized in the group or groups being observed. For instance, Powdermaker and Frank (1948) identify three stages that fit the first three conceptual stages fairly closely, but they do not identify any fourth stage. Perhaps cases like this can be accounted for on the basis of independent variables such as duration of group life.

A few studies identify more than four stages. Some of these additional stages represent a greater degree of differentiation than that of the model and are of less generality (i.e., highly specific to the independent conditions of the study). For instance, therapy-group studies with delinquents and dope addicts identify a stage prior to conceptual Stage 1 in which the antisocial group members must be won over to the point where they will take the therapy seriously.

Some of the studies identify a stage that is clearly not in the model. Parker (1958) describes a first stage of cohesive organization. This divergence from the model may reflect a different way of describing much the same

thing or may reflect an unusual set of independent conditions. Parker was observing a ward population of about 25, rather than a small weekly therapy group. It may be that the hypothesized first stage is somewhat inappropriate for larger, living-together groups.

While the suggested sequence appeared to hold up under widely varied conditions of group composition, duration of group life, and specific group task (i.e., the sequence held up across settings), it must be assumed that there is a finite range of conditions beyond which the sequence of development is altered, and that the studies reviewed did not exceed this assumed range to any great extent. Setting-specific differences and within-setting differences may affect temporal change as regards the specific content of the stages in the developmental sequence, the rate of progression through the sequence, or the order of the sequence itself. In the therapy-group setting, for instance, task information in the third stage is considerably more intimate than it is in the laboratory-group setting, and this stage may be attained at a later chronological time in therapy groups than in laboratory groups.

Certainly duration of group life would be expected to influence amount and rate of development. The laboratory groups, such as those run for a few hours by Bales and Strodtbeck (1951), followed essentially the same course of development as did therapy groups run for a period of a year. The relatively short life of the laboratory group imposes the requirement that the problem-solving stage be reached quickly, while no such imposition exists for the long-lived therapy group. Consequently, the former groups are forced to develop at a rapid rate. The possibility of such rapid development is aided by the impersonal and concrete nature of the laboratory task. Orientation is still required due to the newness of the task but is minimized by task rules, players' manuals, and the like, that help to orient the group members. Emotionality and resistance are major features of therapy-group development and represent personal and interpersonal impediments to group development and solution attainment as a function of the highly emotionally charged nature of the therapy-group task. The impersonal laboratory task features no such impedi-

<sup>4</sup> A more detailed model of individual development (similar to the group model proposed here), along with many citations of supporting literature, may be found in Harvey, Hunt, and Schroder (1961).

ments and consequently the stage of emotionality is absent. The exchange of relevant information is as necessary to the laboratory task as it is to the therapy task, but the information to be exchanged is limited in the laboratory task by the nature of the task and time considerations. The behavior of "norming" is common to both settings but not so salient in the laboratory where the situation is so task-oriented. Finally, the problem-solving or "performing" stage is an essential stage in both settings.

One would expect the laboratory group to spend relatively more time in the fourth stage relative to the first three stages because of the task orientation in the laboratory setting. In the therapy task, with its unavoidable deep interpersonal penetration, we would expect relatively equal time to be spent in each stage. This, however, can undoubtedly be further modified by group composition as well as by the duration of group life and specific nature of the laboratory task. Undoubtedly there is an interaction between setting and development such that the sequence proposed here will be altered.

Unfortunately, the above hypotheses cannot be substantiated with available data, though certain of the studies are suggestive of the explanations offered. The articles reviewed do not deal with rate of temporal change nor do they give sufficiently complete and detailed time data associated with each stage to make calculations of rate possible. Furthermore, they do not systematically describe their independent variables nor relate them to the developmental phenomena through systematic variation and the observation of cause and effect. The major task of systematically studying the effects of a variety of appropriate independent variables on development still remains. The value of the proposed model is that it represents a framework of generic temporal change within which the above explorations can be nested and which should lead to the derivation of many specific hypotheses relating independent variables to the sequence of temporal change. Such quantitative explorations will undoubtedly lead to refinements and perhaps major modifications of such a model.

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