

## Research in Brief



EDWIN H. AMEND, acting editor

### Tell Me I'm Effective!

**Key Finding:** In a group discussion, members getting the most positive evaluations from others will also tend to talk the most.

Extension people work with and in groups quite a bit. Part of the process groups go through involves evaluating themselves and others. Certainly these evaluations influence what goes on in the group. This study by Stephen C. Jones looks at what a part of that influence is.

### Study in Brief

A total of 192 unpaid volunteers were recruited for credit from introductory psychology courses. They were split into 48 groups of 4. There were 24 groups made up of males and 24 of females. Each group

listened to a tape-recorded report of a clinical case. They then participated in group discussions and made evaluations of each other's comments.

Each person was placed so he couldn't see the others in his group. Each subject made evaluations of other subjects by throwing a switch to light a green light for positive evaluation and a red light for negative evaluation. Each had a panel before him on which the lights could be seen, to show him what the positive or negative evaluations had been.

Actual evaluations via the lights were recorded but not passed on to the participants. Instead, the lights were manipulated by the researcher to create three conditions: (1) one member (high member) receiving 80 percent positive evalu-

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ations (green lights), (2) two (medium members) receiving 50 percent positive evaluations, and (3) one (low member) receiving 20 percent positive evaluations.

In addition, knowledge of how others were evaluating was experimentally varied. In 16 groups, each member's panel showed him the green and red lights flashed to him supposedly from the other 3 members. In 16 other groups, each member saw on the board how the 3 other members were supposedly evaluated, but had no idea of how they themselves were evaluated by others. Finally, 16 groups got complete feedback—how both they and their peers were supposedly being evaluated.

After the discussions, each member ranked the entire group as to their preference for one member to be a leader for the next discussion. They also ranked everyone on competence in the discussion just concluded. Then they evaluated their own insight into human nature, and how much they'd like to have further association with the other group members.

### Findings

The manipulated 80 percent positive evaluation members tended to make the most comments during the case report discussions. *But*, those same members tended to get less *actual* positive feedback from the medium members than the medium member gave the 20 percent positive evaluation members.

The researcher discarded several possible explanations. One is the notion of equity and fair play—and that the medium members were attempting to encourage more comments from the low member who was participating very little. Another was the idea that a positive evaluation rewards the response of talking and increases its probability of occurrence. At the same time, a negative evaluation punishes the talking response and decreases the probability of its occurrence. Neither of these explanations seemed feasible to the researcher in this instance.

His tentative explanation was that maybe the low member who tends to talk less saves his talking for only his most astute comments—he only talks when he's very sure that what he's going to say is important—in that he wants to gain acceptance from his peers.

Another major finding concerned the ratings the members made after the discussions were over. Certainly an individual's evaluations of his peers were influenced by the evaluations he received from them as well as by the evaluations he observed the group sending to each member.

In this experiment, high members wanted further association with the rest of the group to a much greater extent than did low members. The researcher calls this a "reciprocation effect"—you like me and I'll like you.

A "conformity effect" also was evident—high members (remember

the green light responses they got to make them high members were manipulated by the researcher) were to some extent *actually* rated more highly by medium members than were low members. Thus, if I see the group rating you more highly, I'll tend to rate you that way too. The group provides me with an anchor point for my own opinion.

#### Some Implications for Extension

One thing to remember from this research is that people's perception of whether others like them can affect how they operate in a group. Positive evaluation from several sources seems to help us participate more actively in a group—and to help us evaluate our performance more highly. An Extension staff member hoping to help a young person or an adult to develop in leadership abilities and behaviors might keep this in mind.

Another thing to remember is that there are many forces working within a group to set up a hierarchy—reciprocation and conformity were identified in this study. It may take some deliberate opposing of these two tendencies for anyone to keep a group hierarchy from setting up very early in the life of a group. Or, if you want a group to form such a hierarchy, these two tendencies can be played on to encourage it.

Stephen C. Jones, "Some Effects of Interpersonal Evaluations on Group Processes and Social Perception," *Sociometry*, XXXI (June, 1968), 150-61. Prepared by: Miss Ketty Mangaard, Edwin H. Amend, and Mason E. Miller.

#### Group Performance: Work Together or Alone?

There's a fair amount of research concerning whether it's best to have people work independently or interdependently. You can find research results favoring either side. This points out how complex the comparison is—and warns the reader of such research to think through what the research is all about before trying to apply the results.

This study by Julian and Perry is a case in point.

#### Study in Brief

A class of 157 sophomore and junior psychology students was divided into 37 teams of 4 or 5 each. Their task . . . for each individual on each team to work a set of statistics problems, come up with hypotheses accounting for the results, and design a study to test one or more of their hypotheses.

Note again that each individual had to submit a paper. Thus, all groups were the same on this score. The difference came in the way the teams and individuals were rewarded—in this case, how they were graded—for their work.

1. In one group of teams, each person's grade was based strictly on how well he had done on his paper.
2. In another group, teams competed with one another. Grades were given on the basis of a curve, with the groups producing the best papers getting A's for all their members, those

next getting B's, and so on.

3. The third group of teams were graded on the basis of the number of points out of the total possible that the team earned. Here everyone's paper in a given group contributed to the final grade for each individual in that group. There were no comparisons or competition across teams.

Although the authors never make it clear, there apparently was plenty of opportunity for the team members to work together if they so desired. What the authors were interested in was: (1) which group would produce the most and the highest quality work and (2) how the members of the various groups would feel about their performances as teams.

#### Findings

1. The "independent" teams, where each individual was graded on the basis of his own paper, produced the most material in relation to the exercise, and the highest quality—as evaluated by two judges.
2. This same group started with the highest task orientation among its members, but decreased over the two hours of the experiment. The other two groups started lower, but by the end of the two hours, they both had increased in their task orientation and were now higher than the first group. Thus, had the experiment run

longer, there is the possibility that the latter two groups would have done even better on the task than did the first group. However, this is conjecture.

3. On social-emotional tone—the warmth of the group, its happiness, and its activity—the latter two groups where members were in some way dependent on others as to their grade tended to start higher and increase, whereas the group where individuals received their own grades tended to start lower and decrease. Thus, the groups "happiest" with themselves were those with some degree of interdependence on each other for grades.

#### Implications

To our way of thinking, the authors don't do much to help us understand the "why" of these results. However, we can make some guesses about some of the critical conditions for you to consider in seeking ways and situations to apply these results.

One critical condition is the type of task . . . production of a paper by *each individual* essentially in teams where people were strangers to each other at the onset. Another is the time period . . . two hours.

Under these conditions, if you want quantity and quality of production, it looks as if the individual rewarding system of every man for himself works the best.

But where the task may go longer than that, or where social-emotional tone of the group is important, then you might think about using one or both of the other rewarding systems. These are systems in which people are to some degree interdependent—their success at the task (measured here as grade) depends on how well the group does.

We haven't found it easy to come up with examples using these results. Maybe you can. But we did feel that both 4-H and agriculture in Cooperative Extension work might find food for thought in the results.

For example, could you run competitions among the various groups of corn growers in your area and reward the individuals and groups in some ways comparable to those used by these researchers? What would likely be the results? Would rewarding corn growers individually for production records make the most sense? Or could some kind of group-rewarding system help raise production and also get farmers working together better than a strictly individual-reward system?

Are there 4-H situations where you can break down a large group and have the individuals cooperating as small groups, but competing against other small groups? What are the consequences of individual reward on the groups in 4-H youth programs? How can you balance it all out to get the best learning and productivity for both the individual and the group?

At least these research results

offer some intriguing ideas to try.

James W. Julian and Franklyn A. Perry, "Cooperation Contrasted with Intra-Group and Inter-Group Competition," *Sociometry*, XXX (March, 1967), 79-90. Prepared by: Leslie J. Rollins, John G. Elliott, and Mason E. Miller.

### Leadership Differences— Directive Vs. Nondirective

How should a leader act in a group—be active answering questions, leading the discussion? Or be more passive and let the group discover and develop its own ways of proceeding? This study by Burke found that more tension is evident in the more passively led group.

#### Study in Brief

Burke randomly selected 150 college freshmen from a private male college and had them work in 23 discussion groups meeting 3 times in 3 weeks. Each week they discussed a different topic pertaining to college life. All groups had the same discussion leader.

Burke looked at how many questions the group asked in relation to how many answers the leader provided. He also tried to measure how much tension, antagonism, and absenteeism there was in each group.

He led the groups in two different styles: directive and nondirective. For directive leadership style, the leader actively tried to meet and fulfill the expectations of the members for him as a leader, as he saw those expectations. He wasn't, on the other hand, "rigid." He an-

swered questions, provided subtopics for discussion, gave opinions on matters, and guided the discussion and clarified points.

For the nondirective leadership style, he was passive—answered questions with questions, provided no subtopics for discussion, and neither summarized nor drew conclusions from the discussion.

Burke looked at a number of possible relationships as part of his study, but the finding that particularly interests us is the one showing that the nondirectively led groups showed more disruptive behavior—particularly tension, and some more aggression.

Burke's explanation for the findings is interesting also. He says groups have to do at least two things: (1) decide on subgoals, decide what activity is relevant to reach the goal and control activity so the goal is reached and (2) set up an authority structure so that the problems listed in Number 1 can be solved.

When a leader is present in a group, the group generally expects him to be part of, and to set up, the authority structure for the group. The directive leader fulfills these expectations. And the group can go on to the problems of subgoals, activities, and control. Thus, at least for groups meeting like those of Burke's did, there is less antagonism evidenced in the directly led groups.

When the leader is nondirective, the group itself has to deal not only with subgoals, activities, and control, but it also has to struggle

with the authority structure—how they're going to go about making decisions, who's going to decide what subgoals, activities, and control, and under what conditions. And that causes tension and aggression in the group, at least in the short-term groups Burke worked with.

### Implications

More and more Extension people are becoming familiar with and using the techniques of nondirective leadership. This study shows what many of them already have experienced—the fact that a leader operating in this manner has to expect some antagonism to be present, at least at first.

However, as Extension people who are familiar with sensitivity training have experienced, tension over the authority issue is dealt with early and usually resolved enough so that the group can get on with its other business. Part of the advantage of the sensitivity group as a learning device is that people are generally forced to deal with the problem of setting up the authority structure—instead of being allowed to take it for granted or have it imposed on them by another person.

Another implication: This study supports the idea that to designate particular types of behavior as "leadership behavior" may be as absurd as to designate a particular personality as a "leadership trait." It's clear from this research, the normative expectations of the group

members about behaviors a leader should perform are important. It's only when a group expects certain behaviors as to what the leader is "supposed" to be doing that they become uncertain when the leader doesn't do those things. Thus, over time, a leader can build expectations into groups as to what leaders "do." When he starts such a change, then he must expect uncertainty. But things should work out eventually.

For example, as we've moved to new audiences and broader involvement, Extension people have had to take less of a direct leadership role with the groups in their programs. They have tried to lessen their involvement in groups they now meet with, as well as downplay the idea that they have to be at every stage of work with new groups.

This research would say that agents in this situation could expect to have considerably more antagonism directed toward them and their program as they become or are more nondirective and as they try to shift responsibility for group activities and decisions from themselves to the group as a whole.

Other experience and research on sensitivity groups would say that if you can weather this kind of trouble, eventually the group will take over and set its own ground rules and proceed to the task at hand of making decisions and accomplishing things. From an educator's viewpoint, the development of people is a major goal. Getting an entire group involved in setting rules, making decisions, etc., is one effective

way that groups can be used to develop people.

Peter J. Burke, "Authority Relations and Disruptive Behavior in Small Discussion Groups," *Sociometry*, XXIX (September, 1966), 237-50. Prepared by: Leslie J. Rollins, John G. Elliott, and Mason E. Miller.

### Abstracts from ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education<sup>1</sup>

AC 005 911JI

*University-Industry Television, Radio and Telephone Links.* Albert J. Morris. *Educational Broadcasting Review*, IV (February, 1969), 44-52.

In this article on electronic means of off-campus study, an overview is presented of advances during the 1960s in linking universities with each other and with industry. Consideration is given to cost effectiveness, contact between students and their instructors, and the problems and potential of such approaches as "blackboard by wire," slow-scan television, and cable systems.

AC 006 529 E

*Selected Enrollment Statistics Relating to Continuing Education.* Albany, New York: State University of New York, Office for Continuing Education.

Provides statistical information on the development of continuing education since 1965. Although there is an increase in the number of part-time students at most campuses each year, in many instances eve-

ning credit courses aren't offered in a pattern that will allow enrollees to make consistent progress toward an undergraduate degree. The first survey of noncredit programing in continuing education conducted in July, 1968, for the 1967-68 academic year shows that 121,563 persons attended 1,786 short courses, institutes, and seminars. A similar study completed in July, 1969, indicates that 138,621 persons were enrolled in 2,439 short courses, institutes, and seminars offered during the 1968-69 academic year.

AC 006 560 E

*Instructional Systems for Extramural Courses.* Jack C. Everly. Paper presented at the Adult Education Research Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 27-28, 1970.

A review of evaluations of two instructional systems now in use by faculty of the College of Agriculture, University of Illinois, in extramural teaching. The systems are: (1) "Univex Net," which transmits audio and visual signals via telephone lines from one campus class-

room to another classroom located somewhere else in the state and (2) self-teaching carrel units, which provide for independent study. A combination of the self-teaching and the Univex system is also evaluated. The evaluations are learner-oriented. Attitude was measured with the Illinois Course Evaluation Questionnaire. Actual performance was measured by grades and specific criteria for success in obtaining educational objectives.

#### Footnote

1. "AC" numbered documents aren't available through ERIC Document Reproduction Service. For "AC" documents, contact the author. "ED" documents are available by writing to EDRS, the National Cash Register Company, 4936 Fairmont Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland 20014. Give "ED" number, whether you want microfiche or hard copy, and number of copies desired. Payment must accompany orders under \$5. Add a handling charge of 50 cents to all orders, and include applicable state sales tax or submit tax-exemption certificate.