

REALITY COMMUNICATION

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THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Every day in offices, classes, hallways, stores and meetings, human beings enter into many interpersonal relationships. Despite the fact that many interpersonal relationships exist, honest and sincere communications do not always occur. Since communications usually takes place through both verbal and non-verbal signals, it is important that people become proficient in recognizing and in expressing their feelings. The better an individual becomes in describing and expressing his own feelings, the more likely he will be able to understand the feelings of others. For the purposes of this report, this two-way process of expressing and accepting human feelings, both verbally and non-verbally, is called reality communication.

Statement of the Problem

During the last four decades, public school teachers, counselors, and administrators have expressed a great need to communicate. In an effort to fulfill this need, there has been much discussion of the topic, individual counseling sessions, large information giving groups, and a variety of homeroom periods. But, relatively little has been done to make possible or even to encourage a situation in which a real and honest act of communication can develop.

There are three purposes of this report: (1) to define reality communication and compare it to current counseling theories and techniques; (2) to present the need for a reality communications program; and (3) to suggest methods to encourage

communication among teachers, administrators, and students.

Definition of Terms

Reality. The meaning of reality is a product of one's background and of his experiences. Therefore, the definitions of reality are as varied as the people who write them.

For the purposes of this report, reality is one's perception of what is honest, genuine, sincere, true, and real. Reality is opposed to idealistic concepts; it is related to an individual's understanding of a situation; it is not a reaction to the situation itself.

Communication. Communication is an interaction between two or more people, verbal or nonverbal regarding either signals. A two way process of both giving and receiving is involved in the act of communication. After the signals are received, if communication has occurred, the receiver will have a reaction. Communication is more than "hearing", it is also responding to the expressed signal although the reaction may be covert.

Reality Communication. Reality communication is an accurate transmission and reception of an individual's feelings or perception when two or more individuals pointedly attend to the needs, ideas, thoughts, and feelings that are expressed.

Reality communication or really communicating is a process rather than a product.

Reality communication is not a matter of agreement or disagreement; it concerns a comprehension of the thoughts and

feelings that are being expressed. Reality communication may take place in individual counseling as well as in group situations. The emphasis in this report was on the group aspect.

Reality Therapy. Reality therapy is a psychiatric approach which differs from the psychoanalytic approach in that reality therapy usually deals with the here and now rather than the past. But, reality therapy is treatment that is suitable to use with both groups and individuals who have psychiatric problems.

According to Glasser, the underlying theory in reality therapy assumes that everyone has two psychological needs; the need to love and to be loved, and the need to feel achievement and selfworth both toward self and toward others. In essence, reality therapy encourages an individual to fulfill his needs by doing what is realistic, responsible, and right.¹

Psychoanalysis Theory. The theory of psychoanalysis that was developed by Freud, attributes mental disorders to repressed factors in the unconscious.² Freud used psychoanalysis as a special technique to investigate human motives.³ Through free association and dream analysis, the patient is encouraged to overcome resistance and to verbalize all the conflicting material

¹William Glasser. Reality Therapy. (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 2.

²Howard Warren (ed.) Dictionary of Psychology (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 216.

³Horace English and Ava English, A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms. (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958), p. 419.

that has been repressed in the unconscious.⁴

Client-Centered Theory. The client-centered theory is also known as nondirective, or self theory. Nondirective methods permit the client to reach his own solutions with a maximum amount of freedom.⁵ For the self theorists, the basic human need is the preservation and enhancement of the self. The relationship that is established between the counselor and the counselee is extremely important.

Behavior Theory. Behavior theory is also known as association learning. The fundamental concept of the behavior theory is that any characteristic of personality is learned and that the process by which this characteristic was learned can be examined.⁶ Behavior is mainly concerned with stimulus-response, conditioning, and motivation.

Trait-Factor Theory. Trait-factor theory is also known as trait-type theory. In this theory a person's personality is described by certain traits which he displays; these traits are then classified under a given type. According to Lazarus, this theory deemphasized the role of external circumstances in determining behavior.⁷

⁴Philip Harriman, Dictionary of Psychology (New York: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1947), p. 2731.

⁵Frederick Thorne, "Critique of Recent Developments in Personality Counseling Theory," Journal of Clinical Psychology, XIII, 1957, 234-244.

⁶Richard Lazarus, Adjustment and Personality (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, Inc., 1961), p. 161.

⁷Ibid., p. 74.

Phenomenology Theory. The phenomenology theory states that human knowledge is limited to experience.⁸ Changing behavior or feelings is a function of reorganizing perceptions. When perception changes behavior changes.

⁸Warren, op. cit., p. 199.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reality Communication

Being able to communicate one's true inner feelings and having these same feelings perceived by another person is reality communication. The response that is returned to the speaker will indicate whether communication has really taken place. Two questions which can be asked to determine if communication has taken place are: "What did you hear me say?" or "What do you think I said?"

Reality communication means that a person or group of persons actually, honestly, and sincerely know how another person is feeling; they feel with him. Together they express and receive one another's joys, sorrows, rewards, disappointments, moods, emotions, and feelings. They accept one another for all that they are and all that they are not. They no longer seem to be far away from one another; they are actually drawn inside of one another by this experience of communication. Reality communication is more than a mere exchange of words, thoughts, and ideas; it is a certain sensitivity and awareness of another's feelings about words, thoughts, and ideas that makes the communication real and meaningful.

Vaughan described this special relationship of reality communication as an encounter. He stated that in the encounter the individuals no longer remain "he" but that they become "thou". They become special beings to one another.¹

¹Richard Vaughan, "Existentialism in Counseling: The Religious View" Personnel and Guidance Journal, February 1965, p. 553-557.

In reality communication, people no longer remain "out there" to be used by one another. Through their communication, they become a part of one another's reality. This togetherness produces a certain bond that no subject-object socially polite relationship can ever produce. Reality communication is not agreeing or disagreeing; it is accepting.

Kenny has summarized some thoughts to aid reality communications in groups. The following ideas are suggestions that have been taken, in part, from his summary.²

Ways to encourage reality communication:

1. Speak only for yourself
2. Listen attentively
3. Paraphrase what you hear; you may not have heard what actually was said
4. Ask questions that are directly relevant to what was said
5. Show that you accept strong feelings, say "This means a lot to you, doesn't it?"
6. Explain why you feel strongly about an issue
7. Take responsibility for your own feelings, say "I'm getting angry" not "You're making me angry."
8. Make sure that you understand a person's comment before you agree or disagree.

Ways to discourage reality communication:

1. Ignore any seriously intended contributions

²Kevin Kenny, "Communication Notebook" (St. Louis: Young Adult Communication Center #1, 1967) (mimeographed).

2. Change the subject without an explanation
3. Interpret another person's behavior, "You say that because you're prejudiced."
4. Tell others what they should do (without their asking for advice.)
5. Praise another person for agreeing with you (It's hard to disagree then!)
6. Make another person feel ashamed of his opinions

Reality Therapy

For Glasser, the prima goal of reality therapy is to lead all patients toward reality, toward dealing successfully with the tangible and intangible aspects of the real world.³

Helping a patient to fulfill the two primary psychological needs is the basis of reality therapy. The needs are (1) the need to love and be loved and (2) the need to feel worthwhile to himself and to others.⁴

Reality therapists believe that all patients, no matter what behavior they choose, deny the reality of the world around them in an unsuccessful effort to fulfill their needs. Therapy will be successful when the patient is responsible, is able to face reality, and is able to fulfill his needs.

Reality therapists do not accept the term mental illness.

³William Glasser, Reality Therapy (New York: Harper and Row, Publisher, 1965), p. 6.

⁴William Glasser, "Reality Therapy and Counseling" cited by Carlton Beck, Guidelines for Guidance (Debuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1966), p. 378.

They advocate removing all common psychiatric labels from patients, and they believe that people are either responsible or irresponsible in their behavior.

Glasser believes that an irresponsible person is unable to fulfill his needs. He also stated that the task of the reality therapist is to help the patient either to learn or to re-learn how to fulfill his basic needs in a responsible and realistic way. Once these needs are met the person will no longer be irresponsible. Dr. Glasser expressed this general point of view by saying, "People do not act irresponsibly because they are ill; they are ill because they act irresponsibly."⁵

In reality therapy there is one general concern; the individual should learn to do what is realistic, responsible, and right. Therefore, he will grow in maturity, in conscientiousness, and in responsibility.⁶ Critics of reality therapy contend that an ethical issue of what is right and what is wrong is not always well defined.⁷

Psychoanalytic Theory

According to psychoanalysts, mental illness does exist and personality can be understood by probing into the patient's past life by using free word association and by dream analysis. Once the psychoanalyst uncovers the psychological motives that cause a patient's behavior, and once the patient clearly understands

⁵Glasser, op. cit., p. 15.

⁶Ibid., p. 14.

⁷Ibid., p. 12.

these motives, then he can use his understanding to change his attitudes and behavior. One of the main concepts of the psychoanalytic theory is that man's behavior is actually dominated by hidden or unconscious motives and emotions.⁸

Sigmund Freud is known as the father of psychoanalytic beliefs and techniques. He labeled the structures of the personality into three mental systems: id, ego, and superego. Each of these mental systems has its own characteristics, but all of the systems are interrelated to produce an organized system. Freud used the term transference to describe a reproduction of emotions relating to repressed experiences. The patient would transfer to the therapist, attitudes that he held toward people who were involved with the beginning of his problem.⁹

Personal dynamics as Freud described the phenomenon, refers to the energy of the mental system. This energy can be transformed in various ways during life. Concepts such as instinct, cathexis, pleasure principle, consciousness are all a part of personality dynamics.¹⁰

For Freud, the basic needs that every person must have fulfilled are sex and aggression.

It is definitely a personal choice whether one accepts all or part of Freud's theory of personality, but it would be unfair

⁸Richard Lazarus, Adjustment and Personality (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., Inc., 1961), p. 138.

⁹William Glasser, op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁰Lazarus, op. cit., p. 139.

to ignore the genius of his work. The impact of Freud's ideas upon other psychological theories has been enormous. The trait-type, the behavioral, and the client-centered theories all contain elements of Freud's theory. For example, Freud described a number of types including the oral and the anal character. The reward principle as stated by Freud is analogous to the principle of reinforcement in learning theory. Freud's interest in the thought processes and in the contents of the mind are relevant to the self theory.¹¹

Steffler noted that in psychoanalysis central importance is given to sexual drives, aggression, and the significance of biological needs.¹²

The psychoanalytic theory has often been criticized because many therapists have spent years delving into a patient's past life to uncover his unconscious motives for his attitudes and for his behavior. Most patients can not afford the time or the money that is involved for psychoanalysis.

Client-Centered Theory

The client centered theory is also known as nondirective, or self theory. Carl Rogers is probably the best known of the self theorists, but Snygg and Combs also have views that are similar to those of Rogers. However, the organization of the self theory did not originate with these men. William James

¹¹Lazarus, op. cit., p. 137.

¹²Buford Steffler, Theories of Counseling (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 92.

wrote a discussion of the self in 1890.¹³

Hall and Lindzey have pointed out that the concept of the self has two meanings: (1) self as an object, (2) self as a process.¹⁴

According to Rogers, there is one basic motive to actualize, maintain, and enhance the self. However, as a result of maturation and learning the self concept can change. Rogers describes self development as a result of the organism's interaction with its environment as it is perceived. Subjective judgment rather than objective reality determines how an individual will respond.¹⁵ Experiences which are inconsistent with the self concept may be threatening and may be rejected, denied, or distorted.¹⁶

Client-centered therapy is used with individuals who are motivated to understand and change themselves. Nondirective methods permit the client to reach his own solutions with maximum freedom.¹⁷

During a client-centered counseling session the counselor reflects the client's comments by giving support at certain points. After a client starts to express himself he may take

¹³Lazarus, op. cit., p. 124.

¹⁴C. S. Hall and G. Lindzey. Theories of Personality. (New York: Wiley, 1957).

¹⁵C. R. Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), p. 484.

¹⁶C. H. Patterson, "The Self in Recent Rogerian Theory" Journal of Individual Psychology, Vol. 17, May 1961, p. 5-11.

¹⁷Frederick Thorne, "Critique of Recent Developments in Personality Counseling Theory," Journal of Clinical Psychology, XIII, 1957, p. 234-244.

the initiative and responsibility to solve his own problems. If the client has a negative self regard, he is more likely to change his behavior than if he has positive self regard.

Thorne stated that in his experiences, the nondirective approach was unsuccessful with clients who are satisfied with themselves because they do not see anything wrong with themselves and they do not want to change. Thorne also expressed the belief that negative self regarding attitudes tend to motivate the client to face his problems and work out his own solutions with a minimum amount of help from the therapist.¹⁸

Vittenson criticized the reflective techniques that Rogers uses in counseling. She feels that it is not natural to reflect to a client's comments. She believes that the reflective techniques are phony and too time consuming. Dr. Vittenson has had better results with the directive method. But, she does feel that the nondirective method reinforces positive self regard.

While a number of persons have contributed to the client-centered theory, including Rogers, Raimy, Snygg and Combs, there have been no stated alternatives or variations of it. Among the client-centered writers, some of their terminology differs, but the basic concepts are the same.¹⁹

Behavior Theory

The fundamental concept of the behavior theory is that

¹⁸Ibid., p. 335.

¹⁹Patterson, op. cit.

any characteristic of personality is learned and that one can profitably examine the specific details of the learning process to answer the question of how any characteristic came into being.²⁰

Lazarus described behavioral theory, also known as association learning, as the development of personality that takes place in accordance with the laws of learning.²¹

Dollard and Miller have stated four fundamental factors in learning: drive (motivation), cue (stimulus), response (action), and reinforcement (reward).²² They have also attempted to apply behavior approaches of learning to the understanding of human personality development and change.²³

Clark Hull has done much work on behavior theory; his work is primarily based on stimulus (S) and response (R) concepts with the use of Pavlov's conditioning and the motivational concepts of Thorndike's reinforcement principle.²⁴

There is no single behavior approach or S-R formulation of behavior. Many theories have developed from the theories of Watson, Pavlov, and Thorndike. However, all of the present behavior theories stress the learning processes and the objective study of these processes.

²⁰Lazarus, op. cit., p. 101.

²¹Ibid., p. 75.

²²J. Dollard, and N. E. Miller. Personality and Psychotherapy. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950.

²³Steffler, op. cit., p. 141.

²⁴Ibid., p. 14.

In considering behavior products, Weitz stressed that all products are related to all previous behavior products and that each projects its energy into the future. It is this flow of energy which must be directed.²⁵

Trait-Factor Theory

Trait-factor theory is also known as the trait and type theory. In this theory a person's personality is described by traits; these traits are classified by a given type.²⁶

Trait theory is most commonly used in making vocational choices. Williamson stated that when the trait-factor theory is used in vocational counseling the counselee receives a highly personalized and individualized assistance in his efforts to discover his own capabilities.²⁷

Lazarus maintained that the trait theory stresses the examination of stable attributes within the person and deemphasizes the role of external circumstances in determining behavior.²⁸

Nunnally feels that a strength of the trait factor theory is the extent to which two traits are correlated. Two traits can vary together so that a person who has a high degree of one trait is likely to have a high degree of the other trait also.²⁹

²⁵Henry Weitz, Behavior Change Through Guidance (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 43.

²⁶Lazarus, op. cit., p. 74.

²⁷Steffler, op. cit., p. 212.

²⁸Lazarus, op. cit., p. 74.

²⁹Jum Nunnally, Educational Measurement and Evaluation (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1964), p. 59.

Lazarus criticized the trait-type theory for forcing great varieties of behavior into a few limited categories.³⁰

Phenomenology Theory

According to Patterson, phenomenology has provided a widely accepted model for guidance theory.³¹

Phenomenologists maintain that the important determinant of behavior is not the stimulus object itself, but rather the organism's apprehension of it.³²

Asch pointed out that the way in which a person perceives events determines how he acts.³³

Koffka suggested that the representation of the objects of the world, rather than the physical object itself, serves as a stimulus.³⁴

Murray maintained that the environment as it is apprehended by the individual determines behavior. Stimulus is based on a personal frame of reference. The stimulus is relevant to behavior because of its effect conceived by the individual; environment is apprehended as relevant or irrelevant and as facilitating or obstructing important needs.³⁵

³⁰Lazarus, op. cit., p. 72.

³¹Patterson, op. cit., p. 6.

³²Lazarus, op. cit., p. 104.

³³Asch, S. E. Social Psychology (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1952), p. 68.

³⁴K. Koffka. Principles of Gestalt Psychology. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1935).

³⁵H. A. Murray, Explorations in Personality. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 80.

Lewin described the situation to which persons respond in terms of its phenomenal impact rather than in terms of its objective character. The stimulus is a complex field that includes a person's needs, other features of his personality structure, the perceived potentialities to action available to him, and all the recognized consequences of this possibilities. This total psychological environment is the central construct of Lewin's system called "life space".³⁶

Lewin distinguished the life space, or psychological environment, of the person from features of the objective environment to which the individual does not directly respond. Lewin's theoretical system is a dynamic one because life space is continually changing rather than static. The system is suitable when dealing with descriptions of the momentary interchanges between an individual and his environment; it is less suitable for dealing with personality, stability, and consistency in predicting future events.³⁷

Rogers emphasized that every individual exists in a continually changing world of experiences of which changing world of experiences of which he is the center.³⁸ He defined experience to mean all that goes on within the organism that might reach consciousness, although only a part of the organism's

³⁶K. A. Lewin, Principles of Topological Psychology. Translated by F. Heider and Grace Heider. (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1936).

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Rogers, op. cit., p. 483.

experiences are ever conscious at any given time. Consciousness is the symbolization, not necessarily the verbal symbolization, of experience. This symbolic representation of experience may have varying degrees of vividness and clarity; it may be in the central focus of awareness as figure or in the background of awareness as ground.³⁹

Rogers emphasized that only the individual himself can completely and genuinely understand his world of experience. Even if an individual is observed, his reactions to various stimuli are measured, and he has recorded his thoughts and reactions on psychometric tests, but his experience and perception of a given situation can never be known in full and vivid detail.⁴⁰

³⁹Steffler, op. cit., p. 38.

⁴⁰Ibid.

REALITY COMMUNICATION COMPARED TO CURRENT
COUNSELING THEORY AND TECHNIQUES

Reality Communication Compared to Current Counseling Theories

Reality Communication/Reality Therapy. Reality therapy is a psychiatric treatment for people with psychological problems. While reality communication may be therapeutic, it is not therapy. However, it is quite obvious that for successful reality therapy to occur, reality communications must occur.

Reality therapy and reality communication are similar in that both result in helping individuals feel worthwhile. We humans always need someone whom we feel really cares about us and accepts us as worthwhile. It is through our relationships with a person or a group of persons that we gain human involvement, closeness, psychological warmth and emotional ties which are necessary to really communicate and to fulfill our needs.

Both reality communication and reality therapy can occur in either a 1:1 ratio or in a group situation. The individuals must be free, honest, sincere and open with one another.

In reality therapy the basic needs are to love and be loved and to feel worthwhile to self and to others. In reality communication it is not only necessary for an individual to know his needs, but he must know how he feels about his needs. Being able to interpret and to verbalize one's feelings is of major importance in reality communication. In reality therapy one's action is more important than his feelings about the action.

In reality therapy there is usually a visible change in the person's behavior. In reality communication there may be a

visible change in behavior, but the change is more likely to be an internal feeling of understanding.

Reality Communication/Psychoanalytic Theory. In reality communication all of the members must be free, open, honest, and sincere with one another. If reality communication occurs in a group, the coordinator is a participating member; he is not a therapist.

In psychoanalysis the therapist probes into the client's past. He strives to remain removed from the client's feelings; he remains "out there". Transference occurs when the patient projects all of his feelings and hostile attitudes concerning authority figures to the therapist. The patient reveals all of his thoughts and feelings to the therapist, but the therapist does not reveal his feelings to the patient.

In reality communication all of the members are honest and open with one another; there are no authority figures within the group. The object of reality communication is to deal with the here and now. An honest effort is made by the members to communicate their personal feelings. No efforts are made to delve into the past experiences of a person or to discuss past anxieties. In both reality communication and psychoanalysis the relationship of the members involved is important, but in a different way. Psychoanalysis does not occur in a group situation. A 1:1 relationship is necessary so that transference can be made possible.

In psychoanalysis the patient may have an appointment with the therapist one hour a day, five days a week; the analysis may continue for several years. As a result, psychoanalysis is a

very expensive and time consuming method. In an organized group within a school students meet for the purpose of expressing their ideas and feelings with one another. The school plans so that the students have one hour per week available during the school year for this purpose. There is no financial cost to the student and in most cases a plan can be arranged that will not cost the school any extra expense. The time can usually be made available through flexible scheduling and double class meetings.

In reality communication the members accept no excuses from one another; truthfulness and openness are expected. The members must be responsible to themselves and to the others in the group; they must stay in contact with reality. They must accept full responsibility for their current actions no matter what their past experiences have been.

Reality Communication/Client-Centered Theory. For the self theorists, the basic human need is the preservation and enhancement of the self. Reality communication and client centered theory share a basic human need; the need to be accepted and understood.

In both reality communication and client-centered theory, each individual has a responsibility to fulfill his needs, but he must do so in a way that does not deprive others of the opportunity to fulfill their needs.

The self theorists maintain that the important determinant of behavior is a person's perception of events. In reality communications the way that an individual perceives an event is important, but his feelings about the perception are equally

important.

Rogers says that experiences that are not consistent with the self concept are threats and can produce emotional disturbances. In reality communication emotional disturbances also occur when an individual can not express his true feelings or when his true feelings are not understood and accepted.

Rogers's theory stresses that the client should verbalize his feelings. If the therapist establishes good rapport and listens to the client's comments with unconditional positive regard then the client will be able to learn about himself; thus he will find his own answers. With this maturation his self concept will change. The client-centered theory is used in individual counseling sessions.

In both reality communication and client-centered theory the members must be more than good listeners; they must be understanders; they must be able to feel with the others. Until a person starts verbalizing his feelings very little progress will be made.

Reality Communication/Behavior Theory. The basic idea of behavior theory is that any characteristic of personality is learned and that one can determine how a certain characteristic developed simply by examining the learning process.

In reality communication the individuals strive to be understood and to understand the feelings of others. Therefore, in reality communications more than the stimulus (S) - response (R) principles of learning are involved. The person needs insight and awareness. If the individual does not evaluate his

communication in terms of feedback, he will not fulfill his need to be understood; he will actually suffer.

Reality Communication/Trait-Factor Theory. The trait-factor theory is essentially a vocational choice theory. Reality communication is a sharing of day-to-day developmental events. In reality communication the member or members may discuss certain traits that an individual possesses; but, possessing certain traits does not label an individual. Neither does it cause a person to be less accepted by the group. The members must be free to admit their feelings to themselves and to express their feelings to the group.

In reality communication an individual can change his ways of communication and become more easily understood. Both internal characteristics and external circumstances are factors that influence communication. In trait-factor theory it is assumed that since certain characteristics are present in a person, the role of external circumstances are minimized.

Reality Communication/Phenomenology Theory. According to phenomenologists, the total experiences of an individual can only be completely understood by the individual himself. The entire experience of another person, as he expresses his opinion or fails an examination, can never really be known to others. But, the individual can describe his feelings about the experience.

In reality communication the members agree that they can not really know the total experiences of another person. But, once an individual expresses his feelings about an experience or

a situation, the members can accept these feelings. In reality communication, the members are not concerned with agreeing or disagreeing about one another's feelings and ideas.

In a group there are usually a variety of reactions and ideas to any given situation. The way that an individual perceives a situation will affect the way he feels. But in reality communication, regardless of the way that a person feels, his feelings should always be expressed and accepted.

Reality Communication Compared to Current Counseling Techniques

Reality Communication/1:1 Counseling Relationship. A ratio of 1:1 is a relationship of one counselor and one counselee; it is known also as individual counseling. Demos and Grant have stated that for years counselors and educators have been trying to reduce the ratio of students per counselor to 300:1 or 250:1. With increased enrollments, it seems that individual counseling for all students is an unrealistic goal; there is no encouragement that this ratio can be reached in the near future.¹

To the present time most counseling and guidance work in the public schools has been done on a 1:1 basis. There has always been considerable discussion about group work in schools, but very few efforts except for a few experimental projects have actually been exerted. Many critics have said that the use of groups in schools is simply an easy solution to the problems

¹George D. Demos Bruce Grant, "College and University Counseling", cited by Carlton Beck, Guidelines for Guidance (Debuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1966), p. 232.

involved with a shortage of qualified counselors and a lack of funds to hire such personnel. The use of groups may, in fact, ease these limiting factors; but economics and counselor shortage certainly are not the main reasons for group work. When people meet in a group they experience the reactions and comments from several individuals. When a person talks with a counselor, of course, he receives responses from one individual only. The interaction of ideas and the individual reactions to these ideas are a vital part of reality communication; a group situation provides conditions for a variety of responses.

Group work is a very necessary part of the public school curriculum. Students need an opportunity to respond to one another without the threat of being graded by a teacher. They need to develop an awareness for their own feelings and for the feelings of others. They also need a chance to express their feelings and to be able to understand the feelings of others; they need to "feel" together. Group work should be considered a supplement to the counseling program and an asset to the entire school curriculum. If the students in a group really communicate with one another, their need to communicate will carry over into their classes, activities, home, and community. The same results will be experienced by teachers who learn to really "hear" and "understand". Group work should encourage them to express their true feelings and to really be concerned with the true feelings of their students, colleagues, and other associates.

Group work should in no way alleviate individual counseling. Individual counseling is necessary for a student who has an

immediate concern or who has a problem that he feels could be solved by talking with a certain person. A person must be able to be in touch with reality before he can be a part of a reality communication group; in some cases an individual may need individual counseling before he enters a group situation.

A group should probably not include more than ten members. Each person needs time to participate in the discussion. Therefore, the length of each meeting will vary; but, at least an hour should be allowed. In the group situation, every member should feel that his opinions and ideas are worthwhile. The members should be open and honest with one another; they should express their feelings to the group. Through "self" expression the members have an opportunity to really communicate with their peers.

A group functions better if all of its members understand the kinds of behavior that they expect of each other as group members. There should be no specific rules that a group must follow. The decisions that each group makes should be their own ideas and should be meaningful for them.

The following are some samples of agreements that a group might make.

1. Confidence

When talking with people who are not members of the group, it is important to remember that anything that happened in the group may be reported as long as no effort is made to name or identify the individual members involved in incidents that might embarrass them or reflect unfavorably upon them.

2. Directness

If an individual is dissatisfied with the way that the group is operating, it is his responsibility to express his feelings and reactions to the group. He should not express his feelings concerning his dissatisfaction with the group outside group meeting. This is not fair to the other members.

3. Survey

Any member may ask for a survey at any time. The requesting member states what he wants to know from the total group. Others then paraphrase or clarify the topic until all of the members understand what is being asked. Each person then briefly states his current position on the topic. A survey is not a vote. It does not bind the group or its members, but it may precede a group decision. A survey must be taken at the time that it is requested.

4. Meeting Arrangements

The members should decide on a time and meeting place that is desirable for the group meeting. At least one hour should be allowed for the session. The group may decide that a longer period of time is needed for all members to express their feelings. It is very important that enough time is available for each member to speak at each meeting. The meeting place should be private and the furniture should be moveable. The members should be able to see one another; a circle arrangement is desirable. The room should be large enough to provide ample space for the group. A good ventilation system and a satisfactory source of light should be available.

5. Group procedure

The group may want to keep a record of each meeting. In this case, the members should take turns keeping minutes of each meeting. It is also helpful to have a chairman; his duties are to start and stop the meetings. The duties of chairman and secretary are carried out by a different member each meeting. It is best to take turns. The person who was the secretary at the last meeting will be the chairman at the following meeting. The members who are serving as the chairman or secretary are not authority figures and have no more control over the meeting than any other member. Every member of the group is responsible for its successes and failure.²

Reality Communication/Large Groups. Large groups, or guidance classes are popular in many schools. The main function of these groups is to present information. Some discussion is allowed, but usually the group has too many members to encourage more than a question and answer period. A teacher is usually the leader of such groups. He usually initiates all discussion. The discussion that occurs is usually dominated by a few students. Most of the scheduled time is used to distribute information. The group members have no part in deciding the procedures of the group or in outlining the information to be presented. There simply is not time for all the students to express their ideas. However, the purpose of the group is not self expression; it is information giving. In fact, in some cases the students are actually discouraged

²Kevin Kenny, "Communication Notebook" (St. Louis: Young Adult Communication Center #1, 1967. (mimeographed).

from contributing their own thought and ideas. In most large groups, the object is to present certain assigned materials. If communication occurs the act is accidental; in reality communication groups, the members plan so that reality communication will occur. The real purpose of the group is to foster communication among the group members. It seems to me that expressing one's needs and feelings and understanding the needs and feelings of others is the basis to all human and social relations.

Large group guidance classes have probably been of some merit, but the prime concern of human beings, regardless of their age, is to communicate, to really be "heard". Some of the same topics such as test interpretation, curriculum planning, and vocational choice can be considered in both large and small groups, but the topics will be understood better if they are presented in a group that really communicate with one another.

Reality Communication/Teacher Directed Groups. Teacher directed groups are usually smaller than large information groups, but they are still too large to encourage any real communication or true expression of feelings.

The homeroom is an example of a teacher directed group. The homeroom was created to restore some of the group experiences and values that are lost through departmentalization. Ideally, the homeroom period should be unique from all other class periods. The student should be free to talk with the other members of the group about whatever may be important to him. Unfortunately, there are usually at least thirty students in each homeroom; this large group makes discussion and expression by all of the members

virtually impossible. As stated earlier, there should not be more than ten members in a group, if the members are really going to communicate with one another. As a result of the large enrollments, most homeroom periods are being used for study halls, activity periods, and administrative duties. As long as the enrollment in the homeroom remains above ten, and as long as the teacher continues to be the authority figure, reality communication will probably never be experienced in the homeroom.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SAMPLE REALITY COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

Objectives of Reality Communication Groups

Guidance. In setting up an ideal program the goal will be to have every student assigned to a group. The function of these groups should be the basis of the ideal suggested guidance program. Besides small group meetings, the guidance program will include individual counseling sessions, displays of occupational information, follow-up studies, and individual record folders for each student. The folder should contain background information, grades, test scores, students' future plans, and any anecdotal records or counseling notes that the teacher or the counselor feels would be helpful in understanding the student.

There will be a teacher or a counselor assigned to each group; he will be known as the group coordinator. The coordinator will be considered a member of the group; he will not be an authority figure. All group sessions are confidential and absolutely no grade assessment will be made during the meetings. Complete honesty, openness, and acceptance is expected of all group members; the coordinator will certainly also be considered a member by the others in the group.

Besides expressing their feelings, the members should be encouraged to ask questions and be free to seek information on any topic. During the sessions the students will have an opportunity to fulfill their needs and to express their true feelings. Thus, less students will probably need to talk with a counselor in an individual session. It may be that the group members will

not be able to help one another change the situation which is causing them to feel distressed, but it is important that they understand the way that the individual member feels about the situation. This understanding of another's feelings is true reality communication.

The group coordinator will be responsible for making available information on test interpretation and on any other topic that is of group interests. The coordinator should consult the counselor for any necessary assistance that he needs.

These group sessions may alleviate the need for many individual counseling sessions; but if a student needs to see a counselor for a face-to-face interview an appointment should be arranged. The small group meetings will be the core of the counseling program, but other guidance services will remain available to all of the students.

Develop Sense of Self Awareness. In order to really communicate with others an individual needs to really know and communicate with himself. During the group experiences, each member should have an opportunity to discover some of his own ideas and attitudes, and to express these feelings openly and freely to the group. Each individual will be able to check how well he communicates his feelings to the group by perceiving how other members respond. By being completely honest with one another, each member will discover his own feelings as well as the feelings of the others in the group. As the group meetings continue, the members will probably develop an awareness of the needs and feelings of each individual.

Because of the sensitivity that is felt when the members express their true feelings, each member helps the others to develop a greater awareness of self.

Develop Reality Communication. The success of the small group meetings will depend upon the degree to which the members really communicate.

Although many times it is very difficult to be honest, truthful, sincere, and open with one's self (much less with other people), these conditions must be desired by every member of the group. The members must commit themselves to really "hearing" one another. They must not desert one another when a lack of communication occurs. The feelings of every member are important. There are times when it is difficult for a certain feeling to be communicated or understood. An individual's feelings can usually be expressed through his eyes, in his voice, or by his facial expressions. But, even when a feeling is expressed it may not be understood.

If a person is not sure that he understands the way that another person feels, he should express his uncertainty. If he really does sense the particular feelings that are being expressed, he should express his understanding.

Reality communication is definitely more than mere conversation; it is an indescribable inner togetherness.

Interrelate Ideas. Everywhere that people exist there is a need for reality communication; a public school is no exception. Every teacher, pupil, and administrator is unique; his ideas, at-

titudes, goals, and beliefs are unique. In many situations, these individual differences are allowed to become barriers to communication. These barriers must be broken down if small group sessions are to function; the entire school must center around reality communication. The teachers, students, and administrators must become involved with one another.

For many of the personnel this will be the first time that they have really communicated or really "heard" one another. When the individuals really accept, respect, and "hear" one another, they will be more likely to function as a unit. It is not expected that the individuals accept one another's beliefs and ideas, but they must accept one another.

The Roles of the Members in a Reality Communication Program

The Role of the Administrator. Reality communication groups cannot function without support from the majority of school personnel. Therefore, the support of the school administrator is a necessity. The administrator must give his unconditional support to the reality communications program and consider it to be the nucleus of the total school plan. By this, is meant that all curriculum and activities must center around the functioning of small group sessions. Reality communication cannot occur if the program is introduced into the school plan during activity periods and study halls.

Since the administrator has many duties and responsibilities he should appoint a member of the staff to organize and direct the entire reality communication program. The head guidance

counselor or a member of the counseling team would be qualified for this position.

Even though the administrator will not organize the program, he must cooperate with the teachers and counselors in pursuit of their reality communication efforts and attend to their expressed needs; he must communicate all of the developments of the program to the board of education and to the general public. In general the administrator must support and strive to further develop the reality communication program in every realm of his capacity.

Role of the Counselor. As director of the reality communication program, the counselor should work closely with administrator, teachers, and students. Once the program has the support of the board of education and of the administration, it is the counselor's responsibility to inform the teachers of the goals of the program and to organize all of their efforts in pursuit of reality communication. He will need to orientate the teachers to their role in the program, arrange bimonthly group meetings with the teachers who will be coordinators of student groups, assist with the scheduling of classes and with the use of human and audio visual aids to free teachers for group work, arrange rooms for small group meetings, and assign students to specific groups.

The counselor should spend approximately two-thirds of his time with the teachers and students to implement the group meetings and to evaluate the total effects of the program. The remainder of the counselor's time should be spent doing individual

counseling, planning a testing program, making occupational information available, and organizing placement and follow-up information.

The counselor should definitely have available the services of a secretary to assist him in keeping records, filing information, typing and duplicating correspondence. With the services of a secretary, the counselor will be freed of many time consuming and routine tasks. He will have more time to work directly with the students and teachers.

Role of the Teachers. Just as the teachers play a vital role in any school program, much of the success of the reality communication program depends upon the actions and attitudes of the teachers. However, the complaint of many teachers is that they do not have time to contribute to any school programs except teaching. Large group instruction, multiple classes, flexible scheduling, team teaching, television instruction and other audio visual aids, and teacher aids will help free teachers from classroom teaching to spend time really communicating with a small group of students.

Not all teachers will be interested or willing to become involved with the small groups even if they do have released time from classroom teaching. To alleviate this problem, when prospective teachers are interviewed, they should be informed of the two special programs that the school has; a reality communication program and a curriculum and instructional improvement program. Every teacher in the system is expected to contribute his efforts in one of these areas. All teachers will be freed from some

classroom teaching, so that each teacher will have time to devote to one of these two programs. The teacher will be given in-service training credit for their efforts in each of these areas; a given amount of in-service training credit will result in salary increase.

If a particular teacher is not interested in working either as a group coordinator in the reality communication program or as a member of the curriculum and instruction improvement committee, then he will not meet the requirements of the teaching position.

The curriculum and instruction improvement committee is indirectly related to reality communications, but only in that the improvements that are suggested be applicable for use in the system to foster reality communications. The members of this committee would not be directly involved as group coordinators. Work on this committee will be considered in-service training; a given amount of in-service training will merit an increase in salary.

For the teachers who are interested in working with groups, their training should begin by having the teachers meet in small groups to experience really communicating with one another. The first year that the program is organized the counselor and the group coordinators will be expected to meet once a week for one and one-half hours during the summer months. The purpose of these summer meetings is to create an opportunity for the teachers to really become involved with one another, to be open, honest, and free with one another. The goal of the group, would be reality communication - really attending to the feelings that are

expressed in the group meetings. However the members would be responsible for making their own decisions, and for deciding their own group goals. The counselor would not be considered as an authority; he would be in the same position as the coordinators in the student groups. All of the group members are considered equal. If teachers are expected to be group coordinators, it seems very important that they have some personal experience in a group. For those teachers who have had experience in group work, their contributions will be welcomed. These organized groups, will continue to meet on a weekly basis during the school term. It would be best to leave the members in their original group during the first year; but this is a decision that the members in each group should make themselves. These group meetings should encourage the teachers to "hear" one another better; not agree or disagree with one another, but really communicate.

A new group will probably need to be formed in the fall for all of the interested new teachers and for the teachers who were unable to attend the summer meetings.

Once school begins the teachers will teach their assigned classes, continue their group meetings and begin to meet with a group of ten students for one hour a week. As stressed earlier, the teacher is not an authority; he is a member of the group. The purpose of these small groups will be to give the students an opportunity to be open and honest with one another.

The teacher will be given in-service training credit for the work that they do as a group coordinator. After a certain

amount of credit is gained, the teacher will receive an increase in salary.

The teachers and students should be aware that a counselor is available if individual counseling is desired.

The purpose of the group meetings is to give all students and teachers an opportunity to interact with one another; a chance to remove the phyness and the socially polite ways of relating to one another that seem to be in abundance today.

Other Aspects to Consider in Developing a Reality Communication Program

Student Assignment to Specific Groups. There are a number of criteria such as I.Q., grade average, vocational choice, sex, age, residence location, and grade level that could be used to assign students to specific groups, however, random grouping within each grade level would be most desirable. In random grouping, the members will be more accepting than if any of the other criteria mentioned were used.

Architecture and Facilities. The facilities that are available in a school will vary. However, with some remodeling and rearranging the building can probably be suited to accommodate small groups for meetings and large groups for lectures. In most cases it will be too expensive and impractical to change the basic exterior design of the school building, but by removing certain permanent walls and replacing them with expansion walls, the interior of the building can be rearranged to suit the needs of the reality communication program.

The selection of courses in the curriculum the scheduling of classes, and the size of the enrollment will dictate the facilities that are needed. In general, these are the facilities necessary for group work to be possible:

1. A large lecture room with a seating capacity for at least one-half of the student population and a large television screen with a demonstration unit and a reflector mirror.
2. Several large classrooms with expansion walls so that smaller rooms can be made.
3. Closed circuit television equipment and a room to use for filming the programs or lectures.
4. Tape recorders, record players, and television sets.
5. Several small rooms to be used for group meetings.
6. Centrally located work room.
7. Small areas of individual space for each teacher to use as an office-there needs to be space for the teacher's aid to do clerical work.
8. Movable furniture and equipment, pull-curtains to be used for dividers within a room.

Scheduling. The use of flexible scheduling in a program is one way to free teachers from classroom teaching. In a class that usually meets one hour five days per week, the schedule could be changed so that the class would meet one hour four days per week and two hours on the fifth day. Or the class could meet two days for two hours and one day for one hour. There are a variety of other possibilities that could be used to arrange

classes with a flexible schedule. If either of the two plans would be used, there would be one or two days when both the teacher and the students would have a free hour. The students could use this hour to meet with a small group, do independent study, attend a lecture class, do homework, or participate in an activity. The teacher could use this time to meet with a small group, plan future class assignments, prepare a lecture for a large class or a television program, work with the teacher aid or work with a student on an independent study project.

Our educational systems have been struggling for years to meet a ratio of thirty pupils to one teacher in a self-contained classroom. At this point it is quite obvious that the shortage of teachers and the lack of classrooms is an uncontrollable problem. Every day that we continue to ignore the situation as it is and hope for a ray of new facilities and an ample supply of professionally trained personnel, we become further removed from reality.

As human beings trying to help other humans, we have a responsibility to attempt to meet the needs of the students. The basic needs that have not been considered in most systems are the needs to be understood and the need to develop self-esteem. If these needs are met in many of the schools today, it almost seems accidental. Every school needs a well structured plan that actually organizes its schedule so that reality communications can happen or transpire.

Teaching Aids. Teaching aids may be either human or audio

visual. As enrollment figures increase the ratio of pupils per teacher also increases. The shortage of professionally trained teachers must not be met by increasing the number of pupils per teacher without making some changes within the classroom. Teacher's aids could definitely free teachers of many of the routine, unskilled, clerical, and janitorial duties that most teachers are currently doing, in addition to their teaching responsibilities. With the services of a teacher's aid, teachers would have more time to do actual teaching to prepare for classes, to work on a professional committee, or to work as a group coordinator.

The use of a teacher's aid to help the teacher utilize his time and to be more effective is only one more suggestion in addition to flexible scheduling, double periods, and multiple classrooms. The use of television, tape recorders, movie projectors, and record players are a few audio visual aids that could be used. Closed circuit television could be very useful in instruction of large lecture classes. By having one or two teachers prepare a lecture to be delivered over television, other teachers would be free to work with groups or to plan lessons for future teaching.

The use of tape recorders, slide viewers, slide projectors, and record players are very useful in independent study.

All of these aids that have been mentioned are simply aids and using them does not replace the classroom teacher. But if these aids enable the teacher to spend more time actually communicating with the students, they become a necessity.

SUMMARY

Reality communication has been described as an experience or an encounter that transpires when individuals really attend to the needs and feelings that are being expressed. Reality communication is not just an exchange of words, or a matter of agreement or disagreement, it is an understanding and an acceptance of feelings, it is an honest expression of one's feelings and occurs when people are sincere and honest with one another. People communicate their understanding and acceptance by responding to the way that a person is feeling rather than to the situation that is causing the certain feeling. Reality communication may take place in individual counseling as well as in group situations. The emphasis in this report was on the group aspect.

Although, many educators have made attempts to establish communication in the public schools, the efforts have usually been secondary to the objectives of the total school programs. Unless reality communication is the core around which the curriculum, activities, and class schedule are planned, reality communication probably will not happen. As long as communication continues to be a peripheral part of the public school program, little progress in reality communication can be made.

Through the use of double class periods, flexible scheduling, large lecture classes, teacher aids and audio visual machines, teachers can be freed from classroom teaching to become a group coordinator of ten students. The ten students could be assigned to a specific group simply by random grouping within a grade level.

The groups would meet one hour per week during the school term for the purpose of really communicating with one another. During the group sessions, the members would establish their own goals and policies. The success of the group to really communicate with one another will depend upon the degree to which each member is open, free, honest, and sincere with himself and with the other members.

Besides teaching responsibilities, the teachers of this system would be expected to contribute to one of these two programs, reality communication or curriculum and instruction improvement. The teachers will be given in-service training credit for their efforts in these areas; a given amount of in-service training credit will result in a salary increase. If a teacher is not interested in contributing to either of these two programs, he will not be offered employment in this particular school system.

Even though individuals do not always express their needs, people are very important to one another. A basic human need is to really communicate; it can be fulfilled by developing an awareness for the feelings of others.

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REALITY COMMUNICATION

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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The success of education is based on communication. Communication is not just an exchange of words; it is an understanding of feelings. Reality communication is an honest expression of one's feelings and occurs when all of the members involved really sense the feelings that are being expressed. They communicate their understanding by responding to the way that a person is feeling rather than to the situation that is causing the certain feelings. Reality communication is more than a stimulus (S) response (R) situation, it is an indescribable togetherness. The members must be honest, free, open and sincere with one another. Reality communication is not concerned with an agreement or disagreement of ideas or opinions expressed by an individual; in reality communication all members need to accept one another for all that they are and all that they are not.

Because of self-contained classrooms with a ratio of 30:1, large information giving groups, and teacher led discussion groups, most efforts in the public school system for students and faculty to express their true feelings and to really communicate have failed. Although, many educators have made attempts to establish communication in the public schools, the efforts have always been secondary to objectives of the total school program. Unless reality communication is the core around which the curriculum, activities, and class schedule are planned, reality communication probably will not happen. As long as communication continue to be a peripheral part of the public school program, little progress in reality communication can be made.

Through the use of double class periods, flexible scheduling,

large lecture classes, teacher aids and audio visual machines, teachers can be freed from classroom teaching to become a group coordinator of ten students. The ten students could be assigned to a specific group simply by random grouping within a grade level. The groups would meet one hour per week during the school term for the purpose of really communicating with one another. During the group sessions, the members would establish their own goals and policies. The success of the group to really communicate with one another will depend upon the degree to which each member is open, free, honest, and sincere with himself and with the other members.

Besides teaching responsibilities, the teachers of this system would be expected to contribute to one of these two programs: reality communication or curriculum and instruction improvement. The teachers will be given in-service training credit for their efforts in these areas; a given amount of in-service training credit will result in a salary increase. If a teacher is not interested in contributing to either of these two programs, he will not be offered employment in this particular school system.

The counselor will be responsible for the organization of the reality communication program, but full support and cooperation from the board of education, administrator, teachers, and other school personnel is necessary. Some desired outcomes of a reality communication program are:

1. An increased awareness of the feelings and reactions of self and of others.
2. An awareness of how people relate to one another

3. An awareness of how self relates to other people
4. An awareness of how other people relate to self.
5. A chance to really communicate, to remove the "phyness" that exists in most encounters

While the goals of each member may differ, the members should experience a certain freedom that allows them to "try out" their real self and give them an opportunity to improve their communication with others.