A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES TO GROWTH EXERCISES AS MEASURED BY THE GRAPHIC AWARENESS PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE

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B. A., The King's College, 1971

A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1974

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LD 2668 T4 1974 M35 C·2 Document

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author appreciates the assistance given him by his thesis committee:

Jane Vincent, Ed.D.; Carroll Kennedy, Ed.D.; and Robert Poresky, Ph.D.

The guidance and support of his major professor, Dr. Jane Vincent, is especially appreciated.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In the past fifteen or so years a phenomenon which is predominantly American has had an effect on many facets of life in the United States. The phenomenon has generally come to be known as "encounter." Groups whose intent is to encounter, relate, interact and strive for psychological growth are now functioning in schools, churches, growth centers, industry, and in universities, involving college students, the elderly, business and professional people, married couples, children, delinquents,—in short, it has affected nearly every segment of our society. Rogers (1968) has called the intensive group experience one of the most rapidly growing social phenomena in the United States.

The encounter movement has grown so rapidly that there have been few empirical studies of it. There is scant information on how various aspects of encounter affect its participants, which may be a function of the lack of a method or instrument which measures the effect of group interaction and processes.

This study will:

1. Present a brief review of encounter methodology and examine some of its deficiencies.

- 2. Present a technique (Graphic Awareness Projective Technique) developed and utilized to measure the impact of group process and experiential learning (Vincent, 1973).
- 3. Analyze participant perceptions of the impact of specific aspects of the Actualization Counseling Education Program (Vincent, 1973b) utilizing the Graphic Awareness Projective (GAP) Technique (Vincent, 1973).

In response to criticisms that many group process models fail to show what is happening to the participants, the method discussed here will analyze semantic and symbolic statements which express responses to experience in the group process exercises.

Review of the Literature on Group Processes

If today's American does not personally consider enrolling in a "growth center," or joining a "living-room group," he may evaluate encounter groups connected with his work or with his church, or he may puzzle over a request from his offspring for permission to participate in a school encounter group (Lieberman, et al., 1973 and 1973b). If one does not participate in group processes through the established social groups (such as church or school) he may become active in one of the many growth centers (see Psychsources, 1973, pp. 148-149).

The Nature of Encounter

In this paper the term "encounter" is used to include many types of group processes. While all group processes are not identical, at this point in time there is insufficient evidence which would establish each group process as a separate

technology (American Psychiatric Association, 1970). Hence, any group which deals with the here-and-now, facilitates face-to-face interaction, encourages qualities such as honesty and openness, encourages interpersonal confrontation and self-disclosure, and revolves around strong emotional expression would be included in the encounter rubric.

An American Psychiatric Association Task Force Report (1970, p. 4) states that,

. . . groups strive to increase inner awareness and to change behavior. The goals of the groups vary: occasionally they are explicitly entertainment --to 'turn on,' to experience joy, etc. -- but generally the goals involve some type of change--a change of behavior, a change of values, a change of being in the world.

Treatment of specific commonalities and differences in various kinds of group processes can be found in Gottschalk and Pattison (1969), Schutz (1967, 1971, and 1973), Soloman and Berzon, eds. (1972), and Back (1972).

Lack of Data

Currently there is a great lack of systematic data on encounter groups. The majority of information is anecdotal and lends itself to folklore. Little is written concerning methodology, and even less on the effects of specific methodologies.

The Task Force Report of the American Psychiatric Association (1970) states that,

Much more is written about encounter groups than is known about them; little systematic information is available about leaders, the participants, the procedural norms, and the outcomes of encounter groups (p. 6).

Shostrom (1969) has stated that encounter groups are crucibles of intense

emotional and intellectual reaction. One never knows exactly what will happen as the group proceeds. As long as people interact with each other there will be various types of intense reactions. These reactions should not be seen as negative. All interactions (and especially those which occur in groups) contain an element of psychological risk, which is generally integral to psychological productivity and growth. The current problem focuses not on the elimination of psychic risk in groups, but rather focuses on the identification of those who cannot synthesize (or incorporate) group experiences, and then to provide a means of dealing with their inability in "handling" the experience.

Burton (1969) suggests that encounter has not yet specified its dangers, and charges that it ignores those who have been hurt by it and have committed suicide. The dangers, in part, have not been specified because the need to specify them has not been fully appreciated by those involved the most in encounter (group leaders and administrators of organizations employing the method), or because they are seen as negligible by other groups of participants. Other reasons for the non-delineation of dangers stems from the interdisciplinary composition of group leaders (who may be competent mental health professionals, clinicians without "group" skills, gurus, or laymen who have participated in one or two groups) and from the fact that the field of group process is still in an experimental stage.

Seldman, et al. (1973) speaks to the problem of a paucity of outcome investigations designed to evaluate the long-range effects of new group methods. Concommitantly no attempt is made to study the short-range effects.

Reddy (1970), in a study on the pathology indices of volunteer T-group

participants and the changes on these indices at the termination of the T-group, concluded that further research into the variables surrounding the techniques should be initiated. Such variables would include the style of the leader, composition of the participants, and the implementation and processing of the specific techniques.

Screening of Participants

Though the present study will not deal specifically with the screening of participants in groups, it is felt that screening has relevance to this study, in terms of dealing with the processing of group dynamics.

The lack of screening of prospective group members may be a result of a lack of research on precisely what occurs during a group (on an individual's internal level of functioning). All to often group methodology is seen as a mechanism and phenomenon which can easily be utilized by anyone. Goldberg (1970) feels that many group leaders believe that prior information about participants in their groups is not necessary, even if it were available. He further contends that, with undaunted confidence, these group trainers feel that they can work with anyone who finds his way into the group.

There are various problems involved when considering the screening of applicants for encounter groups. As with any situation which must be solved, a situation must first be seen as a problem (consciousness must be raised). Some persons in responsible positions in the encounter movement have yet to see screening of participants as a problem. For example, Rogers (1970) contends that one

of the commonest myths regarding groups is that only certain people should be included, and that participants should be screened.

However, there are those who contend that screening of participants is necessary. Gottschalk and Pattison (1969) say that those who cannot tolerate or learn from an intensive group situation at best remain untouched and unmoved, and at worst may decompensate. Peters (1973) contends that the greatest danger of the encounter movement is the indiscriminate application of this technique to everyone, regardless of symptoms. He concludes that encounter groups can hurt people, the people who should not be in them to begin with.

The problem of screening is presently discussed because it puts a greater responsibility on those who direct groups in terms of evaluation and familiarity with the effects of specific techniques. Since most anyone can become a group member, regardless of his readiness for a group experience, it is important that groups contain a basic mode of self-learning, i.e. a technique which will facilitate each individual profiting from the group. This present paper will analyze such a technique.

Much of what results during group work takes place on an internal level, and consequently is not readily (or accurately) observable. How does one tap the inner state of the individual without burdening him with some elaborate, cognitively-weighted device? How is the emotionally-charged aspect of encounter transferred to a reflective one, where learning takes place? Gottschalk and Pattison (1969) contend that in T-groups a premium is placed on total participation, on "experiencing" without self-analysis and reflection. They further warn that the result

may be an exhilarating experience but void of learning. This author feels that it is necessary for transfer to occur, both in the group and to the everyday living of the individual. The emotionality that results from non-verbal activity can should be processed (discussed, evaluated, analyzed), so that one learns about his emotions (Kiesler, 1973).

Measurement of Group/Experiential Learning

Lakin (1969) states that it is difficult to assess the precise effects of training upon a particular individual. Many researchers have borrowed attitude and personality instruments designed for use with an individual and applied these instruments to the group process, contrary to the warnings by test publishers against such use (Nolan, 1970). The typical objective-type test (for example, multiple-choice) tends to measure conformity or fact, which is contrary to the nature of group/experiential learning processes.

Combs (1971) speaks to the problem of a lack of tested and proven procedures for measurement of the "internal" man. Standard paper and pencil devices are antithetical to the group process basically due to their highly structured nature and limited number of response choices. They are unable to provide the necessary latitude for the expression of oneself. Combs (1971) states that those who wish to apply measurement to group processes will have to develop their own technique. This study will focus on one such technique.

Measurement devices have been developed specifically to allow one who is taking them to express whatever they want, and to project his or her individual

personality onto the device. These techniques are called "projective techniques."

A brief look at projective techniques and projective drawings will provide a background for focusing on the primary subject of this study.

CHAPTER II

PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES

Review of the Literature on Projective Techniques

Henry Murray has stated, "The most important things about an individual are what he cannot or will not say" (Frank, 1965, p. 6).

Projective methods in personality measurement have been designed to liftout of an individual that which has been embedded in him, and that which needs to
be dealt with by him. The content usually involves conflict with objects, events,
or other persons.

In defining a "personality," Frank (1965, p. 11) states that:

The personality may be viewed as a dynamic process of organizing experience, of 'structuralizing' the 'life space' (Lewin) according to the unique individual's private world. This conception may be made precise and operational by seeing the individual and his changing environment as a series of fields that arise through the interaction of the individual personality (with his selective awareness, patterned responses, and idiomatic feelings) with the environmental situations of objects, events and other persons.

Assuming that "personality" is a personal thing, and varies from person to person, the instrument designed to measure it must be adaptable to many personalities. Projective techniques were designed to fulfill this need.

Lawrence Frank (1965, p. 13) comments on the projective method:

More specifically, a projection method for study of personality involves the presentation of a stimulus situation designed or chosen because of what it will mean to the subject, not what the experimenter has arbitrarily decided it should mean, but rather whatever it must mean to the personality who gives it, or imposes upon it, his private, idiosyncratic meaning and organization. The subject will then respond to his meaning of the presented stimulus situation by some form of action and feeling that is expressive of his personality.

There are a wide variety of instruments which are termed projective techniques. The Handbook of Projective Techniques (1965) groups them into five general categories: Rorschach, Thematic Tests, The Draw-A-Person Test, Bender-Gestalt, and the Sentence Completion Test. Those which appear to be the most popular, and also the "deeper" techniques are the Rorschach, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and the Draw-A-Person (DAP) Test. Another widely used technique is the House-Tree-Person (HTP) Technique (Rabin, 1968; Murstein, 1965; and Buck, 1948).

Projective Drawings

Projective drawings were first devised and heavily researched around 1948.

Clinicians utilize them as a supplement to the Rorschach or the TAT. Hammer

(1968) states that reasons for their popularity are time economy, ease of administration and rich clinical yield.

Both the House-Tree-Person (H-T-P) and the Draw A Person (DAP) techniques were primarily constructed as measures of intelligence.

Hammer (1968, pp. 366-367) reports that,

Florence Goodenough, having devised an intelligence scale based mainly on the number of details put into the drawing of a man, became aware, along with other clinicians, that her test was tapping personality factors in addition to intellectual capabilities of her child subjects.

In projective drawings the subjects psychological and physiological processes

are caught on paper. For example, lines employed may be firm or timid, uncertain, hesitant or bold, or they may consist of a savage digging at the paper.

Hammer (1968, p. 368) states that, "Projective drawings tap the stream of personality needs as they flood the area of graphic creativity."

Validity and Reliability

Those who support the use of projective techniques are faced with the problems of validity and reliability. Instruments with questionable validity (the degree to which the instrument measures what it is purported to measure) and questionable reliability (the consistency of the instrument over time) are thought to be of little value. Karon (1968, p. 85) on summarizing the literature of projective techniques, states: "There are hundreds of articles on projective techniques which show them to be valid and hundreds of articles demonstrating them to be invalid."

Assumptions of Projective Techniques

Korner (1965, pp. 24-26) cites three assumptions on which projective techniques draw:

- 1. All behavior manifestations, including the most and least significant, are expressive of an individual's personality.
- 2. The individual taking them gives material that he either will not or cannot give otherwise. The assumption for all these techniques is that when a subject gets absorbed in explaining what seems to be an objective bit of material, he loses sight of the fact that in his interpretations he discloses his preoccupations, his wishes, his fears, and his aspirations.
- 3. Another assumption on which projective techniques draw heavily is that of psychic determinism, which precludes a story or a response from being a

chance event. Each response is supposed to be brought about by a distinctive set of causal influences.

Implications of the Literature

The literature indicates, then, that various models and nuances of group processes (Massarik, 1972) are found in numerous aspects of American living.

There is little systematic data on encounter, especially how its participants respond to it and experience it. Many of the dangers in encounter are compounded by this lack of data. And, there is a need for a method of measuring the impact that group processes have on an individual.

Consequently, this study will present a technique designed to measure the impact of group/experiential learning, and then, utilizing this technique, will measure and analyze responses to several exercises similar to those utilized in many group process models.

CHAPTER III

THE G-A-P TECHNIQUE AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The Graphic Awareness Projective (G-A-P) Technique is part of a program called Actualization Counseling/Education, developed in 1969 by Dr. Jane Vincent, who describes it as follows (1973b, p. 4),

Actualization Counseling/Education is a system of teaching self awareness, self understanding, self appreciation, self growth, and so, self transcendence. It is an approach to meaningful learning and relevant teaching because the outcome is the release of human potential, consciousness expansion, and the development of the more healthy personality characteristics, or, at the very least, a greater awareness of the nature of ecstacy and despair. The ACE Program is a body of content directed toward understanding the workings of one's own mind, body, and spirit, with a view to transcending 'self' enough to function as an effective helping professional, a nurturant parent, and inspiring teacher, and/or a good person.

Vincent developed the G-A-P Technique as part of this experiential learning program. The AC/E format focuses on the same theoretical framework of growth as the general group movement, but it is significantly different from the typical encounter or sensitivity training group in several ways, one of which is its constant focus on the measurement of the internal state of the participant as he moves through the experience. One of the most frequent measurement devices utilized is the G-A-P Technique.

Vincent (1973, pp. 66-67) describes the G-A-P Technique as follows:

A graphic is a visual representation of a specific state of mind, body, or spirit. Portraying these states visually helps a person to grasp not only the

presence of such a state, but also its meaning for him. Drawing a graphic helps a person to get in touch with his inner self, his feelings, or his inner experiencing in relation to whatever situation he encounters. It initiates a focus on the relationship between himself and a problem, person, or situation and helps crystallize feelings, integrate them into his SELF, that part of a person which is the center of response.

Laudon (1973, p. 70) details how a student uses the G-A-P Technique, stating,

Let us assume that he (the student) has just had an experience, any experience, good or bad, and he is uncertain of just where he is with himself or the experience. He is not sure what he is feeling. He doesn't even know that the feeling dimension of the experience is important. He is still 'in his head' with the experience. He finds a quiet spot where he can be alone (sometimes in class) and attempts to 'image' the experience by closing his eyes and fantasizing the FEELING of the experience, not the experience itself. He then projects graphically these feelings, the images, tones, and auras surrounding his felanerra (inner experience). The result is a picture of his feelings. He then writes about the experience briefly (to clarify it for himself) and adds a label or title to complete the graphein analysis; this helps him interpret exactly what it is saying to him. Now he is more able to look at his feelings, 'put them on the table' and deal with them.

The common objections to projective techniques (in reference to validity, reliability and objectivity) do not particularly apply to the G-A-P Technique.

Vincent (1973, p. 68) states that,

The G-A-P is measuring feelings, or attitudes or states of being; it is purposely subjective; and it is very simple. The graphic encourages an examination of typical behavior and feelings, or acceptance and modification of them, or the environment, when it seems productive or effective. Tester bias can be eliminated and self interpretation is emphasized. The student is not merely an object of study, as in the ordinary test-taking situation, but he is a participant in self study, analysis and evaluation.

The validity of the G-A-P Technique is found in its capturing of the subjective moment and state of each individual. Content presented via the Technique is determined primarily by the user.

Vincent (1973, pp. 67-68) states,

While the G-A-P Technique is a projective technique in the sense that a subject projects his feelings onto the paper, it differs from the ordinary techniques in that the subject creates his own stimulus card rather than being shown one by the examiner. It is similar to DAP or H-T-P in that you may get a house, trees or a person, but then again you may not.

The graphic, then, is the instrument which will be used in this study to gather data on the effects of group process (in this case the AC/E Program). It is particularly effective as a measurement technique for groups of individuals, and is the type of measurement device of which Combs (1971) speaks and has suggested should be developed.

Aspects of the AC/E Program to be Measured via the G-A-P

The AC/E Program, in its entirety, is too extensive to be dealt with in this study. Therefore, only four exercises used in the program will be analyzed. They are as follows:

- 1. Mirroring Exercises
- 2. Communication Exercises
- 3. Deep Muscle Relaxation (DMR)
- 4. Body Tap

Mirroring Exercise

"Mirroring" is described as, (Vincent, 1973b, p. 26) "an exercise used to facilitate communication non-verbally, in which two people stand facing each other, holding up their hands to each other, moving them simultaneously." In this exercise the individuals maintain eye contact with each other, while moving their hands

(palms facing) in identical or "mirrored" patterns.

Communication Exercises

Vincent (1973b, p. 25) states that,

The need to learn to communicate with others, to pay attention to our own inner communication, to get feedback about our communication skills, is important to personal and professional growth since we can facilitate our own growth or that of others through communicating with them.

The communication exercise used herein is described as, (Vincent, 1973b, p. 26)

A three-part communication exercise is done in the group where partners try to share something with each other, with both talking at the same time; then they share something by taking the conversation away from each other in tangential directions; and then sharing something important with the partner and really listening, 'hearing', his partner.

Simultaneous Discussion

In part one of the exercise each individual, simultaneously, is striving to explain whatever is on his mind. If a roomful of couples is participating a tumultuous roar often develops.

Tangential Discussion

The following example illustrates the second part of the exercise (what the present author refers to as the "can you top this" syndrome):

Speaker A: "I had an extremely interesting vacation last summer"

Speaker B: "Yes, extreme politics have always bothered me. For example, the local group of . . . "

Speaker A: "Speaking of examples, have you noticed how Mrs. ____ acts when she's . . . "

Speaker B: "The Book of Acts is one of my favorite books in the Bible "

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In the second part of this communication exercise, then, each speaker strives to say something seemingly more important than the other, regardless of how irrelevant it is to the conversation.

Empathic Understanding Discussion

Part three is in stark contrast to the first two parts, being a format for effective communication, wherein each speaker is also a listener. In this part each partner listens to the other, responding in terms of what has been said by the other person. One of the persons in the dyad is a "listener" and the other is the "speaker." The speaker shares an experience which has been meaningful to him. The listener reflects back what he has heard. The speaker then gives him some feedback about the accuracy of his reflection.

Deep Muscle Relaxation (DMR) Exercise

out on his back and relaxes, breathes deeply and learns to tense the muscles in his feet and relaxes them, tenses the muscles in his legs and relaxes them, etc., moving up through the body, learning to identify areas of tension. DMR is useful both as a means of identifying tension, of learning to eliminate tension areas, and of becoming more aware of one's own body and how to use it more effectively.

The Body Tap Exercise

The Body Tap is a body awareness exercise in which the participant lightly taps his body with his fingertips, beginning at the top of his head and moving down

to his arms, legs, ankles, feet, etc. The Body Tap also facilitates one's awareness of his body, and of his feelings and responses to touching, identifies tension points and releases tension.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Selection of the Sample

Students (N = 65) enrolled in a helping relations college course were given Shostrom's (1966) Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) during a fifty-minute class/laboratory period.

The O/I ratio score (other directed/inner directed) was used to define the population. Shostrom (1966, p. 17) describes the Inner-Directed person by stating:

The inner-directed person appears to have incorporated a psychic 'gyroscope' which is started by parental influences and later on is further influenced by other authority figures. The inner-directed man goes through life apparently independent, but still obeying this internal piloting. The source of inner-direction seems to be implanted early in life and the direction is guided by a small number of principles. The source of direction for the individual is inner in the sense that he is guided by internal motivations rather than external influences. This source of direction becomes generalized as an inner core of principles and character traits.

The Other-Directed person, as described by Shostrom (1966, p. 17) is as follows:

The other-directed person appears to have been motivated to develop a radar system to receive signals from a far wider circle than just his parents. The boundary between the familial authority and other external authorities breaks down. The primary control feelings tends to be fear or anxiety of the fluctuating voices of school authorities or the peer group. There is a danger that the other-directed person may become over-sensitive to 'others' opinions in matters of external conformity. Approval by others becomes for him the highest goal. Thus, all power is invested in the actual or

imaginary, approving group. Manipulation in the form of pleasing others and insuring constant acceptance, becomes his primary method of relating. Thus, it can be seen that the original feeling of fear can be transformed into an obsessive, insatiable need for affection or reassurance of being loved.

Utilizing a standard scale found in the POI Manual (1966) for the O/I scores, the students were divided into three groups: actualizers, non-actualizers, and the normal range. Since the author considered it desirable to compare differences between responses of actualized and non-actualized subjects, those whose scores fell into the normal range were not included in the study. Therefore, there were ten subjects who were in the actualized group (or Inner-Directed group) and eleven in the non-actualized (or Other-Directed group). All subjects were female, Caucasian, and between 18 and 22 years of age.

Collection of the Data

The class from which the data were gathered was divided into small groups for experiential laboratory sessions. A leader in each of the groups demonstrated the exercise to be participated in during a session (Mirroring, Communication, DMR, or Body Tap).

After the students participated in each exercise they were asked not to discuss the exercise, but to "draw a graphic" on the experience.

The following are guidelines given by the group leader after students participated in the Mirroring Exercise. Guidelines for drawing a "graphic" were similar for the other exercises used in this study.

Close your eyes....Relax....See you and your partner...moving your hands...What was that like? What was your encounter just now like.....How did it feel?.....What was it like to be you in that relationship?.....

What does your relationship look like?....How can you symbolize it?...... Draw this encounter on your paper.....How does it feel?.....What does that feeling look like?.........Now put a label on your picture.....What is it saying to you?.....What are some words that characterize that relationship?...Write a sentence or two describing the experience.....What is your graphic saying to you?

The data used in this study are "graphics" from these laboratory sessions.

Data Analysis

The semantic statements and symbolic representations were compared for the Inner-Directed and Other-Directed groups in each of the four exercises.

Percentages were computed in terms of responses to the self and relationship semantic categories of analysis, and to comfort and discomfort responses.

Chi-square tests of independence were performed on the data to see if there were any significant differences between Inner-Directed and Other-Directed groups both in terms of self and relationship responses and of comfort and discomfort responses.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The semantic and symbolic responses, as measured by the G-A-P Technique, were content analyzed, in order to graphically show the participant perceptions of the four exercises. Appendix A contains the semantic and symbolic data of the content analysis.

Table 1 contains the percentage of responses to the semantic categories for all four exercises. Most of the responses were in terms of oneself and of the relationship. Occasionally responses were in terms of movement or of the experience itself. Of a total of 420 semantic responses only 39 (9.3 percent) referred to these latter two categories, indicating insufficient data upon which to make significant conclusions. Table 2 contains a chi-square analysis of the Inner-Directed and Other-Directed POI score groups in terms of self and relationship responses.

Table 3 contains the percentage of responses which indicated comfort and discomfort experienced in the exercises. Table 4 contains a chi-square analysis of those responses.