

On Plotting Individual Change in Human Relations Training

Craig C. Lundberg

It is becoming common to hear the solemn intonement that trainers and those who design training programs should clearly understand how they will go about reaching their objectives. This injunction usually is met with a chorus of agreement. Yet our training literature is rather notorious for just the opposite, that is, a heterogeneity of goals and some rather diverse and often a just plain blurred prescription of means. Another frequent comment is that conceptual schemes and theories in use will reflect the values of the investigators or trainers using them. This comment is usually followed by an injunction to state these values explicitly. Seldom, however, does this occur. The following comments are hopefully a solemn response to the injunctions just noted. They offer a three dimensional scheme for plotting individual change in hu-

man relations training situations, a scheme which is deliberately constructed to reflect an ideal end-state of growth—maturity and health of the human individual.¹

Particularly needed at the present time are pictures, schemes, or “maps” for keeping track of how an individual or group changes during the human relations training experience. These maps would hopefully have some significant dimensions which reflect critical kinds of learning. Such maps would also hopefully reflect the scientific value of parsimony—this is particularly important for the practitioner who may be unable to manipulate a very complex scheme during the give and take of the training period. The final requirement of any scheme is that it should be easily linked to empirical data—specifically what people do and say.

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Human relations training is most often explicitly designed to change particular attitudes and skills of the trainees.² These may be worthy aims, if somewhat narrowly conceived. In actuality, successful training more often finds the trainees acquiring a more positive and clearly defined identity and acceptance of self, a wider role repertoire, a sensitivity to a wider range of social objects as well as cases, and the conceptual tools useful in understanding and exploring intra and interpersonal phenomena. If we accept this enlarged conception of what effective human relations training accomplishes, and hence what it really aims for, we have to find some more useful notions of describing change in the trainees—something, that is, different than demonstrating better “listening,” more “tolerance,” and so on. Needed are some ideas which help us plot change in the trainee less superficially.

Three Dimensions

Our experience and some recent research have suggested three dimensions which seem particularly fruitful in thinking about the changes that occur in individuals in human relations training.³ These changes we generally subsume under the term “growth.”⁴ The following paragraphs are devoted to explicating these dimensions.

A flexible conception of time. A prevalent escapist reaction to the anxiety developed in many human relations training situations is to talk and think about somebody else, somewhere else, at some time other than the present. The pervasiveness of this phenomenon has resulted in many trainers setting a goal of promoting discussions of the here and now.⁵ We note that this combines the dimensions of time and space (here and there, now and then). We would not

contest the usefulness of this dimension for looking at trainer interventions or even specific data, but would suggest that if one wants to look at individual change in a growth sense it is combining a “natural” dichotomy. We would like to emphasize the time aspect. Certainly, one of the ways that many authorities conceive of maturity is in relations to time. Chris Argyris, for instance, has clearly stated that mature persons in developing,

... tend to develop from having a short time perspective (i.e., the present largely determines the behavior) as an infant to a much longer time perspective as an adult (i.e., where the behavior is more affected by the past and the future). Bakke cogently describes the importance of the time perspective in the lives of workers and their families and the variety of foresight practices by means of which they seek to secure the future.⁶

A relatively healthy human being is also conceived to be relatively flexible about his use of time. That is, when the occasion demands he can focus in the present, or at some other point in time, but also is able to behave in ways which reflect large periods of time. This flexibility of conceptually going from the present to the long term is one of the signs of positive mental health. Concurring with the importance of the time dimension with regards to maturity and mental health we would posit that this is a vital dimension for plotting a person's change in a human relations training situation. It should be pointed out however that this conception is contrary to much of the current human relations training dictum which values how a person deals with his present. Our concern would have us shift attention to how a person uses times more flexibly, therefore a fixa-

tion on a point in the past or in the present or in the future would not worry us as long as it does not persist; in fact a person who can fixate in one of those time periods and then move appropriately to others would be seen as a person making a positive development.

An Openness to a Range of Change Sources

It admittedly is difficult to unravel change sources for they are largely inferred. Yet a good part of the literature about human learning and change does pose a dichotomy between internal and external sources. We do not want to get into arguments about the order of source or about boundaries; this is not the place for them. Yet, we think the sensitive trainer and investigator does find it easy to point to a prime source of change as either being primarily within the person or primarily related to his environment. This dimension is again tied to the concept of maturity. We very often talk about the mature person as one who can develop from being relatively passive to one who is active, and from one who can behave in only a few ways to one who is capable of behaving in many ways. Again the truly mature person is one who is flexible in the sense that he more appropriately responds to change generated both internally and externally to the organism.

We may point out certain conditions believed to be essential for developing the openness we are focusing upon. Self-knowledge, including a realistic appraisal of this knowledge, of ones overriding aspirations, values, dominant feelings and skills, is clearly essential. Such self-knowledge is a corollary of a second essential condition, namely an effective interface with "reality"—physical, social and emo-

tional. By underscoring these conditions we wish to emphasize that the openness to a range of change sources will be more than a simple reactive stance toward attaining the situation. The mature and ostensibly healthy trainee is one who exhibits *pro-active behavior*, behavior which includes purposes—purposes which have their statement both internally and externally. It is the flexible combination and appropriate response to such purposes which we are attempting to highlight here, and we simply note our conception that growth from human relations training will exhibit an increasing openness to a wider variety of sources of change.

An Increasing Incidence of Consciousness of Choice

Admittedly there are many forces on a person both from his environment and from within himself. The important question to ask is can the trainee make appropriate responses in the face of these forces. This requires both recognition of alternative possible responses and the associated consequences and, most important of all, that a *choice is possible*. If all behavior reflects choices, then we contend maturity deems more and more conscious choices. The choices which relate to individual change are the ones which must be consciously made. Otherwise we call the change manipulation, conditioning, and other externally controlled changes. Consciousness is the key component because of the commitment and motivation which tend to accompany awareness. Again the point of view which this dimension represents is value laden, loaded in the direction of an existential, gratification psychology. Increasing consciousness connotes an increase in a person's "sense of self." Independence, an old guidepost of maturity, flowers

with conscious choices. We wish also to emphasize an increase in detachment and objectivity.⁷ Note this dimension of consciousness promotes a contra-Freudian notion for Freud relegated consciousness largely impotent.

Choice among change alternatives, however, is the feature of this third dimension to remember. Warren Bennis eloquently captures this point of view when he states:

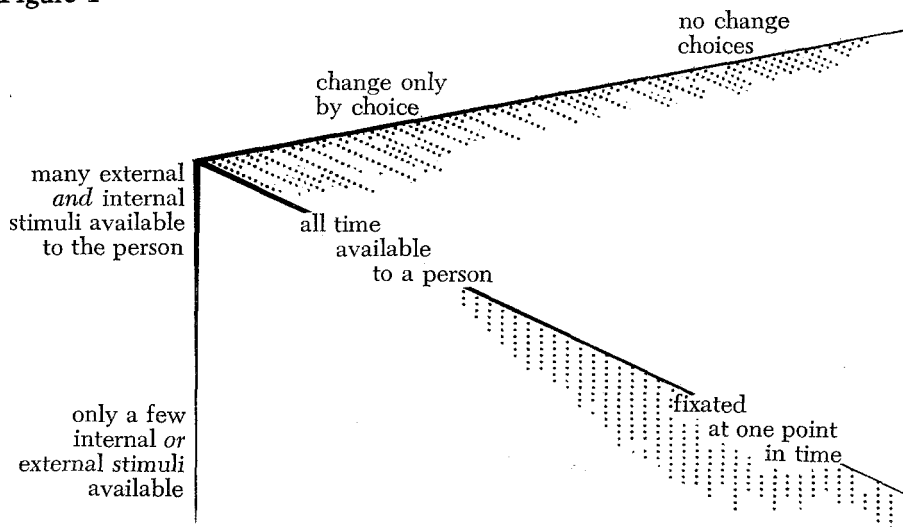
For I care much less about a participant's learning that he talked too much and will, in the future talk less, than I do about his recognizing that choice exists and that there are certain clear consequences of under-or-over participation. I care much less about producing a "cohesive" group than I do about members' understanding the "costs" and gains of cohesiveness, when it's appropriate and worth the cost and when it may not be. I care far less about developing shared leadership in the T-Group than I do about the participant's recognizing that a choice exists among a wide array of

leadership patterns. In short, I care far more about developing *choice and recognition of choice points than I do about change.*⁸

Having briefly outlined three dimensions which have been posited as useful and significant ones for plotting individual change towards growth, perhaps we could draw them together diagrammatically. Figure 1 offers such a conceptual picture.

Figure 1 lets us plot in a three dimensional space a person as he changes over time in regards to our three critical dimensions which were: (1) a flexible conception of time, (2) an openness to a range of change sources, and (3) an increasing incidence of consciousness of choice. In the three dimensional space of Figure 1, the person who is plotted as being near the point of convergence (the upper left corner) of the diagram would be healthy and mature. Movement over time in this space toward the point of convergence then is the broad ob-

Figure 1



jective of human relations training assumed in this paper.

Some Implications

This simple scheme lets us consider individual change in some new ways. Without going into elaborate discussion, we would like to put forward some consequences of thinking of individual change this way. Trainers, as we stated at the beginning of these notes, should have a clear aim. In terms of our scheme, however, this means with regard to ideal end states and the three dimensions outlined above. Trainers and those who design training programs have to come to grips with what are now seen to be fundamental questions such as: Are we satisfied to only have operant conditioning or manipulative changes, change that is not the result of conscious choice? Are we satisfied with change which is largely or solely the product of externally stimulated change where intervention and outside stimuli are impinging upon the trainee? Are we really sold on the human relations trainee's focus on the here and now or "realistic" present only?

Our scheme revitalizes an old and ticklish issue in human relations training, the issue revolving around the place of values, but more specifically how we conceptualize the ideal-end state for the trainee (health and ma-

turity may in fact not be widely held ideals to strive towards in industry). This issue, however, lets us ask still further significant questions. For example: Is the so-called mature group member the same as a mature person? What constitutes individual health and what constitutes group-health? More basic, of course, is just what is the relationship between health and maturity?

The activity of specifying ideal-end states and of plotting individual change over time may force us to keep certain discriminations more sharply in the forefront. For example, the differences between self-knowledge, self-report, and self-concept; the difference between a person and his behaviors: the difference between performance and behaviors; the difference between attentiveness and obedience; the difference between knowledge of acquaintance and knowledge about; and so on.

Concluding Remarks

This brief article is one kind of response to the invitation which often concludes professional and scholarly contributions to the social science literature. Invitations which welcome criticisms, comments and a continuing dialogue in response to the ideas proffered. It seems natural and desirable therefore that we end these brief notes with a similar invitation.

References

1. Our conception of human health and maturity has been primarily influenced by the following writers: C. Argyris, R. Leeper, A. Leighton, A. Maslow, H. A. Murray, and C. R. Rogers.
2. We include here such training as T-Group, Semantic, Role-Playing, Communications Effectiveness, Counseling as well as the behavioral parts of executive development programs.
3. For example, see research studies in the last few issues of *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*.
4. "Growth" is meant to denote a dynamic conception of normality, one that is continuous and developmental. See in this regard, Chapter four in Daniel Offer and Melvin Sabshin, "Normality," Basic Books, Inc., 1966.

5. A wonderfully clear presentation of this notion is contained in James V. Clark, "Some Troublesome Dichotomies in Human Relations Training," *Human Relations Training News*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1962, pp. 3-6.
6. Chris Argyris, "Personality and Organization," Harper and Row, 1957, p. 50.
7. Detachment is of course one of the "capacities" of A. H. Maslow's self-actualizing personalities, see "Motivation and Personality," Harper and Bros., 1954, pp. 212-213.
8. Warren G. Bennis, "Goals and Meta-Goals of Laboratory Training," *Human Relations Training News*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1962, p. 4.

Vocational and Technical Summer Institutes

Training institutes for vocational and technical educators will be held this summer in 15 States, the U.S. Office of Education has announced.

Grants totaling approximately \$500,000 have been awarded to colleges, universities, and school districts for 20 training institutes. More than 1,000 vocational educators—teachers, counselors, supervisors, and State and local agency personnel—are expected to attend.

Institutes will consist of workshops and seminars lasting one to two weeks. They will be held on such topics as planning and budgeting for vocational programs, improving leadership ca-

capacity, and developing curriculum for new occupations in such fields as medical and health sciences technology. Faculty at host institutions will conduct the programs.

Participants will receive allowances of up to \$75 per week and pay no tuition or fees. Applications may be made to host institutions, which will provide further information.

Now in its fourth year, the institute program receives funds under the Vocational Education Act of 1963, which requires that up to 10 percent of the money spent under the Act must be for training and for research and experimentation.

ERIC Request for Adult Education Research

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education is compiling the annual report of research studies and investigations in adult education completed during the past year.

If you have completed a research study or data collecting investigation

in the past year, or if you have one underway, please send, at once, for reporting forms to:

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Syracuse, New York 13210

