

**GROUP PROCESS WORK:  
A STAGE FOR PERSONAL AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT**

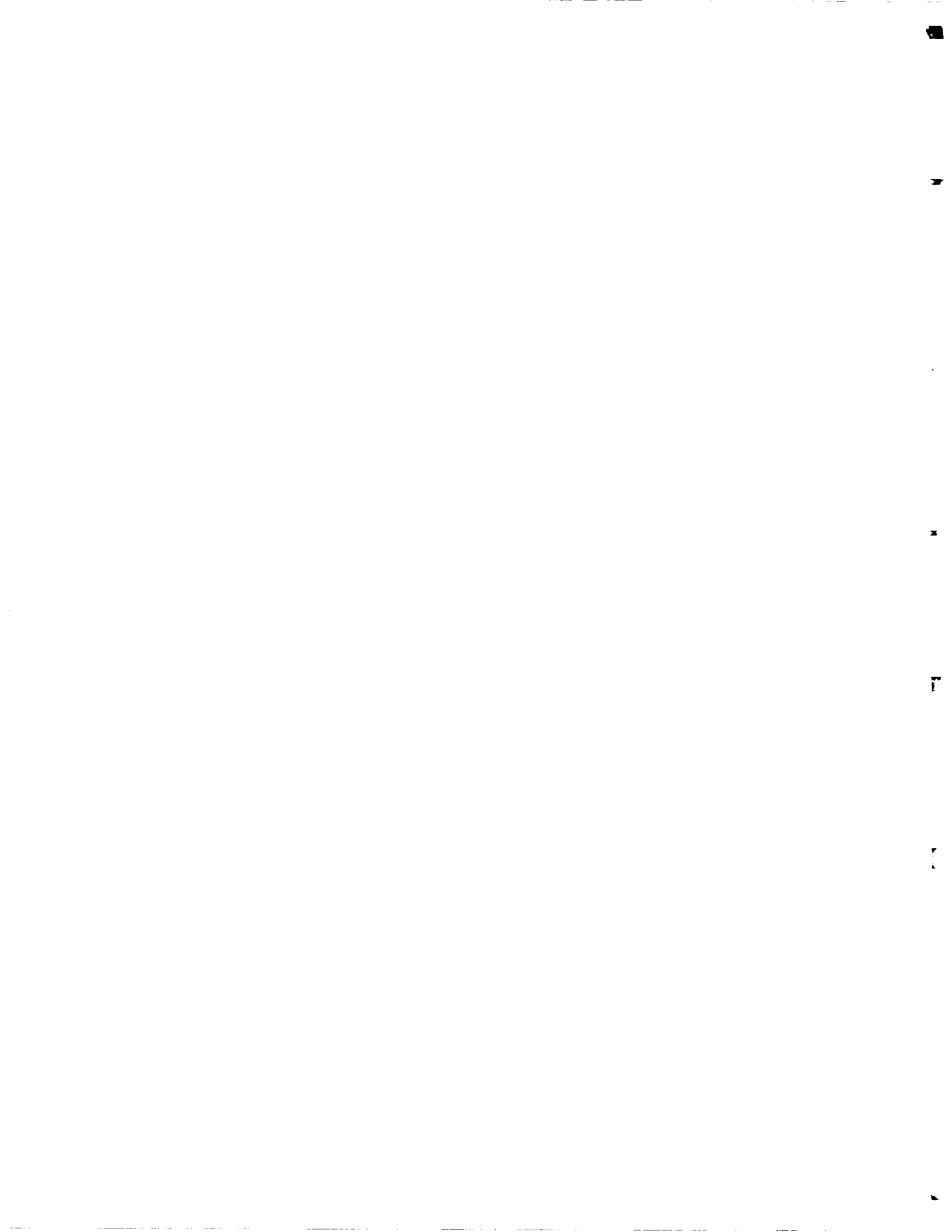
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Thankyou,

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## PREFACE

Groups can be a rich source of pain and pleasure. They can be fertile gardens in which to grow or oppressive and polluted cells from which we long to escape. We are born into groups and live our lives as members, leaders, students, and disturbers of groups. We are plagued by our dependency on groups and irked by our compulsion to remain independent. In the end, our groups bid us farewell as our roles in the group are quickly replaced.

Recently, my own identity as a group member has been challenged. I thought I belonged to one group exclusively; for the last ten years I have been intimately involved with a community of brilliant teachers and avid learners in Zurich, studying and creating Process-oriented Psychology together with its founder, Dr. Arnold Mindell. I had found a group where I felt "at home"--a garden in which I received the water I needed to blossom; a place I felt challenged as well as appreciated. I was getting ready to settle down and enjoy the feeling of belonging when I had the following dream: I was supposed to bring a photo album to a class in order to show my colleagues pictures of my family. My personal photo album was the New York Times!

It was shocking, at first, to realize that my family is the world and that the events which transpire in political, social and global arenas are family matters, requiring my attention and concern. "How can I attend to the world's problems?" I asked myself. Would I sit back and passively watch the evening news if my family members were killing one another, if the trees which I

had planted in my backyard were dying, if my brother were starving, and my best friends were addicted to crack? Would I put down the newspaper and go about my business if my husband were being murdered because of the color of his skin?

The majority of us are suffering under a collective passivity largely due to our hopelessness. We lack a philosophy which helps us to believe in our troubled planet. We are convinced that we do not possess the tools we need in order to intervene and make the earth a more inspiring and enjoyable place to live for more of its people. We have been hypnotized to believe that the tools which we have developed in order to work on ourselves, our personal relationships, our family problems, and our business concerns cannot be translated and applied to some of our pressing global conflicts. We are sure that cleaning up our own mess will not help the planet. Many of us become rapidly depressed when thinking about world affairs.

Our hypnosis is insidious. We look at our world leaders and are mesmerized; we think that someone else will figure out what to do. We think that "someone out there," our savior, will appear with some answers. Our education, or lack of it, has convinced us that we do not have the power, strength, intelligence, or insight to create a world in which we want to live.

This dissertation offers an alternative to our hopelessness and a challenge to our collective hypnosis. The work conveys my need to believe in the world in which we live and to participate in creating and expressing its wholeness and wisdom.

## INTRODUCTION

In the last fifteen years, a system called "Process-oriented Psychology" has emerged to influence our understanding of personal, group, and global development. Integrating these phenomena in a single theoretical framework, Process-oriented Psychology, also known as "Process Work," was created by Dr. Arnold Mindell in Zurich, Switzerland. The system was born as a daughter of Jungian psychology in the early seventies and has gone through so much expansion and redefinition during its short life that it can longer be regarded solely as a system of psychotherapy.

Over the past several decades, Mindell's experiences with individuals, families, and groups in ordinary and extreme states of consciousness have brought him into conflict with the traditional role of psychotherapy as it has been practiced throughout this century. Mindell's research as well as his passionate involvement with people and planetary concerns have led him to formulate a cross-disciplinary paradigm that can be applied to a broad spectrum of psychological, social, and political issues facing today's world. Process-oriented Psychology extends the parameters of psychology to date.

Above all else, Process Work offers an optimistic and almost reverent way of looking at the world, and suggests tools which can be applied to make life more enjoyable. It suggests a new way of thinking about groups and communities, respecting and encouraging their inherent wisdom and potential for growth.

Process Work begins to bridge the gaps between psychology and politics, the individual and the group, the personal and the global. It introduces innovative methods with which to intervene in a plethora of difficult situations with individuals, couples, families, and groups (1982, 1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c). Process Work shows that the unconscious aspects of an individual, relationship, group, or city are adept at finding ways to express all parts of their totality. Mindell first noticed the versatility with which unconscious material finds modes of expression while researching the relationship between dream and body processes. One of his earliest discoveries indicated that the information which comes to us through dreams is mirrored in our body processes (1982). This radical finding suggested that unconscious processes were not limited to the domain of the dream world, and that the dreaming process was not happening only at night, during sleep. We learned that our body dreams all the time!

Mindell formulated the concept of the "dreambody" to reflect this connection between dream and body processes (1982, 1985a, 1985b). It has since been revealed that the dreambody encompasses not only dreams and body symptoms, but relationship, family, group, and collective phenomena as well. Today we speak of a "global dreambody" and recognize that the world itself is like an anthropomorphic being which is also dreaming all the time!

Dreambody and global dreambody ideas indicate that inner and outer events conform to patterns and have meaning. According to Mindell (1985), the patterns create the essence of a "process

logic," which gives coherence to all spontaneous perceptions and events. Thus, the world is not chaotic, but is organized in accordance with dream-like patterns and principles.

The global dreambody concept is based on the recognition that the individual, the group, and the larger human collective are all woven of the same cloth and that interventions and changes made at one level of the system invariably effect all other levels. From the perspective of the global dreambody, the distinction between individual and collective phenomena is no longer meaningful. Some of the central characteristics of the global dreambody, as outlined by Mindell (1987), are as follows:

- The whole is patterned.
- Each part contains the whole.
- Each part is related to all other parts causally and non-causally.
- The whole creates and heals itself.
- The whole can destroy or make itself ill.
- The whole has mythical characteristics. . . .
- The whole has a human character.
- The whole is the goal of human development. (p. 104)

Considering the world as a global dreambody brings us insight into some of the disturbing and troublesome events presently occurring on our planet--within groups, between groups and nations, and in the environment. The world is seen as a kind of huge human being--an anthropos figure--which is in conflict internally. The anthropos is having difficulties dealing with its many conflicting internal parts, struggling to become aware of itself, and moving towards wholeness, much like you and I. Mindell (1987) explains:

- The coagulation and separation of an individual's parts is the essence of awareness and consciousness. Thus the anthropos also grows in awareness of himself through periods

of strife and union. Just as we find out more about our belly if we have a belly ache, so he (the anthropos) finds out more about us when we have trouble. . . . His growing self-awareness is reflected in our growing awareness of the community and universe in which we live. His increased awareness is reflected in our burgeoning interest in psychology! (pp. 104-105)

Following the notion of a global dreambody, Mindell has created a system in which a basic set of concepts and tools can be applied, with variations, to work with individuals, couples, families, and small and large groups. Mindell's most innovative work is presently involved with applying the process paradigm to large groups and to cross-cultural and political situations.

In this dissertation we look at the application of the dreambody and global dreambody ideas to work with groups. We focus specifically on Group Process Work, the branch of Process-oriented Psychology which deals with group dynamics and group development. I introduce tools and methods, developed by Mindell, which have been tested in groups containing between 3 and 200 people. The philosophy and interventions which I present are accessible cross-culturally; they have been of use in dispelling hopelessness, relieving tension, improving communication, and creating community in psychological and non-psychological groups in both developed and developing countries.

The study of groups is certainly not the domain of Group Process Work alone, nor is it limited to the field of psychology. Groups can be studied from a variety of perspectives: a group can be seen as a collection of individual personalities, a web of inter-personal relationships, an assemblage of subgroups, a developed social system, or a culture. The field of study does

not rightly belong to any one discipline. Generally, one thinks first of sociology, anthropology, or political philosophy when seeking knowledge about group life. Each of these fields has contributed substantially to the body of literature about groups.

In the field of psychology, groups have never been the main focus of study. Throughout this century, psychologists and psychotherapists have been primarily interested in individuals, couples, or families. During World War I, psychologists began theorizing about the psychological mechanisms which underlie group life (Kaplan & Saddock, chap. 1, 1971). Some of these "group psychologists" began experimenting with the treatment of individuals in a group setting. In the last three decades "group psychotherapy" has established itself as a treatment modality which uses a group setting to facilitate the individual's growth process. Today, almost every school of psychology is also represented in group practice. In these systems, however, the individual, rather than the group itself, is the explicit focus of the therapy.

The social psychologists have concerned themselves with social influences on behavior and are known to be more involved in studying groups than are the individual psychologists (Aron & Aron, 1986). Since the early sixties, psychologists have been employed by businesses and industry in order to study organizational phenomena (Adams, Ed., 1984; Nadler, Hackman & Lawler, 1979). The humanistic movement in psychology has recently turned its attention to social issues and the development of a humane politics (Greening, Ed., 1984; Rogers, 1984). However, generally speaking, psychologists have an

introverted reputation; they are not thought of as professionals who are actively working with social or global issues.

Mindell's Jungian background influenced him in staying away from group work for several years. He had been interested in global issues for a long time before he abandoned his reticence and dove into the challenging field. In the spring of 1986, he gave his first public lecture on psychology and politics in Zurich.

The time was ripe to begin researching group phenomena. Chernobyl had just exploded and radiation was roaming freely over Europe. The world seemed to be awakening to the illusions of separateness created by political borders. A country which had long been secretive was no longer able to keep its "dirty laundry" in its own basket. Something was beginning to bring people into contact, and it was important to begin creating those connections consciously!

During the remainder of 1986, Mindell became actively committed to studying world problems and began teaching theoretical courses about global processes at the Center for Process-oriented Psychology in Zurich. Group Process Work was conceived spontaneously in the winter of 1987 during the annual six-week intensive course in Process-oriented Psychology in Zurich. The initial inspiration to work directly with the group itself came from the participants of that course--they demanded a forum to air their grievances and to deal with group tensions floating in the air. As a result of his experiences with that group, Mindell woke up to the tremendous potential in group work



and the urgent need for conflict resolution tools. He conducted his first experimental seminar on the subject in April, 1987. The methods and theories of Group Process Work were developed purely empirically. Mindell did not have a background in sociology, social psychology, or group psychology. However, his background in theoretical physics may have been even more useful for his studies of groups than any concrete information from more related fields.

Physics had taught him to observe nature and to take a phenomenological approach to the processes which he studied (Hohler, 1989). This had been crucial to Mindell in his discovery of the dreambody (1982) and in the overall development of Process-oriented Psychology. It was to be equally valuable in his studies of groups. He used his beginner's mind to observe the group in great detail, notice its so-called resistances, and identify its modes of communication. Above all else, he believed in nature and supported the inner wisdom and tendency towards wholeness which he saw operating at all levels of phenomena. Whether dealing with an individual within the group, a couple, or the group as a whole, Mindell recognized that

each dreambody is an anthropos with its own primitive wisdom and intelligence. Repeated experiences indicate that if you help the body to awareness, it will do whatever necessary to reorganize itself creatively. If the therapist feels responsible for its well-being, then he has identified with the magical, creative power of dreams. . . . My suggestion is to. . . let the mysterious thing called life do its own creating and reorganizing. (1987, p. 13)

Although new tools and interventions were created in order to facilitate group processes, Mindell found that the basic attitudes and philosophical principles which created Process-

oriented Psychology also made sense in relation to groups. In three years time, an entire system of group work has been developed, tested, and proven effective,

In his book The Year One (in press), Mindell outlines the basic theories and methodologies of Group Process Work. He discusses the earth's problems and the shortcomings of solutions which have been attempted. He shows how ancient myths, religious systems and modern scientific theories are planetary dreams, organizing events and processes in the real world.

As a result of its rapid development, Group Process Work has hardly had a chance to reflect upon itself and its heritage. Although it was born primarily out of Mindell's creativity and empirical work and introduces a unique approach to the study of groups, it has friends and relatives in other fields. This dissertation enhances Mindell's work by uncovering the roots of Group Process Work in other systems of thought and practice.

In the first part of the dissertation the reader is introduced to a variety of theoretical approaches to the study of groups. In chapter one, I present an overview of the field of group psychology. I include only those thinkers whose work, in my opinion, has made a contribution to our theoretical understanding of group phenomena. We will notice that several central themes emerge repeatedly; each theme which is presented is addressed directly or indirectly in Mindell's work. The reader will have a glimpse of the philosophical approach which has created the field of group psychology.

I have chosen not to focus on methods of group

psychotherapy, but rather to include a table which outlines its main directions. (See Tables 1:1--1:4 on pp. 42-48.) Although many of the group psychologists also developed methods of group psychotherapy, I have found that these systems do not contribute anything new to our understanding of groups. Most systems of group psychotherapy have grown out of a system of individual work. The individual model is applied in a group setting with a stronger focus on interpersonal relationships and communication skills; transference issues exclusively between client and therapist become less important.

In chapter two we leave the study of "psychological" groups and take a look at some of the new directions which have emerged to contribute to our knowledge about "group as a whole" phenomena. Organizational Development becomes an important field of study and we examine the application of ideas from a variety of fields to the study of organizations. The reader is introduced to systems thinking, field theories, holographic concepts, and anthropomorphic principles as they relate to the study of groups.

Chapter three presents the process paradigm in greater depth. We take a close look at how Process-oriented Psychology integrates the directions mentioned in chapters one and two by understanding both the individual and the group as channels for a larger field. We will focus on the development of global concepts in Mindell's work. The reader is introduced to basic concepts of Process-oriented Psychology which will be necessary in our discussion of Group Process Work.

In the second part of this dissertation, I outline the

details of Group Process Work. I explain theory, discuss interventions, and demonstrate, with short case examples, how Mindell's work has synthesized some of the earlier psychological theories and challenged other ones. I show how Group Process Work integrates and applies ideas which were described theoretically in chapters one and two and I amplify Mindell's theories with concepts from sociology.

I introduce Group Process Work (chapter four), present in-depth analyses of group structures (chapter five), and discuss a group's channels of communication (chapter six). I investigate group roles (chapter seven) with a specific emphasis on the roles of leadership and facilitation (chapter eight). The reader should gain a sense of those theories, methodologies, and philosophies Group Process Work shares with other schools and those which make it unique.

In part three, I illustrate how the methods of Group Process Work are applied. I present a case from my own practice which demonstrates Group Process Work with an organization and illustrates the complexity and subtlety of the work. Because it is a case which was led by a beginning group facilitator, it is not meant to represent the best of Process Work with groups. Rather, it is a realistic portrayal of the difficulties and challenges involved in applying Group Process Work in an organizational setting.

Because my own personal and professional development influenced my ability to work with this group, I have decided to analyze my own process (chapter nine) in addition to the process

of the group (chapter ten). We will see how the facilitator's strengths and weaknesses can serve to either push the group in exactly the right directions, or alternatively, can block its growth. We will get a glimpse of the depth of awareness and the myriad of skills required of a Group Process Work facilitator.

This dissertation may be of professional use for psychologists, psychiatrists, organizational consultants, managers, teachers, social workers, social service administrators, and politicians. It should be of interest to anyone who is or has ever been a member of a group. It explains some of the experiences, feelings, and intuitions which we all have about groups, and it offers some tips about how to make groups more exciting and enjoyable for everyone involved.

My personal interest in groups has grown out of my interest in the world. Individual work and world work meet in the group arena. In the microcosm of the group, issues emerge which mirror collective and global concerns. At the level of the group, I feel that I can begin to participate constructively in the life of my planetary family.

When working with an individual, we notice how the individual's psychic parts, whether they be called sub-personalities (Assagioli, 1965), ego-states (Berne, 1964), splinter psyches (Jung, 1948), or dream figures (Goodbread, 1987; Mindell, 1985a, 1987) relate and interact intrapsychically. They battle, compete, love and hate each other; each part attempts to dominate the psyche. In order to be known, lived and appreciated by their host, parts force themselves into the individual's consciousness using whatever means they have at

their disposal. By studying the individual's dreams and somatic signals, verbal and non-verbal messages, we gain access to this inner theater. As therapists, we try to intervene in order to make the drama more conscious and less painful.

In a group, however, the parts are human beings, interacting on the group stage in living color. The group platform is crowded with leaders, rebels, lovers, terrorists, and peacemakers. The theater looks remarkably like life. We are drawn into embarrassing and difficult scenes which we would prefer to avoid. In a group we can witness the evolution of hatred and the creation of war; we can observe the hesitations which lead to de-escalation and to the initiation of friendship. Unwittingly, we may be touched by a mystifying spirit which enters our hearts without invitation. We sometimes experience genuine connection with our neighbors.

Sometimes we want to help the drama move towards its conclusion. Will our efforts facilitate a rapid resolution, or does the group reject our mediation in order to follow its own timing? Will our interventions be used as fuel for a smoldering fire? Can we drop our programs and address the needs of the group? Are we able to help the group express its fury at the leadership, to split apart after years of imposed togetherness, or to create the genuine community which it is seeking? Can we help the group discover its own growth potential and creativity?

In today's world, there is an urgent need for people who can participate constructively in group life. A minimal requirement for a planetary citizen entering the twenty-first century is the

ability to get along in groups. A further mandate necessitates skill in group facilitation. We all belong to groups and we cannot predict when our awareness might be essential. In our experiences with small group conflict, we develop and practice tools which may be needed in our communities. The role of the global facilitator is still sparsely filled, in want of people with the courage and ability to meet this pressing need of our times.

The theories, philosophies, and tools introduced by Group Process Work can help us begin to fill the role of group and global facilitators. The system has the potential to be very useful in relation to some of our most pressing planetary concerns. It inspires an appreciation of diversity and offers some insight about the chaotic meanderings and prickly paths which a group must travel in order to reach understanding and transform itself. I think this system can be of use to our global family.

My deepest hope in writing this dissertation is to give you, the reader, a taste of optimism. The body of literature which criticizes people for their selfishness and predicts gloom and disaster for our planet is abundant. There is less written offering concrete and practical tools which ordinary women and men can use to enhance life in their groups, communities, and cities. The shortage of literature which conveys an attitude of hope and believes that there is meaning and potential creativity in the path which we are traveling together is vast. Hopefully, this dissertation challenges our collective despondence by offering some concrete tools and suggestions which can enhance

our lives as we enter the twenty-first century.



PART I

PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES  
TO GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS



## GROUP PSYCHOLOGY: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

Informal studies of group behavior have probably taken place ever since humans have organized themselves into tribes and communities. In every culture and from the earliest times, human beings sought to understand their own behavior and the behavior of others in groups. The formal study of human behavior in groups has its roots in various separate and distinct pieces of work and cannot be attributed to any single theorist. Although there was no generally recognized field of study called group psychology before the 1930s (De Board, 1978), many philosophers, sociologists, and psychologists, reflecting their own cultures and social climates, had already begun to study groups from a number of standpoints.

Both of the major world wars in this century have been a great impetus in the development of our knowledge about groups (Kaplan & Saddock, 1971, chap. 1). World War I was especially influential in the development of group psychology; thinkers began trying to understand and theorize about people's behavior in groups. World War II proved to be an equally strong incentive in the creation of group psychotherapy--the psychologists actually began working in a group setting. They were particularly interested in experimenting with the large groups of psychiatric casualties which needed treatment in the hospitals. In war, people are forced into large groups; they lose their individual identities and in many cases their lives for the sake

of the whole. The morale of the group (the armed forces) becomes a critical factor in a country's struggle for existence. These factors inspired several thinkers to attempt to understand group life.

In the following survey I will summarize the thinking of some of the early group and social psychologists. Many of these theorists have developed extensive theories of the personality and systems of psychotherapy. However, for my purposes here, I will stress only those elements of each theory which make it a unique contribution to the field of group work. I will emphasize those aspects of each theory which will be of interest to us later in our discussion of Group Process Work. Many group psychotherapies in existence today have their roots in the ideas of several of these pioneers, especially Freud, Lewin, and Bion. A review of some of the best known group psychotherapies can be found in Tables 1:1--1:4 on pages 42-48.

#### Wilfred Trotter

During World War I, Wilfred Trotter (1916), a neurosurgeon, put forth a theory about the herd instinct in peace and war. He postulated four primary instincts in humans--self-preservation, nutrition, sex, and the herd. He regarded the group as a continuation of the multicellular character of all higher organisms and concluded that it is both logical and biological for humans to form groups. According to Trotter, the instinct for humans to come together in a group, whose parts have multifunctional skills which insure individual and group survival, is in keeping with evolutionary trends.

## Freud, Le Bon, and McDougall

Freud is considered one of the fathers of modern psychology. Almost all current forms of psychotherapy owe some debt to his discoveries. Psychoanalysis, the system of psychotherapy created by Freud, is many things--a theory of personality, a method of psychotherapy, and a philosophical view of life. We will take a look at Freud's thinking about group behavior and its roots in the ideas of Le Bon and McDougall.

In 1921 Freud published Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. In the introduction he stated that the contrast between group or social psychology and individual psychology was insignificant. He thought that all psychology was basically group psychology in that it was essentially

concerned with the individual man as a member of a race, of a nation, of a caste, of a profession, of an institution, or as a component part of a crowd of people who have been organized into a group at some particular time for some definite purpose. (1921/1985, p. 96)

Thus, he considered group psychology to be the original and older form of psychology.<sup>1</sup>

Freud observed that individuals act very differently in a group than they do when they are alone or in analysis. He wondered how the group could exert such a decisive influence and pondered the exact nature of the changes which the group inspired in the individual. He was influenced by the work of Le Bon (1895/1920), who observed that in a group setting, an individual possesses a "collective mind which makes him feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that . . . were he in a state of isolation" (cited in Freud, 1921/1985, p. 99).

Le Bon stressed that when individuals are part of a group,

their instinctual impulses are far less repressed and the unconscious is more manifest. He introduced a precursor to a field theory (see Lewin, below) with his introduction of the following idea:

in a group every sentiment and act is contagious . . . to such a degree that the individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest. . . .

He is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will. (cited in Freud, 1921/1985, pp. 101-103)

Le Bon recognized a hypnotic force at work in a group. He said that the group mind is similar to the mind of "primitive" people and children, having the following characteristics: it thinks in images, has feelings which are simple and exaggerated, is inclined to extremes, demands strength of its heroes, is irritable and unconscious, is fundamentally conservative, and has an unbounded respect for tradition. Furthermore, Le Bon asserted that a group is essentially a primitive herd which cannot survive without its master and submits to anyone who appoints him or herself leader.

Without the tools to intervene in this hypnotic field, we can understand his pessimistic view of groups. In part two, we will see how Mindell has introduced the concept of awareness as a transformative agent in group life.

Before the turn of the century, Le Bon hinted at an idea which many modern systems theorists (see chap. 2) have adopted as a central feature of their theory. He wrote that the various elements of a group "are combined, exactly as the cells which constitute a living body form by their reunion a new being which

displays characteristics very different from those possessed by each of the cells singly" (cited in Freud, 1921/1985, p. 99). Modern systems theorists would state, as Aristotle did, that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (Checkland, 1981, p. 75).

Freud was also influenced by McDougall (1920), whose seminal work, The Group Mind, portrayed a negative and pessimistic view of the group mind. He called it

excessively emotional, violent, fickle, inconsistent . . . . hasty in judgement, incapable of any but the simpler and imperfect forms of reasoning; easily swayed and led, lacking in self-consciousness, devoid of self-respect and of a sense of responsibility, and apt to be carried away by the consciousness of its own force. Hence its behavior is like that of an unruly child or an untutored passionate savage in a strange situation . . . and in the worst cases is like that of a wild beast, rather than like that of human beings. (cited in Freud, 1985/1921, p. 114)

McDougall also recognized that groups were capable of splendid achievements. To reconcile this contradiction he purported two psychologies for groups--one dealing with an unorganized group and the other with an organized and task-oriented group. If certain conditions of organization are fulfilled, the negative aspects of the group psychology can be avoided.

Freud noticed that the theories of both Le Bon and McDougall revolved around the ideas of suggestion and suggestibility. He wanted to know who or what had the power to hypnotize the group.

Freud's contribution to group work involved the concept of libido. A term used to describe the energy and instincts that are related to love, eros, and sex, Freud thought it constituted the essence of the the group mind. He argued that the binding

force of a group derives from the emotional ties between group members and between members and the leader. He saw these ties as an expression of libido.

Additionally, he described the mechanism of identification as basic to group formation. Identification is the "earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person" (Freud, 1921/1985, p. 134). The group members identify with the leader of the group, whom they see as something like a father surrogate or a savior, and they identify with one another through their common tie to the leader. To sum it up:

a primary group . . . is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego-ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego . . . .

Originally rivals, they have succeeded in identifying themselves with one another by means of a similar love for the same object. (Freud, 1921/1985, pp. 147-152)

This tie to the leader is at the basis of group formation. A leading idea can substitute for an actual leader when no leader is present. Under a charismatic leader, a group is hypnotized and surrenders itself to a dependent relationship on the leader.

Freud rejected Trotter's "herd instinct." Rather, he saw the group as a revival of the earlier primal "horde," a primitive form of society in which a herd is ruled over by a powerful male. In the primal horde, the beginnings of religion, morality, and social organization are connected with the "killing of the powerful male chief by violence and the transformation of the paternal horde into a community of brothers" (Freud, 1921/1985, p. 154). In Totem and Taboo (1912), Freud suggested that the primal horde actually ate the leader. Symbolically, this implies



that the leader's qualities are incorporated into each member.

Freud's insights placed the study of group behavior into the framework of psychoanalytic thought and indicated his interest in social as well as individual psychology. Although Freud never developed a psychotherapeutic technique for groups, his ideas inspired many of his followers who have been applying them to work with groups ever since (DeBoard, 1987).

### Kurt Lewin

Kurt Lewin has been the single most influential person in the field of social psychology, although most of his ideas have come to us through the work of his students. Many current studies in group dynamics (a phrase which he was the first to use) can be traced to Lewin. After his death in 1947, the learning psychologist Edward C. Tolman guessed that "Freud, the clinician and Lewin, the experimentalist . . . will always be remembered because . . . their contrasting but complementary insights first made of psychology a science applicable both to real individuals and to real society" (cited in Aron & Aron, 1986, p. 2).

Lewin conducted controlled, empirical research, influenced in part by psychoanalysis, within the confines of academic institutions. His experiments inspired more conventional psychologists to conduct scientific research.

Lewin's work reflected his life. His passionate concern for democracy and for minority groups was born out of his personal experience; he was forced to flee Nazi Germany in 1933. Above all else, he hoped and believed that psychology could become an

applied science which would contribute to the improvement of the social conditions of human beings. Throughout his work, he emphasized the group as a psychologically organic whole, rather than simply a collection of individual persons. In this section, we will be concerned primarily with Lewin's "field theory," and his contribution to the development of the "T-group."

In the 1920s in Berlin, Lewin was influenced by the ideas of the emerging Gestalt psychology. He developed the concept of a "force field" to describe all the interdependent forces that determine human behavior. According to Lewin, each individual exists in a field called the "life-space" a highly subjective space signifying the world as the individual sees it. The life-space is a field which consists of conscious and unconscious goals, fears, hopes, and dreams (Lewin, 1972).

Lewin (1951) stressed that the physical and social conditions in which an individual exists are also a part of the life space. With this concept he introduced the idea of a general background field which influences the individual just as the gravitational field exerts influence on matter. In other words, the individual cannot be viewed in isolation from the field or environment in which he or she lives. The type of atmosphere a person lives in, whether friendly or hostile, has a great deal of influence on his or her behavior. According to Lewin's field theory, if there is no change in the atmosphere or field, there will be no change in the individual's behavior.

Lewin tested these ideas in a series of experiments which researched the extent to which outer influences effect group and

individual behavior. In one well-known experiment, Lewin studied the effect of three types of leadership--autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire--on groups of boys. He considered the results to be highly significant for the following reasons: they proved the superiority of democracy, of which he was a champion, and they showed that social climate and atmosphere are not intangible concepts. Rather, they are psychological realities whose effect can be tested. From this study Lewin concluded that "psychological atmospheres are empirical realities and are scientifically describable facts" (1972, p. 201).

In the 1940s Lewin set up the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He became increasingly interested in all kinds of groups. With a team of colleagues, he researched anti-Semitism, racism, and gang fights. Empirical findings regarding leadership, group cohesion, group goals, group pressure, and communication in groups and organizations became the basis for the new field called group dynamics. Lewin died young and was unable to apply his field theory of the individual to the social-psychological phenomena of larger groups, communities, and political entities. His followers have been attempting to take his work in this direction (Stivers & Wheelan, Eds., 1986).

Almost by accident, Lewin produced an innovation in education and group work which was to have lasting impact. In 1946, he conducted a conference to train a racially mixed group of business people to combat racism and religious prejudice. In the evenings, most participants went home and the facilitators discussed the day's events and analyzed the various social

interactions and communication problems. A few participants asked to sit in on a meeting and were granted permission. As they heard themselves being discussed, they began to participate and contribute to the discussion about their own and the group's behavior.

To us this seems commonplace. At the time a powerful and radical form of education, in which people receive direct feedback about their own behavior in a group setting in order to develop and improve interpersonal skills, was being created. Out of this, the National Training Laboratories were established in Bethel, Maine, where they still exist today. This method of education is known as "T-group" or "sensitivity group" training. It inspired the encounter movement and the marathon group therapy forms which became popular in the sixties and has become a major educational method in managerial training and Organizational Development.

### Wilfred Bion

Wilfred Bion (1968) developed an original theory of group and organizational behavior. Together with Freud and Lewin, Bion has been a major source of theoretical influence on later group psychotherapists. A practicing psychoanalyst of the Kleinian school, Bion began working with groups as an army psychiatrist at Northfield hospital during World War II. His seminal work with groups was developed at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London. Like several of the early group psychologists, he does not consider himself a group psychotherapist, but an investigator of groups.

Bion treats the whole group as his patient and gives interpretations of group rather than individual behavior. He does not see group work as psychotherapy with individuals done in groups, but as psychotherapy designed to make conscious the unconscious of the group.

His behavior in groups was bewildering and frustrating to his patients and in the beginning there was a lot of boredom and apathy in his groups (Bion, 1968). In regard to his role as facilitator, he wrote, "I establish no rules of procedure and put forward no agenda" (p. 77). Naturally, this irritated group members and hurled them into a process of their own. By staying out of the group as much as possible and studying its behavior, he perceived the patterns of group behavior which comprise his theory.

Like McDougall, Bion recognized that when a group is organized, its more primitive, unconscious aspects remain underground. At a manifest level the organized group operates in a way that is rational, productive, and busy; it depends on a leader who can guide it. When the group has nothing to do and no leader to follow, the unconscious, irrational feelings and fantasies become manifest.

Bion postulated that a group stays together because of its "basic assumptions"--a term which he used to denote the unconscious basic needs which all groups have in common. One of a group's basic assumptions regards its relationship to the leader: a group assumes it needs a leader who can be depended on for everything; the group members consider themselves to be

irrational and immature and the leader is believed to be omnipotent. Thus, by virtue of projections, the leader derives extraordinary power. As long as the leader unconsciously colludes with the group's demands, he or she is loved. Failing to do so results in the leader's rejection.

According to the theory of basic assumptions, the group also assumes that the leader will somehow assist individuals in finding a sexual partner, and that the leader will direct the group into fight against or flight from the enemy if and when this becomes necessary.

Bion says that after a group becomes conscious of its basic assumptions it becomes a work group. The work group is in touch with reality and is ready to address its task. At this point, individual members realize that in order to contribute to the group's task, they must develop personal and interpersonal skills. The work group functions like the ego, able to mediate between external reality and the inner needs of the group; it can communicate about its forms of communication. When the work group is functioning, unconscious contents may still emerge, but they can be recognized and dealt with in the here and now.

#### Henry Ezriel and C. G. Jung

Ezriel, also of the Tavistock clinic in London, was especially interested in the interaction between manifest and latent levels of the group. Although he is not widely known outside of group psychotherapy circles, several of his theories are of particular interest.

In the place of Bion's basic assumptions, he postulated the

existence of a shared group problem or group tension which is the common denominator in the unconscious life of all group members. Although the group is not generally aware of this underlying problem, it determines the group's behavior (cited in Kaplan & Saddock, 1971, chap. 1).

This bears some relation to C. G. Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, which is often implied, but rarely referred to directly, by group psychologists. Jung rarely addressed group psychology explicitly in his writings, and he had an aversion to group life. However, he introduced several concepts which have a bearing on group and collective activity. He postulated a collective unconscious along with a personal one.

In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature . . . there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes . . . which give definite form to certain psychic contents. (Jung, 1936/1959, p. 43)

The archetypes are primordial images or tendencies to form particular representations. They manifest as universal symbols in dreams and fantasies. Today it is recognized that the archetypes are tendencies towards particular patterns of behavior as well as towards images (Mindell, 1985).

According to Ezriel, the behavior of other group members and of the group leader functions like the stimulus of a Rorschach test or "blank access"<sup>2</sup> and provokes reactions born out of the unconscious common denominator. At times, all group members may be driven by forces beyond their control in what they themselves consider to be useless directions. Each group member takes on a

particular role which is characteristic of his or her personality structure. The role that each person plays in the unfolding group drama indicates the individual's method of dealing with the common tension. We will be dealing extensively with the concept of group roles in chapter seven.

### S. H. Foulkes

Foulkes was a colleague of Bion's at the Northfield hospital in Britain, where a great many of the early group psychologists congregated during World War II to deal with the treatment of psychiatric casualties. Northfield's claim to fame was that many early experiments in group psychotherapy took place there.

Foulkes (1957) looks beyond the group to the community as a whole. For him, the group is seen as an instrument for dealing with the individual as part of a "network" of relationships within the community. Therefore, practitioners need a triple perspective in doing group work: a focus on the individual patient, on the group, and on the interpersonal environment from which the individual comes. The practitioner is trained to locate disturbances on any one of these levels (Kaplan & Saddock, 1971, chap. 1).

The influence of Kurt Lewin is apparent--the network is an extension of Lewin's field idea. Focusing on the current life situation and the life network remind the therapist that the individual group member is only the tip of the iceberg--he or she is an integral part of a larger network and cannot be treated in isolation. This idea appears to be an antecedent to the systems approach to families and groups which was to be developed by



Watzlawick, et al. (1967) in years to follow. It also seems to anticipate Mindell's (1987, 1988, 1989b) concept of the global dreambody.

Foulkes was the first to use the term "group process." in 1957, to refer to a group's patterns of interaction. The group process was said to convey the members' specific feeling and fear patterns, either manifest or latent (Kaplan & Saddock, 1971, chap. 3). The expression has developed into a generic term which carries little explanatory power outside of the literal.

### Trigant Burrow

Trigant Burrow was a pioneer in the study of small groups, and the originator of what is known as group analysis or analytic group psychotherapy. Because he held some unorthodox views and stated them in a very specialized way, his work is generally ignored or given only slight attention.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Burrow's views were considered radical. He took the therapist out of the leader's role, stressed the importance of the "immediate group in the immediate moment" (cited in Berne, 1963, p. 289), and paid little attention to past causes. He was concerned with non-verbal and somatic manifestations of stress as they are subjectively and objectively experienced in groups. He did not polarize the therapeutic situation into "sick" patient and "healthy" doctor. He viewed both as elements of an aberrant society and believed that both needed to understand more about the social situation from which they were suffering.

Burrow regarded the behavior of the individual in a group as

unnatural because in a group a person "appears to be acutely sensitive to the impression he creates on others" (cited in Berne, 1967 p. 290). Therefore, people cannot be productive in groups, but are competitive, defensive and superstitious. This special type of fogged awareness he called "dintention." But he found it was possible, through certain exercises, to induce another type of state called "cotention," which is associated with physiological changes. Cotention is accompanied by the cessation of normal rivalry and a profound change in group atmosphere which he equated to a kind of religious experience.

This impressive and meaningful finding was overlooked by most scientific group workers for several decades. In retrospect we can see that his work anticipated a recent interest in somatic processes within the group setting (see chapter six).

### J. L. Moreno

Moreno's work represents a radical departure from the ideas which have been espoused thus far. In 1912, Moreno expressed the following to Freud:

I start where you leave off. You meet people in the artificial setting of your office. I meet them in the street and in their homes, in their natural surroundings. You analyze their dreams. I give them the courage to dream again. I teach people how to play God. (1971, p. 460)

Two antitheses to psychoanalysis emerged in Vienna in 1914. The first was group psychotherapy (Moreno was the first to use the term), which emphasized the group rather than the individual. The second was psychodrama, which emphasized action rather than analysis (1947, 1957). During the decades to follow, Moreno

(1951) also developed sociometry, a branch of sociology which deals with the deep socio-dynamic patterns which lie beneath the action matrix of all societies.

Psychodrama was distinct from all the group therapeutic work which had been done until that time. Moreno's objective was to create a therapeutic setting that would allow for the dramatic enactment of the patient's life problems in the here and now. It takes place in a theater setting, and the patient relives actual situations which present special problems. Group members serve either as actors and actresses in the patient's drama or as members of the audience.

Moreno felt that a patient should never be left feeling alone with his or her particular problem, and group members are therefore encouraged to identify with the protagonist and share their own feelings. The therapist, who serves as the director, shares his or her feelings as well. Moreno felt that after individuals expose so much of themselves, love and sharing is more important than analysis.

Moreno introduced several techniques which have since become an integral part of many other therapeutic schools. One of the most radical was his acceptance of physical contact. In the 1920s and 30s, in the Viennese milieu, it was clear that a psychoanalyst who would become physically involved with his or her patients would be ostracized. Moreno, however, recognized that physical contact was an important part of life and should not be kept out of the psychodramatic setting. He encouraged the participants in the drama to comfort each other physically and to interact physically and affectionately when it was

appropriate in the role.

Moreno introduced role playing and role reversal into the therapeutic setting (see chapter seven). He believed that role reversal was especially useful with people of close psychological proximity, such as husband and wife or parent and child, and he encouraged families to work together whenever possible. He used the technique called mirroring, in which members of the audience act like the protagonist while the protagonist, sitting and watching in the audience, reacts to his or her behavior.

Moreno noticed the difference between interpretation and spontaneous insight. He recognized that an act often provided interpretation without words and observed that interpretations were not always constructive--sometimes the patient ignored them or did not hear them. If a patient ignored his interpretation, he realized he was communicating inappropriately; he did not subscribe to the accepted belief that it was due to the patient's resistances.

One of the most unorthodox aspects of psychodrama is its philosophy regarding the creative power of the individual. Within the framework of psychodrama, divine or spiritual forces are integrated into the therapeutic process. The client, or "protagonist," is given the freedom to expand his or her identity and change outer life situations in accordance with his or her needs, desires, and fantasies. The protagonist can be the master of fate and create life as she or he sees fit. The protagonist is freed from facts and actualities and encouraged to believe that reality is not absolute. This idea was particularly

controversial for the Freudians who believed that past causes had irreversible influence on the individual's present psychological situation.

Psychodrama is considered a group therapy because the group can become very involved in the drama that is being enacted. Moreno (1971) reports the case of a psychotic patient, treated in 1941, who insisted he was Adolf Hitler. The group gathered in the psychodramatic theater for over three months helping this man work through his psychosis. According to Moreno's report, events which foreshadowed many of the actual occurrences in Hitler's life were enacted. At times the group was said to have become so involved in the drama that it was not possible to distinguish the patient from the actors. Moreno wrote that his studies of the sessions

showed there were a few little Hitlers in the group. A magnificent panorama of the contemporary world emerged in bold relief, caught in the miniature mirror of this group. Careful analysis . . . suggested that the real Adolf Hitler might have profited greatly if he had participated in psychodramatic sessions . . . and that World War II might have been averted or, at least, taken a different form. (1971, p. 484)

Moreno noticed the parallels between the internal psychologies of group members, patterns in the therapeutic groups, and events in the larger collective. He hinted at the holographic nature of reality--a central characteristic of the global dreambody which will be discussed and elaborated in the following chapters.

Moreno was not satisfied with Freud's conception of the psyche in the framework of a single individual. He was convinced that the unconscious of one person was somehow linked directly

with the unconscious of another. He was interested in a concrete application of Jung's conception of the collective unconscious. Moreno was not fascinated by the archetypes per se, but was interested in how they functioned to create group cohesiveness on the unconscious level in actual group situations.

Psychodrama is one of many sociometric procedures which Moreno employed in order to research group phenomena. Although psychodrama is the most famous of his techniques, Moreno (1951) also used sociometric tests, action tests, spontaneity tests, and sociodrama in his attempt to isolate the factors which enter into a group's formation. He identified a factor called "tele" which he saw as the "actual, dynamic, central structure underlying and determining all . . . formal groupings" (1951, p. 135). He explained that

this central structure--once it has been identified--is either found or discernible in every form of human society, from the most primitive to the most civilized . . . it exerts a determining influence upon every sphere in which the factor of human interrelations is an active agent--in economics, biology, social pathology, politics, government and similiar spheres of social action. (p. 135)

Moreno guessed that this idea would one day be the cornerstone of all social science. In 1951, in an address to the Moreno Institute, he proposed that if the government of the United States was really to be a government "of the people, for the people and by the people" (cited in Moreno, 1951, p. iii), it would need to add a department of Human Relations which would use direct channels of communication with the people at the state and local level.

Although Moreno's radical ideas have enjoyed widespread

popularity, they have not achieved the scope of exposure for which he hoped. The Zeitgeist, earlier in the century, may not have been ready for him. However, the times have changed and many of his basic ideas have been picked up and expanded in Group Process Work.

### Common Themes

Although each of the thinkers developed a unique approach to groups, several common themes are apparent. The existence of a conscious and unconscious or manifest and latent level of group experience was recognized by every theorist mentioned. The importance of the leader and the leader's influence on group members was stressed by Trotter, Le Bon, McDougall, Freud, Lewin, and Bion, together with the notion of individuality and the individual's relationship to the group as a whole. The concept of a field which connects group members to each other and to the environment was especially important to Lewin, Ezriel, Jung, and Foulkes and was hinted at by LeBon and McDougall in their discussion of the group mind. Lewin, Foulkes, and Moreno all addressed the relationship and connections between the individual, the group, and the society at large, and recognized that work at any of the levels should not be done in isolation.

All of the above ideas, which were introduced and tested by these creative pioneers in the field of group psychology, have been expanded and applied in Process Work with groups. We will return to these themes in part two of this paper.

## GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPIES

Tables 1:1--1:4

Table 1:1  
DESCRIPTION / BASIC PHILOSOPHY

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### FREUDIAN

#### Analytic

The group therapy procedures which derive from Freud's work differ greatly. Treatment is long term, oriented towards producing changes in character rather than changes in interpersonal functioning. Human beings are determined by early experiences. Unconscious motives and behaviors are central in present functioning.

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### NEO-FREUDIAN

#### Adler

Human beings are social creatures and the group is a natural therapeutic setting. Behavior is purposive and directed towards social survival and self-realization. Personality is a unified intertwining of social, somatic, and psychological processes.

#### Horney

A unifying process goes on in the group that can be turned into a healthy direction and used to work through neurotic blocks. Democratic values of the group encourage cooperation.

#### Sullivan

The avoidance of anxiety and search for security creates maladaptive behavior. The maladaptive behavior is explored in the group setting.

---

### HUMANISTIC

#### Existential

Human condition includes ability for self-awareness, freedom of choice to decide one's fate and the search for meaning in a meaningless world. The avoidance of anxiety and the search for security create maladaptive behavior. This maladaptive behavior is explored in the group.



TABLE 1:1 continued

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Transactional	
Berne	The life process is a re-enactment of original experiences, but people can also make choices. In the group, a person can create new patterns for past scripting and self-defeating behaviors.
Group-centered Rogers	View of human beings is positive. People are believed to be potentially adequate and responsible, but become maladaptive by failing to accept and integrate all aspects of themselves. Group can positively reinforce individual.
Gestalt Perls	People strive for wholeness and integration of thinking, feeling and behaving. Group procedure focuses on maladaptive behaviors and therapist tries to knock out inappropriate patterns which appear in group.
Bio-energetic Lowen	Body activity is included in group psychotherapy. Physical experiences are said to provide insight more convincingly than words alone. Personality change not valid until accompanied by changes in form, motility, and functioning of body.
Encounter Marathon	Refers to a variety of methods which assume that the overpowering of the individual's defenses is therapeutic. Group pressure is exploited to generate psychological intimacy as quickly as possible.
T-Groups Sensitivity Training	Created to promote personal growth in a non-therapeutic manner. Applied in community, industrial and educational settings.

Table 1:2  
THERAPIST'S FOCUS

<b>FREUDIAN</b>	
Analytic	Focuses on intrapsychic, unconscious processes; past as well as present.
<b>NEO-FREUDIAN</b>	
Adler	Focuses on social aspects of individual's behavior; here and now group interactions and relationships.
Horney	Focuses on one of three levels: group atmosphere, interpersonal behavior, or intrapsychic mechanisms. Emphasis on here and now.
Sullivan	Focuses on individual's feelings in the group in the here and now; not interested in past memories.
<b>HUMANISTIC</b>	
Existential	Focuses on here and now interactions, transference issues, and interpersonal relationships.
Transactional	Focuses on here and now interactions. Determines which ego-states are relating in the group.
Group-centered	Focuses on understanding and accepting the individual's momentary feelings; not interested in the conflicts that lie beneath behavior.
Gestalt	Focuses on individual group member in here and now.
Bioenergetic	Focuses on the individual's body experiences, bodily contact and interpersonal relating.
Encounter	Focuses on interpersonal relationships in the here and now.
T-groups	
Sensitivity training	Focuses on on-going interpersonal transactions. Members study themselves and one another.

Table 1:3  
METHODS & TECHNIQUES

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FREUDIAN

Analytic

Therapist interprets dreams, analyzes transference to leader and peers, and studies the resistance phenomena. Patients are encouraged to free-associate about others in group. Group sessions alternated with sessions without a therapist.

---

NEO-FREUDIAN

Adler

Therapist interprets social aspects of individual's behavior. Treatment conducted as an educational process; emotional experiences are reinforced by intellectual learning. An atmosphere of social equality among peers is created in order to counteract fears and create new social orientation.

Horney

Therapist encourages individuals to bring up conflict and anxiety and interprets neurotic patterns which appear in group interactions. Transference issues between patients and with leader are analyzed.

Sullivan

Therapist is representative of constructive culture and communicates acceptance and respect. He or she engages in interpersonal transactions with patients in order to correct their distorted perceptions. Group members participate by validating therapist's interpretations in order to help patient become aware.

---

HUMANISTIC

Existential

Therapist applies techniques from psychoanalysis despite the philosophical differences. Looks at transference, counter-transference, and resistance phenomena. Therapist uses his or her own unconscious responses to stimulate reparative forces in patients.

Transactional

Therapist focuses on loosening resistances and on uncovering the "games" people play in their social interactions. Therapist analyzes transactions and determines which ego-states (parent, child, adult) are relating in the group.

TABLE 1:3 continued

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Group-centered	Therapist deals with patients with unconditional positive regard and believes this will help them handle their problems. Therapist clarifies feelings which are expressed and conveys acceptance and respect.
Gestalt	The therapist is directive. Rules are introduced which help people stay with their feelings, heighten awareness, and communicate in the present tense. Therapist guides individuals away from explanations back to the bedrock of their experiences. Helps patients move from "why" to "what" and "how."
Bioenergetic	Therapist introduces breathing exercises which facilitate the expression and release of feelings. Members manipulate each other's bodies manually and engage in other forms of physical contact. Therapist encourages patients to express negative feelings before being affectionate. The body expression is analyzed and interpreted.
Encounter Marathon	Therapist creates a mood for intimate encounters by any means including the rejection of his or her therapeutic role and the assumption of the patient's role. Participants are encouraged to be bluntly honest regarding immediate feelings about themselves and others. Peak experiences achieved through direct onslaught on defense system. Group is responsible for developing its own structure.
T-group Sensitivity training	The group is responsible for creating its own structure, however trainers arrive and leave at pre-scheduled time. Trainers draw attention to what is going on in non-judgmental way. They ask questions but do not answer them. They remain objective and do not form personal relationships with group members.

Table 1:4  
GOALS

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FREUDIAN

Analytic

Patients should work through maladaptive behavior, achieve insight and psycho-sexual maturation.

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NEO-FREUDIAN

Adler

Therapy should increase patient's self respect and self-confidence, remove feelings of inferiority and enhance faith in one's own worth and ability to grow.

Horney

Patient should achieve an enduring character change and a restructuring of the personality.

Sullivan

Patient should become a well-integrated, socially effective person who sees the world as others in the culture do, and who behaves in ways that the rest of the culture would approve.

---

HUMANISTIC

Existential

Therapy should help liberate the individual's cognitive and creative potentials, break up compulsions, expand his or her feeling repertoire, and aid in self-discovery.

Transactional

Goal is to "cure" the patient. Contractual agreements set up for cure on individual basis. Authenticity in social behavior is a goal.

Group-centered

The therapy should aid in enhancing patient's self-esteem, capacity for self-direction and ability to cope with stressful situations.

Gestalt

Therapy aims to promote individual's self-confidence, autonomous functioning, and ability to deal with feelings.

Bioenergetic

Therapy should facilitate a personality change through activation of healing forces on a deep and powerful level.

TABLE 1:4 continued

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Encounter Marathon	Goal is personal growth, self-actualization and enhanced physical and mental awareness of oneself and others. Groups should counteract the pervasive sense of estrangement and alienation and the loss of personal identity produced by modern society.
T-group Sensitivity training	These groups are meant to heighten individual's interpersonal coping skills and add greater authenticity and self-awareness to life. They should help individuals realize how their behavior effects others.

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Note The information in Tables 1:1--1:4 was obtained from the author's readings (Berne, 1963; Corsini, 1984; DeBoard, 1978, and Kaplan & Saddock, 1971).

## Notes

1. It is interesting to note that much of the healing that took place in primitive societies was indeed group psychology in that it was usually performed as a ceremony. In ceremonial healings, the patient had to be healed within the context of the group or social setting--family, clan, tribe--to which he or she belonged (Ellenberger, 1970, chap.1).
2. Mindell uses the term "blank access" to describe those interventions which are designed to elicit unconscious projections and fantasies from the client. The statement or question made by the therapist is deliberately vague, for example, "you know what I am thinking," or "do IT." Thus the client's background fantasies and desires are free to emerge.

## II

### CROSS-DISCIPLINARY DEVELOPMENTS IN GROUP THEORY

In this chapter we will look at some of the theories which have emerged in the latter part of this century and have had tremendous impact on the way we think about life in groups and organizations. Many of the ideas which follow come from fields outside of psychology; some represent a collective effort by thinkers from various fields. In part two of this paper it will become apparent how these ideas have contributed to the development of Group Process Work; they constitute a rich part of its heritage.

In the early part of this century, group psychology, still in its infancy, focused primarily on the study of the individual within the group and was based on the bio-medical model of health and disease. As indicated in Tables 1:1--1:4 on pages 42-48, most forms of group therapy have been devoted to helping individuals learn more about their interpersonal relationship skills and neurotic mechanisms in order to help them become more well-integrated and effective members of society. In practice, few group psychologists have focused on the group as a whole.

The ideas which will be presented in this chapter have influenced our thinking about the group as a whole. The theories have been applied primarily to work with organizations and they offer us some new ways of thinking about society at large; they have had less application to groups which come together for psychological purposes. Our discussion in this chapter will be



primarily theoretical. We will look at how some of these ideas are applied in Group Process Work in part two of this dissertation.

### Organizational Development

It was not until organizations began eliciting the services of psychologists that an explicit focus on the group as a whole became important to those studying groups. Prior to the 1960s, psychologists were employed by industries primarily for the purposes of psychological testing and the selection and placement of employees. In the early sixties, a field called "Organizational Development," popularly known as OD, emerged from applied social sciences as "a process for helping organizations solve their problems and more fully realize their potentials" (Adams, 1984, p. vii).

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Japanese industries have become increasingly powerful on the world market and the supremacy of the American industrial enterprise has been challenged. As a result, American organizational theorists became more interested in OD and hoped it could solve some of industry's problems. A new field, "Organizational Transformation," (OT), which grew out of OD, is still in its early stages of emergence. Expanding OD, OT has shifted the focus from an emphasis on creating effective operations to a focus on helping organizations explore their purpose and vision and their relationship to the larger environment. Both OD and OT have become major foci for psychologists working with groups.

Many organizations operate in a machine-like fashion; they

are designed as tools or instruments created to achieve particular goals. Tasks and objectives have been central concepts for organizations throughout history. Organizations designed and operated according to a mechanical model are known as bureaucracies.

In the early part of this century, Max Weber, the German sociologist, (Gerth and Mills, Eds., chap. 8) outlined the characteristics of a bureaucracy, stressing its emphasis on speed, precision, clarity, reliability, efficiency, task division, and hierarchical supervision. Weber was interested in the social consequences of bureaucracy and recognized the negative effect it might have on the human spirit and the capacity for spontaneous action. Weber's ideas anticipated themes picked up later in the century. In 1969, Fritz Perls wrote about the adverse effect of organizations on human beings:

the age of industrialism brought about a new difficulty; today the soul of the workman is no longer of interest to the manufacturer. He needs . . . (only) those parts of the organism that are required for the work. This devitalization progresses further; individuality is being killed . . . upsetting the harmony of the personality. (Perls, 1969, p. 121)

Today, modern organizations are challenged to replace the mechanistic model with fresh concepts which take into account the human factor and the interdependence of technical and human relationships. Many of the developments in OD and OT have revolved around a shift from mechanistic to biologically-oriented thinking.

Theories of motivation pioneered by Abraham Maslow (1970) present the individual as a kind of "psychological organism" and

suggest that employees, the living part of the organization, must be motivated in order to work well. A biological metaphor has been employed and many of the new theories are built on the idea that individuals and groups, like biological organisms, are purposive entities which operate most effectively when their needs are satisfied (Morgan, 1985). Thus, organizations are now thought of as living systems and organizational theorists use a whole new set of ideas and concepts to study organizational behavior.

### Systems Theory

In the last three decades, the "systems approach" has had increasing influence in fields ranging from physics to agriculture to Organizational Development. Conceived in the 1950s by the Canadian theoretical biologist, Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), General Systems Theory is a "meta-discipline," a field of study which talks about other subjects. General Systems Theory does not replace existing disciplines; it points out similarities that exist in the theoretical constructs of existing subjects. In addition, it concentrates on the interrelationships between parts of a system, studies the properties that hold for systems in general, and discovers the principles which lie behind the existence of the whole (Checkland, 1981).

According to Von Bertalanffy, one is forced to deal with wholes or systems in all fields of knowledge. This implies a re-orientation in scientific thinking, and some theorists (Von Bertalanffy, 1968; Miller, 1978; Boulding, 1968) believe that

General Systems Theory has the ability to unify science and to help in the understanding of all kinds of systems: simple mechanistic systems, the biological cell, individuals, organizations, and society.

More than two thousand years ago, Aristotle argued that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. This holistic picture of the world was overthrown by the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century and replaced with Newton's physics which offered a mechanical view of the universe. Aristotle's "teleological" outlook, which claimed that objects in the world functioned in order to fulfill an innate purpose, had a metaphysical connotation and quickly became antiquated with the rise of Newton.

Biologists have been among the pioneers in establishing ways of thinking concerning wholes, and have tested the scientific method as outlined by Newton. Bertalanffy was an advocate of the "organismic" viewpoint in biology. There has been a debate in biology between mechanistic (reductionist) and organismic (holistic) viewpoints. The reductionists argued that living systems are complex machines which could be understood by studying their component parts, while the holists asserted that "the organic whole is not a multiple of ultimate units, but is, on the contrary, itself one single unit" (cited in Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 140). In viewing the single functioning unit, the organismic biologists referred to "entelechy"--a vital, spirit-like force which was said to reside inside the organism, unify its activities and urge it towards self-fulfillment. Although entelechy is no longer referred to by scientists, the notion of

purpose has been reinstated as an acceptable, intellectual concept in the field of biology (Checkland, 1981). The organismic biologists in the 1920s and 30s can be regarded as the early systems thinkers.

Organized complexity is the subject matter of the systems discipline today. Systems theorists recognize a hierarchical structure in the levels of a system's organization. Each emergent level is more complex than the level below and exhibits properties which do not exist at the lower level. The higher level is seen as the result or outcome of the properties existing at the lower levels.

'The shape of an apple,' although the result of processes which operate at the level of the cells, organelles and organic molecules which comprise apple trees . . . has no meaning at the lower level of description. The processes at those levels result in . . . a new level of complexity--that of the whole apple itself--which has emergent properties, one of them being the apple's shape. (Checkland, 1981, p. 78)

Hierarchy theory is fundamentally concerned with the differences between the levels. Its aim is to provide an account of the relationships between levels, the factors which generate new levels, and those which separate them. The hierarchies are characterized by processes of communication and control operating at the interfaces between the levels. The concepts of emergence and hierarchy, communication and control, are central root ideas in systems thinking.

#### Organizations as Open Systems

Within General Systems Theory, a distinction can be made between systems which are open to the environment and those which

are closed. The biological cell, the organ, a group, an organization, and society are all open systems. In open systems there is an exchange of information, energy, and material between the system and its outer environment. A steady state is created through a constant exchange and communication with the environment and the control and regulation of information exchange. In a closed system, the unchanging components inside the system's boundaries move towards a state of maximum randomness and settle into equilibrium.

This distinction becomes important in the application of systems thinking to groups and organizations. The mechanistic view of organizations is outdated. Such an approach regarded the organization as a closed system, moving in its own universe, in which it had to protect itself from environmental influences and concentrate on internal issues: high productivity, high employee morale, and efficient service. The growing instability of the environment, the constant external pressures on organizations, and the complexity of relationships both internally and with the environment have made it fruitful for organizational theorists to adopt an open systems view of organizations.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, the open-systems approach has become a dominant theoretical view of organizations (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Merry & Brown, 1987). The following are several themes which are of particular importance in applying open systems theory to work with organizations and groups.

1. A system is understood as a set of interrelated subsystems which are organized hierarchically. The individuals

and subsystems are independent wholes unto themselves as well as dependent members of a higher level system. "Real changes at any level of the system induce changes at all other levels" (Palazzoli et al., 1986, p. 49). Palazzoli cites numerous examples of interventions made by her team at one level which resulted in a restructuring of the entire organization and changes in the environment. In part two, we will see how this principle applies to global dreambody theory; I will describe cases in which changes made in one part of the group effect the whole of the group or system.

2. A system is viewed in relationship to its environment. An open system may selectively relate to its environment, maintaining necessary exchanges and excluding others. An organization, according to Merry and Brown (1987)

is not only reactive to environmental stimuli, or proactive in actively seizing environmental opportunities, but it actively effects and changes its environment. . . . An industry attempts to create customer tastes for its new products. It develops new sources of supply . . . and works on changing legislation in its favor. . . . it not only changes itself, but also the environment. (p. 191)

An open system is able to replenish itself by importing energy from the environment, transforming it into products or services, and then exporting it back into the environment. In a closed system there is no exchange of information with the environment, and thus the steady state travels towards increasing disorder.

Group Process Work takes this idea a step further. Both the organization and its environment are seen as part and parcel of a larger system--the global dreambody--which is organizing the

events and interactions both at all levels and between levels.

3. Every living system is the best explanation of itself at a given moment. In order to understand the system it is not important to search for past causes or look for future purposes or goals. The present, which is higher on the hierarchy, is said to contain and metacommunicate about the past (Palazzoli et al, 1986). Against this background we see why group therapists have found it useful to focus on the here and now. The past and future are embedded in the present behavior of the group or organization. This principle will be illustrated in the case study in part three of this dissertation.

The principle of "equifinality" says that because open systems interact constantly with a changing environment, similar causes may lead to different results and different causes may lead to similar results. An open system does not depend on its initial conditions as the sole determinant of its final state. "Systems with equifinal behavior appear to have 'goals of their own' and they manifest quasi purposive behavior" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 146).

4. The ability of a system to engage in self-regulating behavior rests in processes of information exchange involving feedback. This insight comes to us from a branch of systems theory known as cybernetics. Developed by Norbert Wiener in the 1940s, he defined it as "the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal" (cited in Checkland, 1981 p. 84).

Cybernetics comes from the Greek word meaning steersman. A steersman has the ability to modify and correct operations while



proceeding along course in order to reach the desired goal. This concept is central to cybernetics: the machine or animal is able to correct its performance according to the feedback which it receives during the process. A missile, for example, fired towards a moving plane, has the capacity to redirect its course, according to the feedback which it receives en route about various factors such as the momentary direction of the plane on which it is firing and the wind speed.

In negative feedback the modification which is made reduces the difference between actual and desired performance, hence correcting the performance in accordance with the original goal. Negative feedback is a kind of error detection and correction process. Thus, it serves to keep change and fluctuation to a minimum and to maintain the status-quo of the system.

Fluctuations may also be reinforced positively. In positive feedback modifications are supported which lead to greater system instability. In positive feedback the status quo is disturbed and the system must transform. Capra (1982) explains that a system's stability is

continually tested by its fluctuations, and at a certain moment, one or several of them may become so strong that they drive the system over an instability into an entirely new structure. . . . The stability of a system is never absolute. . . any system is always ready to transform itself, always ready to evolve. (p. 287)

In gestalt therapy with organizations (Merry & Brown, 1987), the importance of feedback mechanisms in dealing with organizational problems is stressed. Interventions made by gestalt therapists are

continually subject to modification as conditions change, with an important part of the process learning how to discriminate and delineate what these changing conditions are, perceiving what is in contrast to what . . . would be desirable. . . . As external and internal conditions change, this allows for appropriate modification of goals as well as a change in the organization itself. (p. 79)

In the remainder of this dissertation, we will see how the practice of Group Process Work may support a system's disturbances with positive feedback mechanisms. Thus, the status-quo is often disturbed and the system is encouraged to modify its goals in accordance with the momentary processes being expressed by the global dreambody.

5. Disequilibria and chaos within a system can become a source of order. This concept was formulated by Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine (1980) in his work on the fluctuations of dissipative structures. Dissipative structures are non-equilibrium, unstable, and continually fluctuating open systems: they can be anything from a chemical solution to a person, organization, or society. The more complex the system, the more it needs to dissipate energy in order to maintain its complexity. When the fluctuations in the system increase, the number of interactions increases and the elements begin to interact in a new way. The system is brought to a new state of greater complexity with a new set of rules. It reorganizes itself in the new state according to a non-linear process.

Merry and Brown (1987) suggest that maladaptive systems such as declining organizations do not function according to the theory of dissipative structures.

They move into an order of decreasing complexity, decreasing interdependence among subsystems, and greater entropy. . . .

Declining organizations behave as nonliving systems. They are unable to revitalize themselves . . . with the energy they derive from the environment. (p. 209)

Prigogine relates his theory to organizational and social issues. The theory describes how one steady state changes to another. It indicates that fluctuations which are caused by a minority in a group or organization can, through positive feedback mechanisms, cause the whole system to shift to a new order. We will see how this principle structures group life in chapter five. Prigogine's work gives credence to a recent observation by group psychologists which indicates that a process of chaos may be a creative step in a group's development (Mindell, 1989; Peck, 1987).

Organizational psychologists are continually being challenged to apply the principles of open systems theory in their work with organizations.

### Organizations as Brains

Organizational theorists have attempted to design organizations to be as flexible, resilient, and inventive as the human brain. In the history of brain research there have been numerous metaphors used in thinking about the brain. Of particular interest to organizational theorists has been the work of neuroscientist Karl Pribram (1971) at Stanford University. Interpreters of his work have employed a metaphor which compares the brain to a hologram.

Holography, one of the marvels of laser science, was invented in 1948 by Denis Gabor. It uses a lenseless camera to record information in such a way that the whole is stored in all

of the parts. One of the most remarkable features of a hologram is that if it is broken, any single piece can be used to reconstruct the entire image. In other words, the whole is enfolded or encoded in all of the parts so that each and every part also represents the whole.

According to Pribram, memory is encoded in the brain in accordance with holographic principles. Each nerve cell (neuron) in the brain is connected with hundreds of thousands of others, allowing a system of functioning which is both generalized and specialized. Everything is so interconnected that to some degree functions are distributed throughout the whole. Each neuron is believed to be capable of storing vast amounts of information. One part of the brain has an amazing capacity to be aware of what is going on in another part.

Because of these rich connections, there is always more exchange of information than may be needed at any given time. This "redundancy of functioning" ensures flexibility in operation. Redundancy facilitates a process of self-organization whereby internal structures and functions can be varied and new patterns of activity emerge with changing circumstances.

The self-organizing capacity is demonstrated by the fact that when brain damage occurs, it is common for other parts of the brain to take over the functions of the part which has been impaired. Similarly, considerable amounts of the motor cortex can be removed without paralyzing any one group of muscles; instead a general deterioration of motor function occurs.

It is easy to imagine the application of these holographic

principles to organizational design. Morgan (1985) outlines some of the essential factors. An organization designed in accordance with holographic principles must do the following :

- Get the whole into the parts.
- Create connectivity and redundancy.
- Create simultaneous specialization and generalization.
- Create a capacity to self organize. (chap. 4, p. 18)

The development of a holographic organization would not require a change in the basic structure of most organizations: rather, it would demand a re-orientation and exploitation of the potential which already exists.

The capacities required in the whole of an organization designed as a holographic system are encoded in all the parts. This allows the system to maintain a complete mode of functioning, even when some of the parts are removed or malfunctioning. Instead of adding new parts to a system, more functions are added to each of the parts. Thus, each part performs a great variety of functions, rather than one specialized activity. Such an organization possesses the flexibility to reorganize at all levels (Emery & Trist, 1960).

This theoretical construct is difficult to apply in many modern organizations where the knowledge and skill required for each part is vast. In order to apply a holographic design, roles must be vague, overlapping and ambiguous. There should be minimal predesign and individuals must be encouraged to take appropriate action according to the momentary situation. Theoretically, each individual would feel responsible for the whole, knowing that in some fashion he or she is the whole.

Involvement in such a group or organization has the

potential to be holistic and all absorbing. Because there are few predetermined rules guiding behavior, direction for the group as a whole must come from individual group members. Shared values and norms evolve organically, to be subsequently challenged with changing circumstances.

Such an organization represents a hope for the future. A few highly innovative groups have already begun to find means of organizing according to holographic principles. These new ideas are emerging trends which have yet to be applied practically on a wide scale.

### The Holomovement

The holographic paradigm is being applied in other fields of study as well (Wilbur, Ed., 1982). Quantum physicist David Bohm (1980) goes beyond the organization and employs a holographic metaphor to outline his physical theory and world view.

Bohm postulates a universe of unbroken wholeness in which space and time are no longer dominant factors. The unbroken wholeness or "implicate order" is carried by the holomovement, an indefinable and immeasurable undivided totality. The implicate order is enfolded within every region of space and time in the same sense that every point on a hologram contains information about the whole image. When specialized forms within the totality manifest or unfold, this is called the explicate order. The explicate order reveals forms which appear as solid and tangible: what is generally known as reality. In the explicate order, each event lies in its own region of space and time.

Bohm understands both the "cosmos and consciousness as a

single unbroken totality of movement" (p. 172). He recognizes that the full set of laws governing the totality is unknown. The holomovement involves both matter and consciousness at once. It is at this level, where mind and matter are of the same movement, that Jung's concept of synchronicity (1952), the meaningful, acausal connection between physical and psychic events, becomes explicable. The existence of such a holomovement gives credence to the concept of the global dreambody, in which psyche and matter are connected and events are both causally and synchronistically organized.

#### Meaning and Purpose in Organizations

Charles Kiefer and Peter Stoh offer yet another viewpoint on which to base the practice of Organizational Development. Innovators in the field, they introduce the concept of the "metanoic" organization, from the Greek word "metanoia," meaning "fundamental shift of mind" (1984, p. 172). The traditional emphasis on goals, solutions, and rational analysis takes the back seat to an emphasis on purpose, vision, systems structure, and integration of intuition and reason.

Their emphasis on purpose brings the concept of teleology to organizational work. Kiefer and Stroh attempt to create a situation where the organizational purpose is an extension of the individual's personal life purpose. The individual identifies with the organization and feels responsible for his or her own work, for the whole, and for helping the organization to realize its innate purposes. Peters and Waterman (1982) authors of In Search of Excellence, a very popular book about several of the

most successful American companies, found that employees perform most creatively and enthusiastically when they believe they are contributing to a purpose which is larger than themselves.

The individual's need for meaning in life was proven in several recent studies. A comprehensive study on American values done by Yankelovich (1981) revealed a "grass-roots shift from an 'instrumental' to a 'sacred' world" (cited in Kiefer & Stron, 1984, p. 173). In her survey of 60,000 Americans, Sheehy (1981) sought to identify characteristics associated with well-being and general life satisfaction. The most important factor was the presence of meaning and direction in life. More and more people seem to be seeking work which, beyond offering financial security, is intrinsically meaningful. A sense of organizational purpose may be an important factor in fulfilling this need.

Gestalt therapists working with organizations recognize this need. Perls believed the discrepancy between organizational and individual goals was one of the most basic and enduring dilemmas of organizational life. He stressed that the relationship between the individual and the organization should be one of mutuality. "A sound holism requires mutual identification. The club which does not identify with its members--protecting their interests and compensating them for their devotion--will disintegrate" (1969, p. 144).

Peters and Waterman (1982) demonstrate that it is desirable and profitable for a business to be spiritually oriented in this sense. The authors studied 75 companies which they judged excellent according to financial and other measures. One of the eight characteristics they all shared was that the companies



helped employees find transcendent meaning in their work.

#### Organization as Culture: Myth and Ritual

Groups and organizations with similar structures, procedures, and goals may all have very different "feeling tones." Organizations have personalities; they may be likened to mini-societies with patterns of culture and sub-culture. Members share certain understandings and ways of conducting business. This intangible concept is identified by Gareth Morgan (1985) as "corporate culture." Every organization may be regarded as a distinct culture with a set of myths and rituals of its own.

Harrison Owen (1981), leader in the field of Organizational Transformation, purports that understanding an organization's myths and rituals can lead to strategies for change and development. Identifying what Owen calls the "mythic element" of an organization's culture permits one to see standard procedures and everyday activities in a new light; they become essential ingredients which create the organization's story and identity.

An organization's myths reflect beliefs and values which are widely accepted by the majority of group members; the myths serve to define the institution and structure its reality. The organization's myths are reflected in the body of stories which emerge in a group and are told repeatedly. Story telling is often largely unconscious and unintentional. If a story is told repeatedly, it is symbolic of the group's myth or identity. However, myths have a life cycle--they are born, grow and may even die. "Myths die when they are no longer useful to interpret a changed world" (Owen, 1981, p. 222).

The active side of myth is ritual. Rituals are dramatic enactments of myths in the present time and may take the form of commonplace and routine activities. If we disrupt the normal pattern or ritual then the implicit and taken for granted rules which have created the forms of behavior become obvious. For example, in many organizations, all employees sit in the same place at every staff meeting. If a newcomer enters and naively sits in the director's chair, he or she has unknowingly breached the ritual and challenged the myth.

Life within a given culture flows smoothly when one's behavior conforms with the myths and rituals widely accepted by the culture. These routines are rich in symbolic and hidden meaning and play an important role in understanding the way the group really works.

According to Owen, the first step in making myths useful to the group is to make them explicit. When stated consciously, myths can define the group, initiate new members, sustain the group through difficult times, and provide patterns for getting through hardships. Myths may also challenge the group by inspiring it to live the ideals and dreams which it professes.

Organizations suffer from mythic dissonance. Competing value systems are held by various sub-cultures within the group. Interestingly, the successful organizations studied by Peters and Waterman (1982) have found ways of identifying a common set of meanings and values within the diversity.

Owen points out that myths are powerful, conservative, and change slowly. He says that if "outright 'war' is to be avoided,

they should not be attacked directly" (1981, p. 223). He stresses that organizational change can not be accomplished by intervening on the structural, mechanical level alone. If the level of myth and ritual is touched, transformation is achieved and new myths emerge. Owen has developed a body of interventions which can be used to apply some of these ideas. In part two, we will discuss the theory and interventions used by Group Process Work facilitators in order to deal with the apparent and underground myths of a group or organization.

### The Anthropos Myth

One of the most prevalent themes in the creation myths of ancient civilizations portrays the creator as an anthropos--a huge godlike figure. In many myths, the anthropos creates the world by destroying itself and using its own body parts to form the basic things of the universe. This creation story can be found in Chinese, Babylonian, Germanic and Hindu cosmogonies. In similar versions of the creation, the immense anthropos is the earth itself. The Vedic God Indras is a huge living hologram whose parts mirror the patterns in the whole (von Franz, 1972).

The anthropos myths reveal a pattern which is reflected in some of our modern theories about groups and about the universe as a whole. Anthropomorphic ideas are evident in the metaphors which compare groups to living systems, brains, and cultures and are essential to the global dreambody concept as well. All these ideas indicate that there is something organized and human-like about group phenomena.

The notion that the earth itself behaves like a living

organism is gaining a foothold in the scientific community today. British biologist James Lovelock (1979) has formulated a theory which he calls the Gaia hypothesis, after the Greek earth goddess. Lovelock proves that the atmosphere, oceans, soil, and living things are part of a giant interdependent system. He compares this to a planetary being or anthropos figure who has the ability to maintain the exact conditions it needs in order to survive .

It is noteworthy that a scientific theory which has a Greek goddess and an anthropomorphic principle as its centerpiece was written up in the very mainstream Newsweek magazine (Cowley, 1988) and is gaining a scientific reputation. The ancient mythical patterns which revealed human-like principles at various levels of creation have not disappeared; they have emerged to find their place in the myths of the modern world.

#### Morphogenetic Fields

Myths influence how we perceive reality; when we bring a set of beliefs to a situation, those myths or beliefs create a lense through which we determine what is real. Additionally, our experiences in groups indicate that our beliefs seem to reinforce or even create similar beliefs in others.

Rupert Sheldrake's hypothesis of formative causation (1987) brings scientific support to such experiences and intuitions about group life. He introduces an interpretation of physical and biological phenomena which, like systems theory, has its roots in the organismic branch of biology. Organismic biologists described a special physical field--the morphogenetic field--

which influences the development of the form and the organization of systems.

Sheldrake advanced the concept and proposed that morphogenetic fields impose patterned restrictions on the development of form and organization at all levels of complexity in the fields of biology, chemistry, and physics. According to his hypothesis, systems derive their form from past systems; the field of all past systems exists in all similar present systems. Past systems effect present systems by a cumulative influence across boundaries which defy normal ideas of time and space.

This hypothesis, concerned with repetition of pattern, is popularly known as the "hundredth monkey effect." If a hundred monkeys learn a particular form of behavior in a particular part of the world, that behavior becomes much easier for monkeys to learn in another geographical region of the world, even at some time in the future. The learning occurs despite the fact that there is no conceivable way for the monkeys to communicate in ways that are presently known. According to the theory, the more the given pattern of behavior is repeated, the stronger its "morphic resonance" will become and the easier the new behavior will be for others to learn.

Sheldrake's hypothesis is relevant to work with groups and organizations. It indicates that we are influenced by a kind of blueprint which provides the pattern for our activities. The myths behind an organization's behavior may be part of its cultural inheritance, picked up through the morphic resonance. Behavior and activities may be inherited. This questions the concept of free will and implies that the ability to pick up a

new myth or transform an old one depends on what is or has been happening in the environment or larger field.

### Making Connections

The theory reminds us of several concepts we have studied thus far: it is consistent with the systems axiom which states that the past is embedded in the present and that changes on one level of the system produce changes in the whole. The holographic concept that the whole is implicated in all the parts is quite apparent. Jung's concept of the archetypes and his notion of synchronicity seem to be included in Sheldrake's ideas. Like Sheldrake, Mindell believes we are influenced by a kind of blueprint or field which provides the patterns for our activities. He calls it the global dreambody.

The existence of such a field must have been intuited by Kurt Lewin when he said that "behavior is a function of person and environment" (cited in Moszak, p. 56). This concept was the basis of his field theory. Perls' thinking about the relationship between the individual and the group also anticipated the morphogenetic field idea. He said

the individual is inevitably, at every moment, a part of some field. His behavior is a function of the total field which includes both him and his environment. The nature of the relationship between him and his environment determines the human being's behavior . . . Each is what it is . . . because of its relationship to the other and the whole. (1980, p. 16)

Since the late 1960s, the relationship between the system (individual, group, organization) and the environment has been a major focus in organizational research and theory (Terreberry,

1968; Emery & Trist, 1965; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Sheldrake's research introduces the radical idea that our activities in one part of the world may influence other events in another part of the world. If indeed, our activities do effect events on other parts of the planet, we might be inspired to think and behave utterly differently in our individual localities.

Similar insights have been revealed through research in various fields. Theorists across disciplines postulate that the world is governed by a dreamlike and acausal field which lies beneath the conflicts, tensions, pains and pleasures which we experience in group life. Whether we refer to an open system, the holomovement, purposes and myths, Gaia, the morphogenetic field, or the global dreambody, we can see that all groups share certain characteristics, mirroring the larger field of which we are all a part.

### III

#### THE PROCESS PARADIGM: A NEW APPROACH

We have identified two main directions which have emerged through work with groups in this century: we've looked at the work of psychologists, which has theorized about group process, group development, and the effect of the group on the individual, and which has focused primarily on the psychological process of the individual within the context of a group setting. We've also taken a look at some of the theories and meta-theories which have emerged in the last fifty years and which are presently being applied to work with organizations. These theories have emphasized a focus on the group as a whole and are less concerned with individual group members.

Process-oriented Psychology integrates the above directions by including individual and group phenomena in a single theoretical and practical framework. With its introduction of the concept of the global dreambody, Process Work embraces concepts included in both group psychology and Organizational Development.

In this chapter we take a look at some of the philosophical and theoretical principles in the background of Process Work. We focus primarily on the development of what are known as "global" concepts in Process-oriented Psychology, and we investigate their relationship to and roots in work with individuals. In part two, we will study Group Process Work in great detail. Although Process Work developed and grew out of work with individuals, for



our purposes here we are interested in the system primarily from the perspective of the group.

### The Global Dreambody

The global dreambody is an organizing pattern whose messages unfold on the individual, group, and collective level. It is a dreamlike field which influences events and organizes information in both conscious and unconscious realms. "It binds us together; it mysteriously organizes our personal psychology and connects us to the inner (and outer) world of others" (Mindell, 1987, p. 5).

This radical notion is similar to several of the ideas discussed in the previous chapters; however, it differs in a noteworthy way: the theory which has been developed around global dreambody ideas has a very practical application in Process Work. Mindell has created a system which attempts to decode and process the messages of the global dreambody and to help that information express itself fully at individual, relationship, family, group, and global levels.

The global dreambody concept includes many of the concepts outlined in chapter two which are presently being applied to work with organizations. Mindell (1987) says

the global dreambody, including field, hologram, dreambody and anthropos theories, helps organize what we see, feel, hear from individuals, groups, couples, families. . . . It is an anthropos figure with a process, life and death of its own.

The global dreambody operates like an individual dreambody by organizing the patterns, dreams and fantasies of the individual parts. . . . Yet at the same time, and from a larger viewpoint, the global dreambody is a non-causal field with synchronistic connections which are organized by patterns without any known, outside, mechanical influences on the parts. In addition, the global dreambody operates like a hologram insofar as its individual parts reflect the same patterns as all the other parts and of the

whole: (1987, p. 105)

### Individual and Group Awareness

Originally, the dreambody concept was applied to work with individuals; Process-oriented Psychology was developed primarily as a system of psychotherapy to be practiced in a private setting. In recent years within the Process Work community, there has been much research and activity focusing on group work and global issues, coupled with an attempt to reach beyond the population of "growers" fortunate enough to be interested in their personal development. Trainers of Process Work have become quite interested in working with groups and communities which are not normally touched by psychotherapy.

When pondering this development, I initially assumed that members of the Process Work community had become interested in groups and social issues as a result of many years of internal and personal work. This was a somewhat naive assumption which reflected a linear and causal way of thinking coupled with a cultural bias. It was based on a belief that people should work on their inner development before they could contribute to the collective in a meaningful way.

In the 1960s and 70s, this emphasis on individual personal growth work was very popular in some parts of western culture, and resulted in the emergence of many new psychotherapeutic systems. Therapy became fashionable. Those who were influenced by this movement and became intensely involved with various forms of self-awareness projects have been referred to in a derogative manner as the "me generation."

New-age thinkers criticize such self-centeredness, call it egotism, and urge people to go beyond their petty motives. Although such selfless virtues may sound admirable, eliminating egotism would neither be possible nor desirable. Egotism and self-centeredness are forms of inner work which may be very important, especially in cases where people or groups feel insecure and need to focus on themselves in order to develop and strengthen their identities. Egotism is necessary as long as people have trouble believing in their personal opinions (Mindell, in press, p. 12). However, it is also one-sided and therefore limited; it is compensated by a very different attitude in various cultures in other parts of the world.

The main concern of the Pueblo Indian, for example, is always with the group and its welfare. The Pueblos had great difficulties in the white people's schools because for Pueblos, competition is repugnant. Competing with someone else is like warring with another part of yourself! The idea that the boundaries of a person end at the border of his or her physical body is a culturally specific concept which the Pueblos, among others, do not accept (Hall, 1977, p. 231). In Kenya, the first and foremost focus for many people is the group. A Kenyan student of Process Work explained that in his culture, group feeling and group awareness is quite ordinary for most people (Ikiugu, personal communication, February, 1989). He explained that for many Kenyans, it is difficult to focus on individuality and personal needs separate from the family and culture.

The process paradigm sees both self-awareness and group awareness as necessary and valuable components of a global or

holistic viewpoint. A global attitude requires the ability to move fluidly between both positions: at one moment it is important for an individual to be extremely egotistical; in the next moment he or she may be pressed to be totally focused on the group. A group, as well, may focus in one minute on its totality and in the next on its individual parts. At yet another time, it may be right for a person or group to adopt a neutral position--identifying with the stream and movement of the process itself and recognizing both states as momentary flashes in the continuous flow of events.

Process Work integrates eastern and western, ancient and contemporary, selfless and self-centered attitudes by recognizing that a rigid distinction between personal and world work is, in a certain sense, artificial. The ancient Chinese Taoists teach us that working on oneself means working on the whole world. In the Tao Te Ching, the classical Taoist text by Lao Tzu, the sage claims, "I take no action and people are reformed. I enjoy peace and people become honest. I do nothing and people become rich. I have no desires and people return to the good and simple life" (Gia-Fu Feng & English, Trans., 1972, p. 57).

Taoist thinking permeates the philosophical background of Process-oriented Psychology. The Taoists stressed that if one person is whole, the entire world falls into place, in a kind of magical, synchronistic fashion. Mindell extends this idea and says that

when we work on ourselves, on a client's individual problem or a family difficulty, we are doing, in our own individual way, world politics. Inversely, the personal body problems and relationship difficulties that we have are . . .

influenced, perhaps even organized by the development of the larger anthropos in which we live. This anthropos then is not really outside of us; it is a part of our psychology. The world is a channel for us, a dream figure, a part of our personal story. (1987, p. 121)

Mindell goes on to say that part of our collective task involves our ability to understand and to work with groups and the world at large as if they are parts of ourselves, and to realize that we are responsible for both our personal growth and for the planet's development. Having both group and personal awareness is essential, not just theoretically but also practically.

Imagine what the world would be like if people would read the newspapers as if they were reading about themselves. When they read about a lethal gas leak poisoning thousands of people, they would also be concerned about their own smoking habit. When they got upset with a dictator for unjustly imprisoning people, they would find out how they do that to themselves and others, as well as considering how to deal with the actual dictator. (1987, p. 121)

### The Channel Concept

The notion that the world is a part of, or a channel for, the individual's psychology belongs to a larger body of theory which forms the backbone of Process-oriented Psychology. The word "process" refers to the flow of information in and between channels in an individual, couple, family, group, or the world (Mindell, 1985a). The practitioner of Process Work, or process worker, deals with information by working with it in the channel in which it appears, amplifying it (making it stronger), and following it through other channels. Process Work can be applied to a broad spectrum of human behavior and situations. Process workers must therefore recognize the myriad ways in which

information flows within an individual, between the individual and his or her environment, and in a group.

A channel theory has been established in order to work with individual processes (Bandler & Grinder, 1975; Mindell, 1985). Process work has identified six main channels which occur most frequently in work with individuals from North America, Europe, Australia, Africa, India, Japan, and South America, as well as two additional channels which seem to appear with increasing regularity.

The first group of channels are differentiated according to the sensory mode which carries the information. An individual sees, hears, has body feelings (proprioception) or moves (kinesthesia). The other two channels are composite; they can't be attributed to any one mode of perception. An individual's awareness often flows in the relationship or the world channel. Parapsychological and spiritual channels are appearing more and more often and detailed study of these modes of perception is presently underway.

It is fitting to think of the channels as wires through which information travels. If someone is interested in dreams or is having fantasies, information is flowing through the visual channel. Hearing voices, listening, speaking, and singing all indicate the use of the auditory channel. Proprioception is characterized by internal body feeling: pressure, heat, pain, heaviness, and so forth. When a person's process flows in the movement channel, parts of the body move, or movement such as shaking or quivering is experienced internally.

The relationship and world channels are more complex and are

not characterized by specific, sensory-grounded information. When a person discusses fights, problems at home, or falling in or out of love, the relationship channel is apparent. An individual whose process is flowing in the world channel is interested in what appear initially as "outer" situations: career, politics, social or environmental issues, and nature; or they may experience synchronistic events in which the world seems to be acting as part of their personal psyche.

We all identify with, or "occupy," the experiences we are having in certain channels; this means we are aware of what is happening and can exercise some degree of control in organizing the occurrences. Other experiences we disregard, do not identify with, or attempt to repress or forget. Those experiences are "unoccupied," or more chaotic and unknown to us; the information challenges our identity in some way and we often feel ourselves to be at its mercy.

For example, if you identify with the image you have of yourself as a responsible worker (occupied visual), you may disregard your burning fever (unoccupied proprioception or kinesthesia) until it makes you collapse. The fever itself has a personality which is quite different than the one with which you identify. When you are giving a lecture (occupied auditory), you prefer to repress nightmarish images from your dreams, although they seem to keep appearing without your control (unoccupied visual). If you are walking in the city, enjoying the company of your friends (occupied relationship), you may want to forget what you read in the newspaper that morning (unoccupied world). How

typical that everytime you pass a newsstand, the newspaper headlines seem to pop out at you!

Because of our ordinary human need to maintain our identities, it is difficult to integrate and identify with the messages and information in our unoccupied channels. We cast off unwanted material and reject parts of ourselves and the world which threaten the definitions of who we are. Mindell writes,

we try to forget our bad dreams and not worry about little body problems. We quiet loud children, teenage frustrations and the neighbor's car. We medicate psychosis, take aspirin for headaches, forget the conflicts we read about in newspapers and try to maintain our individual, family, group and national identity. We give negative feedback to change so unconsciously, automatically and rapidly that we think maintaining stability is a natural law! (in press, p. 56)

Our awareness and occupation of the world channel in particular is becoming increasingly important. It is no longer sufficient for us to think of outer events as separate from ourselves. When we occupy the world channel, we recognize that the problems of our ailing globe are also personal problems and that our ability to work on supposedly outer world problems may be intimately connected to the solution of our body and relationship difficulties.

### Process Structures

Process work has adopted a neutral set of terminology to describe those processes with which we identify and those which are further from our awareness. The set of experiences associated with the identity, which we are often able to organize according to our intentions, is known as the primary process. Our primary processes generally flow through our occupied



channels.

Chaotic, far-away, or disturbing experiences which lie outside the domain of the known personality are referred to as secondary processes. The experiences in the unoccupied channels where events happen to us without our consent are secondary processes. Generally speaking, the painful, aggressive, chaotic, or magnificent events occurring on the planet or in nature which disturb, delight, or mystify us represent aspects of our secondary processes.

The terms primary and secondary refer to the distance of the process from the individual's awareness. Mindell has chosen not to use the terms conscious and unconscious, because the processes are not static; they are changing, even flipping, all the time. As one integrates a part which has been secondary, it gets incorporated into the identity and may become primary. Sometimes, the previous primary identity slips away and must find its temporary home in the unoccupied channels. The terms conscious and unconscious do not describe such a fluid process. In addition, it is often the case that both processes happen unconsciously, outside of our awareness.

#### Entropy and Metacommunication

What happens to the experiences flowing in our unoccupied channels? Where does the information go when we cast it off? Does our very ordinary human need to maintain an identity require us to imprison and reject the dissident factors that threaten our security? Can we become more democratic in regard to our own experiences without inviting chaos?

The first law of thermodynamics has taught us that it is impossible to destroy energy in the physical realm (Rifkin, 1980). This holds true for psychic energy as well (Jung, 1948). Process Work has revealed that psychic energy is information and can not be thrown away; when disregarded, it finds other channels through which to express itself. A fiery and intense personality may express itself in a burning fever if it is ignored by the primary process. When suppressed by aspirin, it may appear as a blazing fire in dreams and fantasies. If those are disregarded, fiery people in wild affects may appear synchronistically in the environment. All information remains in the system, lurking in channels which are far from awareness and difficult to access. Knowledge of channel theory allows the process worker to track down and follow information in channels which are not easily picked up by the client's awareness.

According to the second law of thermodynamics, there is a tendency in a closed part of a system for events to move towards increasing disorder or entropy (Rifkin, 1981; Zukav, 1979). This means that the total amount of energy in the system becomes more chaotic and less available for work. This principle is said to apply to molecules, living cells, and to people but does not hold true on the quantum level. Mindell's work with individuals and groups indicates that in the human realm, the entropy law is also defied.

In a human system . . . apparently lost, unconscious information and entropic behavior can be accessed with awareness to create new forms of behavior. We are capable of delving into the nature of our illnesses and discovering lost information and meaning there. (in press, p. 13)

The scientific community has refused to acknowledge the full implications of the entropy law (Rifkin, 1980). Scientists have repeatedly attempted to challenge its fatalistic implications, perhaps intuiting that something more hopeful could be possible. In the late 19th century, the physicist, Maxwell, hypothesized that the entropy law could be reversed if awareness were introduced into the system. Maxwell imagined a little man, now known as Maxwell's demon, who lived in a closed box and could monitor and direct the activities occurring in the system. In the physical world, such a demon was never produced and the entropy law holds.

This inner demon, which maintains a neutral viewpoint and follows the workings of the system with awareness, is known in Process Work as the metacommunicator. Among the tasks of the metacommunicator is the ability to observe and intervene in the relationship between parts. The presence of the metacommunicator prevents the system, whether it is an individual, a group, or a whole community, from moving rapidly toward increasing entropy.

If some form of consciousness is present in the troubled planetary system we live in, then the global degeneration and misery predicted by the second law might be reversed. But how many of us are conscious when caught in the midst of our own family systems, groups and large national problems! (Mindell, in press, p. 13)

At the present time, it is vital that we learn to transform our waste products--both physical and psychic--into usable energy. Presently the role for the aware metacommunicator, who is able to facilitate this transformation, is weakly populated both within individuals and in the global community. Process Work trains facilitators to occupy this gravely needed role. We

will look at the tools which the process worker uses in order to pick up and process information in part two of this paper.

### The Information Float

Process workers are only one of many groups which are presently concerned with information and information processing. According to John Naisbitt, author of Megatrends (1982), our society is in the middle of a mega-shift from an industrial to an information society.

Naisbitt points out that the "life channel of the information age is communication" (p. 14). One of the goals of the information society is to communicate more efficiently, thereby reducing the "information float." The term information float refers to the amount of time that information spends in the communication channel, between sender and receiver, as in the time that a letter spends in the mail. Faster and more sophisticated information technology is rapidly making communication across great distances almost instantaneous.

Process workers are also interested in reducing the information float which, according to Mindell, creates a "fog of uncertainty between people . . . clogs up the atmosphere and ruins the group" (in press, p. 17). Float is created in the following way:

we ignore dreams and body experiences which threaten our present identities. We focus on messages we can see or hear and rarely pick up information coming in body channels or through relationships . . . .

[A] group focuses only on what is being discussed . . . [and misses] information coming from other channels such as movement or feelings. . . the outside world or the dreams of its members. Channel incongruity creates an information float or dump, like a garbage dump, which festers if it is

not recycled. (pp. 17-18)

A group, like an individual, uses channels to express intended and unintended messages. The primary processes of a group are expressed in certain commonly used and occupied channels such as seeing and hearing, while the secondary group processes use other less known channels. The information which is not perceived consciously by the group remains stuck in unoccupied channels and creates the group's information float. In part two of this paper we will take a look at the many channels which a group uses in order to express its wholeness.

#### A Group Channel: "The City Shadow"

Mindell first noticed that groups and collectives also use unoccupied channels to express certain unwanted or secondary characteristics in his work with psychiatric and social work cases. He came to the conclusion that the client of the city's police, social work, and psychiatric institutions is the "identified patient of the community; he channels its repressed and unrealized psychology" (1988, p. 162).

Mindell believes these so-called "crazy," "psychopathic," or "addicted" clients are stuck in an "extreme state" that is, "a state which is normally antagonistic or unusual in a given community" (1988, p. 174). People in extreme states lack a metacommunicator; there is no one at home in the system who has awareness about the inner workings of the system and can communicate with others about what is going on. Without any awareness, the system appears chaotic and entropic.

Because these people find themselves in states which

directly compensate the collective identity of the group to which they belong, Mindell refers to them as "city shadows" (1987). Jung coined the term "shadow" to label the parts of a person of which he or she is ashamed; the uncivilized desires and emotions that are incompatible with social standards and with the persona. Jung writes:

the shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort . . . it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for self-knowledge. (quoted in Singer, 1973, p. 215)

Mindell expanded the concept of a personal shadow and recognized that the city has a shadow as well; the group uses certain individuals as channels through which to express split off parts of its own wholeness.

The shadow is like the city's dream portraying its neglected gods, the hopelessness it will not admit, its withdrawal from superficial communication, its suicidal tendencies, mania, addiction, murderous rage and hypersensitivity. The shadow reminds us of the smoldering revolution we perceive only in the dark of the night. (1988, p. 162)

The city's shadow contributes to the collective information float in the same way our own body symptoms, dreams and relationship issues, when they are left unprocessed, contribute to an internal information float. Part of our collective task involves becoming aware of the messages which our collective shadows express. If we live them consciously, we can expand the identities of the groups to which we belong.

We have a few models of courageous individuals who work on their own body and relationship processes, reduce their internal

information floats, and integrate the mercurial spirits which are trying to come to life. Those individuals have fluid identities, always surprising us with some new and previously unknown aspects of their personalities. Groups tend to have even more rigid identities than individuals; we are in want of models for groups which are able to take this risk. How different the world would be if groups were willing to pick up the information which their collective shadows carry!

Process-oriented Psychology shows that a rigid distinction between individual and group as a whole phenomena has little practical significance. Our personal development is coupled with the development of the groups to which we belong. In part two we will look at the theoretical constructs and interventions which have been developed to aid and enhance our development at both levels.





PART II  
PROCESS WORK WITH GROUPS



## IV

### BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

In part two of this dissertation I outline the theory and practice of Group Process Work. In this chapter we will begin with a look at some of the fundamental principles, goals, and assumptions underlying process work with groups.

Groups have been variously defined by psychologists, sociologists, and politicians. Among other definitions, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines a group as "a number of individuals assembled together or having some unifying relationship."

Process Work extends the dictionary's definition and notices that although a group does indeed consist of a number of people with a unifying or common belief, every group contains a minority as well. The group minority does not participate in the unifying relationship of the majority and is generally terrified to express its opinions. Majority and minority positions together define the group (Mindell, class, May 27, 1988).

A group can also be characterized by its specific and unique pattern of communication (Mindell, class, Feb. 26, 1989). Every group has its own form of communicating and relating. Although group members are often unconscious of their specific methods of communication, they often notice and project both favored and rejected patterns of communication onto the identified group leader.

Process Work employs several metaphors with which to discuss

groups: a group can be likened to an individual searching to become whole. It can be seen as a garden which provides the earth for people to grow into their strength and leadership abilities. A group has even been called a "living mass of trouble, looking for help, that realizes itself when one of its parts gets hurt" (Mindell, seminar, April 1987).

### A Teleological Perspective

Group Process Work is a philosophy and a set of interventions designed to study the events of group life. It aims to amplify and unravel that which is happening in order to make it useful and inspiring for group members. The basic philosophy, as formulated by Mindell, states that "those things which we are consciously and unconsciously doing, will aid us in solving problems and enriching our own experiences" (in press, p. 63). Group Process Work interventions appreciate the unconscious and conscious behavior which the group is presently displaying and enable the group to make its behavior even more accessible and useful.

In the background of the Process Work paradigm is a belief that everything which a group, individual, couple, or family needs can be found in the behavior and signals of the entity asking for help. In regard to group work, this belief assumes a basic wisdom at the core of a group and an innate tendency for it to become whole.

The notion of teleology, as Jung (1948/1960) applied it to individual psychology, is extended to group work. Within groups lies an implicit movement towards a meaningful goal: the group's

expression of its wholeness. Just as it is impossible for an individual to simply get rid of certain aspects of his or her personality, the group cannot simply dispose of its deviants. If the disturber is removed from the group, his or her signals, behavior, or messages will appear within the group in another form. The relation of this concept to role theory will be discussed in detail in chapter eight.

Process Work assumes an inherent wisdom and purpose in disturbing, random, and apparently chaotic group phenomena. However, Mindell stresses that "this wisdom does not operate overtly, unless the field we live in is made conscious to us all. Only when all of its parts are represented and appreciated . . . does the field manifest its wisdom" (in press, p. 109).

Unconscious, unintended, and challenging communications are seen as meaningful, necessary, and potentially growth-producing for the group if they can be unraveled with awareness. This, however, is not a simple task. In order for the group's wisdom to become apparent, all the parts of a group must be given a chance to express themselves to completion. Partially, insufficiently, or unconsciously expressed emotions, feelings, needs, and criticisms contribute to the group's information float and pollute its atmosphere. The facilitator should notice how various wanted and unwanted group parts express themselves, both consciously and unconsciously. Only when both majority and minority opinions make their contribution to the group's life can the whole of the group be expressed.

### Discovering the Field

In regard to its goals, Group Process Work can be immediately differentiated from organizational work and to an even greater degree from forms of group therapy. Both OD and group therapy adopt a set of goals oriented towards the group majority.

In accordance with its philosophy, the most encompassing goal of Process Work with groups is to discover the background field or dream that binds the group, and to give this field expression. The background field includes both majority and minority opinions, normal and deviant forms of behavior. Allowing the field or global dreambody to express itself often has the effect of changing the group into a community with a heart and wisdom at its center.

The goal in most organizational work is to create a more effective organization. This refers to the degree to which the economic and productivity goals of the organization's management are met and the extent to which the organization provides a quality of work life that meets the overall needs of its employees (Nadler, Hackman and Lawler, 1979).

According to Kaplan and Saddock (1971), group psychotherapy consists of "a group of patients joined together under the leadership of a therapist . . . for the treatment of each patient's emotional disorders" (p. 843). The authors state that ". . . group psychotherapy has only one raison d'etre--to benefit the individual" (p. 82). The most common and basic goal in most group psychotherapeutic schools (see Tables 1:1--1:4 on pp. 42-48) is the elimination of maladaptive behavior and the

achievement of a level of functioning consonant with the individual's ego capacities: the more ideal goal beyond symptom relief is the "maturation of the personality" (p. 32).

The goals of group therapy require that individual group members adapt to the majority's standards. The focus is on the individual, and the deviant within the group is seen as pathological. A careful effort is made by the group leader to thoroughly screen all potential group members in order to choose individuals who will fit well with one another (Kaplan and Saddock, 1971, p. 50). An individual whose maladaptive behavior presents a significant disturbance to group functioning may be asked to leave the group (Peck, 1987). Group dynamics, or groups as whole phenomena, receive focus only to the extent that they strengthen group cohesion or further the development of individual patients (Kaplan and Saddock, 1971).

Sociological interpretations purport that such forms of group therapy work in so far as group pressures cause individuals to accept the standards and images being presented to them by the group. Erving Goffman (1961) and R. D. Laing (1968) have described how these social pressures work in mental institutions. Both suggest that psychiatric patients "sell-out" to the doctor's interpretation of their existence.

Process Work with groups may occasionally include some of the goals of group therapy or organizational psychology if those goals are genuinely consonant with the background process that is trying to happen in the group. Process Work does not subscribe to a pre-determined focus on either the individual or on the

group as a whole. Rather, process workers notice that the group itself sometimes focuses on the individual; in certain moments a group's task may be to help a single person to wake up and become whole. On the other hand, sometimes the background field is interested in the group as a whole in order to aid it in knowing itself. We will be talking more about this in our discussion of channels in chapter six.

Mindell recently formulated another implicit goal of his work with groups. He would like to facilitate the creation of a group atmosphere where the people who are present feel "at home." What do people do when they are at home? Among other things, they sleep and dream. At home, there is lots of room for the unconscious to come up. One of the goals of Group Process Work is to create a community space where the far-away, unacceptable, unknown, and shadowy parts of life are given the chance to live, thereby making the group more home-like and more whole (Mindell, seminar, April 1989).

### Unraveling the Tao

The ancient Taoists believed that one could find the Tao hidden within the darkest and most difficult situations. They recognized the Tao not only in mountains and rivers but also in cow dung (Blofield, 1978). Medieval alchemists were of like mind. They cooked their metals, knowing that buried in the darkness and chaos of the prima materia, there was gold to be found (Coudert, 1980). This idea, shared by Taoists and alchemists, expresses the essence of Group Process Work.

Recognizing the Tao, unraveling it, and discovering its



meaning is an implicit goal of Group Process Work. But as Lao Tsu said, the Tao is elusive and mysterious: "Look, it cannot be seen--it is beyond form. Listen, it cannot be heard--it is beyond sound. Grasp, it cannot be held--it is intangible . . . ." (Gia-Feng & English, Trans., 1972, p. 14).

Although the Tao is everywhere, it takes a great deal of training and a sophisticated technique in order to make it useful. Perhaps Taoism has not survived in any extensive form because of its lack of pragmatism. Specific instructions as to how to work with the Tao are scarce. Process Work is a modern system of applied Taoism; it offers concrete tools for working with the Tao hidden in individuals and groups.

How do we recognize the Tao in a group? It can look like any one of a number of disturbing group signals. Imagine for example, the nasty attacks of a woman dissatisfied with the proceedings of a group about to come to a close after a week of study and retreat. What could possibly be meaningful about her tirade, which initially injures the loving group atmosphere? Could such a disturber be a piece of the Tao, expressing itself in a concealed form?

By unraveling the woman's criticism and encouraging its expression, a missing principle is revealed. The critic is a carrier of a repressed feminine position, representing feelings of weakness and inferiority which are searching for a voice in the midst of an extroverted and self-confident group field. The group would have forsaken a vital aspect of itself had it repressed that disturbance. However, without the tools to help the field express itself, important signals get lost in the float

of information and the Tao itself remains clouded behind a veil of incongruent communication.

### For Whom is it Useful?

So far, we have looked at two different types of groups. In chapter one, the theories described referred to groups gathered for explicitly psychological purposes; in chapter two, the work branched into Organizational Development, in which group members have little or no psychological training or interest. Group Process Work can be applied to psychological and non-psychological groups, social and political groups, members of the "grower's club" (those people interested in their personal development), and non-growers. The groups can be open or closed, heterogeneous or homogenous, long or short-term, and can contain people from all walks of life, any culture, and any socio-economic background.

Group Process Work is especially useful for any social, political, psychological, or business group whose internal or external troubles, tensions and conflicts prevent it from reaching its goals. It can be applied to groups which would like to operate more efficiently; groups whose members are interested in personal growth and in finding out more about who they are in groups; student groups interested in learning more about how groups function and about the relationship between individual and group behavior; groups of people committed to working on themselves in order to improve the overall collective planetary situation; and, finally, to those caught in the middle of painful and difficult fields, such as groups plagued by problems of

racism, tribalism, or colonialism, or groups and countries at war.

Group Process Work has been applied to work with groups containing between three and two hundred members; it is yet to be tested with larger groups. Group Process Work requires that at least one person in a hundred has the overview to facilitate the processes which are happening. This facilitator should be assisted by at least five people in a hundred who are willing to work on themselves alone, in relationships, and in front of the large group (Mindell, in press, p. 55).

Mindell stresses that the process work paradigm does not require all people to be interested in becoming conscious or in working on their personal material. In fact, Mindell warns that those of us with psychological training "must be careful about our own beliefs about consciousness: consciousness is sometimes necessary for some people in some groups, but not for everyone, all the time, in every group" (in press, p. 64). Therefore, if we rigidly adhere to psychological concepts such as consciousness or integration, we limit the scope and applicability of our work.

Although consciousness is not important for all groups, Mindell notes that there is something which all groups share.

The boredom, tensions, cold war, open conflicts, aggression and madness which amazes, hypnotizes and terrifies all of us is an unconscious attempt to reveal and discover the powerful and exciting, electric and holy heart of the dreambody we live in. . . . People all over seem to strive for this numinous community core. (in press, p. 110)

In the following chapters we will see how groups can transform the pain and madness of collective life into a sense of community and wholeness.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE FIELD

Like individuals, groups have conscious and familiar ways of behaving as well as unknown and unconscious personality traits. Imagine a group of people gathered for a party. Upon arriving, the guests are normally polite and well behaved--abiding by whatever set of social rules characterize their particular culture. In most parts of Europe and North America, the people are likely to be operating primarily in the visual and auditory channels. Guests might be sitting or standing around, talking and listening to music, and observing the doings of the other guests. If you think of all the people as one large body, it makes a visual impression; it has certain colors and wears a particular type of clothing. The party anthropos would also have a sound of its own--it could be a hum or a drone.

Imagine the same anthropos, several hours later, after it has had a few drinks and loosened up. Such a group looks like quite a different organism! It is probably a bit more colorful, and is occupying its movement and proprioception. Individual parts are dancing or making physical contact, and the sounds are more extreme, either much louder, or quieter and more intimate.

Altered Group States

"Gimme Shelter," the documentary film of the Rolling Stones Concert at Altamont Raceway in Oakland, California in 1969, vividly portrays conscious and unconscious group phenomena on a larger scale. It illustrates the influence of the hypnotic group

field which was identified by Le Bon, McDougall, and Freud and shows how instinctual and unconscious impulses can emerge in group life (see chap. 1). The film documents a process in which 300,000 peace-loving hippies--influenced by a variety of mind-altering substances and provoked by a number of very boisterous and aggressive members of a motorcycle gang, the Hell's Angels--transformed into a violent, angry mob. The mob actually murdered one of its parts. The one-sidedness of the hippie lifestyle forbade aggressive expressions. One of the shadows of the era thus expressed itself in an unrestrained, destructive fashion.

Common sense tells us that groups would avoid these extreme and altered states. However, empirical evidence indicates the contrary. Under certain conditions, it is not difficult for a group to flip into its opposite, leaving its previous identity behind. Mindell says that when a field abandons its usual one-sided identity "any altered state, even aggression, feels like freedom . . . . When the group flips, it leaves its old center, its homeostasis and rationality behind" (in press, p. 95).

The term altered state is used by process workers to describe a condition which is changed relative to the group's normal identity. All groups sometimes have a need to enter into altered states. In indigenous communities, shamans provided the leadership in guiding the community into unusual states of consciousness (Nicolson, Ed., 1987). In modern times, almost all firms have ritual Christmas parties, where employees and employers alike get drunk and adopt exceptional forms of behavior. C. G. Jung was in favor of parties and recommended

that colleagues get drunk together in order to see one another's shadows! (Hannah, 1976). A group that is interested in its own wholeness will attempt to integrate its altered states and expand its identity. Mindell writes:

people need altered states and the depth of experience that goes with them. One reason why we tend to avoid group life is because its superficial focus leaves out deeper, spiritual experiences. Another reason . . . [is] because we fear the altered states which they pull us into. Global awareness means appreciating and working with the altered states that groups, like individuals, need for life. This is, after all why we create rituals, dances, theatres and music festivals. (in press, p. 86)

### Primary and Secondary Group Processes

The conscious and unconscious aspects of a group have been variously labeled by group psychologists as manifest and latent, organized and disorganized, work or basic assumptions (see chapter two). In process work we talk about primary and secondary group processes.

The primary processes of a group include the issues, goals, and plans with which the majority of group members identify. Thus, the primary group process at most parties, for example, is concerned with relaxing, having fun, socializing, seeing friends or business acquaintances, and relating on a personal level.

Secondary processes are those with which group members have more difficulty identifying. They are not always planned; they happen to the group, taking it by surprise. They tend to be emotionally loaded and either uncomfortable, devastating or ecstatic in nature. Thus, at a party, secondary processes reflect very natural human ambitions: they range from finding a sexual partner, hearing the latest gossip, impressing certain

people, or sharing a deep and religious collective experience to an assortment of forbidden emotions such as jealousy, competition, and love. Naturally, secondary group processes are rarely stated explicitly and normally emerge unconsciously.

If the group has an identified leader, his or her behavior generally mirrors the primary process of the culture or group. Thus, the shadow or secondary process of the leader reflects the group's secondary process (Mindell, in press, p. 67). If the shadow of a leader is seen, prior to the group's knowledge or acceptance of its own secondary process, the leader is likely to be quickly forgotten, rejected, or under extreme conditions, assassinated.

Most countries insist that their leaders conform to the ideals of the primary process. The transformation of George Bush from wimp to superman during the 1988 United States' presidential campaign illustrates the values and qualities acceptable to the primary process of the majority of American voters (Newsweek, Sept. 25, 1988).

On the other hand, the campaign of Gary Hart in 1987 portrays the opposite (Shapiro, 1987). His shadow was seen and it led to his demise. Mindell suggests that if he had been able to stand up for his secondary process and had represented it to the people in an inspiring way, he might have been a true leader (class, May 30, 1987). Issues of sex, money, power, and jealousy are certainly of interest to many people. However, we have no models of world leaders who are willing to stand for the shadow. Imagine a U.S. president who could say to the people, "Let's talk about our most intimate and personal lives. I am interested in

love and sex. I have relationship problems; sometimes I have affairs." Such a leader would have very little to hide from the people.

The theme of ethics and sexuality which came to the attention of the American public during Hart's campaign also surfaced at a large conference for conflict resolution held in Colorado Springs in October, 1987. The conference, sponsored by the Colorado Institute for Conflict Resolution and Creative Leadership (CICRCL) and facilitated by Mindell, was attended by 150 people. The group members were politicians, members of the U.S. army, psychologists, and lay people. On the first day, the primary process of the group was cautious, shy, and full of persona. Almost immediately, the theme of sexuality and sexual freedom surfaced to disturb the group's identity.

The topic was initially brought up during a conflict resolution demonstration with a couple who happened to be fighting over the theme of sexual ethics. Although people had strong reactions to the couple's work, the theme was not mentioned again until a courageous individual broached the subject during a large group conflict resolution session. Acknowledgement of the topic was met by strained silence. Nobody wanted to talk about such intimate matters in public! Naturally, the primary group process had tremendous resistance and would rather discuss logistical details concerning hotel accommodations. However, guided by Dr. Mindell's skillful facilitation, a passionate conflict regarding sexual freedom, ethics, and repression ensued.



It quickly became apparent that Hart was not alone in his difficulties. Problems involving sexual issues, especially around the topics of faithfulness and infidelity, touched many people. The issue caused relationship difficulties in many couples and resulted in a collective difference of opinion in the group. Almost everyone in the room became involved in the conflict. It seemed at the time to be one of the important background issues floating in our global field.

It is not a coincidence that this issue came up in Colorado, the home state of Gary Hart, a few months after the news of his affair was publicized. Mindell points out that because of the holographic nature of individuals and groups, conflicts present in the global field are reflected in local and individual fields as well (class, June 1988). My own experiences in the mid-east taught me that when a country is at war, the conflict between the country and its enemy is also an internal conflict for many of the country's citizens, and represents a common pattern for relationship conflicts between fellow citizens. The primary process of the country is represented by its views and policies, while secondary forms of behavior are represented on the other side of the political borders (Menken and Dworkin, 1988).

### The Edge

The border, real or imaginary, which separates primary from secondary processes is known in Process Work as the edge. When the group approaches the border of its known identity it reaches its edge. One of the functions of the edge is that it keeps out the unknown--the people or parts which disturb the group, try to

upset its equilibrium, and which challenge the primary identity.

There are several edges which most groups share, despite the individual nature of their primary processes. Mindell has found that members of most formal groups seem to avoid emotional issues, chaos, the here and now, and standing strongly for personal opinions (in press, p. 60). The Colorado group's fear of dealing with intimate subjects in public is another common group edge. (For more information about recognizing group edges, please see Table 2 on pages 116-117.)

Employing systems terminology, we would say that a group generally gives negative feedback to change and disturbance in order to maintain its intended course of direction and avoid its edge. Group members almost instinctively attempt to preserve the steady state or group identity. Mindell (in press) attributes our homeostatic behavior to our genuine human fear of change and pain. However, maintaining stability is not the only possible course of action for a group: "though . . . most systems react negatively to change, and most groups suppress their disturbances, this need is not a natural law!" (p. 56).

Systems theory introduces a more interesting method of reacting to a system's disturbances. As we saw in chapter two, Prigogine's work reveals that deviations and disturbances can also be supported through positive feedback mechanisms which lead the system to a condition of greater instability and then into an entirely new structure.

### Integrating the Disturbances

Process Work has developed methods which enable a group to

pick up disturbances and pieces of its secondary process and to use them to help the group expand its identity. This reduces the likelihood that the disturbance will overcome the group primary process in a destructive fashion, as was the case at Altamont. An individual who represses his or her small aches and pains over long periods of time, neglecting to make the changes they are demanding, will develop major physical problems. Similarly, when an entire group is rigid and inflexible over time, the secondary process or minority becomes like a terrorist, violently disrupting the status quo in radical ways. Mindell has found that "a global process work . . . must not only support the homeostasis but also focus on disturbances, for they are almost always the secret to change and increased group longevity" (in press, p. 58).

Group Process Work has a very unusual way of dealing with a system's disturbances. Rather than trying to eliminate fluctuations and disturbances through negative feedback mechanisms in order to maintain the status quo, process workers do just the opposite: disturbances are supported through positive feedback mechanisms such as amplification. A process worker helps the disturbances express themselves to completion by amplifying or intensifying the disturbing signals. As a result, the odd and unsettling behavior of the disturber is clarified and often brings a useful message to the group.

Integrating a group disturber in a process-oriented manner can be a dramatic and enriching experience. I remember one such case vividly. A lecturer was presenting theoretical material in a class at an educational institute. During the presentation, a

woman began to scream in agony, apparently over nothing, and then proceeded to use language in a way which was incomprehensible to the sixty students present. It looked as if this group disturber was in the midst of an extreme state--psychiatry would say that she was having a psychotic episode.

Most of the students present were trained in the methods of Process Work and were interested in experimenting with new forms of community making. Rather than calling the psychiatric emergency service to lock this woman up, the students decided to try to amplify the "crazy" person's exotic behavior. Since it was impossible to work with the woman individually--she did not feel she was having problems--her signals were amplified by her classmates. Everyone in the room was asked to get in touch with the most disturbing aspects of themselves and to bring their "craziness" into the group. The room was quickly transformed from a quiet lecture hall filled with well-behaved students to a space resembling the back wards of a mental hospital, where individuals withdrew into silence, danced, embraced, and approached others with paranoid accusations.

Not only did the woman who was originally disturbing the group calm down, but the rest of the group contacted their own needs for more creative, expressive, and genuine forms of behavior and communication. They had been much too quiet and passive in their learning styles.

This is a very radical example, illustrating the role of the city shadow which we discussed in chapter three. The case also demonstrates how fluctuations and disturbances in a group

minority, when reinforced through positive feedback mechanisms, can transform the entire system. Mindell stresses that the people or events which disturb a group contain exactly the information which that group needs in order to be whole (seminar, April 1989). However, solutions which require unconventional behavior are not appropriate for every group. More conservative and business groups need gentler means of integrating the disturbances which disrupt their steady states. Many groups are not interested in integrating disturbances at all. Mindell points out that

there is, of course, also value in repression. Repression challenges the disturber to grow, to learn how to bring in new ideas in a more acceptable way. Repression enables the group to continue its task, at least momentarily. An individual with a body problem can neglect it and continue his day. A group can ignore a disturber, and the world can momentarily neglect the needs of the troubled third world. (in press, p. 56)

In certain moments it is very important for a group to maintain its primary process, especially if it is a new group, still in the process of building an identity. Like an individual, a group is sometimes able to open up to new information and other times must repress it--leaving the disturbances to find new channels with which to express themselves. We will be looking at the various channels which a group uses to express its totality in the following chapter.

#### The Minority and the Monster

The responsibility for working with and integrating minority or disturbing views cannot always belong solely to the group majority or primary process. When the disturber is in an

extreme state and has no metacommunicator, as in the above example, the task of integrating is left to the majority, which has the ability to talk about the total situation. In other cases, where a minority wants to bring an opinion or a policy change into a majority situation, the minority must use special tools in order to convey its message.

Why is it so difficult to introduce a minority opinion to the primary process of a group? The primary process or group majority, according to Mindell, can be likened to a monster which is ready to gobble up anything which gets in its way. This monster must be fed and nurtured before it will open up to outside views. Because of this monster, many people are afraid to speak out in groups. They fear they will be devoured if they say the wrong thing. The presence of such a rigid primary process creates a group with a distinct mood; the group becomes a frozen mass of people without much expression, avoiding difficult or controversial issues. Such a group doesn't move much, and its members are afraid to look one another in the eyes (class, May 27, 1988).

The primary process is associated with the group "we." The "we" is the identity which the majority shares. There is a strong emphasis on this concept in American sociology (see Hare, Borgatta & Bales, Eds., 1955). The sociologist Charles Horton Cooley referred to the group's "we" as

a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self. . . is the common life and purpose of the group . . . . One lives in the feeling of the whole and finds the chief aims of his will in that feeling. (Cooley, 1909/1955, p. 15)

There are many types of "we" which have been identified in

group life. The most rigid group identities include business-oriented, festive, spiritual, repressive, combative, psychological, academic, and new-age groups. The "we" is a powerful factor in group life, and serves to keep the group identity intact.

### The Group Ideology

The "we" has a particular ideology. Ideology is a concept used in the branch of sociology called the sociology of knowledge (Scheler, 1925/1960; Mannheim, 1955; Stark, 1958; Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Sociology of knowledge borrows its basic premise--that consciousness is determined by social factors--from Marx (1844/1975), and its methodology is phenomenological.

Sociology of knowledge also inherited one of its key concepts--ideology--from Marx. According to Peter Berger (1963), a well-known popularizer of sociology, we speak of ideology when a "certain idea serves a vested interest in society" (p. 111). Ideological thinking can "legitimate the activities of groups... justify what is done by the group. . .and interpret social reality in such a way that the justification is made plausible" (p. 112).

All groups have both latent and manifest ideologies, or the beliefs which they profess and others which underlie them (Merton, 1957). Ideas have an intended and conscious function as well as an unintended and unconscious function. Groups generally have less awareness about what is in the background of their professed ideologies; the unconscious function of an ideology is rarely stated explicitly.

In process terms, we would say that a group's ideology, even if it appears to be neutral, generally tends to serve the vested interests of the group's majority or primary process. A group excludes ideologies and beliefs which may threaten the status quo. Mindell (in press) likens a group's ideology to a myth or a saga which "creates a morphic field around a network or a group." (p. 69) He says that our ideologies are

our most prized possessions, but also our most dangerous liabilities, for they operate with a hypnotic magnetism far from consciousness. . . . [They can] become rigid systems, perhaps even prisons for all who do not obey. They. . . give us vision but blind us to events which do not fit. (p. 69)

Harrison Owen (1984) refers to the group's ideology as the mythic element in organizational culture (see chapter two). Clashing myths or ideologies create conflict in groups. He stresses that the group facilitator must recognize an organization's myth or identity and respect it. He recommends that to avoid conflict, a group's myth should be challenged only indirectly.

Owen's recommendation is a wise one. If you are in a facilitating role in a group or an organization, you will regularly find yourself in a minority position, blind to the group's ideology and in want of tools to deal with its primary process. The very act of bringing awareness into a group, or recommending a change of state, jeopardizes the group's myth. If you dislike the majority and can't understand and support its ideology, you will not be able to bring your minority view across. A facilitator or any minority faction risks crucifixion



if suggestions are not introduced with the greatest of tact and subtlety.

Mindell was extremely aware of this phenomenon on his recent trip to South Africa. Among his very difficult tasks was his need to understand and feel into the country's primary process, the apartheid government, in order to be able to work with the total situation. He recognized that just criticizing their ideology and avoiding or punishing them was not an effective way of dealing with the very strong and rigid South African primary process. Supporting the weaker position is "humane and correct but not helpful in conflict work, unless the groups in power are also supported in their ability to communicate" (Mindell, 1989c, p. 42).

#### Minority Awareness

Mindell (in press) is optimistic about the minority's ability to effect change. "If one uses the language and ideology of the primary process, even unwanted and disturbing behavior or ideas can be presented in an acceptable way" (p. 87). This is easy to understand when dealing with the primary process or conscious ideology of an individual. A woman whose belief system says that it is important to be sweet and well-liked will have trouble bringing out her critical nature. A process worker accepts her ideology and encourages her to bring out her criticism in a kind and loving way. The primary process must be respected and protected. If the woman discovers that being critical can also be an act of love and needn't threaten her friendships, she might be ready to experiment with expanding her

identity.

In the case of a group, the minority faction has a special and difficult fate: it needs to have more awareness of the whole than the majority does. Since many of the most difficult problems on our planet involve minority situations and have no facilitator, it is often up to the minority to bring this needed awareness. The majority, unfortunately, does not want to change and is not generally interested in awareness of the whole.

In order to bring in a minority opinion, the minority group must have a global awareness: contact with its own feelings as well as awareness and understanding of the group identity and its ideology. The minority must be able to talk to the primary process using its terminology and belief system. If it alienates the majority, it will not get its point across. The minority should also realize that it is a role which is also present in each individual, and should use this awareness in order to avoid being scapegoated. We will be talking more about the minority as a role in chapter seven.

Consider an everyday example. In a European city whose government is unsympathetic to the problems of the youth, a social work team is trying to find housing opportunities for homeless drug addicts. Most of the staff members have been involved with drugs themselves and actually identify with their clients. They are totally fed up with the current drug policies and the lack of concern from the city. The majority of staff members share a radical ideology and would like to propose an unconventional solution. They want the city to give gift certificates to the drug addicts; these certificates would allow

the addicts to stay in hotel rooms if they had nowhere else to go. A single staff member would like to bring in a more conservative suggestion which would respect the ideology of the city; she wants to work with the police force and city government. She is alone in her opinion, and she is also the only psychologist on a staff of twenty social workers. Her training in Group Process Work helped her to bring in her minority views in such a way that she was able to influence the majority opinion.

First she worked on herself and got in touch with her own radical nature; she identified areas of her life where she felt she wanted to act rashly. This helped her to understand the extreme nature of her colleagues' reactions. Feeling less alienated, she could identify with the majority's ideology and was even able to appreciate their ideas. At the next meeting, she supported their desire to make changes and revealed that she too, shared their goals. Only after understanding and supporting the majority objectives and relating to them on their turf, so to speak, did she bring her suggestion, assuring them it would help them meet their goals even more quickly. Together the team came up with a new plan which integrated both minority and majority views.

In this case, the woman in the minority position was able to talk to the primary process of the group, in their language, about an opinion which was secondary. Amy Mindell (1989) has identified this as one of several "magical" interventions in Process Work. It is magical in that it has a rapid and

transformative effect on the primary process. Owen (1984) refers to it as "indirect manipulation of the operative myth." He suggests identifying those elements of the organization's myth which might be closest to supporting the proposed change and then enhancing them (p. 223). Palazzoli (1986) calls this type of intervention a paradoxical commentary and, recognizing that alienating those in power is not useful, employs it frequently in her work with groups.

It is not always easy to appreciate the primary process of a group with which you disagree. However, it is a crucial factor which determines whether or not the group will accept you. Mindell (in press) stresses that

the wisest facilitator realizes that just as each individual person has his or her own nature, groups, too, are individuals and want to be respected. . . . Realizing that a group is also a person requiring acceptance has opened me up to love in unexpected ways. (p. 82)

I have shown that a group, like a person, has a primary and secondary process, or a majority view and minority positions which are disturbing and disruptive. In the following chapter we will look at some of the channels which a group uses in order to express these contradictory parts of itself.

## EDGE AWARENESS

Table 2

The following are ways to recognize that a group is at an edge:

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### Cycling

After the group has gotten to an edge and missed it, the same themes keep cycling again and again.

### Boredom

If things are quiet and boring, the group has probably missed an edge. This is not a peaceful quiet.

### Chaos

A period of chaos can be like a group trance if it goes on too long. When people start to leave because the chaos is frustrating, the group has probably missed an edge.

### Synchronicities

If a synchronicity happens and the group ignores it, there is probably an edge around.

### Natural phenomena

If nature is particularly active around a particular group, for example, storms, earthquakes, droughts, or avalanches occur, a group edge may be indicated.

### Cold War

If certain factions or groups simply do not talk or relate over long periods and tension is around, it is an edge.

### Incompleted acts

All incompleted activities, like sudden incompleted movements, unfinished sentences, unfinished emotions, unfinished conflicts, and so forth, represent a group edge.

### Gossip

If there is lots of gossip happening outside the group or during the group session, it is indicative of a group edge.

### Third parties

If third parties or outer groups are talked about and not represented, it is indicative of a group edge.

TABLE 2 continued

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Extreme states

When a group member acts "crazy" she or he is representing behavior that is an edge for the group.

Illness

If certain group members are sick, having strong body experiences, or dying, their experiences are probably an edge for the group

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Note. The information from this table was compiled by Mindell and seminar participants at a "Community Crisis Interventions" seminar held outside of Luzern, Switzerland in April, 1989.

## VI

### GROUP COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

If we view a group like a person, with a particular identity or personality and characteristics which are further from its identity, we must ask ourselves how this group organism expresses itself. What modes of communication does it have at its disposal?

A group communicates using the same six channels that an individual uses: it sees, hears, moves and feels; it expresses itself through the relationships within the group and through events that occur in the outer world, as well as through relationships with the world and outer groups. Additionally, a group uses certain channels which are not available to the individual: every person in a group can be a channel for the group's process; subgroup processes express aspects of the group's conscious and unconscious identity, and the spiritual channel is an important avenue for the expression of certain aspects of a group's life.

Like individuals, groups favor certain channels and use those favored channels to express their intentions and primary identity. Thus, much of the talking and listening that goes on in groups is primary. Generally, the most verbally active people, including the identified group leader, express the group's primary process (see chapter eight). Other channels tend to express parts of the group which are further from its awareness. The spontaneous movements of group members, their

inner body feelings and emotional experiences, and the personal relationship difficulties between group members are only rarely brought into group life. According to Mindell, the unoccupied group channels "bring the field together by expressing its core and expanding its experience" (in press, p. 87).

In this chapter we take a look at some of the channels which the global dreambody uses in its everyday rituals. We will focus primarily on the discoveries made by Mindell in his work with groups and will bring in ideas from other systems in so far as they amplify or extend Group Process Work theory.

### Vision

In tribal communities, each group member's dreams and visions provided a tremendous source of wisdom for the whole group. Dreams and visions were considered to be messages from the spirit world. Additionally, when shamans needed information about their healing ceremonies or about group life, they consulted their dreams or went on vision quests (Nicolson, Ed., 1987).

The psychiatrist M. Scott Peck (1987), in his work with community making, points out that there are usually several people who fill the role of "group dreamer" (p. 133). Likewise, process workers recognize that background issues which want to be lived in the group are sometimes revealed through the dreams of individual group members.

Consider the case of a dreamer at a Group Process Work training seminar whose dream foreshadowed the group's process in a synchronistic fashion. The woman dreamed that one of the men



in the group had to go to jail for civil disobedience. In the dream, the courtroom scene took place, and the police came into the courtroom. The dream was told in the morning, before the day's activities commenced.

Later that morning, in the midst of a study session, a woman accidentally said something she shouldn't have said about someone who was not present. Several group members became angry at her for breaching confidentiality. Although the group had been in the middle of some intellectual work, many people got involved in the discussion and it turned into a group process. Judges, lawyers, and defendants were all present! The woman "on trial" just happened to be the wife of the man in the dream. Group members did not think of the dream until, just prior to resolving the issues, the postal service knocked at the door, dressed in uniform.

In this case, the dream of an individual patterned the group's activities in an acausal way. The group mind seems to know what it needs to work on and brings it across in whatever way it can.

In chapter two we saw how innovative organizational psychologists have introduced the use of visioning in identifying common purpose among employees. Process workers also find it useful to work with a group's visions. Most people identify with looking outside of themselves. Background material appears if you ask people to close their eyes, feel themselves or the group atmosphere, and translate those feelings into visions. This is especially useful for extroverted groups which have been talking a lot and for groups whose members have body symptoms and

internal experiences which do not come out consciously. Making visions out of more secondary experiences like feelings gives the material an accessible channel through which to express itself. This is one of the many channel oriented interventions developed by Dr. Mindell. (See Table 3 on pp. 135-136.)

### Audition

Much of the hearing and listening that goes on in group life is related to the primary process of the group. Generally, some people speak and others listen. Those who speak most frequently tend to be more closely associated with the primary process of the group.

There are several aspects of group audition which are secondary expressions of group life. The voices of a group usually tend to have a general tone. The group voice may sound loud or soft, shrill or whiny. Focusing on the group tone, rather than its content, and amplifying it through sound or song brings a group rapidly into an altered state (Arye, 1988). Asking group members to go inside and hear a song after they have been talking creates a channel for the expression of deeper material. Being part of a group who finds its song and sings it together can be a powerful experience. Peck (1987) has found that in his groups, such singing "is not merely meaningful; it may be transporting" (p. 134).

The silent voice of those who do not speak is often neglected in groups. Mindell calls these people "the silent spirit" and says that the people who do not speak

are like the dream which has not yet happened. They are

essential because they predict the group's future . . . .  
[They are] the silent majority, the large number of people  
who do not express their opinions, those who do not vote in  
elections. (in press, p. 80)

The most rapid way of integrating the silent group members is by asking everybody to be silent. If the silent one is able to speak, move, or dance, his or her message can also be brought into the field through these other channels.

Peck (1987) considers silence to be such an essential element in group life that he creates a ritual in which a period of silence is programmed into all group meetings. The silent period is meant to facilitate the group's transformation from a period of chaos to what he calls "emptiness," which, for Peck, is the most critical stage of community development. During the period of emptiness group members are asked to empty themselves of their barriers to communication, which include: preconceived ideas, prejudices, expectations, ideologies, theologies, desires to heal, and the needs to control. This emptiness is compared to a group death. "The whole group seems to writhe and moan in its travail" (p. 102).

The use of such a ritual is a powerful but limited method of transforming group life because, according to Mindell,

the primary process of the group, its issues, beliefs and talk are left, and the channels not normally used . . . are focused on. . . . Rituals would be more meaningful if they did not merely leave or ignore the issues of the primary process, but transformed them by bringing them into new channels. (in press, p. 86)

When long or short periods of silence occur spontaneously in a group, the process worker amplifies the silence by encouraging group members to pick it up consciously. This may suggest a

period of silence and meditation. Out of the silence, the group often finds the wisdom it needs to solve the previous difficulties of the primary process.

The "grapevine" is another auditory mode through which a group spirit sends its secondary messages. Gossip happens before, after, and during group sessions in psychological, political, business, and other types of groups. People say things to their friends that they wouldn't say in public. This material, expressed privately in hushed tones, is one of the shadows of group life. It is to the group's advantage to process the gossip in the group as a whole.

Linda Ackerman (1984), in her study of organizations as energy fields, recognizes that organizational energy gets stuck in the gossip channel and creates what she calls "negative energy" (p. 121). Process workers have several ways of helping this gossip energy to flow. Mindell recommends gossiping consciously, and creates a group garbage pail or compost heap where individuals can anonymously express the topics about which they have gossiped but are too shy to say publicly. These messages are brought into the group and recycled on a regular basis.

Group garbage generally includes: criticisms of teachers and leaders, money and salary issues, questions about sexuality and sexual preferences, and ideas and fears about the physical or psychological health of other group members. By bringing these issues to awareness and unfolding the processes behind them, deep and basic issues such as personal needs, questions of self-worth and feelings of mortality come to the fore.

Mindell (1985a) compares process workers to the alchemists, who were interested in finding gold in the darkness and chaos of the "prima materia." Group gossip contains the shadow of group life and, according to Mindell

enlightens us about the parts of life we are shy about. It throws us into tumultuous, non-equilibrium processes. Though it confuses and scares us, it also breaks down barriers and reunites people in unbelievable ways. . . . Such processes always demonstrate the incredible wisdom hidden in the field of the anthropos. . . . The global mind uses impossible issues to reveal its divine center. (in press, p. 88)

### Proprioception

Who has not attended a meeting in which many of the people present develop headaches or stomach aches during the proceedings? By forbidding certain forms of behavior, a group's atmosphere can create symptoms in individuals. I participated in a business meeting during which several of the people present developed pains in the heart. We discovered that these pains were indicative of the group's need to bring the heart feelings into the business.

A focus on inner body feeling is a neglected part of both group and individual life in the western world. In the 1920s, Trigant Burrow studied the somatic experiences of individuals in groups, but his work was largely disregarded by his colleagues. Mindell has discovered that body experiences can be brought into a group by encouraging all the group members to feel their bodies and make visions or fairytales which express what they are feeling. In order to also include the movement channel, some of the common elements in the visions or fairytales can then be choreographed in the large group.

## Movement

Most groups move in programmed ways. Business groups shake hands and sit down; they move only rarely. In more informal groups, members might hug, sit on the floor, and occasionally move around. Most people find their spot in the room and stay glued to it. In fact, asking people to sit somewhere other than in their usual position can bring up strong group issues, especially in business groups. Encouraging the people who sit in the back to take places in the center of the room and express what they are feeling is a way of bringing the "outside" opinions into group awareness.

When we look closely at a group, we notice that people actually make many small movements which tend to go unnoticed (Kaplan, 1986). A group whose members make lots of unconscious movements like fidgeting, stretching, and leaving to use the bathroom can learn more about its secondary process if people are encouraged to get up and move around. Will group members, when left to their own movement processes, dance, stamp, hug, walk around aimlessly, or fight? What movement form will the group spontaneously choose to express its secondary process?

In a recent training seminar, Mindell noticed lots of playful fights happening after the group's movement was encouraged. He actually recommended a group brawl! This radical form of movement work brought us into a deep group process in which background feelings of fear, hurt, and anger were given a chance to express themselves.

### Relationships and Subgroups

Mindell once defined relationship as "a spirit who is seaching for people through which it can express itself" (personal communication, April, 1984). This unusual definition refers to a certain aspect of relationship life; it assumes that the field which is created between two people is not only the result of their personal psychologies, but is created by the larger global dreambody.

The group field uses relationships as a channel through which to express aspects of itself. The field chooses people who are an appropriate expression of certain forms of behavior and then hurdles these people into the center of the group. Mindell says that groups actually draw certain people together into relationships. The group needs people to relate in specific ways and to work on certain themes. One of the goals of relationship work with a group orientation involves discovering what the group spirit is trying to express and then working on that theme consciously in the group as a whole.

In chapter five we saw how the issue of ethics and sexuality brought up by one couple became the group's issue. If a relationship process does not reflect the background spirit of the group, group members will become bored and will refuse to give the couple its focus. Small sub-groups or factions within a community may also carry aspects of the large group's process.

In one group process session a large psychological organization was working on its internal tensions. Some participants complained about a lack of compassion in the group.

It seemed there was a conflict in the field between a cold and selfish element and a part who felt in need of love. (More will be said about group roles in the following chapter.) A very heated but diffuse and impersonal discussion about needs ensued. After a few minutes only two people were still speaking--a father and his teen-age daughter. They processed the painful details of their relationship right there, in the middle of a hundred people. Everyone was emotionally involved. The group found a couple of very real human beings to graphically display the issue on which it needed to work.

This group process did not end with the work of that particular couple. In fact, they could not solve their difficulties without other group members becoming involved. After the couple felt finished with their work, the group broke up into diads, giving everyone a chance to work on the relationship problems floating in the field. That group field needed some spring cleaning in the relationship channel!

In another case, a group in conflict, whose members were displaying a lot of extroverted aggression, began to focus on a divorcing couple. The couple was dealing with a triangular situation, and intense issues of jealousy and rage emerged. The third party, the wife's boyfriend, was described to be a very quiet and centered type. The group facilitator noticed that since there was so much talk about the boyfriend, who wasn't physically present, it might be useful to bring him into the field consciously. Both husband and wife, who had previously displayed violent and hateful behavior, were asked to act like the boyfriend. Almost immediately the field quieted. The couple



acknowledged a deep need for the qualities of that third party in their relationship field. Though they were ready to part, they wanted to do it in a quiet and peaceful way.

After this couple worked, the rest of the group, which had been in conflict earlier, fell silent. The couple helped the group to contact its need for silent reflection. Mysteriously enough, the period of silence seemed to dissolve the previous tensions.

### Individuals

A group can also use an individual as a vehicle to represent a part of its multifaceted personality. We saw in chapter three how our collective shadow lives in the back wards of psychiatric clinics and on the city streets. These individuals provide a channel for unwanted and rejected parts of collective life.

It is often the group disturber who holds the key to the group's wholeness. Consider the case of the woman mentioned in chapter five, who disturbed the group with her "psychotic" outbursts. She was not expected to conform to the group norm, as in the goal of most group therapies. (See Tables 1:1--1:4 on pp. 42-48.) The process paradigm introduces the radical idea that it is often the group which must change and expand its identity. That colorful and unusual group member helped the group discover the liveliness and creativity it had previously lacked.

Individuals who represent important aspects of group life need not be only disturbers. If the group's attention and focus remains fixed on an individual's process, then it is an

indication that that individual is experiencing something which the group needs. Recently, during a group process training session, creative student facilitators encouraged the silent and shy people to speak out. One courageous man began to speak of his "terminal" illness and his need for community life. Almost immediately, the group quieted and gave this man their undivided attention. Soon after, others in the group began to speak of their illnesses and fears of death. In this case, the group spirit propelled one shy man into the center of group life in order to create a channel which would help the entire group focus on life and death issues.

### The Spiritual Channel

The spiritual channel of a group has been written about extensively in Peck's work with community building. Peck believes that when a group becomes a community there is a "dramatic change of spirit. . . . an utterly new quietness enters the room" (1987, p. 74). He interprets this spirit in both secular and non-secular terms. For those with secular consciousness the spirit of community is "a purely human spirit or one created solely by the group" (p. 75). For those of Christian orientation the spirit is assumed to be "external to and independent of the group . . . descending upon the group, just as the holy spirit is said to have descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove" (p. 75). The work of community building is, for some, a preparation for the descent of the holy spirit.

Although the orientation of Group Process Work is purely secular, process workers notice that mysterious or

parapsychological phenomena sometimes occur in groups. These occurrences provoke a kind of religious or spiritual group atmosphere. I remember one such experience vividly. It took place during a session in which an educational institute was processing its internal conflicts.

The group process cycled around issues of inclusion and exclusion. Certain students were disturbed by the large number of people attending the courses. The central issue had to do with people's need for more contact with the identified leader. As the community grew, it was becoming increasingly difficult to have personal contact with the leader, who was an important figure at the center of the group's life. Many felt that it was this individual leader who kept the group together.

A period of chaos occurred during which a great variety of opinions were expressed. Because many people were feeling physically uncomfortable, the facilitator suggested that group members meditate for a few moments on their body feelings, and then try to make a vision out of their feelings. Where was this conflict trying to lead the group? Perhaps our bodies could tell us. After about five minutes of meditation, one woman interrupted the silence in order to draw the group's attention to the television screen. The session was being recorded on video and the camera person had left her position behind the camera in order to meditate. The tripod had accidentally slipped out of position, and the camera was pointing at the beams on the ceiling. As a result, a strange and eerie image of a cross appeared on the screen.

Although this image meant something different for almost everyone in the room, its appearance brought a marked change in the group's mood. The symbol seemed to hint at a larger perspective on the current problems and guided the group towards a new center, which provided a feeling of unity right in the moment, with or without the identified leader.

In other situations, a specific intervention is used to divine the group spirit, or group Tao, in a kind of acausal, parapsychological manner. The group spirit can be divined by a simple procedure: the spin of a pen. The pen is spun in the center of the room and then points to a specific person who is recognized to be carrying an important process for the whole group. It is uncanny how the pen knows just whom to choose!

Recently, at an experimental seminar led by Mindell, focusing on Taoism, the diviner of the Tao chose a woman who, despite much focus and attention, seemed to be stuck in her development. She couldn't find a solution to her inferiority feelings and lack of belief in herself. Earlier, someone in the group had thrown the I Ching, asking the ancient Chinese oracle what was going to be the group's process for the day. The hexagram which was revealed through the tossing of coins was called "Standstill." Clearly, all group members needed to spend some time focusing on their own internal blocks and working on the areas of their lives where they were stuck.

### The World

What does it mean for the world to be a channel for a group's process? In such a case, unpredictable yet meaningful

things occur in the world around the group. The very earth itself might be disturbed in the vicinity of a particular group.

I participated in a training seminar in which students were attempting to facilitate the group process. A wild and violent storm was raging outside around the house. The shutters were banging and the wind was howling. The storm was so loud it was difficult for us to ignore it. We remembered that it might be a channel for our group's process, expressing something which we as a group needed. Amazingly enough, when individual group members finally had the courage to take a strong and determined stand and to speak out publicly, the outer storm seemed to quiet down. As a group, we felt we had integrated something which nature was trying to teach us.

The world is also a vehicle for the group's process when the group itself is concerned about other groups and outer social and political situations. A group which is disturbed by the behavior of other groups can learn about its own secondary process by locating the opinions of the other group within members of their own community. One institute was disturbed by the rigid and demanding nature of an older and more conservative organization. The newer group had a moment of enlightenment when group members realized that they were not being tough enough with each other; this newly formed organization needed to tighten up its standards and execute more quality control.

#### Multi-leveled Solutions

Because there are so many channels involved in a group's form of communication, group resolution often requires

integration on many levels. Sometimes a group process will not come to its conclusion until several of the channels are worked on. After a group focused on the above mentioned relationship between father and daughter, individual group members needed to work on their own relationship difficulties. The next step in that process was for individuals to work internally on conflicts around neediness and independence.

If a certain important channel is missed, resolution will not happen. A group at a training seminar recently worked on a difficult issue involving the Nazi-Jewish conflict. We worked internally, on our relationships, focused on German and Jewish subgroups, and we even worked intensely with one individual on his inner prejudices. But the process continued and we could find no resolution. One quiet man, an outsider from another field, began to talk about political events. Another woman, a political activist, cried about the suffering in the world. The process finally resolved itself when we realized that although we were working on a collective issue, we had neglected the world channel. Each of us needed to take concrete action in our communities against racial and religious prejudices and minority oppression. Recognizing this, the group process quieted. Our next step as a group involved educating the world about what we had learned about minority issues!

There are many channels of communication which demand group focus and express aspects of the group's wholeness. Interventions need not be limited to any one of the levels. By focusing on all the channels in a group setting, Process Work attempts to be a global and holistic approach. In contrast, Peck

(1987) makes a general rule which states that "leaders should keep their focus on the group as a whole. They need not concern themselves with the problems or personalities of individual members . . . such concern is likely to interfere with community development" (p. 118). Empirical evidence gathered in process-oriented group work indicates that, in fact, quite the contrary is often true. The individual is one of many channels for the group's expression and often carries important messages for the group as a whole.

Additionally, by focusing on various levels, Group Process Work applies the systems idea (see chapter two), which states that changes at one level of the system results in changes at other levels. Group Process Work has shown that working with one individual or a single relationship can influence and change the entire group field.

Considering the complexity of the world's problems, it is evident that many-leveled solutions will be necessary. Normally groups only focus on what is said or what actions are taken. Clearly, this is insufficient. Knowing something about the more unconscious aspects of a group's expression is vital. Often, the group channels which rarely receive focus hold the keys which bring resolution to conflict and unexpected answers to long-standing group problems.

## CHANNEL-ORIENTED INTERVENTIONS

Table 3

You can help a group change states by knowing something about its channel structure and helping it contact the information in the unoccupied channels. The following are some ideas about how to work with group channels:

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### Vision

- \* Visualize something that could be in the center of the room.
- \* Create a fairytale about a village with the problem of the group.
- \* Look, in your mind's eye, at the most awful, fantastic, or meaningful scene that happened during the group process and complete it in your fantasy.
- \* Sense the atmosphere and make a picture out of it.

### Audition

- \* When there has been lots of talk, change from talk to silence and then make a sound or a song out of the silence.
- \* Listen to the sounds of people's voices and create the group sound without any content.
- \* Gossip with your neighbor or in subgroups and then bring the gossip into the group.
- \* Let the silent people speak.
- \* Integrate silent people by meditating.

### Proprioception

- \* Focus on internal body feelings when people are tense, exhausted, or crowded. Create visions from feelings.
- \* Work with an individual on body symptoms.

### Kinesthesia

- \* If group has been still for a long time, change to movement.
- \* Begin with programmed movement, then encourage spontaneous movement.
- \* Change seating arrangement in room. For example, have the outsiders sit inside.
- \* Sense atmosphere, make visions, and choreograph the visions.
- \* Collect dreams and choreograph common elements in dreams.
- \* Suggest a barroom brawl if there are a lot of small fights.



TABLE 3 continued

Relationship Subgroup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Do conflict resolution work with couple.</li> <li>* Work with couple, then do dyads on the same theme.</li> <li>* Break into subgroups after there has been lots of chaos or intensity.</li> <li>* Act out a fight between two people who are shy to do it themselves.</li> </ul>
World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Act out other groups which disturb you.</li> <li>* Act out nature.</li> <li>* Act out third parties in the environment which disturb you.</li> <li>* Work internally on collective issues like acid rain, terrorism, radiation leaks, AIDS.</li> <li>* Plan strategies for integrating group issues in outer world.</li> </ul>
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Spin a pen to identify person carrying the group Tao and work with that individual.</li> <li>* Focus on disturber and take over his or her behavior.</li> <li>* Individual gets dreamed-up to represent what is over the edge.</li> <li>* One person in group goes into altered state. Work with person and then everyone go into their altered states.</li> <li>* Courageous individual initiates conflict which is in field.</li> <li>* Work on individual's personal problem and consider it a field problem.</li> </ul>
Multi-channel (blank access)	<p>Facilitator should try one of the following and create others if group is stuck:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Put a bag over your head and say you are a wise old man or woman coming with the solution. Let group project into your wisdom.</li> <li>* Say, "Something wants to happen in that corner... Um.. It's something... round..."</li> <li>* Say, "I feel something... which is... green. Does anyone else feel it?"</li> <li>* Say, "Who is going to show us that thing which everybody knows and feels but nobody says?"</li> </ul>

Note. The information from this table was compiled from personal notes taken at seminars and classes taught by Mindell between 1987 and 1989.

## VII

### GROUP ROLES

Many of us do not enjoy group life. We try to avoid groups, in part, because in groups, the entire notion of individual identity is questioned and our personal boundaries are threatened. Although we try not to be influenced by the actions and opinions of our peers, teachers, students, parents, children, and siblings, we often experience ourselves as slaves to the anthropos or group mind.

Many of the early group psychologists were quite occupied with this theme (see chap. one). Freud was concerned with the observation that individuals act very differently in a group than when they are alone. His group studies dealt with how groups could exert this influence on the individual. Both LeBon and McDougall believed that individuals in groups were hypnotized into becoming mere automatons, and that they lost their individuality completely in the group setting. Burrow regarded the behavior of people in groups as unnatural because individuals seemed to be so concerned with the impression they created on others that they could no longer operate autonomously. Bion stressed that the behavior of group members is influenced by ideas of how the group feels towards them, whether or not they admit it. Ezriel thought that individuals in groups should not even bother to try to "be themselves" because they serve as a projection board for other group members regardless of what they do.

Because of this loss of personal identity, alluded to by the early group psychologists, many people are hesitant to become involved with groups. Here in the west, there is a tremendous focus placed on individuality, and people become depressed if they lose a sense of themselves while participating in groups. C. G. Jung did not create a theory of group psychology; however, he did warn individuals about this loss of personal identity. He insisted that the individual had a task in relation to the group and collective--he stressed that a person should stand on his or her own two feet, maintain individuality, and avoid assuming a collective identity. In his autobiography (1961), he wrote that

all collective identities are . . . crutches for the lame, shields for the timid, beds for the lazy, nurseries for the irresponsible; but they are equally shelters for the poor and weak, a home port for the shipwrecked, the bosom of a family for orphans . . . and a mother providing nourishment and growth . . . [A collective identity is] the only possible form of existence for the individual, who nowadays seems more than ever threatened by anonymity. (p. 343)

Jung believed that our exclusive focus on individuality was essential in that it compensated a tendency towards collectivism which he observed in Nazi and communist ideologies as well as in religious systems in the east (cited in Hannah, 1981). Today neo-Freudian therapeutic directions (Eagle, 1984) stress the importance of maintaining individuality, and great emphasis is placed on ego-development and ego-building. The concepts of personal boundaries and personal space have become part of the lay person's vocabulary.

In the east, losing personal identity and becoming one with the universal spirit or the great anthropos is the goal of many religions. Detachment from the limitations of the finite self

and identification with reality as a whole, or Brahman, is the goal of Hinduism. The Buddhists believe in a great being called the Atman and the goal of life for Buddhists is to become one with this being (Smith, 1958). Being in harmony with the Tao or eternal way, which was the source of all life, was said to bring immortality to the Taoist sages (Blofield, 1978).

Even here in the west, recently developed forms of family therapy have taught us that we cannot consider ourselves in isolation from the families and groups of which we are a part (Guerin, Ed., 1976). What happens to us in our families and groups is not just the result of our personal psychology but is a product of the groups to which we belong. Mindell stresses that

we are, for better or for worse, strongly influenced by the group, nation, and world in which we live. . . . we are part of an organization which may have an intelligence of its own! To some this discovery may be depressing, to others it is relieving. For the planet itself, this insight could lead to conclusions which may be a matter of planetary life and death. (1987, p. 15)

Group Process Work relieves people of their need to maintain individuality in a group setting by recognizing that the concept of the individual, defined by physical borders and the personal identity, is a limited idea which lacks empirical grounding as soon as a human being enters a group setting. In a group, an individual is part of a larger field and is used by the field to express an aspect of its personality. In essence, an individual becomes a channel for the group process; one plays a role with which one may or may not personally identify.

In the last chapter we looked at the group's communication forms and saw that a group has a number of channels through which

to express its totality. In this chapter, we will focus on the concept of the individual as a part of a global dreambody which effects and creates the individual in an unavoidable manner. We will look at the roots of this concept in sociological theory. We will see how roles, and not individuals, constitute the basic organs of the group's body. We will study the use of role-identification, role-playing, and role-detachment in Group Process Work. We will also see how the concept of roles fades away at a certain moment in group process work.

### Role Theory

Role theory has been a part of traditional sociological thinking for at least half a century. It has been primarily an American intellectual development, and its parents are Charles Horton Cooley (1922) and George Herbert Mead (1934), although some of its germinal insights go back to William James and John Dewey. It is not my purpose here to summarize its historical development, nor to give a complete overview of the field. Rather, we will concern ourselves with those aspects of role theory which have a direct relevance to Group Process Work.

A role, defined by sociologist Peter Berger, is seen as a "typified response to a typified situation" (1963, p. 94). Berger says that society provides the script and the actors generally slip into the roles assigned to them. The roles provide the pattern according to which the individual should act in the particular situation. Certain roles, such as physician or clergyman, require very specific mannerisms, speech patterns, postures, and so forth. The roles themselves carry these

emotions and attitudes, and when an individual adopts a particular role, he or she is influenced by it and takes on its characteristics. Thus, one becomes wise by being appointed a professor, and one practically dies on the spot after being labeled terminally ill. The person not only begins to act wise or dying; he or she actually feels it.

The questions of the individual's freedom of choice in regard to the role, and the importance of subjective experience, have been much debated. Max Weber (1905/1958) stressed the importance of the individual's experiences. He asserted that the individual's behavior either supports or challenges the group or society. Under certain circumstances the individual may choose not to play the assigned role, or may introduce a role which upsets the system. "The introduction of a dramatic character that does not fit into the scenario of the particular play seriously threatens the role playing of those who do fit" (Berger, 1963, p. 131). If a charismatic leader succeeds in capturing a following which supports his or her deviant interpretation of reality, the "world-taken-for-granted" is threatened (Gerth & Mills, Eds., 1946). According to the Weberian view, society and groups need to be confirmed by people in order to exist and continue.

This theory implies that the individual has some degree of power or control in relation to a group or society, and also accounts for the process of change. Emile Durkheim (1895/1964), on the other hand, believed that the collective is a unity which cannot be reduced or translated to individual or other factors;

certain properties emerge only in the whole. He disregarded the influence of individual motives in studying group phenomena (1897/1951) and saw society as an objective fact, coercing and creating individuals in ways which are often outside of their awareness. According to Durkheim, the group entity creates and controls the behavior of its parts by defining and assigning roles.

These views are not necessarily contradictory, but can be seen as different aspects of social reality. Both views may be correct--society defines individuals by assigning roles, and individuals define society by either accepting or abandoning the roles which are assigned. Without the recognition and support of individuals, the group will not be sustained.

Mindell developed Group Process Work without a familiarity with sociological theory or role theory. Role theory in Group Process Work grew spontaneously and empirically out of Mindell's early experiments with groups. His findings regarding roles support both Durkheimian and Weberian views. Agreeing with Durkheim, he saw that group roles seem to be a priori and given and that the people who fill them are somewhat interchangeable. However, he found that each role usually needed more than one person to fill it and additionally, that any single individual could, as Weber asserted, leave his or her assigned role and play another one. Hence the conclusion: a role is greater than an individual and the individual is also more than the role.

This concept was originally formulated in the Spring of 1987 at Mindell's first experimental seminar focusing exclusively on Group Process Work. On the first day of this seminar, one of the

participants, in an aggressive fashion, criticized Mindell about how he was conducting the sessions. Mindell invited her into the center to work it out. They proceeded to talk about their relationship difficulties and hurt feelings. The woman continued to criticize; she was obviously very upset, but it was difficult to determine just exactly what was bothering her. Eventually, she stormed out of the room in frustration.

Naturally, the group was disturbed because the process had not been completed. Another woman spontaneously entered the center of the circle and began to speak for the woman who had left. "We can't all be as strong as you are," she said. She went on to express her frustration and anger about her inability to speak up and voice her opinions in this particular setting. Something had propelled her to the center of the room and suddenly she was speaking for both herself and for the woman who had left. Soon others began speaking up about the same issue and it became clear that the initial critic was expressing an opinion which was shared by many.

The initial critic was unable to express her feelings completely. A traditional analytic view would focus on her personal psychology by encouraging her to work on her father complex and her fear of authority. The process paradigm observes what happens in nature and sees the seeds of something which may be useful. It is, in some sense, correct that she cannot complete her criticism. It is not her job to do so alone. The critic is a role, one that many people feel, and should therefore be shared. Had she been able to express her criticisms



to completion, it would have robbed others of their chance to grow.

The critic is only one of many roles in a group field. We will discuss the leadership role in great detail in chapter eight. Some other roles which appear with regularity in groups are the silent sufferers and the tyrannical dictator, the parent and child, the insiders and outsiders, and the authorities and the "crazy" people.

Because the role is greater than the person, individuals often need help completing their roles. Playing a role seems to be a tremendous and mythical task, and it is rare that a role can be fulfilled by one person alone. In chapter five, we saw how the group disturber, especially if he or she is in an extreme state, needs others to share the role in order to express the message to completion.

I remember another early group process experience in which group members worked on their difficulties around being an individual in a group. During a lengthy period of chaos, one woman became so frustrated that she threw a glass on the floor. As it shattered, people froze in stunned silence. Our group terrorist announced that she had just set off a bomb.

She began to shout at the group. "Wake-up!" she said. "It could be the end." The fifty participants listened quietly. Upset by her violent outburst, they waited to hear her message. However, she had some difficulty bringing it across effectively. She told the group to wake-up, but she herself seemed sleepy and apathetic; she admitted feeling hopeless about the events on the planet.

Group members realized that her message was, in part, a projection. She herself needed to wake-up out of her own hopelessness. Initially the group felt angry, thinking that she should be able to model or display the behavior that she was recommending. "Why doesn't she act like an awakened teacher?" group members wondered. "How dare she criticize us for something which she herself is not yet able to do? This woman should work on her personal psychology!"

The group's anger quickly subsided, replaced by a desire to understand the dramatic events which were unfolding. Eventually, guided by Mindell's facilitation, the waker-upper was recognized as a role which many could fill. A ritual was created whereby each and every person who had a message concerning waking-up came into a particular corner of the room to speak out. In this way, the responsibility of awakening and shaking up the world was shared. By distributing the role and giving it content, the negative feelings for the original terrorist were rapidly dissolved.

The theory which eventually developed out of such experiences purports that the group itself is whole and therefore the individual need not always be. Each individual plays a role which contributes to the group's wholeness, but each individual unit is not expected to be complete unto itself.

Furthermore, individual and group development are coupled. In the above example, the individual helped the group to wake up. Paradoxically, she taught the group more by being unable to wake it up than she would have had she been an enlightened teacher.

Small bombs are sometimes useful! Her inability to awaken the group prompted group members to pick up the role of the waker-upper themselves.

On the other hand, the group helped the individual to develop by using her, assigning her the role of the waker-upper, and forcing her to become aware of her own hopelessness along with her desire to change the world. For this woman, being a terrorist was a first step towards fulfilling her personal task in the world channel.

The relationship between the group and individual is one of mutual awakening. Because the smaller anthropos, in this sense the individual woman, was stuck in her own development, the larger anthropos was forced to use her "problem" for its enlightenment.

#### Person Selection and Dreaming-Up

At this point we can employ another concept which comes to us from sociology. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1953) coined the term "person-selection" to refer to the process through which a social structure selects the person or persons that it needs to continue its functioning. If no persons are available to fill a certain role, according to the theory of "person selection," they will have to be invented or produced in accordance with required specifications. Berger (1963) explains that

society manufactures the personnel it needs to keep it going . . . fierce warriors appear because there are armies to be sent out, pious men because there are churches to be built, scholars because there are universities to be staffed, and murderers because there are killings to be performed. (p. 110)

In chapter six we saw how groups use or create individuals, couples, subgroups, and even the natural world as channels through which to express aspects of their totality. In the next chapter we will look at how groups manage to produce the leaders they need.

In process terms we would say that the behavior of an individual may be influenced, or "dreamed-up," by the field to which the individual belongs (Mindell, 1985, 1985a, 1987, 1988, 1989, in print; Goodbread, 1987, 1989). Parts of the field begin to act out the "dream" of the whole. The "dream" is that part of the field which has not yet been expressed consciously. Thus, we saw how the woman at the first Group Process seminar was dreamed up by the field to express criticism. This was not a personal choice. The larger anthropos used her; it needed her to express itself. In the second case, the woman was forced by the field to throw the glass and drive the group to an awakening. She did not consciously audition for the role. The field's choice of actors for particular roles has something to do with the personal psychologies of those present, but it is not limited to only these personal psychologies. The exact nature of the field's selection process is a matter open to further research.

If you have ever been part of a relationship or a group you probably have an intuitive sense of what it is like to be dreamed-up. Dreaming-up is a form of communication which happens unconsciously. You are dreamed-up when you have that strange but common experience of feeling and acting in ways which are inexplicable to you; you do not identify with your behavior, and you do not know where it has come from. You are being moved and

influenced by fields or signals of which you are not aware.

Think about how you feel when you walk into someone's home for the first time. You have an immediate feeling, based on the "atmosphere" in the house. The field creates certain experiences in you: perhaps you want to sit down, relax, and talk about your most intimate experiences; maybe you would prefer to make an immediate exit and meet in a restaurant; it could be that you feel compelled to go into the kitchen and make a mess.

Dreaming-up may also happen when you enter restaurants, meetings, concert halls, and even cities and countries. In certain places you feel well; others make you feel sick, anxious, or unhappy. In some cases, you can determine some of the signals which have caused your feelings; other times the field effects you in an acausal way which you cannot identify.

Dreaming-up in relationships, both personal and therapeutic, is commonplace. Research and writing (Mindell, 1985, 1985a, 1987, 1988, 1989, in press; Goodbread, 1987, 1989) has been done on this topic. Imagine that you are talking to someone whom you don't know very well, and you start to feel a sense of coldness and irritation coming over you. You don't know why, but you feel like rejecting this person. Upon closer examination of his signals, you realize he has been talking incessantly and is looking at you with a particular tilt of the head and a longing in his eyes. His signals are communicating to a figure who is not listening to him. He is talking so much because no one ever listens! Without your awareness or consent, you have begun acting like that rejecting parent which he probably dreamed about

the previous night.

In another case, a woman is crying and simultaneously stroking her hair. You find yourself wanting to take her in your arms and parent her. How beautiful and how helpful this would be! Another creative choice would be to notice her signals; the hand which is stroking her head is quite interesting. A part of her seems to be nurturing herself. You may be dreamed-up unconsciously to take over the role of the comforter yourself, or you can help her contact the loving hand, the part of herself which does the job so perfectly.

In both of these cases, dreaming-up can be understood causally. You relate only to the primary process of a person and don't notice secondary signals. Those signals, in turn, influence you to behave in a certain way. Suddenly, you are no longer yourself; you are an actor in your partner's dream, fulfilling a role in his or her unconscious drama.

If you can locate the signals which dream you up, you can identify the cause of your behavior and make a choice about how to deal with it. However, in families, groups, and especially in larger collectives, dreaming-up functions as a field effect which cannot be explained by causality and does not necessarily respect the laws of locality. Thus it is possible to be dreamed-up and influenced by events and activities happening in another part of the world. The reverse is also true: the behavior of a single individual may effect, not only his or her family and community, but the entire city as well.

### Archetypal Nature of Roles

Jung introduced non-causal ideas into modern psychology with his conception of the collective unconscious, a field patterned by a priori forms called archetypes. He determined that the archetypes were not purely of a psychic nature, but could occur "just as much in circumstances that are not psychic" (1952/1960, p. 515). For Jung, most synchronistic or acausal connections between psychic and physical phenomena are said to have a direct connection with an archetype. When an archetype manifests in a synchronicity, it takes on a physical form. An archetype, said Jung,

cannot be localized, since either it is complete in principle in every individual or is found to be the same everywhere. You can never say with certainty whether what appears to be going on . . . with a single individual . . . is not also happening in other individuals or organisms or things or situations. (1952/1960, p. 481)

From the perspective of Group Process Work, it is the archetypal field structure of the group which creates the roles. Roles, therefore, as the expression of archetypal patterns, are a priori, mythical forms waiting for people to bring them to life. The role-players seem to be interchangeable and appear in a synchronistic fashion, as they are needed. As long as a person is found to take on the qualities prescribed by the role, the group or society can express itself.

This may also be the case for our long-term roles in life. A more holistic and long-term view of person-selection and dreaming-up indicates that certain of our roles are life myths, chosen synchronistically at the moment of our birth. We can discover these life roles by exploring our chronic symptoms and

childhood dreams, which are like the blueprints for our life-long personal patterns. Connecting with our life myths or global roles gives us a sense of divine purpose in life. We have the feeling that we have been chosen to fulfill a role in the global field--we are alive in order to work on something with which the world needs help! If we identify with this long term role, which goes on after we die, we connect with something transpersonal and eternal (Mindell, personal communication, Nov. 1987).

According to Mindell (in press), the roles themselves live far longer than the people, and over time they change more slowly than individuals do. Perhaps one of the reasons people must die is to give others a chance to play that role.

Ghandi was killed, but not his role: the drive to settle world problems through introspection and meditation. We can legally forbid the idea of segregation so that Blacks are dealt with more fairly, but racism still persists . . . We cannot get rid of roles or parts of a group, whether we forbid them or kill the people in the roles. . . . we must differentiate people from the roles they fill and find out what beliefs or ideologies the roles themselves represent. (p. 67)

The notion that group roles may exist prior to the people who fill them is supported by quantum physicist, John Bell (1988), in an article entitled, "Nonlocality in Physics and Psychology." In a discussion of quantum indeterminacy, Bell makes an analogy between events at the quantum level and events in a human group:

Suppose you had a population of human beings and you could arrange it so that all their environments were equal. If you could solve the equation with all the relevant variables you might say 'Let's calculate how many will become Christians and how many will not . . . .' Quantum mechanics may tell you . . . for example that [a certain percent] will become Christians. Whether any one particular person



becomes a Christian, however is still random--chance. (1988, p. 305)

Bell's statements indicate that the behavior of events at the quantum level mirrors the findings of Group Process Work. What Bell calls "Christian" can be seen as a group role. Although it is possible to predict which roles will appear in a group, that is, which archetypes might emerge at a given event, it is almost never possible to determine with certainty which individual will fill any given role.

### Scapegoating

After a person has been selected or dreamed-up to fill a role, the rest of the group tends to identify the person with the role. This is a form of scapegoating and its prevalence is one of the reasons why people are often afraid to speak out in groups, especially when they are in minority positions. As long as parts of the group--certain individuals or subgroups--are available to take the minority role, the rest of the group can scapegoat that part and avoid the experience of the position themselves.

This phenomenon is illustrated particularly vividly in regard to the situation in South Africa. Most of us look at the events there and react with disdain. We don't visit, and we attempt economic sanctions; we symbolically excommunicate those who support apartheid and pretend they are not a part of our family. As long as the white South Africans fill the global "racist" role, we can act appalled and pretend that racism, tribalism, and religious prejudice do not exist in our own

backyards. Mindell introduces the idea that the white South Africans might be our planetary shadow. It could be that one large anthropos, the world, has dreamed-up South Africa to portray the prejudice and racism which is present to some degree in all of us, regardless of our race (class, Feb. 24, 1989).

A holistic view of the individual recognizes that all the roles are present in all of us. Mindell looks at the global situation and notices that it

reflects our psychic life. Racism appears in many forms, whenever we forbid dreams, feelings and instincts from influencing our behavior. In relationships, we always think the others are wrong, in public we devalue and mistrust strangers. Everyone is a stranger, an outsider at one time or another, and thus everyone knows what it is like to be the underdog. (in press, p. 57)

The South African government cannot be excused. It is important, however, to consider the idea that their intolerance and bigotry may mirror aspects of our own repressed psychic lives. We as a global community need to work on our own racist tendencies; all of us may be partly responsible for the solution to the atrocities in South Africa (Mindell, class, Feb. 24, 1989).

Scapegoating happens frequently in group situations. Without training in minority awareness (see chapter five), people in the minority position are often scapegoated. Therefore, people with minority positions rarely come to the fore.

In a large conflict resolution seminar (referred to in chapter five and sponsored by CIRCL) facilitated by Mindell, there were about 150 people, with a very small group of Blacks, who were mostly from the U.S. military. <sup>1</sup> Towards the end of the

course, one of the black men made academic criticisms of the sessions. He spoke of people who he believed had "negative issues" which they were afraid to express. Because he referred to third parties, group members tried to get him to speak personally and directly about his concerns, but he was either unable or unwilling to do so. Finally, various others began to speak up and some content was revealed: this man felt he had been ignored. The issue of race was never mentioned.

The speaker was not anxious to communicate his personal experiences and feelings directly, regardless of the fact that members of the group were pressuring him to do so. Group members interpreted his behavior through their own belief systems and encouraged him to change. Some said he should understand psychologists for being so introverted; others thought he himself should learn to reach out, and still others spoke of non-linear and linear means of approaching relationship. All the comments from the outside carried an indirect criticism and were oriented towards excusing the behavior of the majority.

No wonder the speaker hesitated to talk personally about his experiences! A group majority can hardly wait to connect an individual to his or her role and create a scapegoat. Group Process Work discourages scapegoating by accepting the man's disinclination to speak personally. It is seen as an indication that he represents a part of the field. Individuals needn't identify with roles with which they feel uncomfortable; others who have the same or similar feelings are encouraged to play the roles instead. In any single group setting there are certainly some people who feel left out, ostracized, or ignored!

### "Gestalt" the Field

Role playing is not simply a technique. It is indigenous to group work because people automatically identify and disidentify with various group roles. Therefore, one of the most useful interventions employed by Group Process Work involves identifying the roles that are floating in the field and creating concrete positions for them in the room. In any given group, there may be a spot for the leader, the critic, and the silent or shy person. Creating these positions allows people to step into and out of the various group roles. This intervention gives form or "gestalt" to the nebulous field. Mindell says:

finding the roles in a global field is essential to understanding it. By taking over the vague information float, we are giving it a chance to channel and differentiate itself; we are helping it to create instead of pollute us. (in press, p. 78)

How does a group facilitator identify the important group roles? He or she may want to use an intuitive or feeling capacity to sense what is in the atmosphere and then present those observations to the group. The group's reaction must be watched carefully. If group members begin to play the roles spontaneously, with energy, the facilitator is on the right track. But the facilitator must beware, because a group's aversion to certain roles could indicate an edge. Groups, like individuals, have edges against certain roles. Group members need a lot of encouragement before they will play a role which may threaten the group's identity. It is very useful, in a group process setting, if the facilitator has assistants who can begin to act out those roles from which the group recoils.

There are several additional ways of noticing group roles. They can be identified by sorting through the feelings and themes which individuals express. The issues which constellate the most emotionally charged reactions in the group generally indicate group roles which need to be explored. When an individual begins to express feelings with which he or she cannot identify personally or express to completion, the facilitator recognizes the presence of a role. Roles are also indicated when group members speak of third parties who are not present, or past and future events. When third parties are discussed it is an indication that there are certain roles in the group which are being projected. If the roles are not represented with awareness, they will happen to the group and create a disturbance to its primary process.

After a role is identified and acted out, the group facilitator attempts to distinguish the recipient of the role's communication. Mindell has discovered that

each role communicates with another role. Which role is the inadequate person speaking to? Is there a tyrant present who makes others feel inadequate? Each role in a field can be understood as a reaction to another role, and polarizing these two roles clarifies the field. (in press, p. 78)

Generally, after the roles are created and given form and content, unconscious issues emerge rapidly and can be processed. In the conflict resolution seminar mentioned above, a role for the minority person who felt ignored was identified. Consequently, a role for those who were disregarding or snubbing others could also be established. By creating roles for these polar positions, the background issues of racism, trust, fear,

and ignorance rose quickly to the surface.

### Role Detachment

People are invited to identify with roles, act them out, notice when they no longer fit, and then leave them behind. It is common to take a position very strongly and then, soon after, to disidentify with it. Mindell asserts,

one of the reasons why most of us avoid public life and avoid playing leading roles is because our nature is more complex than any given role. An individual has many parts, and thus feels identified with many roles, not just one. It's limiting for an individual to stay identified with any given role for a long period of time. (in press, p. 79)

Role switching is thus an important part of Group Process Work. As soon as the impulse arises, individuals are encouraged to leave their positions and identify with other roles. Such role switching often brings a group conflict to a rapid resolution.

More than a half a century ago, George Herbert Mead (1934), one of the fathers of role theory, asserted that human beings were essentially role taking animals. Assuming the role of the other was essential to what he called "social intelligence." He wrote that the

putting of one's self in the places of others, this taking by one's self of their roles and attitudes, is not merely one of the various aspects or expressions of intelligence . . . but is the very essence of its character. ( p. 141)

Mead considered the ability to take on other's roles to be a prerequisite for democracy.

The implication of democracy is . . . that the individual can be as highly developed as lies within the possibilities of his own inheritance, and still can enter into the attitudes of the others whom he affects. . . . superior individuals can themselves enter into the attitudes of the

community which they undertake to lead. (1934, p. 326)

The ability to leave an assigned role behind and take on the role of the other requires a disidentification with the role with which one is presently involved. Ervin Goffman (1961), a contemporary American sociologist, calls this disidentification "role-distance." Berger (1963) explains that role-distance occurs when "the actor has established an inner distance between his consciousness and his role playing" (p. 135). This is said to be a departure from the normal pattern in that roles are usually played without reflection and people generally identify with the roles that they play.

Mindell confirms Goffman's idea and stresses how difficult it is to get out of a role which the group or society has assigned. Groups tend to marry people to their roles and then to freeze the partnership into an eternal condition. The group unwittingly tries to make the person into the role (Mindell, seminar, April 1987). This makes it all the more difficult for the individual to leave the role. It is like a couple attempting to divorce if a whole community is trying to keep them together. The marriage of person and role also has the effect of irritating other group members who notice aspects of the individual which are actually not congruent with the role he or she is playing.

In the case of role-distance, the actor has access to many roles and can choose to play the one he or she wishes. The actor can also play the role which society expects, without taking it seriously. This puts the actor in an ecstatic position. The word ecstatic comes from the Greek "ekstasis" which literally

means to stand or step outside (Berger, 1963, p. 136). This notion of ecstasy takes us away from the Durkheimian idea (1950) that the society determines the individual completely. The actor in an ecstatic position is able to step outside the role and therefore has freedom of choice relative to the world in which he or she lives.

Berger questions whether certain social situations or groups particularly facilitate this ecstatic state of consciousness. Group Process Work certainly encourages it. Process workers notice that when someone who is strongly identified with one position can take some distance from it in order to understand and play the role of the other, it seems to have a magical and transformative effect on the whole group.

I remember a case in which one man's ability to take an opposing role transformed an angry, hurt group into a community with love and hope at its center. At a training seminar led by Mindell, a man worked on his so called "terminal illness" and learned that the illness was his ally, challenging him to express his power and to stand up for himself under even the most adverse circumstances. He integrated this message immediately by entering into several relationship situations which challenged him to assert himself in a new way. His self-assured and aggressive behavior constellated a group process. Many people were afraid of violence and aggression and had been through difficult experiences which convinced them that violent outbursts should be controlled and repressed. For this man, however, living his wild nature was literally a matter of life and death.

The group processed its tensions by creating roles. Some



people took the role which spoke for free expression and the need to live what is inside without looking out for others. There was another role for people who were frightened and wanted to be treated with sensitivity and care. A third role, which espoused acceptance of people the way they are, also emerged. This role was against trying to mold the behavior of others in order to make oneself more comfortable.

After the structure of the field was revealed, the roles argued back and forth; people switched positions as they identified with the various points of view. The turning point occurred when the man whose process had constellated the conflict left his position in the role of free expression and took the role of those expressing fear. He talked about his deep fear of violence and shared how important it had been for him to repress his own aggressive nature in his attempt to be a loving man. He spoke of his deep need to be treated with sensitivity and love. His ability to remain in contact with his wholeness while in the middle of developing a totally new side of himself was impressive. As he expressed his fear, the conflict seemed to disappear. By understanding and identifying with the position of his foes, he inspired them to accept and even support his need to live a dormant and socially threatening part of his own personality.

As we can see, taking the role of others is not only important for the group's development; it can also be essential for the individual's growth. This returns us to the notion that an individual is greater than any one role. An individual's

wholeness or "globality" depends on his or her ability to play a great variety of roles.

Sociologically speaking, a personality is perceived as a repertoire of roles, each role "properly equipped with a certain identity" (Berger, 1963, p. 105). The range or scope of an individual personality is measured by the number and variety of roles he or she is capable of playing. Berger says that the personality, viewed from a sociological perspective, is "no longer a solid entity that moves from one situation to another. It is rather a process, continuously created and re-created in each social situation that one enters" (1963, p. 106).

Process work views the personality like a hologram which a person carries everywhere. The occupation of the various roles in the hologram depends on the social situations or relationships in which one takes part, and on who else is present in the field. Thus, every relationship thrusts a person into a different role and forces one to experience a different side of oneself. A woman may be adapted and submissive with her self-assured and bossy partner, yet aggressive and confident with friends who are more diffident than she. This is one of the reasons a person needs more than one relationship. It is much more difficult to play all the roles and experience one's wholeness in a single relationship, where one tends to get stuck in one or several roles (Mindell, 1987, p. 101).

### Melting of Roles

There is an old Zen saying which goes as follows. "Before you study Zen, a mountain is a mountain. While you are studying

Zen, a mountain is no longer a mountain. After you've studied Zen, a mountain is once again a mountain" (cited in Izutsu, 1979).

Before we study groups, we think that people are just people, with their individual identities intact. While we are deep into our group experiences, people are no longer so simple-- they become confusing and complex entities and often look like a medley of roles rather than distinct individual personalities. Then, at a certain point in group life, the roles seem to melt and the issue of who is playing what role is no longer important. Then people are just real people communicating with one another honestly and openly.

The group process just described completed itself when the "ill" man was able to stand congruently and honestly for several parts of himself at once. In the case about racism, the process came to its dramatic conclusion only after the actual roles were dropped and a very genuine and realistic conflict took place between the black man who spoke up at the beginning and a white man from the group. Mindell describes the conclusion beautifully.

One white man decided to risk his worst fears, and turned his back on one of the black men. For a moment the whole room was filled with terror. The black man then reached out, put his arms around the front of his "opponent" and embraced him. The white man broke down and cried and everyone genuinely embraced. (in press, p. 61)

During such powerful and moving encounters, the concept of roles fades away and we acknowledge the uniqueness and beauty of each individual personality. A mountain once again becomes a mountain, only to become more complex next time we are thrust

into a group field which is trying to clarify and express its totality.

## Notes

1. Portions of this experimental seminar were videotaped. Entitled "Conflict Resolution and World Consciousness," the tape is distributed by the Visionary Company, P.O. Box 730, Haleiwa, Hawaii, 96712, USA.

## VIII

### LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATION

The study of leadership is of vital concern to anyone interested in working with group process and group dynamics. It is widely accepted among group psychologists, social psychologists, and sociologists that the group leader is only one, albeit a highly visible one, of many group roles (Hare, Borgatta, and Bales, Eds., 1955). The role has a multiplicity of meanings and implications depending on the point of view of the theorist.

In this chapter we will look at the concept of leadership in Group Process Work and differentiate it from what is known as group facilitation. We will compare our ideas about leadership to other commonly held notions in group psychology and sociology. We will also define and identify the role of the Group Process Work facilitator.

#### Leader as Parental or Divine Figure

From time immemorial, it has been thought that people project parental images onto their leaders. Confucius asserted that "the people are pleased with their ruler because he is like a parent to the people" (cited in Berne, 1963, p. 297). In chapter one we discussed how the early group psychologists picked up this idea and expanded it in a variety of ways.

Freud believed that the group leader held the group together. He said that group members projected their "ego-ideals" onto the leader, thereby identifying with the person in

the leadership role. Freud was convinced that, without this identification, the group would fall apart.

Le Bon claimed that the group was like an obedient herd which took a submissive role in relation to the parent/leader. Bion extended this idea by identifying it as one of a group's basic assumptions: he said that the group unconsciously hopes and dreams that it will be sustained by a leader who can be depended upon for everything. As long as the leader plays this parental role, said Bion, he or she is accepted. Part of the group's task is to face the emotional tensions that ensue when the therapist restrains from playing the role of a god who is fully responsible for the group's life.

Ezriel agreed that group members sometimes project a parental or divine figure onto the group leader, but he saw that group projections on the leader were not limited to this particular one. He believed that the behavior of the group leader functions like a Rorschach test, onto which group members project their unconscious fantasies. For Ezriel, the fantasies are born out of the collective unconscious and represent a wide spectrum of archetypal images.

Eric Berne (1963), in his Transactional Analysis with groups, connects the concept of leadership with a process called "euhemerization." First written about by the Greek philosopher, Euhemerus, the term originally referred to the process whereby ancient kings and heroes took on mythical attributes in the popular mind, thus becoming god-like (p. 134). The modern group leader, according to Berne, is like an euhemerus in that he or

she is a blank slate onto which group members project all the qualities which they require of the god-like leadership position.

According to Berne, people need to euhemerize the leadership, in part because the group itself is not in sufficient contact with the living spirit in the moment. The euhemerus becomes a sort of god-figure and receives all of the group's projections of power, ability, and competence. He or she serves as a rallying force for the cohesive powers in the group. Members feel secure in the sense that there is a leader or leading force which will take care of them.

The process of euhemerization is sometimes essential. It provides the group with a divine center and a sense of wholeness and well-being. In the eastern system, the guru is believed to have a deep inner connection to the divine. By loving the guru, the disciples share a part of this divine connection. Clearly, projecting those divine qualities can be a first step towards recognizing them internally. However, the process also has its disadvantage--it reinforces our widespread collective illusion that there is "someone out there" who will be our savior, take care of us, and solve all our problems. It neglects the fact that leadership and divinity are roles to be shared by all of us.

Mindell uses the term "consensus hypnosis" (personal communication, Nov. 1988) to refer to a collective state of unconsciousness and dreaming which leads us to split off our own powers and euhemerize our identified leaders. Our hypnosis leads us into a kind of t.v. watching, "couch potato" mentality in which we sit back and watch the events of the world go by, convinced that we are powerless to do anything about them.



waiting for someone else, one of our leaders, to step in and take action.

In general, most of us don't even react to the world television show, convinced our reactions would be of no use in effecting change. We have been hypnotized to believe that we must endure the pain and conflict in our families, in group life, and in the world. Process Work teaches us that our reactions represent a missing role in the drama. Our pain, like the suffering earth, expresses a part of the global field.

Roszak (1979) says that since the earth, or Gaia, has no voice with which to cry out in pain, she must use human voices to express her suffering. Mindell suggests that if we could bring our suffering into the field more consciously, other parts of the earth, like the dying trees, might not have to suffer quite so much (seminar, March 1987). In denying our reactions, we fail to acknowledge that they are a missing role in the field--a role which has the potential to lead the field to a new center.

### The Field as Leader

The process-oriented notion of leadership offers a radical contrast to our consensus hypnosis and serves to shake us out of our collective passivity. Process work recognizes that it is the background field or global dreambody which leads a group. The field, when expressed in its totality, has the power to guide the group towards its divine center. Leadership need not be limited to any one given person; it is our collective responsibility.

The leader is a perceiver. Anyone who picks up a part of that background field and brings it into the group with awareness

is in a leadership position. According to Mindell,

each one of us occasionally has the energy, knowledge and excitement to contribute to this role . . . the apparent leader is a form, a role, a symbol for insight and power each of us sometimes feels and is responsible for contributing to our communitites. (in press, p. 67)

Naturally, it is difficult for us to believe that our perceptions have the potential to "lead." When we feel something in a group, we think it is personal and forget we are a role belonging to the field. We repress our perceptions, remain silent, suffer, and hate group life. We think that we have to be someone special in a group in order to be important. This leads us to delusions of grandeur and fantasies of false leadership. In fact, every perceiver has something to contribute.

Even if your role is to be the silent one who feels but cannot speak. . . you are playing a 'leading' role . . . . Only when all roles are consciously represented, can the field operate humanely and wisely. Each role is a leading one because the field we live in is created by the tension and interaction between all its roles. (in press, p. 68)

This view of leadership was illustrated during a case in which members of the Process Work community worked on conflicts between students, teachers, and administrators. A nasty and painful fight between identified "insiders" and "outsiders" occurred. At one point, a woman in the student role began to speak from her heart about the pain and difficulty of getting through the training program, which demanded so much of its students; she spoke of her feelings of inadequacy. She mentioned the background philosophies which touched her so deeply and kept her motivated, despite the hardships. As this woman spoke, the group fell quiet, the tension disappeared and participants formed

a circle around her. The previous conflict was no longer the important issue. For the moment, the roles of inferiority, commitment and love were important and led the group to its center.

### Challenging the Leader

It is commonplace that people in leadership roles are challenged, criticized, and attacked, and these phenomena can be understood from a variety of perspectives. Freud (see chapter one) said such challenges represent an attempt to kill the father figure in order to integrate his power. He said that in tribal communities, members of the primal horde actually ate the leader in order to incorporate his authority. Adler (Corsini, 1984) described the fight with leadership as a power struggle. Bion (see chapter one) said that group leaders are attacked when they refuse to play the all-knowing parental role. Group Process Work identifies several reasons for the criticisms directed against group leadership. An overview as to the cause for the attacks and suggestions for possible ways to deal with them is outlined in Table 4 on pages 183-184.

Mindell believes that the struggle against the leader is a necessary part of group life. Group members who have considered themselves passive followers with nothing to contribute must, at some point, rebel against the leader in order to make themselves known and to experience their own power and leadership abilities. The group rebels can be likened to body symptoms which appear in order to get a message across to the governing personality. Since it is the background spirit of the group which leads and

not the individual identified as the leader, it is important that the identified leader be fluid in giving up his or her position, especially when the role is challenged.

I have participated in and witnessed many group processes in which the leadership is attacked for being insufficient in some way. In some cases, the old leader is not only awake enough to recognize the emerging leader, who is making an appearance in the form of a critic, but also humble enough to leave the leadership role behind. With these conditions fulfilled, the group process has the opportunity to reorganize itself and the leadership passes into new hands. The best identified leaders give up their role before it is attacked in order to share it with others.

No individual leader is consistently congruent with that which is truly leading the group. The identified leader's imperfection is both useful and important to the group as a whole. In the case of the educational institution which we referred to above, the identified leader did not have contact with the feelings of inferiority floating in the group field. This was a blessing in disguise for other group members! If he had picked up and represented the feelings of inferiority in the field, he would have robbed the emerging leader of the chance to experience the power of her own leadership ability. A group eventually hates a perfect leader and needs to rebel in order for others to feel their own leadership potential.

Especially during the early stages of a group's life, group members tend to demand perfection of their leader. If a divinity is being projected onto the leader, we can assume that

the group needs a spiritual center. A process-oriented leader recognizes that it may be important to take on this role temporarily, in order to provide the center that the group presently experiences only through projection. Soon after, however, the process-oriented leader steps out of this role in order to help the group find that divine center in itself. If a leader refuses to take on this god-like role, even temporarily, he or she will probably be criticized. Group leaders such as Bion and Peck prefer not to assume the divine and wise position at all; as a result they must bear intense group criticism.

Peck writes that in some groups which he has led, the group's desire for an authority figure is so strong "that they will figuratively crucify the leader who does not accede to their demands." In training leaders, Peck says, "You must be willing and able to die for the group." This calls our ideas about strength and leadership into question. "Paradoxically, the strong leader, in these instances is she or he who is willing to risk--even welcome--the accusation of failing to lead" (1987, p. 116). By failing to lead, the "leader" offers, even forces, the leadership role to someone else.

Failing as a leader can also be useful for the leader. Failure forces the leader to review his or her paradigm. If your goal as a leader is to heal the group or be its savior, chances are you will suffer a great deal during group life. If you see yourself as a role in the field, symbolic of the many group forces being projected onto you, ready to fluidly take them on and then drop them again, able to give the leadership back to group members, you will enjoy group life, and cultivate your own

wholeness as well.

Everyone who has worked with groups knows the pain of being attacked when occupying the leadership position. Leadership may be attacked for being perfect or imperfect, weak or strong, authoritarian or laissez-faire. It is often the case that leaders are attacked for parts of themselves with which they themselves are unfamiliar. Group members notice the leader's secondary signals even if the leader is unaware of them. Because the leader becomes a symbol for the total field, sometimes people even attack leaders for things which may be totally false.

Consider the case of a very sensitive, introverted woman who was attacked for being too authoritarian. The authoritarian role was floating in the field; each group member needed more contact with his or her own authoritarian nature; therefore, the people saw that behavior in the leader, despite her gentle qualities. In this case it was useful for the leader to take on the role being projected. This meant she needed the ability to contact the authority in herself and act it out, giving group members a chance to interact with that figure. As she played the role, it inspired others to help her fill it out. As other group members stepped into the authority position, the leadership was once again shared.

#### Shared Leadership

Process workers are not the first to recognize the shared nature of group leadership. Anthropologist Virginia Hines noticed that polycephalous or many-headed leadership presented an alternative both to bureaucracy and to group forms which proposed

no leadership. She identified polycephalous leadership as an essential component of a "global society of the future" (cited in Lipnack and Stamps, 1986, p. 5).

Peck (1987) recognizes the decentralization of authority as an empirical fact in his work with groups. He says that once a group becomes a community, his job as group leader is finished and a "flow of leadership" appears.

The flow of leadership in community is routine. It is a phenomena that has profound implications for anyone who would seek to improve organizational decision making--in business, government or elsewhere. . . . Traditional hierarchical patterns have to be at least temporarily set aside. . . . For it is a situation in which it is the spirit of community itself which leads and not any single individual. (p. 72)

For Peck, the spirit of true community is the spirit of peace and love. As we have seen, process workers recognize that background community spirits can be anything; they range from love to competition, ambition to feelings of inferiority, peace to a group brawl.

A fluid view of leadership is in accordance with Kurt Lewin's field theory. Lewin (1935) postulated that the individual's characteristics and actions change under the varying influence of the "social field." Following Lewin, the social psychologist Cecil Gibb (1947) expounded a theory of leadership which asserts that "the adoption of a leadership role is dependent on the specific situation. The same individual in the same group may alternate between the role of leader and follower as the group goal changes" (Hare, Borgatta, and Bales, Eds., 1955, p. 90).

According to Gibb's theory, leadership is not an innate

attribute of personality but rather depends on the relation between the individual personality and the group at any particular moment. Gibb says that the group has the capacity to

propel to leadership one or more of their number . . . the choice of a specific individual for the leadership role will be more dependent on the nature of the group and of its purpose than upon the personality of the individual. (p. 89)

This concept is reminiscent of dreaming-up and person-selection--ideas discussed in chapter seven. If groups actually create their leaders, we must reconsider our ideas about the great and terrible leaders in history. Have they been responsible for the social situations and changes which they have initiated? To what extent would these social situations, both wonderful and destructive, have occurred anyway, under the leadership of another "group-chosen" personality?

### Facilitation

Since it is the background field, or global dreambody, which actually leads, Group Process Work distinguishes between the leadership role and the person or persons who facilitate the group process. Naturally, it is often the case that the group facilitator is also the object of the group's leadership projections and becomes a living symbol of the background field. Therefore, the job of the facilitator is subtle and complex.

Mindell points out that since every group has an innate tendency to be whole, the group will produce or dream-up a leader who has capacity for wholeness and global awareness and can represent this awareness in the group. Such a leader has the



capacity not only to play leading group roles, but to facilitate group life.

In an ideal situation, every member of the group has the awareness which is necessary in order to step into the role of group facilitator. The first requirement for the group facilitator is the maintenance of a dual awareness. The facilitator must be aware of his or her own individual feelings and experiences and have access to many parts internally. Additionally, he or she must be aware of the group as a whole. One of these forms of awareness, without the other, is insufficient (Mindell, seminar, March 1989). The two together constitute a global viewpoint.

Furthermore, the facilitator needs the ability to metacommunicate to the group--to talk to them about their various forms of communication. He or she should bring this information across in a neutral fashion, without pushing, criticizing, or provoking guilt. This attitude and style of communicating is difficult to learn. It is a metaskill which requires that the facilitator believes in the group and trusts that its behavior holds the seeds for its future development. This multiple awareness is a great deal to ask of any one human being; at the same time, it should be expected of us all.

Why is it important that a group facilitator have awareness of and access to many parts of his or her own personality? As we have seen, the group has a holographic structure. All the parts of the whole are enfolded into each individual piece. Therefore, all the parts which are floating around in the field are also

present in the facilitator as well as in every other group member. However, since split off parts of the group are likely to be projected onto the leader, who is often the facilitator, it is necessary that he or she be able to deal with a wide variety of correct and incorrect projections.

The sensitive leader who was identified as authoritarian had the capacity to represent the authority which was projected onto her. This intervention served the function of bringing a missing role consciously into the field and helped the group find its own wholeness. Had she been unable to represent the authority because she was not in touch with that part of herself, someone else in the room would probably have become authoritarian. As such, the authority figure would quickly become the new group leader.

In one case, a student facilitator was accused of being repressive. At first he denied that this was true, told the group they were wrong, and continued to repress them unconsciously. He was facilitating a democratic group whose members generally listened patiently to everyone's story. The facilitator had been hypnotized by the group's communication style. He had been convinced that dictatorship was bad and therefore became defensive at the accusation. When he was able to free himself from his own preconceived notions and get in touch with his tyrannical nature, it turned out not to be tyrannical at all; he was a powerful speaker with important and critical views, and he had been hesitant to interrupt the group proceedings in order to bring them across. By "repressing" others consciously and stating his opinions forcefully, he

inspired other group members to get in touch with their need to "repress" others in order to express their own views. Thus, the egalitarian group found value in the dictator's position. The facilitator's ability to contact his own dictatorial nature and allow it to unfold into something meaningful helped the group to contact an unknown part of itself.

In another case, in front of 200 people, a facilitator was identified as being spiritual. This facilitator was not comfortable talking about his spiritual views publicly. However, the group situation propelled him over his personal edge. A spiritual center was being projected onto him; his ability to contact his own deep beliefs in front of the large group, and to speak about them openly, allowed the group to share a very special experience. The next step for the group was inner work. All group members meditated on their deepest beliefs, thereby becoming their own spiritual centers.

An enlightened facilitator has the ability to support all parts of group life: the disturbers, the silent people, the nasty critics, the incessant talkers, and the jealous ones. Such a facilitator appreciates both majority and minority opinions. He or she recognizes each position which is present as a potential leader and encourages it to come out. Mindell once defined enlightenment as the ability to have contact with and work on every possible human problem inside of yourself (personal communication, Aug. 1987). This special form of enlightened awareness trains the facilitator to appreciate all possible group situations.

However, being your real, genuine self as a group facilitator is a complicated matter and cannot be applied as a program. It is not always right for a facilitator to pick up and represent the background group process. I remember the case of a student facilitator who expressed her own neediness and desire for attention in the group with which she was working. She was able to notice her own feelings; she had an uncanny sense of loneliness and abandonment when she was part of this particular group. While she noticed her own feelings, she had less awareness about where the group was as a whole. Parts of the group supported her and got in contact with their own needs through her process, but another faction became angry at her for taking up so much group time. This group hadn't yet had enough of its own process. It was too early for the facilitator to draw so much group focus.

The facilitator is part of the field and his or her every move has great strategic significance. Palazzoli (1986) notices in her work with organizations that the psychologist "in his consulting capacity, is his own professional instrument. . . while accepting his own emotional reactions, he has learned to filter them out and arrive at the appropriate response in a given context" (p. 127).

This hints at the facilitator's second job: to have awareness of the group as a whole. The facilitator's awareness of his or her own feelings is rarely sufficient. A group facilitator gets dreamed-up to have all sorts of feelings in a group, and must learn to deal with them in ways which are useful for the group. (See Table 5 on pp. 185-186.) A facilitator who

takes up too much time with his or her own process will be attacked, and rightly so, by the group. The ability to notice a group's totality and to determine which interventions are useful in a given moment is one of the multiple tasks of the process-oriented group facilitator.

There is still another viewpoint necessary for the facilitator: that of the neutral metacommunicator. A well-known photograph from recent times is a picture of the earth taken from the moon. The popularity of this picture reflects our collective need to be able to take a detached position and view our actions, feelings, and experiences from afar.

This ability to detach is taught in various meditation procedures (LeShan, 1984). Originally an eastern endeavor, meditation has been gaining increasing popularity in the west. It is extremely helpful for a group if someone can take a neutral position and comment on what is happening without being interpretive or judgmental. This form of neutrality is compassionate, in contrast to a neutrality which is the result of indifference. It requires being open to all the roles in the group and to the numerous states a group goes through, such as rage, love, racism, logic, and silence.

The facilitator's metacommunication encourages the group to reflect about itself. Of course, this is not always useful. In the case of a very stiff group which is just beginning to get into emotional issues, talking about things can quickly re-access the original inhibitions. During periods of chaos, however, it can be an extremely helpful intervention.

we must ask ourselves if it is indeed possible for a facilitator to remain outside of a system long enough to observe what is going on objectively. Quantum physicists take great care to account for the relationship between observed and observing systems.<sup>1</sup> Palazzoli (1986), subscribing to Morin's (1977) epistemological concept of observation, points out that

in the relationship between observing and observed system, the observer is as much a part of the observed system as the observed system is part of the intellect and the culture of the observing system. . . . the observer observes himself while he observes the system. (p. 128)

Such a meta-observer notices that the system includes the observer as one of its parts. Again, I must stress that it is only sometimes possible and correct for the facilitator to be in this observer role. Mindell points out that the facilitator cannot and should not always remain outside, but must have the ability to come in and out of group feeling--to take a strong stand and also be able to detach (seminar, March 1989).

As we can see, the facilitator's role is not an easy one. No single attitude or intervention can be applied as a program. The facilitator has a great variety of problems which can only be eased through experience. Among the most difficult problems of group facilitators are the following: being criticized in public; dealing with extreme states such as psychosis or violence in the group; having a group member or faction of the group leave; bringing in personal feelings. We have seen that the process-oriented group facilitator has a huge repertoire of tools with which to deal with these issues.

Mindell stresses that the most important tool of the group

facilitator is his or her awareness.

We are only just now realizing that our awareness is as creative as a bomb is destructive. Just being aware can have immediate effects on others because . . . in a world of non-locality, every thought and feeling [belongs to everybody] is global. (in press, p. 68)

In the next part of this dissertation, we look more closely at the difficulties which a beginning group facilitator has in maintaining awareness while in the middle of group life. It will become apparent that the task is quite a challenge!

## GETTING ATTACKED AS A LEADER

Table 4

There are many ways to deal with getting attacked when you are in a leadership role. What to do depends on the specific details of the process in the moment. Following are some possible processes and tips for dealing with them:

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### Potential leaders

The person attacks you because he or she is growing into leadership and needs to feel strong. Encourage and support the attacker to be powerful. The majority of attackers are would-be leaders and need to bring the identified leader down so they can emerge. Invite the attacker up to the front to teach something. The tone of voice which the attacker uses against you is often the same tone that is needed in order to be powerful.

### Roles

If the attacks are exaggerated and not true, coming one right after the other, your position is a role which needs to be attacked. Get out of your role. Take the position of the attacker and criticize yourself even more strongly than the attacker did. This is especially useful if the attacks were absurd and obviously false and impersonal. The attackers will probably laugh. The group needs to have a group process around these various roles and is using the leader to get it started. You might also try to take over the role that they are attacking. If they say you are authoritative (and you are really a soft-spoken introvert), act really mean and tough. Exaggerate it and play the role with which they need to conflict.

### Stay out

Don't get involved and let the group have its own process. The attacker is using the public situation as a coalition against you. See how group members deal with it. Some will laugh, others will take your side and others will attack. Constellate the roles in the field and let the group process it. It is a field problem.



TABLE 4 continued

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Admitting

If the criticism is correct, accept it as being just. Admit your imperfection. Usually at least half of what the attacker says is true. It helps if you know your own shadow and are familiar with the kinds of things you might be attacked for. Often this will depotentiate the attacker. However it will only work if the group has had enough process of its own. If they are attacking you in order to get into a group issue, then they won't be interested in your personal process.

Work on yourself

If you get into an altered state and feel really badly, you have no choice but to work on it. In a very stiff group where people do not show emotion, it may be useful to bring out pain or something personal. However, if you work on yourself and become personal, the group can make you into a scapegoat, especially if what you are portraying is secondary for the group. Again, this is not useful if it is your role being attacked and not the real you. It is also not useful if the attacker is a potential leader who needs attention.

Ask for help

Leaders always think they have to do everything alone. But if things are really difficult, especially if there is a coalition against you, ask someone in the group to help you. This may be just what the attacker needed to see.

Defend yourself

Take your own side. Tell the attacker to shut up and leave you alone if this is what you really feel. Do it with humor and it may depotentiate the opponent.

Relationship issue

It is possible that the attacker has a genuine personal relationship issue with the leader. If this is the case, you should work on that issue in front of the group. Maybe this group needs to see the leader without a persona.

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Note. The information from this table was compiled by Mindell and seminar participants at "Global Processes" seminar in Mannenbach, Switzerland, in March 1988 and "Community Crisis Intervention" seminar outside of Luzern, Switzerland, April 1989.

## FACILITATOR GETTING DREAMED-UP

Table 5

When you are in the role of facilitator, the group will produce certain feelings inside of you which make it very difficult, if not impossible, for you to remain neutral. Here are some tips about how to handle it when you get strongly identified with a role:

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### Notice it

Usually, when you are dreamed-up, you don't even notice it. You unconsciously try to repress it, thinking you should be neutral. Just noticing you are dreamed-up is the first step to being able to make your feelings useful for the group.

### Create a role

Ask the group if there is anyone in the field who is feeling the way you are. Don't identify a personal feeling. Find your feeling in the field and have group members portray it.

### Express it

This intervention will be successful if the group has already had a lot of their own process and they are able to focus on you. Sometimes this is exactly what the group needs--for the facilitator to be his or her genuine self and express what he or she is feeling. If you can bring your emotions out with a lot of awareness, it will probably be more useful for the group.

### Work on Yourself

(in front of group)

Begin to speak out loud about what is going on inside of you. Represent all parts of yourself--parts which are having certain feelings in the group and also parts that think you shouldn't bring out. This will not be very useful if the group has not had enough of their own process.

### Work on yourself

(alone in the corner)

Sometimes something happens in the group which really upsets you or sets you into an altered state. Maybe you even start to hate the group. Take a moment while the group is processing to work on yourself internally. Find out what is going on with you and try to regain your neutrality. If you have been hurt by someone in the group or something which the group has done (which is often the case) you can deal with it privately. It is often more useful to work on yourself internally rather than in front of the group.

TABLE 5 continued

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Tell a fairytale

Make up a story. "Once upon a time there was a village. And the village was at war. The village doctor was asked to..." Don't identify the story as your feelings.

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Note. The information from this table was compiled by Mindell and seminar participants at the seminar entitled "Community Crisis Intervention," held outside of Luzern, Switzerland, April 1989.

## Notes

1. The Copenhagen interpretation of quantum theory divides the physical world into an observed and an observing system. The two systems are interrelated and the observing system always has an effect on the system being observed. Therefore it is impossible to predict with certainty what the behavior of the observed system would be if the observing apparatus were not present. (Capra, 1976; Zukav, 1979).

PART III

APPLYING GROUP PROCESS WORK:  
A CASE STUDY



## IX

### THE FACILITATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

In part one of this paper, I introduced the reader to the background of Group Process Work. In part two, I presented the theoretical and philosophical framework upon which Group Process Work rests. In this section, I present a case study of my work with a business organization, in order to illustrate how Group Process Work can be applied.

This part of the dissertation has been the most difficult to write. It would have been easier if I could present a perfect finished product which illustrates the magic that Group Process Work techniques sometimes produce. However, one of the most unusual and difficult aspects of Group Process Work is that it requires so much of the facilitator. As we saw in the last chapter, the facilitator is expected to have at least a dual awareness: an awareness of his or her own feelings and an awareness of the group as a whole. This may sound simple, but I have found this dual awareness very difficult to achieve.

This case study illustrates the difficulties characteristic of a beginning facilitator. It illustrates the problems encountered by a psychologist whose primary experiences are with psychological groups when she tries to apply Group Process Work to an organization.

#### Background

The organization I describe consists of seven members, including the director, who is an active and important

participant in our sessions. They are the staff of a community center, funded by the city, whose task is to provide free-time and cultural activities for the local population. Each member of the staff has a different area of responsibility, and their positions vary as to level of responsibility, amount of time employed, and salary.

Before meeting the group, I had several initial concerns. I was hired by the director of the organization, who had originally been my client in private practice. I was aware that my previous relationship with her had the potential to effect my neutrality, and I vowed to stay awake about this. Additionally, I knew that the hiring of a psychologist is often dictated by someone who is looking for a coalition partner and needs support against an adversary in the institution (Palazzoli, 1986). I wondered if this would be the case with my client.

I was also alert about the fact that I was a psychologist and would be working with a group of social workers. In the city where I was working, social workers are known to have a negative impression of psychologists, who have a higher academic degree and tend to make more money. The director, Eva, made it abundantly clear to me that I was not hired to do group therapy. She stressed that team members were not interested in personal growth or deep psychological insight and that they did not intend to become personal or emotional with one another.

Because this work took place in Switzerland, I was concerned about my language abilities and the fact that I would also be an outsider culturally. Although my Swiss German is adequate for



individual psychotherapy sessions, I was well aware that it would be difficult for me to follow the nuances and subtleties of the conversations in the group. I assuaged my fear by reminding myself that verbal expression was only one of a group's many channels of communication. Unfortunately for me, a business group was sure to use the verbal channel quite frequently!

I knew in advance that I was not always at ease in Swiss groups; the atmosphere tended to be formal and conservative--fitting in was going to be a challenge. I wondered whether I would have enough persona. Should I repress my loose and informal manner, or would the group need that? In accordance with the process paradigm, I could assure myself that if the group hired me, and not someone else, then they probably needed my individual personality as well as my particular skills. We will see how my personality became an immediate issue in the first session and how my personal process was intimately coupled with the group's development.

In this chapter, I discuss my experiences and my personal growth over the ten sessions conducted during a five month period. I evaluate how my facilitation influenced the group's process. I emphasize those moments which were particularly difficult or enlightening for me and for my way of working. In discussing my own difficulties, I also review the overall development of the group. In the next chapter I will go into detail about the specific theoretical themes introduced in part two, and we will look more closely at the group's process.

### The First Session

The first meeting with a group is comparable to the first five minutes of a therapy session with an individual: one can see the seeds of many of the themes and issues which emerge over time. I will therefore discuss my experiences in the first session in some depth. I begin my work with this group feeling like a relatively free agent; I am able to remain somewhat outside of the field and I have the sense that I can "be myself." As the sessions go on, I am drawn more and more into the field as I unconsciously pick up roles which are rejected or unknown to the group.

In the first session we begin with introductions. Afterwards Eva, the director, presents the group's goals, which she says they have discussed together. She reports that the group would like to improve their communication, learn to take more risks, develop their ability to go into and work through conflicts, deal with issues of hurting and being hurt, and learn how to ask for help when they need it. Because the goals are presented by the identified group leader and they are so organized and well-formulated, I assume they are associated with the group's identity; I try to notice other, more unconscious goals, as well. It is interesting that several of their goals are related to interpersonal and emotional issues; this aspect of their goals is not acknowledged directly.

Initially, the thing which strikes me most about the group is the atmosphere which it creates. Although most of the staff are approximately my age--in their 30s, and are dressed casually, I feel as if I am with a group of business people wearing

conservative attire. The mood is very stiff and quiet. It is hard for me to believe that these people spend a substantial part of their waking life together. I wonder where their feeling connection is. They certainly don't seem to enjoy being with one another. And I do not feel very "at home."

I wonder if their reticence is due to my presence, and ask how they feel about my being there. Several group members express mistrust of psychologists, whom they describe as being serious, critical, and analytical. Interestingly enough, these are just the qualities which I would have attributed to them! The director displays these qualities more than the others. She states at the outset that she would not speak frequently--she says that she hopes that others, who are so passive, would speak up for a change.

After the initial discussion about their goals and their mistrust of psychologists, a long period of silence follows. This silence is to become one of the strongest characteristics of their communication; we will discuss it in detail in the following chapter. It is not a silence in which I feel comfortable and meditative; rather, it is a tense silence which seems to be loaded with unspoken feelings and fear.

In that first session, I make several attempts to work with the silence. Filled with creativity and excitement, I am curious to discover what the silence is about. The staff members follow each of my interventions obediently, like a group of school children, and then return immediately to their silence.

More than anything else, I wonder to whom the silence is

speaking. As we saw in chapter seven, all roles are communications to other roles. This group responds to somebody or something with frozen silence. They appear to be hypnotized by a rigid primary process. What are the details of this process? What is the meaning of the silence? The remainder of our work together is occupied with these questions.

Despite the stiff atmosphere, I am still feeling rather relaxed and spontaneous. I try to fantasize about what could be creating the silence, and I act it out. I imagine a figure criticizing and analyzing them--a supervisor with a pipe, ready to attack their every utterance. As I enact this figure and demand that they remain quiet and repress their ideas, group members giggle in embarrassment. My intervention brings the group to the edge of its identity. The critical figure is far away from their awareness--it may be the one which creates all their silence. I ask if anyone in the group can help me play that role, expecting folks to jump up and help me, eager to find out more about themselves. They respond with more uncomfortable giggles. As the laughter subsides, the group returns once again to its silence.

I make several other efforts to work with the silence and stiffness using visual and movement interventions. Although they take up my suggestions enthusiastically, the staff members always go back to their frozen silence.

Towards the end of the first session, the director suggests that I should be more patient with the group. "Don't worry, in time you'll get used to us," she says. I respond by acting out my feelings with humor, assuming they are a role in the field.

"No." I insist as I bang on the table. "You'll never make me change--I'm a wild and excited child. Don't try to calm me down." I assume that group members may sometimes feel what I was expressing, but that it is forbidden to verbalize such things in the group.

The group giggles and stares. They seem to be amused by me and fascinated by my spontaneity. They ask me to return the following week, and say that we will discuss a contract.

#### Facilitator's Awakening

After the first session I had the sense that the creativity and excitement which I had felt would not last long. There was something in that field which put a damper on spontaneity, and I had a hunch that after a few more sessions together, it might get me. However, I also suspected that since they laughed so much and enjoyed my "performance," they probably wanted to have more fun at work.

I discussed the session with Mindell. He was interested in the director's statement: "in time you'll get used to us." He pointed out that this indicated that I did not appreciate the group the way they were. I realized that this was true. I had thought that the organization should be like the groups of which I had been a part.

Apparently, I had not brought in my minority views--my childlike behavior--in a way that supported the primary process. I had unconsciously become a critic, thinking they should change. This was a useful piece of information which confirmed the fact that there was a critic in the field. Perhaps I had been

dreame-up, but I felt pressed to understand more about my own behavior.

I realized that I had been driven by an unconscious goal-- I wished they would open up and become looser and more talkative. My goal at that time differed from their goal and from the goals of Group Process Work. They said they wanted to communicate more fluidly; they did not specify how that communication should look. If my goals had been congruent with those of Group Process Work, I would have attempted simply to bring out the background field. I would not have been invested in changing their behavior. Why was I so intent upon making them different?

I tried to open up to the group the way they were. Since I was not used to working with groups, I tried to imagine that the group was a person who would come to me in private practice. How would I describe his or her personality?

This particular group was like a shy and introverted person who is not drawn to deep spiritual or psychological experiences. The person is a bit stiff and uptight and seems to be afraid of something. There seems to be a critic around who is terrorizing the person and making the person feel depressed and sulky. Looking at the group this way touched something inside of me. I could very easily understand and support such an individual. I realized that group work is comparable to individual work--if the facilitator is unable to appreciate the group's primary process, the group will feel disliked and the work will go nowhere.

Although I understood this intellectually, as the sessions went on, I continued to have trouble accepting the group.

Eventually, my prejudice became clear. I realized that I was upset! I actually needed more feeling and love from them. I felt they were cold and unappreciative of me, and I had been unconsciously trying to squeeze some more feelings out of them. That was why I didn't like them. Aha! Suddenly it became clear that my feeling needs were also a role in the field. Maybe they too felt unappreciated and criticized by other group members, but were too shy to bring those feelings out.

This realization was an awakening for me. I needed something from them! But I had been hired as their facilitator; I wasn't supposed to be the one in need. What could I do with my feelings? With an individual client, I would probably bring out such a need and enter the relationship channel. With a group, however, my feelings represented a role in the field. It would be much too early to bring my personal feelings in. The group hadn't yet had enough of its own process. (See Table 5 on pp. 185-186.) I realized that the group needed to find out more about the part of itself which needs appreciation.

At the end of the first session, I had asked them if I could bring an assistant. I had felt I wanted some help and I had thought it would be more fun for me if I had someone with whom to discuss the work. The group had objected. After a few sessions passed, I understood why. In the first session I had immediately challenged their primary process, and they probably felt threatened by me. Like me, they needed to be appreciated--another supervisor represented an additional threat.

Mindell pointed out that at various stages in our work, I had gotten dreamed-up to play roles which they had split off. I

became part of their field and picked up the roles in the information float. At one moment I was filled with warmth and feeling, at another moment I was the critic. At another point I played the child, who had not yet been repressed by the critic. But this is not what I had been hired for. I could be of more use to the group if I could stay out of the field and report on what was happening. How could I communicate to them about their parts without taking them over myself? This was to become one of the great challenges throughout my work with this group.

I recognized several issues which were important for my own personal growth. My ability to recognize my feelings as a role in the group and to learn to give that back to the group would become essential. I needed to learn to assume a meta-position relative to the group. My becoming warm or appreciative or critical or needy was much less useful to the group than was my ability to point out how they occupied those roles with each other. If I could learn to recognize that my feelings were not just personal--that they were roles in the field and were present in the group itself--I might be able to help the group contact its wholeness.

It was also vital that I develop an ability to appreciate a variety of group states including coldness and silence. In order for me to do so, I would have to become somewhat detached from my need for their appreciation. Because I was a beginning group facilitator, I was hooked. I wanted their acknowledgement in order to feel good about my work. As long as I depended on them for appreciation, I couldn't possibly support their coldness. I



could only criticize their states and expect them to grow, rather than changing myself. The expectation that the client should change in order to make the therapist more comfortable is an embarrassing and manipulative therapeutic attitude which is at the root of many counter-transference issues (Goodbread, 1989).

As time went on, I tried to notice my own need for appreciation and study how it colored my work with the group. In reading over my notes, it was striking how frequently I stated, "No one was particularly nice or friendly to me." All along, my unconscious ambitions--my desire to succeed and my need to be liked and appreciated--hindered my ability to work with and support the group.

Mindell states that difficult clients should be looked at as a piece of the therapist's fate; they force the therapist to grow (seminar, April 1989). I felt as if the group had found me in order to make me aware of this unconscious ambition which pervaded my work. This insight was to become an important piece of learning which I also applied to other areas of my life. I had not expected my work with organizations to be such an extensive personal growth project.

### Struggling Along

In the early phases of our work, we often focused on relationship issues which were constellated between Eva, the director, and Kurt, a new employee who was full of creativity and ambition. The conflict did not always remain in the relationship channel. Their conflict was not just personal; they represented polar roles in the group field.

During these sessions, the roles were always roughly the same: the director's position was authoritative, practical, and perfectionistic; Kurt represented a more creative and unstructured part which tended to be imperfect. Occasionally a third role was constellated which expressed either sadness, hurt, or the need for appreciation, but that role appeared briefly and was generally ignored by the major actors in the drama. The group regularly gave negative feedback to any fluctuations which threatened its identity.

I asked myself why I was unable to support and encourage the emotional states which surfaced; they had the potential to disrupt the group equilibrium and lead it to a new center. As the sessions continued, I noticed that I was becoming stiffer and more inhibited. I was frequently unable to maintain my awareness. I became hypnotized by the primary process which forbade emotional or spontaneous expression, and I was afraid to intervene, especially to focus on emotional issues. There are a number of useful ways for a facilitator to bring difficult and uncomfortable feelings into a group in a useful fashion. These are outlined in Table 5 on pages 185-186.

Several factors contributed to my difficulties. I had been criticized both subtly and directly by Eva for being too psychological. Sometimes I noticed my reaction and could work on myself internally, without bringing my feelings into the group. In that case I could regain my neutrality, remember that my hurt was a role, look for it in the field, and try to help bring it out. But when I was criticized indirectly, I didn't notice that I was hurt until later. In those cases I simply became blocked.

inhibited, and bitter. By studying the videotapes, I recognized that part of my personal growth involved noticing when I felt hurt.

I found myself in a double bind. The field was heavy with unfinished relationship issues, especially between Eva and Kurt. During the conflicts, the director attempted to draw me into a coalition by appealing to my psychological interests. She instructed me that it would be healthy for staff members to fight more with one another. I bought into her appeal, relieved that finally someone was interested in relationships. Later I realized that her wish represented only a part of the group. Most of the group was not interested in conflicts; they needed support!

Naturally, Eva encouraged other staff members to work out their conflicts with one another--she was probably tired of all the criticism which came her way. We can guess that she too, needed appreciation.

When we worked on the conflict in the large group and kept out of the relationship channel, people said it wasn't real. When it became real, they said they didn't want to be personal. Once I was even criticized for creating problems where there hadn't been any. Group work was more formidable than I had suspected!

It didn't seem to get easier. Sometimes I wanted to give up my profession. I felt like a failure. I struggled with my desire to make something happen and to do a good job. Often they sat passively and I felt pressured to create something out of

their silence. I wanted to scream or disappear.

My discussions with Mindell about the case were especially valuable. I needed encouragement and support. He sympathized with my need to feel valued and he acknowledged my efforts. He reminded me that until group members got in contact with their own need for appreciation, I would pick up that role and the sessions would probably be somewhat boring. He encouraged me to work on myself and stay alert for needy signals from staff members. He reminded me not to injure their primary process.

#### A Small Breakthrough

To my great surprise, the sixth session was actually a lot of fun. Staff members had become much less inhibited about role playing. They began picking up each other's roles, entering lively conflicts, and achieving spontaneous compromises out of the drama. Towards the close of the sixth session, the director, who had usually been in the role of critic, complimented the whole group. In fact, she encouraged the staff to take it easy and relax more, and admired their incredible diligence and creativity. Kurt supported her and they agreed for the first time. This created a very special atmosphere which was warmer and more relaxed than it had been to date.

The unusual atmosphere inspired me to broach the subject, once again, of my bringing an assistant. By this point I had worked on myself quite a bit and explored my own need for appreciation. I had decided that since they weren't going to do it for me, I would begin to appreciate myself. For me, this meant taking care of myself and treating myself with love while I

was working. What I really wanted was to have a friend there with me--more than anything, for moral support and company. I didn't want to have to work alone anymore. Interestingly enough, when I proposed it this time the group was completely open to the idea.

Something small had changed. The group must have felt more supported and understood by me. I took this as a minor success, congratulated myself, and looked forward to the next session with renewed optimism.

For the remainder of the sessions I felt more at ease in the work. One of my most important professional goals, whether I am working with individuals, couples, or groups, is to have a good time and to live my artistic nature. If I am not enjoying myself and loving my profession, then I feel I am on the wrong track and must re-evaluate my style of working. My difficulties at the beginning were due, in part, to personal complexes which I needed to work on.

In the second phase of the work, I had a friend with me who supported me and helped me to believe in myself. This enabled me to remain slightly more detached from my need to be liked by the group. It allowed me to see the group for who they were. Because my assistant was Swiss and was accustomed to being in Swiss groups, she helped me put the work into a cultural perspective. She pointed out that staff members were actually more lively and engaged than those in groups in which she had been involved. She helped me understand their restrained style.

I spent the remainder of the sessions working on letting go of my need to make things happen and to do a good job. I made an

effort to establish my neutrality . I intervened with "weather reports," a technique whereby the facilitator simply observes the group and reports on the varying conditions and interactions. The weather reporter detaches after presenting the report, leaving the information to group members, to use or ignore as they wish (Mindell, seminar, March 1989).

I observed the needy role in the field and attempted to draw it out in the group. Through my discussions with Mindell and my video studies, it became increasingly clear that the role for personal feelings and the need for appreciation was missing from the group. The group's rigid identity had insured that this role would not find a welcome home in the field. During rare moments in the last few sessions, staff members risked occupying this unwanted role: occasionally the primary process transformed and the group actually took an interest in the personal needs of its members. I will describe this process in the next chapter.

In evaluating the case, I think some of the group's goals were indeed reached in the ten sessions, despite my personal difficulties. Our work with role playing introduced some conflict resolution skills and encouraged risk-taking in switching roles. The relationship work certainly addressed their communication problems. Occasionally, a few courageous individuals took the risk to act spontaneously or bring out personal needs. Their communication seemed to flow more fluidly with time.

Their feedback to me about my work was mixed. Several group members noticed that the work was more exciting when I acted more

spontaneously; they observed that I had become somewhat stiff during a phase in the work. They objected to the fact that I had stopped bringing suggestions and telling them what to do. My passivity amplified their edges and their inability to act spontaneously. Although some group members often protested vociferously that I was "too psychological," during the last session several people acknowledged the importance of interpersonal relationships and said that their opinions had changed regarding this issue. A few group members said they had become more open and felt more comfortable expressing both feelings and ideas in the group.

It seems to me that the group's ability to grow was coupled with my personal development. It may be fair to say that the group can only go as far as the facilitator. The holographic structure in the background of the group is evident. The group's issues were being played out internally in me, and I could watch my internal parts dance on the group stage. The systems theorists stress that change at one level of the system brings change at all other levels (Checkland, 1981; Palazzoli, 1986). Perhaps my personal work had some influence on the group's process. In the next chapter, we will study the group's drama in detail and observe how the contrasting group processes unraveled.

## THE GROUP'S PROCESS

In this chapter I illustrate the specific theoretical elements which were outlined in part two of this dissertation. We will look at the organization's process structure, its channels of communication, the various group roles, and the group's leadership. This chapter may clarify many of the points which have been discussed throughout the paper.

Structure

In order to understand a group or organization, it is important for the facilitator to know something about its process structure. In chapter five we learned that groups, like individuals, have primary and secondary processes. All groups identify with certain beliefs, ideologies and ways of behaving; they disidentify with others--casting off unwanted beliefs or behavior modes that do not go along with their identities. A good facilitator has the ability to support and appreciate both primary and secondary group processes.

The simplest way to identify primary and secondary processes is through the things that the group says about itself. A group's process structure comes up verbally through its expression of the "we" and "not we" (Mindell, class, June 1988). Thus when the director at the community center states the group's shared goals--they are interested in improving communication skills, learning to deal with conflict, taking risks, and asking for help--I learn something about the nature of their primary



process. When she asserts that "we are not interested in personal growth or psychological insight," I obtain clues about secondary issues. Although I can guess that something psychological or insightful is secondary, I cannot determine the exact nature of the process.

One can also sense a group's structure by observing its rituals. How do the people look and behave? Do they sit on pillows on the floor or around a huge table in an executive suite? Do they joke around with each other? Is there physical contact? Do they sit quietly waiting for the meeting to come to order? The group facilitator must take note of the everyday and commonplace occurrences. These ordinary events are the rituals which reveal the identity or mythic element of the organizational culture (Owen, 1981).

At the community center, the staff sits around a square table. On the table each staff member has a pad of paper and pen, which is rarely used, except for occasional doodling. The people chat with one another before the meetings, and the atmosphere is friendly. Staff members make jokes and laugh together. They seem to be independent, strong, and professional.

Each time I sit down with them, after setting up my video equipment, they fall silent, like a classroom full of obedient children. This silence happens to them; it comes over them like a grey cloud, creating a heavy atmosphere full of fear and expectation. When the silence persists it makes them very uncomfortable. They would like me to bring a theme or provide a focus.

Clearly, this group does not identify with the silence or the mood that it creates. They identify with being a team of social workers, who are not psychologically inclined, working at a community center. They agree that they are pensive and slow to come out with their feelings, but they would not consider themselves moody or frozen; this state is not a part of their identity.

With groups as with individuals, the secondary process often creates a stronger impression than the primary one. The secondary process comes out in double signals and disturbs the harmonic picture created by the group. For this group, the silence is like a symptom which, in an attempt to communicate something, mars their collective image. It is an unfinished statement which leaves us wondering. If they are self-assured social workers, interested in their goals, why are they frozen silent? We must work with the silence and unravel its message before we can draw any conclusions as to its meaning. (Later in this chapter we will look at specific channel-oriented methods for working with the silence.)

In this group, like in many others, the frozen silence is a reaction to a rigid primary process. The primary process is not only non-psychological, it is critical and nasty towards anyone who does not conform to its standards. People are therefore afraid to speak, fearful that they will be gobbled up by a monster-like creature, which represents the group's identity, if they say the wrong thing.

The primary creature is a perfectionist, as well. People say that they are afraid to speak and bring out their ideas

because others might criticize their work if it is not perfect. During our sessions, I have seen the primary process become scolding, telling people they are "chaotic, poisonous, disorganized, passive, impractical, air-headed," and so forth.

The primary process makes its most dramatic appearance when it attempts to dispose of a role which is secondary. Thus when I come in and speak personally at the beginning of the second session, and try to engage group members in an informal discussion, the director snubs my efforts. She tells me they have more important things to discuss. Naturally, I fall silent in shame. The group identity surfaced, armed and competent, and performed its duties swiftly.

In one of our first sessions, Marcel, a quiet and sensitive staff member, spoke of being criticized and punished in the military and related what a painful experience it had been. Although he was almost moved to tears, his emotions were not acknowledged. The military environment was present in the moment, as Marcel was subtly ostracized and punished for his feelings. The system is the best explanation of itself at a given moment (Pallazzoli, 1986). We need not discuss events in the past; whatever is talked about is also happening in the here and now.

The group has a primary ideology. It believes that it is not useful or desirable for people to be personal at the workplace. It says that personal relationships interfere with productivity and complicate the work atmosphere. The group members gave me several lectures instructing me about this

belief. It wasn't until our last session together that group members dared to question the value of this ideology.

Barbara, the staff member who had been there the longest and was closest to the director, represented the ideology of the primary process succinctly. When a staff member expressed a need for sensitivity and support when bringing out ideas, Barbara asserted, "Arbeitsplatz ist Arbeitsplatz" (the workplace is the workplace).

Both primary and secondary processes show up at various group levels. Barbara said that she used to be sensitive and caring at work but "it wasn't worth it." She had been hurt and as a result she had flipped identities. Although she used to show her vulnerability, she now saves that behavior for friends and family. Her new work identity is tough and business-like--the sensitivity has become secondary. Evidently, the parts of the process structure which battle in the group are also mirrored in the psyches of individual staff members.

With time, the process structure becomes clear. I recognize that the silence is a communication to the critic. If the silence had a voice it might say, "I refuse to come out unless you are nice to me. I will not risk being attacked and hurt. I would rather sit in silence." The silence itself is a state. It is a frozen snapshot of the entire process, a vessel for the war between a critical, perfectionistic, business-like primary process and a secondary personality which is in need of appreciation and support. The personal needs are hiding in the background. It will take an act of warriorship on the part of staff members to bring those needs out under such adverse

conditions.

### Channels

How will we find out more about the group's background needs? How will we bring the secondary process to light? A group uses various channels to communicate its primary and secondary processes. By studying the information in these channels we discover the group's entire personality. The group's wholeness is revealed by the messages it sends through its occupied and unoccupied channels.

In chapter six we discussed all of the channels which a group uses to express its entirety. Here we will discuss only those which were particularly striking in the work at the community center.

#### Audition

This group occupies mainly its auditory channel. Its verbal messages are associated very closely with its primary intents and conscious goals. The director states the group's goals verbally, and staff members present the group's ideology using words. Some people speak and others listen. The critic speaks out clearly, giving negative feedback to the system's fluctuations. In order to find out what is secondary or further from the group's awareness, we will have to look beyond the verbal content.

#### Vision

In one instance, my use of the visual channel to introduce the background process brought understanding to the group. Staff members were arguing over policy-making. Marcel kept bringing

ideas which the others rejected ruthlessly. He seemed somewhat oblivious to the group's reaction and kept bringing new ideas. Thinking him foolish, staff members became irritated, and a bad mood pervaded the atmosphere. Nobody spoke directly about the feeling issues which created the heavy feeling.

I told the group that their interaction inspired a vision. I described an archetypal family scene in which a child comes home from school excited about something, and the parent hits the child. I told the story very slowly, pausing frequently. My pauses left lots of room for staff members to fill in the holes with their fantasies.

As I spoke, staff members nodded in agreement. They became aware of how they had been treating Marcel, and a discussion about whether or not it is important to protect other people's feelings ensued. The primary process was still strongly in favor of being direct and straightfoward, but some awareness had been shed on the injuring process happening in the background.

Mindell stresses that family life is one of the most cross-cultural symbols for minority processes. Minority problems all over the world look, metaphorically, like a small child being hit by a parent. Bringing this background dream into a conflict situation may have the effect of reducing tension. However, it is only possible for the facilitator to introduce the picture if he or she is neutral. If the facilitator is also in a minority position, identified with the victim, he or she will be too terrified to bring the vision out (class, June 1988).

There were several other occasions in which the group's use

of fantasy and vision brought some clues about the process behind the silence. The visual channel was not completely occupied by the primary process of the group; there was some room for unconscious fantasies. Thus, visualization presented a non-threatening way to introduce secondary material into the group's primary process.

Since the beginning of our work together, I had wondered about the purpose of the silence. I viewed it teleologically, assuming it must bring the group something which it needed. It was not just a stuck state--a pathology--but also an attempted solution to something. In order to find out more about it, I asked staff members to simply sit quietly, sense the atmosphere, and make a visual representation of the silence. This is a channel-oriented intervention (see Table 3 on pp. 135-136) designed to give unconscious material expression in a channel which the group understands.

The group was able to do this with relative ease, and the visions brought some new insight regarding the silence. Several visions portrayed something hard and tough, like a rock, and something soft and fluid which tried to move over and around it. Group members were interested in these common elements from various visions, and were especially struck by the image of water trying to flow around a rock.

#### Movement/Relationship

The visual channel provided a means to express background material. In order to fill out the pattern even more, I introduced the movement channel. Movement, which the group

occupies less frequently, is likely to bring material which is even further from the group's identity. I asked staff members to choreograph that vision in movement. Surprisingly, several people volunteered without too much hesitation.

The movement work brought us rapidly to a deeper level. Kurt said the scene reminded him of his relationship with the director. He talked about how he felt like the water, coming with good and creative ideas, but always needing to get them approved by Eva, whom he experienced as a rock. This was a moment to leave the choreography and enter the relationship channel.

In the next session, we focused on the relationship between Kurt and Eva. Although it began as a personal conflict, it quickly became clear that the two positions were roles in the field, shared by many other staff members. The visioning and choreography had revealed a conflict between a rigid, conservative, and critical position and a more creative, childlike, and excited part. These were the background roles which were creating the field at that time. The silence, which often looked like a stuck state, was the group's unconscious attempt to get away from the critic.

Through studying the videotapes, I noticed the extreme general lack of movement in the group. This indicated that the movement channel was not occupied by the group's primary process. Towards the end of our work together, with the support of my assistant, I introduced a radical means of bringing up secondary material using movement. We asked the group if they would be willing to remove the table which was such an important part of



their culture.

At first, several group members objected, insisting that they enjoyed sitting at a table and needed it for protection and in order to hide. This already gave us a lot of information! To reduce their anxiety, we explained our goal. We were not suggesting that they get rid of their table; rather, we wanted to find out just what the table provided for the group and how it was important. They agreed to try it.

The table is an important part of the group's process structure. What does it do for the group? Certainly it is associated with the group's identity--it is an essential part of everyday group rituals. But wouldn't the group be more flexible if it could integrate the table's purpose? If the table provides protection, maybe group members can learn to protect themselves. Let's look at what they need protection from. Thinking that a table is simply a table is a rational way of viewing matter, but this perspective brings no new information to the group.

Removing the table brought up many issues, all of which threatened the group's identity. It created a more informal atmosphere in which staff members had to decide how close they wanted to sit to each other and how they wanted to position themselves. People had a fuller view of each other's bodies; they could not hide parts of themselves under the table. The staff realized that they shared an intense fear of being exposed and of acting spontaneously. Structurally, the table was similar to the silence. It provided something to hide behind--a way to get away from the critical eye which judged others and put down

those who did not conform.

#### The Individual

Secondary aspects of the group's process were frequently expressed through the feelings of individuals who were in a minority position relative to the group's primary process. The individual was a channel through which the group could express itself.

Since the beginning of my work at the center, I carried certain aspects of the group's process (chapter nine). My own need for appreciation and my hurt feelings resulting from the group's insensitivity represented rejected feelings in the field. Other individuals also carried these feelings. But whenever personal feelings were expressed, they were ignored by the group and quickly dropped by the individual. People sensed that if they went too far in expressing minority feelings they would be scapegoated by the group.

While observing the group, on several occasions I noticed staff members who looked hurt, with pained expressions on their faces. It is fair to guess that all group members were at some point channels for the group's hurt feelings and sensitivity. Most of the individuals who carried these feelings were either unaware of them at the time or unable to bring them into the group.

#### Roles

Each group member is sometimes thrust into the sensitive role; all are also critical and nasty from time to time. As we saw in chapter seven, every person is more than just one role.

and each role needs more than one person to fill it. It was fascinating to observe the various group roles passing from one person to the next throughout our work.

During one of the sessions, Kurt complained that the staff meetings were too tightly scheduled; he felt that they lacked room for spontaneity and creativity. Others agreed with his observation and the group identified the roles which created the problem. A conflict was acknowledged between an authoritarian position, concerned about taking care of practical matters, and a more artistic and creative type of person who longed for a chance for expression.

Staff members filled in the roles and the group entered an unusually fluid and spontaneous process. Barbara, who was generally identified with the authority role, did a magnificent job of portraying the laid-back artist. Apparently that role was not so alien to her! The staff roared with laughter. Suddenly Kurt, who had been looking on from the outside, complained that the role play wasn't real. Why was he protesting? One would think he would be satisfied now that the group was having fun. However, somebody needed to fill the authority role, and since everyone else was busy acting and enjoying themselves, the field had selected him to do the job.

This kind of role switching was quite commonplace. Despite the fact that I generally identified with being hurt and sensitive, I also picked up the role of the critic. On one occasion the group was working on a polarity between the perfectionist/critic and the one who was sensitive and wanted

more support. The roles dropped away when Anna, a shy woman who rarely spoke, mentioned an incident in which she felt hurt by Barbara's perfectionism. As she described the situation, Barbara interrupted, insisting it was a trivial example. The events of the past were unraveling in the present (Palazzoli, 1986). The critic, in the form of Barbara, had just come in and destroyed Anna's example.

Immediately, I interrupted Barbara in order to point out the communication pattern. My observation came out sounding like a reproach. At that moment I had unconsciously become the critic/perfectionist. Where was the meta-communicator, who could stay out of the field and report on its entirety?

It appears as if the field is searching for awareness of itself. All the parts of the field want to be known, understood and appreciated. The roles in the field will use any means at their disposal to show themselves. Perhaps the critic has a purpose. Maybe it is looking for a reaction and will persist until somebody cries out in pain and protest.

Unconsciously picking up a role is less useful than doing it consciously. In both of the above examples (with Kurt and myself) the roles were filled unconsciously. If nobody is available who can metacommunicate neutrally, the drama continues without awareness. The reason that we identify roles and act them out is that we want to bring awareness into the unconscious drama underlying the group's life.

Sometimes it is useful for the facilitator to take over a role. If the role is played with full awareness and he or she is not identified with it, the facilitator can provide a pattern

which the group needs. In such a case, the facilitator has established an inner distance between his or her personality and the role playing (Goffman, 1961). After the role has been sketched out, the facilitator can leave it and return to the objective position. Group members are left to fill in the details.

In one such case, the group was deciding whether or not to invite two other staff members, who had less responsibility at the center, into our sessions. I recognized the group's use of a third party; we were discussing outsiders who weren't present. I wondered where the third party was in the moment, and asked if anyone felt like an outsider. Eva said that she did. I asked her how it felt to be an outsider and she responded with, "That's a psychological question." I felt embarrassed and scolded, but luckily I maintained my awareness. In that moment I had become the outsider!

I moved to another position in the room and spoke about my feelings of being outside--I was a psychologist, my German was lousy, I was American, and so forth. Since I was not feeling deeply hurt, I could play the role with humor and a sense of detachment and slip out of it after my point was made. Other group members stepped into the role and began speaking about their feelings of being outside. If the facilitator can identify a group role, represent it completely, and then step out of it, he or she leaves the group lots of room to have their own process. Being personal and genuine is important, and being able to detach is crucial as well.

It is especially useful for the facilitator to identify and represent roles which are an edge for group members. This group had an edge against the critical/authority role and an even greater edge about being hurt and needing support. Often groups have edges against both their primary and secondary processes and are shy about playing any of the roles completely.

In this group, the edge against authority served to constellate the authority unconsciously; the field dreamed-up a strict teacher, and a grade school atmosphere prevailed. If there is an authority in the field, and everyone is against it, someone gets selected to occupy the role.

Staff members complained that the director was too authoritarian. Eva consistently denied the charge and accused the staff of projecting parental images, an interesting accusation from someone who ostensibly is not interested in psychological insight! A minor breakthrough occurred when she went over a group edge and stood congruently for being authoritarian. She insisted that the group needed her and that if she didn't play that role, the work would not get done.

Although staff members frequently became authoritative and nasty with each other unconsciously, they did not share the responsibilities that went with the role of the director. If they picked up what was happening, and used it to their benefit, they could design a truly holographic organization, in which the director's role is shared by all members (Morgan, 1985). Since Eva is still the only person who fills the role consciously, she is identified with the position and criticized.

Interestingly enough, her controlling nature only disturbed

staff members when she pretended that she was egalitarian. In such cases her dictatorial signals came across unconsciously and effected people adversely; her behavior was incongruent with her verbal messages. If she was clear about her authority, it did not have a negative effect on the staff.

At first I too was irritated by the director's style. I thought she should be more democratic. I was especially disturbed when once, after I had given the group a homework assignment, she insisted on knowing who had done it and scolded those who had forgotten. As time passed, I began to understand that her behavior was dreamed-up by the field.

I had noticed from the outset that the staff members were like obedient pupils who followed my instructions dutifully. I tried to get out of the authority role in the hope that they would pick it up themselves. However, when I did not make suggestions about what we should work on, staff members sat silently and looked at me with expectation. I had trouble tolerating the silent moodiness and tension, and I was irritated by their lack of initiative. I was often unable to simply wait and metacommunicate about the pattern; I was moved to bring assignments, thus filling the authority role. I sympathized with Eva's position. The field sometimes limits individual choice.

Although the edge against the authority and the critic was noteworthy, the edge against the sensitivity and hurt was even greater. Occasionally staff members were able to be assertive, critical, perfectionist, dictatorial, and downright nasty. They even engaged in a few fights which included name-calling. This

behavior was closer to their awareness. Only rarely did anyone express fear, hurt, or the need for appreciation. Not once did anyone say what I so often felt-- "Ouch, I want people to be nice to me."

### Leadership

The authority role was delegated to Eva, the identified leader, whether she wanted it or not. However, she was certainly not the only tyrant in the room. In fact, her style of communication was characteristic of the entire group. A group's unconscious communication form is often projected onto the leader (Mindell, seminar, March 1989). Group members share a style of communicating; they don't see it in themselves, but they recognize it in the leader. In this case, they criticized her for it, and she became a scapegoat.

Because the communication style belongs to the group as a whole, when staff members are unhappy about the leader's style, they should be encouraged to model a new form. Not a single person at the community center was able to model a form of communicating which was supportive and open to other people's ideas. I assume that this was the result of my own insecurity in bringing the suggestion. My lack of confidence in insisting that they try probably made it easier for them to get around their edge.

In one of our last sessions, the director was not present. This session was enlightening for everyone involved. It became quite clear that the leader was merely a symbol for the way they all related. In that session, Marcel, who had already threatened



the group's primary process several times, began to speak up about problems he was having in his department. The others attacked him brutally, scolding him for confusing the day's agenda. Kurt, who had suffered most under the director's authority, was the nastiest of all the critics. Apparently the director was in everyone, whether or not they identified with her communication style.

Although Marcel had been in the sensitive role before, this time he did not abandon it. He continued to speak of his concerns, despite the scorn of the group. Staff members became increasingly irritated with him. He had become a group disturber, interrupting their equilibrium. Perhaps the absence of the director gave him the freedom to persist in his disturbing behavior. Although he was discussing business issues, my psychological training alerted me to the fact that underneath, he needed something from the group. The more he focused on the actual business, the more incensed group members became.

He was in danger of being scapegoated. However, since this was one of our last sessions together, and I had been looking for signs of neediness or feeling in staff members, I decided to focus on Marcel. I recognized that this was the first outright group disturbance, and was not willing to let it go by. I wanted to help him bring out the needs which he was feeling, and I hoped he could model a new form of behavior for other group members. It was a risk, but I hoped that if he brought out his needs he would not be rejected for being too sensitive. I felt strongly that the group might be ready to acknowledge another one of its parts.

The meeting came to a heartfelt conclusion. Marcel was able to express his difficulties and told the group that he needed their help with a project which was over his head. He spoke personally, and staff members sympathized with him. They decided to create another meeting to focus explicitly on his needs.

For this group, that interaction was a breakthrough. The group gave positive feedback to a role which it had previously despised. For a few short moments, the disturber was embraced, and genuine personal feelings reorganized the system and led it to a new center. After the group accepted the presence of Marcel's role, I felt we were on the right track. The next step would be for others to begin expressing their needs and desire for appreciation. Thus, the background process would finally occupy a leadership role.

In the last session the group acknowledged their primary ideology consciously and discussed the possibility of expanding their group identity to include more emotional interactions. Although they felt hesitant about taking this risk, they recognized that it would make their work atmosphere more fluid and productive, less hindered by unpleasant moods. As a group, they agreed on their uneasiness and resistance and decided to think it over.

As a result of our work together, the background field became apparent and the atmosphere lifted. The group will decide if they would like to make the next step.

## CONCLUSION

My purpose in this dissertation has been to outline the basic theory and methodology of Group Process Work, demonstrate its application with case examples, and place it into a context with some of the work which has been done in related fields. I have outlined the traditions of group psychologies which have come before it, and reviewed theories from both social and natural sciences which have influenced our thinking about group and organizational behavior. I have begun to illustrate the foundations of Group Process Work in sociological theory. In future work, I intend to delve more deeply into uncovering the roots of Group Process Work in sociological and philosophical systems in order to expose its rich heritage in greater detail.

In addition, I have hoped to inspire the reader by introducing a hypothesis about the events of life and a world view which has the potential to bring hope and sense into some of the more chaotic and difficult aspects of personal and community life. Stated succinctly by Mindell, the belief I have attempted to convey and to illustrate is the following:

Groups, communities and even our local relationship conflicts all have one thing in common. The boredom, tensions, cold war, open conflicts, aggression and madness which amazes, hypnotizes and terrifies all of us is an unconscious attempt to reveal and discover the powerful and exciting, electric and holy heart of the dreambody we live in. (Mindell, in press, p. 110)

This central hypothesis of Process Work has been elucidated in detail and illustrated in this dissertation through numerous case examples.

I have shown that the techniques of Process-oriented Psychology and specifically Group Process Work are complex, subtle, and difficult to apply; they demand a great deal of the facilitator. It has become clear that Process Work is more than either a school of psychotherapy or a set of tools and techniques. Process Work rests on an underlying quasi-religious belief--an elegant yet simple dream which is attempting to come to birth. Without its philosophical basis, the science of Process Work is dry and technical.

Group Process Work is built on a tolerance of and appreciation for the diversity inherent in nature, people, and groups. Group Process Work looks at a group and understands that its differences, conflicts, tensions, passions, and disdains contain the seeds of the solutions to its problems. When all the parts are represented and unraveled with awareness, the totality will carry the group in the direction it needs to go.

This is an optimistic and reverent way of regarding nature. From where does such faith come? At a superficial glance, it is practically impossible to imagine that there could be something meaningful or useful in the processes of countries at war or lands which are poverty-stricken. It seems terribly audacious to suggest that the acts of violence, the hopelessness and the misery which characterize our period of time could have purpose or could be leading us in the right direction. What if we blow each other up? Dare we think for a fleeting moment that our impulse to kill and destroy may be the beginning of a new hope for humankind?

The optimism inherent in Process Work is neither blind trust

nor religious hypnosis. It has grown out of empirical work with groups and individuals in seemingly impossible situations who have transformed their misery, pain, and chaos into the beginning of a new world. Mindell (1989a) has learned from his work with dying people, people in comas, and people in the middle of brutal and wrenching physical processes, that often in the processes of death and destruction lie seeds which sprout new growth. His phenomenological work indicates that there are "powerful, dramatic and meaningful events trying to unfold themselves" in difficult individual and group states (1989a, p. 53). If these apparently hopeless and painful states are unraveled--if we go down into the depths and communicate with the comas, altered states, and group madness, using their signals and their unusual forms of relating--we find that awareness and individuation are waiting to be discovered and encouraged.

When we are alone in an altered state, stuck in the middle of a relationship battle, or paralyzed with fear in a violent group situation, we suffer. Without the tools to unravel the processes, we simply want to make the pain and trouble go away, and we dream of a new age in which people live together harmoniously. However, Mindell says that "hidden in the most impossible or absurd conditions is something wondrous. I see human nature as a diety, for in the most confusing chaos, one finds the seeds of creation" (1989a, p. 54). Connecting with those seeds, nurturing them, and encouraging them to express themselves fully is the job of the process work facilitator.

The medieval alchemists seemed to have the right idea;

ostensibly they tried to create gold out of base metals. Intuitively, they knew that hidden in the darkness and chaos of the "prima materia" or original substance, was the key to all creation. They recognized that the metals, cooking over the fire, had to go through many stages before reaching perfection; the process itself was their goal. They raised the heat of the alchemical fires and expected the "nigredo" phase, which unleashed a violent conflict between opposing principles. It was not until the onset of this difficult phase that the alchemists knew they were on the right track! During the nigredo the metals battled in the dark and murky liquids, bringing a wearisome process of death and decay. Eventually, the "albedo" appeared and light emerged from the darkness. With this transformation came insight and the hope that the final stage--the "coniunctio"--would be reached; in this stage the opposites would marry and the golden child would be born as the creator of all things. They knew that in every stage of the process there was value (Dworkin, 1984).

Perhaps we are going through something like a nigredo phase in our global evolution. Group Process Work makes its contribution to our ostensible planetary impasse and nigredo by introducing a set of tools and interventions which can be applied to help find the gold hidden in group conflicts. The system is still in its early stages of development. Until now, it has been effective in dealing with small and large tensions and conflicts in psychological, social, community and business groups with up to 200 members in various parts of the world. Future research and practice will aim at applying Group Process Work to groups in

more urgent need of help--groups in extreme situations whose processes threaten the stability of our community and planetary life.

Our world is plagued by violence; it is apparent in families, on the streets of the inner cities, and in almost every region of the world. In their book, A Quick and Dirty Guide to War (1985, chap. 16), Dunnigan and Bay include a chart entitled "The World in Conflict," which lists 192 wars which were being waged at the time the book was written. Their research has brought them to the conclusion that

World War III has been going on for some time now. The casualties from all wars (including the few that have actually ended) exceed fifty million dead, wounded and missing. The number of refugees [in the last forty years] exceeds that created during World War II and the cost of the wars of the last forty years has more than matched the horrendous expense of World Wars I and II combined. (p. 336)

Violent conflict is clearly pervasive, and tools which facilitate conflict resolution without bloodshed are scarce. It appears that this dark and terrifying corner of our family life has not yet been touched by psychological insight. One of the future challenges of Group Process Work is to discover ways in which facilitators can work in extremely violent and life-threatening situations without becoming martyrs. How can a process worker introduce conflict resolution tools in the Los Angeles gang wars, on the streets of the the West Bank, in South Africa, in Northern Ireland, at Tiananmen Square or in any number of Central American and African countries? Are Group Process Work tools useful for groups who aim to kill in the name of justice?

Can Group Process Work make a contribution in the political arena? Will policy makers at the local, national or international levels become interested in learning conflict resolution and group processing skills? Will those with political power ever aspire to become true leaders by representing and supporting the expression of both majority and minority views in the nations they lead?

If Group Process Work is to touch these and other globally significant issues, it must continue to develop means to reach people from many walks of life and from cultural and socio-economic groups other than the white, upper classes of western society. If the system aims to contribute to making this planet a more livable and inspiring place, process workers need to address those social, environmental, economic, and political problems which concern our planet as a whole. In order to make a significant contribution to the present state of affairs, Group Process Work must be willing to continually redefine and expand itself as new challenges and applications render existing theories obsolete.

Since Group Process Work is still quite young and very busy with its own growth and development, the field has not had much chance to get to know other groups with similar goals. Networking with other organizations who are doing related work has just begun and will continue to be an important part of its task.

Maybe humans of the 30th century will look back at this period of time with a mixture of affection and sympathy,



imagining what it must have been like for us to struggle through our nigredo--the phase in our planetary development when we still killed each other to protect imaginary boundaries and acted without a deep contact with meaning in life. They might notice that this was a time when we were in the dark about the ordered qualities of nature and the connections between all things; an era when we still thought that matter and psyche were separate, and that chance ruled the world. They might laugh about our illusion that we could be masters of the universe, noticing that we hadn't yet learned anything from our neighbors on other planets.

One of the implications of the process paradigm is that Group Process Work, or any system for that matter, can never be THE ANSWER to the world's problems. Mindell points out that "from the viewpoint of world history, global thinking is just another spot in a troubled planetary field" (in press, p. 111). We now know that the field or global dreambody creates the roles, the people, and the ideas which it needs in order to express its wholeness. A role is now available in the global field for the ideas discussed in this dissertation. Nature, together with this particular point in history, have been the parents of Process Work; they are responsible for its conception. Mindell has been its midwife, bringing it to birth and nurturing it in its infancy. We are all warmly invited and urgently needed in order to help the child grow into its potential.

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