Relationship of Client-Centered/Experiential Responding

To Experiencing Level in Task-Oriented Group Discussion

University of Chicago

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Footnotes

[1] Reprints available from the author at 230 S. Fraser Street, State College, Pa. 16801.

[2] This research was done as part of the requirements for the Ph.D. at University of Chicago. Thanks go to E. T. Gendlin. E. Pinkston, and S. Maddi for advisory help.

[3] Carl Rogers points to the need for a similar process for group discussion in Ch. 5, The politics of administration, in his book On personal power: Inner strength and its revolutionary impact. New York: Delacourt Press, 1977.

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ABSTRACT

An attempt was made to increase the experiencing level of task-oriented group discussion by providing conditions similar to client-centered/experiential responding as it is practiced in the dyadic therapy situation. Theoretical justification for the belief that increasing experiencing level should lead to higher quality decisions and increased satisfaction with decisions was given from Gendlin's (1962) theory of experiencing and the social psychology literature on decision-making. Three naturally occurring groups were used in a multiple baseline design. Training was done through a combination of written rules for discussion and experimenter-administered verbal cues and reinforcers. There was an increase in client-centered/experiential responding in all three groups, accompanied by an increase in experiencing level. Some change was maintained during carryover. However, consistent change in behavior was maintained in only one group. Inconsistency of attendance during training sessions was suggested as a possible explanation for the lesser success of the intervention in the other two groups.

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The present study tests a method for producing client-centered/experiential responding in a task-oriented small group situation.[2] A set of written rules instructing group members to decrease interruptions and to respond to expression of negative feelings and pauses with requests for more information (listening responses) was combined with cueing, modelling, and reinforcement by the experimenter.

The rules were derived from an analysis of decision-making at Changes, a loosely structured therapeutic community of people trained in Gendlin and Hendricks' (1972) listening technique. The listening technique, a form of client-centered/experiential responding (Gendlin, 1974), was developed for use in the dyadic counselling situation as a way of helping individuals to explore their feelings about life experiences and to make decisions in a self-directed way. The Changes group applied the same principles to the group decision-making situation.

Tapes of Changes meetings were compared with tapes of more argumentative groups in an attempt to isolate specific chains of verbal behavior differentiating the two. It was found that, at Changes meetings, when members expressed doubts, fears, or anger about proposed decisions or about the meeting itself, other group members would ask them to say more about their feelings. This is the essence of client-centered/experiential responding. By contrast, in

argumentative groups, negative feelings were seldom
expressed directly but were indirectly expressed through
logical argument. If a negative feeling was expressed,
typically the speaker was interrupted with a variety of
responses which seemed to function as punishments to the
speaker for having voiced that feeling, making future
expression less likely. Similarly, group members were
not encouraged to search carefully for words to express
a preverbal idea. Any pause was quickly seized upon as
an opportunity for taking of the floor through interruption.
It was therefore decided that the present study would
focus on *increasing* the direct expression
of negative feelings and pausing to search for words
by decreasing contingent interruptions and increasing
contingent listening responses.

The listening response in relation to expression of
negative feelings is seen as providing an opportunity for
further explication by the speaker of the reasons under-
lying that feeling. The prohibition against interruptions
is also seen as providing a speaker with the time for
careful explication of an idea or feeling. Full explora-
tion of group members' negative feelings is thought to
provide new information leading to higher quality decisions
and to increased group member satisfaction with decisions.
The belief that explication of feelings will increase the
quality of decisions comes from Gendlin's theory of
experiencing (1962). Gendlin's theory has been most
widely applied to the explication of feelings as they
occur in the traditional therapy situation. However,

the theory applies more generally to the interplay between preverbal felt experiencing and symbols wherever that occurs. Gendlin holds that "experiencing" comes as a bodily-felt, many-faceted sense and that this internal datum is the basis for the "meaningfulness" of any created symbols. According to this theory, creative thinking involves a slow back and forth between explicit word and implicit felt sense, with constant checking to see if the words used are an accurate representation of the bodily-felt experiencing. If this process of articulation or explication does not happen, the thought is too early placed into static, logical, all-ready-known forms, and many edges and creative aspects are lost. The expression of an emotion ("I am angry"; "I feel scared") is only the first step in the articulation of a rich experiential response to the entire situation in which the person is involved. In terms of group problem-solving, an individual's experiencing includes a felt sense of the situational contingencies which are in fact impinging upon the group and its planning. Further articulation of an individual's experiencing, be it a doubt or fear about the group's plans or an intuitive idea about how things could be done, is expected to provide valuable input about real aspects of the situation which should be taken into consideration.

When applied to individual psychotherapy, Gendlin's theory has been operationalized in the Experiencing Scale (Klein, Mathieu, Kiesler, & Gendlin, 1970), where clients fall on a continuum from low to high experiencing in the degree to

which they use an interplay between felt senses and words
in their approach to personal problems. The Experiencing
Scale defines seven different levels of verbal behavior,
ranging from One (Low experiencing as indicated by super-
ficial, objective, impersonal conversation with little
reference to personal feelings or subjective experiencing)
to Seven (High experiencing as indicated by a highly
personal report of present feelings and subjective experi-
encing). High and low experiencing are assumed to be
qualitatively different manners of the interplay between
words and felt meanings, and evidence for this qualitative
difference has been given through measurement of GSR during
superficial conversation vs. experiential focusing
(Gendlin & Berlin, 1961). Gendlin, Beebe, Cassens, Klein
and Oberlander (1968) were able to demonstrate that it
was initial high vs. low experiencing of clients which
determined whether therapy would be successful, rather
than the specific school or technique of therapy used.
The present study makes a similar assumption about
"experiencing" as it occurs in the group situation. The
decrease in interruptions and increase in listening res-
ponses is seen as moving the group away from impersonal,
objective discussion (low experiencing) to a more personal
exploration of felt meanings (high experiencing). The
expression of negative feelings measure is an attempt to
operationalize, as specifically countable verbal behavior,
one aspect of "high experiencing" as it occurs in a task-
oriented group situation. Pausing during a speaking turn
is also seen as an observable correlate of "direct

reference" to inner experiencing, or of "focusing inward," an essential step in the explication of felt meaning (Gendlin, 1962).

A basic premise of the present work is that creative thinking and problem solving in the group situation, as they rely upon the explication of felt meanings of the individuals involved, demand much the same conditions of interaction which make explication possible in the individual therapy situation.[3] In order to explicate a new aspect of a felt sense, or to create a new meaning, the client in therapy must "focus" inwards--must turn quietly to his or her preverbal felt experiencing of a situation and allow words to come which are exactly accurate in carrying forward that felt meaning (Gendlin, 1969). The client-centered conditions of empathic understanding, congruence, and unconditional positive regard essentially create a situation where this focusing inward can be attempted and where tentative verbal expression of felt meaning can be made without fear of punishment. Reflection of feeling is used by the therapist to aid the client in the constant back and forth between words and preverbal sensing which can finally lead to finding the words which carry forward experiencing. It is out of this process that the possibility of finding a new solution to an old problem arises. So it is in the group situation--the discovery of a solution to a problem demands the same careful explication of the felt aspects of the situation as they are present in the preverbal felt sensings of the group members.

However, the fast, argumentative, competitive mode of unstructured group discussion militates against the kind of inwardly-turned focusing necessary for the explication of felt meanings. This is especially true in relation to the expression of negative feelings, which often calls forth a defensive, or punishing, reaction from other group members. So, the present study focuses on slowing down the discussion and eliminating the fear of punishment by prohibiting interruptions and insuring that expression of negative feelings will be responded to with a request for more information (listening response). The listening response is seen to be functionally equivalent to reflection of feelings in that both lead the speaker to refer directly to felt experiencing before creating more words to describe the feeling that is there. Reflection of feelings has been shown to increase the expression of feelings in the dyadic therapy situation (Adams & Frye, 1964; Stollak, 1968).

There is also a good basis in the social psychology literature for the assumption that increased expression of negative feelings will have positive effects upon quality of decisions. Hoffman and Maier (1964) found that solutions in which certain members have a strong emotional investment tend to win out over other possible solutions, regardless of quality. Calling this emotional value "valence," they measure it in terms of verbal behaviors. They have found that it is valence (basically, the number of pro statements), not objective quality, which determines the choice of solutions by the group, and they have found

that they get more creative solutions by increasing the expression of disagreements (Hoffman, 1961; Hoffman, Harburg, and Maier, 1962). Disagreement keeps a particular solution from achieving the valence needed for acceptance before other, higher quality alternatives can be considered.

The prohibition of aggressive interruption as a means of turn-taking in the present study should also serve as a means for equalizing participation in groups. Ever since Asch's definition of "conformity pressure" in 1956, there has been concern with the power of groups to distort individual judgment or at least to suppress minority opinion. Shaw (1962; 1961) and Shaw and Penrod (1962) found that, even when one member of a group was secretly given special information which could aid problem-solution, performance of the group was not necessarily improved--the individual's ability to affect the solution depended upon his "weight" or influence, which has been shown to be correlated with talkativeness (Riecken, 1958). Research has also shown that satisfaction with decisions is highly correlated with participation (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939; Hoffman, Burke, and Maier, 1965). Oakes, Droge, and August (1960) found satisfaction to be correlated with reinforcement vs. punishment of verbal behavior. Hastorf (1968) found that increasing the participation of low-status members increased not only their feelings of satisfaction but also the perception by others of their status. Maier (1952) makes it clear that there is a distinction between the abstract quality of a decision and the workers' acceptance of the decision,

or their motivation to carry it out. The latter is of
course an important part of the "quality" of a solution
for a particular group at a particular time. Hoffman
et al. (1965) found that it was not the absolute amount
of verbal participation which determined satisfaction
with decisions but the "felt freedom to express ideas"
and "satisfaction with the amount of influence" actually
exerted over the decision reached. The present intervention
can be expected to increase both of these aspects of
participation, since the listening response allows a
member to express his or her reasons for a negative
feeling and to perhaps influence the group to reconsider
the proposed solution.

The present study does not test the above theorized
effects of the intervention upon quality of and satisfaction
with decisions. A necessary first step was the discovery
of a reliable means for producing client-centered/
experiential responding and increased experiencing in
naturally occurring groups. Gendlin and Beebe's rules
for groups (1968), Barrett-Lennard's rules for experiential
groups (1974), and Massad's rules for listening learning
groups (1973) all provide suggestions for producing
that kind of interaction in groups. The present study
differs in that it includes an analysis of verbal behaviors
making up "listening" and specifies the alternative verbal
behaviors needed in specific situations to produce a
"listening" interaction, providing a concrete means for
moving from the old to the new mode of interaction. A

similar skills training approach has been used to teach "listening" behavior in dyadic situations (Danish and Hauer, 1973; Ely, Guerney, and Stover, 1973) and has been shown to be more successful in producing change in verbal behavior than traditional discussion methods (Coufal, 1975; Vogelsong, 1975). The present study attempts to see whether specific training of verbal behavior can increase client-centered/ experiential responding in groups and, in turn, the expression of negative feelings and pauses for direct reference to felt experiencing.

Methods

Definition of Variables

Frequency counts of selected verbal behaviors of group members were made from audio cassettes of meetings. Behaviors were scored continuously by 10-second interval, and the sequence of behaviors was maintained for contingency analysis. The following specific behaviors were scored:

Interruption, defined as the emission of one or more complete words by a group member without such verbalization being elicited either by turn-giving by the experimenter or by a question addressed by another group member. The only exceptions were the spontaneous emission of a request for a turn or a listening response.

Listening response, defined as a request or statement cueing further verbalization from a speaker about particular words or phrases previously used by that speaker. Examples: "Can you say more about how this is related to your 'work with adolescent girls'?"; "What do you mean by the word 'insolent'?"; "Can you say more about 'feeling scared'?".

Expression of negative feelings, defined as the emission
of a verbalization containing negative affect words in relation
to another group member, an action which the group was planning
to take, or the actions which the group had taken during the
present meeting. The verbalization included either the
direct use of a negative emotion word("I feel bad about...";
"I feel angry"; "I feel confused..."; "That bothers me") or
a metaphorical statement of an unpleasant affect ("That makes
my stomach knot up in a little ball"; "That makes me feel like
running away"). Excluded were statements of preference, opinion,
or evaluation without reference to an affect.

Pausing, defined as the emission of a silence of three
(3) seconds or more between words by a particular speaker.
The pause is counted from the last content word to the next
content word. Punctuation sounds (mmmm, uhhh) do not count
as interrupting a pause, nor do words indicating difficulty
in expressing a feeling or idea (e.g., "It's something about
...ummm...being sure that we are honest;" "The problem is in
...oh, what's the right word:...specializing too soon").

Intervention Package

The training intervention combined experimenter-adminis-
tered verbal cues and reinforcers with written rules which
were handed out to all group members.

Written rules. Basically, the rules instructed group
members to ask for turns rather than interrupting and to
substitute invitations to say more for interruptions, especially
in response to the expression of negative feelings. Some
examples of situations in which the listening response was
appropriate were given. Table One presents the rules.

Insert Table One about here

Experimenter behaviors. The experimenter was to limit
her verbal behavior to carefully defined categories, which
included behavior modification techniques as well as other
acceptable functions of the experimenter. Behavior modification
behaviors were scored on the same data sheets as the verbal
behaviors of group members and with reference to the behavior
which was being modified, so that the final record presented
complete data on the behavior modification of each behavior.
Table Two presents the categories used in scoring experimenter
behavior.

Insert Table Two about here

Subjects and Setting

The subjects were members of three naturally occurring
decision-making groups with a minimum of five and maximum
of fifteen members present at any particular meeting. The
groups were located in a large metropolitan area and shared
a social change or social service orientation. A main
criteria was that each group hold weekly meetings averaging
from one and one-half to three hours in length and that the group
be available for study each week during a three-month span.
Data were collected in the meeting room ordinarily used by
each group for meetings, not in a special laboratory setting.

Group A had a membership of five men and two women
with an average attendance of six. Two hours per week
were set aside for a meeting. Actual meetings during the
study ranged from 24 to 140 minutes, with an average of

70 minutes. Meetings were chaired by the director, or, in his absence, by the case coordinator. Other group members were caseworkers. Decisions could be made unilaterally by the director, or by the case-coordinator in relation to cases, but there was a commitment to group discussion of decisions. All were paid staff members, some part-time, some full-time. Attendance at meetings was required.

Group B had a membership of about twenty women with an average attendance at meetings of seven. Two hours once a week were set aside for a meeting. During the study meetings ranged from 46 to 93 minutes with an average length of 67 minutes. Chairmanship of meetings rotated among the three members of a steering committee. Membership on the steering committee was rotated every six months, as was the position of treasurer-bookkeeper. All decisions were made by majority vote. There was one paid staff member. The rest of the members were volunteers. Attendance at meetings was not required except for steering committee members, although attendance by all was informally expected.

Group C had a membership of about twenty women with an average attendance of eight. Three hours once per week were set aside for a meeting. During the study meetings ranged from 46 to 165 minutes with an average length of 131 minutes. The organizational structure was non-hierarchical, with the chairmanship of the meeting rotating each week. An attempt was made to arrive at decisions by consensus rather than by majority vote. There were two paid staff

members, also on a rotating basis. The rest of the members were unpaid. Attendance at meetings was not required, but there was an informal expectation of attendance by all.

Multiple Baseline Design

Baseline observations of all groups were begun simultaneously. After the fourth week of baseline, the training intervention was begun in Group A, with Groups B and C continuing on baseline. After the fifth week, training was begun in Group B, with Group C continuing on baseline. After the sixth week, training was begun in Group C. The carryover phase was begun in each group after three training meetings and followed the same staggered schedule as the initiation of training.

Procedure

All of the baseline and training sessions were attended by the experimenter, who was absent only during the carryover portion of the design. Data were collected at all meetings through cassette tape recording.

Baseline sessions. During baseline meetings, the experimenter sat at the table and interacted only in terms of friendly greetings at the beginning and end of meetings. The groups were told that baseline measures of various verbal behaviors were being gathered from the tape-recorded data and that training would begin when the baselines had stabilized. They were also informed that two other groups were participating in the study but that the other groups must remain nameless. At the start of

the last baseline session before training, the groups were
informed that training would begin at the next meeting.

Training sessions. At training session one, approximately
ten minutes were spent before the business meeting actually
began during which the written rules and cue sheet (a modified
version of the rules) were distributed and discussed. The
rules were read aloud one at a time by the experimenter,
and questions were answered. Conversation was kept strictly
to the rules and their application, with no discussion of
the nature of the behavioral variables being measured. It
was explained that the experimenter would take the role of
process monitor as outlined in the rules, so that the group
members could concentrate upon trying out the new behaviors.
Then, during the last two sessions, two of them would share
the role of process monitor without the experimenter present.
Group members were also instructed to keep the cue sheet in
front of them throughout the meeting and to glance at it
periodically to remind themselves of the new behaviors. As
soon as all questions were answered, the actual meeting
was begun. The group was instructed to proceed as usual.
All procedures around preparing the agenda, chairing the
meeting, and the like, were unchanged. The only change was
that the experimenter intervened occasionally to cue, model,
positively reinforce, or punish behaviors as specified in
the rules. Intervention by the experimenter was kept strictly
within these bounds. She dispensed social reinforcers in
a natural and friendly way contingent upon emission of the

new behaviors. She was very careful not to contribute to the content of the meeting in any way (such as offering or evaluating solutions or decisions made). At the second and third training meetings, there was no introductory reading or discussion of the rules. Written rules and cue sheets were again distributed, and the cue sheet alone was read out loud by the experimenter.

Carryover sessions. At carryover meetings, cue sheets and written rules were distributed as before, and two people were asked to volunteer to share the role of process monitor. The meeting was then again carried on per usual, except that the process monitor was to take over the behaviors of the experimenter as specified in the written rules. The experimenter was not present.

Data Analysis

Sessions varied in length (total number of 10-second intervals). Therefore, data were transformed into percentages instead of frequency counts. Percent occurrence was figured as the number of occurrences of a particular behavior divided by the total number of intervals for that session.

Results

Reliability

Reliability checks were done on samples from all three groups and from baseline and training sessions. For interruptions, which occurred at a frequency of more than one per minute, the raters scored simultaneously for a five-minute

segment, and reliability was figured as agreements divided
by agreements plus disagreements. Thirteen five-minute
samples were done, and the range of reliabilities was from
60% to 100%, with a mean of 87%. Listening responses,
expression of negative feelings, and experimenter behaviors
all occurred with a frequency of less than one per minute.
Often, especially during baseline, the frequency was closer
to one per twenty minutes. There was a good deal of difficulty
in achieving reliability on these low frequency behaviors. It
was decided to reduce the incidence of false negatives by
stopping the tape when a signal occurred and an equal number
of times when no signal had occurred, randomly distributed.
The attention of both raters would then be focused on the
same incidence, and a decision made by each as to whether the
behavior under question was a positive or a false positive.
Reliability was then figured as the number of agreements
divided by agreements plus disagreements. For listening responses,
twenty-two trials were done (8 positives, 14 false positives)
with a reliability of 100%. For expression of negative feelings,
thirty-four trials were done (14 positives, 20 false positives)
with a reliability of 97%. For pausing, thirty-two trials were
done (10 positives; 22 false positives), with a reliability of
94 percent. For experimenter behaviors, a similar method was
used, except that all trials consisted of positive experimenter
behaviors, with the raters' task being to score each in the
correct one out of the possible seven categories and in reference
to the correct group member behavior. Twenty-six trials were
done, and reliability was 85%.

Verbal Behaviors of Group Members

Expression of negative feelings. Figure One depicts
the percent occurrence of expression of negative feelings.

Insert Figure One about here

Expression of negative feelings increased above baseline
levels during training in all three groups and occurred
at above baseline levels in some carryover sessions of each
group. The respective means for baseline, training, and
carryover were, in Group A, 0%, 2.7%, and 2.5%; in Group B,
0%, 2%, and 1.5%; in Group C, 0.4%, 1%, and 0.5%. Expression
of negative feelings increased from 0% to 2% in the last
baseline session before training in Group C, indicating the
existence of controlling variables other than the training
intervention.

Pausing. Figure Two depicts the percent occurrence of
pausing. In Groups A and B there was some increase in pausing
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Insert Figure Two about here
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above baseline levels during training. In Group C there was
no significant increase. Only in Group A was there a consistent
increase during training and maintenance of increased pausing
during carryover. The respective means for baseline, training,
and carryover were, in Group A,0.2%, 3.3%, and 2.5%; in Group
B, 0.2%, 1.6%, and 0%; in Group C, 0.4%, 0.3%, and 0%.

Listening responses. Figure Three depicts the percent
occurrence of listening responses.

Insert Figure Three about here

Listening responses increased above baseline levels during

training in all three groups, although the change in Group B seems negligible. Listening responses occurred at above baseline levels in at least one carryover session for each group, but there was also considerable evidence of a return toward baseline both during the later training sessions in Groups A and B and during carryover. Mean percentages for baseline, training, and carryover were, in Group A, 0%, 2.7%, 1%; in Group B, 0%, 0.3%, and 0.5%; in Group C, 0%, 2%, and 1%.

Interruptions. Figure Four depicts the percent occurrence of interruptions. In all three groups, there was a large drop
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Insert Figure Four about here
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in interruptions from the last baseline session to the first training session. In Group A, the low rate was maintained and even further decreased during subsequent training and carryover sessions. In Groups B and C there was a gradual increase in interruptions after training session one. Although at the end of training, percent occurrence of interruptions was still somewhat below baseline levels, the study was not continued long enough to determine whether there would have been a continuing return toward baseline or whether interruptions would have leveled off at below baseline levels. Mean percentages for baseline, training, and carryover were, in Group A, 47%, 33%, and 24%; in Group B, 58%, 37%, and 50%; and in Group C, 68%, 55%, and 63%.

Experimenter Behavior

Categories. A total of 309 experimenter behaviors were scored throughout the study. There were no instances of behavior modification during baseline sessions. The only

experimenter behaviors occurring during baseline were
information-giving and four instances of behavior which
could not be scored in any category so were scored as "other."
Table Three indicates the percentage out of the 309 behaviors
which were scored in each category. 50.8% of the experimenter's

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Insert Table Three about here

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behavior consisted of behavior modification of listening
responses and interruptions during training. There were no
instances of behavior modification in relation to expression
of negative feelings or pausing. The majority of the behavior
modification was done through cueing (including restatement
and explanation of the written rules). 11% of behaviors were
scored "other."

Amount. Figure Five graphs the percent occurrence of
behavior modification in each group. In general, behavior
modification was highest during the first training session,
decreasing thereafter. There was some maintenance of behavior
modification behaviors by group members as process monitors
during carryover.

Insert Figure Five about here

Comparison with process monitors. Table Four compares
the performance of the experimenter with the behavior of
group members as process monitors during carryover.

Insert Table Four about here

Punishment of interruptions and turngiving were at about the same level for experimenter and process monitors, cueing of interruptuons occurred about half as often, and cueing, modelling, and positive reinforcement of listening responses were greatly reduced for the process monitors.

Discussion

Other studies of verbal behavior in groups have focused upon changing specific behaviors of individual group members through experimenter-administered reinforcers (Hastorf, 1968; Oakes et al., 1960). The present study attempted to produce change through changes in the contingencies of reinforcement between group members. Increases in listening responses and decreases in interruptions were produced by experimenter-administered cues and reinforcers in conjunction with the written rules. However, the increase in expression of negative feelings and pausing was to be produced, not by experimenter reinforcers, but by changes in the contingent responses of group members. Conclusive proof of the above assumption cannot be derived from the present study, since the multiple baseline design does not separate changes in the contingencies from the beginning of experimenter intervention and presentation of the written rules. However, the fact that no behavior modification by the experimenter was scored in relation to negative feelings and pauses lends some support to the assumption that the increase in experiencing level was produced by the increase in client-centered/experiential responding.

89% of the experimenter's behaviors were scorable in prescribed categories. The complete tabulation of experimenter behaviors allows for the conclusion that changes in listening and interruptions were produced by the rules and behavior modification, not by other uncontrolled behaviors of the experimenter.

In order to bring the changes in verbal behavior more into perspective, percent occurrence of a particular behavior can be transformed into an approximated rate per minute by dividing the number of occurrences into the number of minutes. When listening responses had been increased to 3% in Group A, a listening response was occurring approximately once every five minutes. When percent occurrence was at 1%, a listening response was occurring only once every twenty minutes. So, an increase of one or two percentage points in listening responses, expression of negative feelings, or pausing, when translated into changes in rate per minute, is a considerable change in the nature of conversation at group meetings. There are also no norms as to the levels of listening responses or interruptions necessary to produce maximal occurrence of expression of negative feelings and pausing (higher experiencing). In the experimenter's experience with Gendlin and Hendricks' listening technique in dyadic situations, the rate of listening responses more closely approaches one per minute. However, in the present study, any increase in listening responses was taken as representing a change from an "argumentative" to a "listening" mode of

group interaction. Although the intervention may not have
been successful in producing maximal levels of listening
responses, indication was given that the listening response
can be taught through the methods used.

While there was evidence that group members could
discriminate appropriate situations for replacing inter-
ruptions with listening responses and that experiencing
level could be increased, a consistent change in all
measured verbal behaviors occurred only in Group A. One
variable which may have accounted for the less persistent
change in Groups B and C was consistency of attendance
by group members at training sessions. In Group A, 71%
of the members were present for all three training sessions.
In Group B, only 8% were present for three training sessions.
In Group C, 58% were present for three training sessions.
Group A also started with a considerably lower level of
interruptions even before training, which may have contri-
buted to the greater success of training. Other variables
which differentiated Group A from Groups B and C and which
might be controlled in future studies were a) smaller size
of meetings, b) presence of males as well as females, c)
hierarchical organization with meetings chaired by the
director, and d) paid vs. volunteer status of group members.

In Group A, the quality of interaction at meetings
seemed an accurate replication of decision-making as observed
at the Changes group meetings. In Groups B and C, Changes-
like discussion also occurred periodically, but, in the latter
groups, "listening" was interspersed with outbreaks of high
interruption discussion. The qualitative change in meetings,

as experienced by the experimenter and others who listened
to taped sessions, was more dramatic than that part of it
captured by the expression of negative feelings and pausing
measures. Expression of negative feelings, as defined,
included only the most direct and powerful form of negative
feelings. It seemed during the study that one occurrence
could bring out for open discussion an extremely important,
hitherto covered-over aspect of the group as a decision-making
body. One occurrence might be followed by twenty minutes of
quality discussion of a problem which formerly could not
be discussed because of the intensity of feeling or risk-
taking involved. Decreased interruptions and increased
listening responses did seem to provide a mechanism for the
discussion of such issues. Expression of negative feelings
as defined does seem to measure one aspect of high experiencing
as expressed in verbal behavior. However, it seems to leave
out other verbal behaviors which are functionally equivalent
for the accurate communication of inner experiencing. A
measure is needed which more fully quantifies the qualitative
changes in depth and creativity of discussion which were
evident in the present study.

When pausing occurred, it seemed to represent an accurate
measure of attempts at making fresh words for inner experiencing
as defined in high experiencing. Interestingly enough, the
pause was often produced as a consequence of a listening
response, e.g., when asked to say more about a particular
word or phrase, a speaker would pause, presumably searching
for words. This is an exciting indication for the potency

of the listening response in terms of Gendlin's theory,
since it indicates that asking for more produces in the
speaker the kind of direct reference to preverbal felt sense,
followed by articulation of that sense into words, which is
essential to high experiencing (Gendlin, 1962). The fact
that pausing hardly ever occurred in Groups B and C, where
most of the time the percentage of interruptions remained
at about 50%, also provides confirmation for the assumption
that pausing is correlated with a mode of thinking which
does not occur in a fast, competitive, punishing kind of
group interaction.

Frequency counts were made, not of the behavior of
individuals, but of the behavior of the group as a whole.
A similar approach was taken by Everett, Hayward, and Meyers
(1974) when they applied a token economy to the entire
fluctuating population of riders of a university bus.
In the present study, even with large fluctuations in the
size and composition of meetings, the effect of the training
intervention upon baseline levels was clearly evident.
Controlling for attendance would probably greatly reduce
the variance in baselines on interruptions within a particular
group, since both size of meetings and presence or absence of
particular group members seemed to affect the number of
interruptions. Long-term study of baselines of particular
behaviors in groups is needed to isolate variables internal
to the group which affect them. The fact that group members
function as mutually reinforcing agents makes it possible
for behaviors to change without any outside intervention.
The increase in expression of negative feelings from 0% to

2% in the last baseline session of Group C is an example
from the present study.

The present study suggests that behavior analysis
can be used to create contingencies of verbal behavior
which appear to replicate client-centered/experiential
responding in groups and that this is accompanied by an
increase in experiencing level. It did not demonstrate
that a higher level of expression of negative feelings
and pausing, as made possible by an increase in listening
responses and a decrease in interruptions, actually
caused an increase in the quality of decisions made. The
development of measures of the quality of decisions in
naturally-occurring groups is an important next step in
the application of behavior change procedures to the group
situation.

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Table 1

Written Rules

1. First, two people need to volunteer to share the role of "process monitor." They can sit next to each other, and, if one needs out, the other can take over. Only one needs to be doing it at a time. The process monitor needs to be willing to stay out of the discussion, no matter how heated it becomes, and to concentrate just on helping others to remember to try the new behaviors. This is done by gently reminding people right in the situation if they are forgetting ("Wait. You need to ask her to say more" or "Your three minutes is almost up"). She/he also keeps track of who gets the next turn to talk, especially if there are several people waiting. The process monitor needs to have a watch with a second hand and a little bravery.

   IT WON'T WORK UNLESS YOU HAVE A REAL, LIVE, APPOINTED PROCESS MONITOR. You may think that you can do without, and watch yourselves, but pretty soon you will have snow-balled right back into the old way of being. And the process monitor doesn't really have to miss out on giving his/her opinions, as long as there are two and they take turns.

2. Agree to limit uninterrupted talking by one person to three minutes, to be timed by the process monitor. This does not apply if someone is asked to say more--then they get more time. This way, if you want someone to stop so you can have a turn, instead of interrupting them or getting into a hassle with them, you'll know you only have to wait patiently for three minutes. On the other hand, you'll know you have a whole three minutes to lay out your thing, if you need that much time.

3. NO STEALING THE FLOOR. You can interrupt ONLY to ask for clarification ("Can you say more about...?") or to say "I need a turn soon," if you are afraid that you will never get a turn. Then, the person can go on, but the process monitor will make sure you get a turn soon.

4. If you ask someone to say more about a part of their thing that is confusing or upsetting to you, you automatically get the next turn. This makes sense, because feeling a strong need to have the next turn is usually a good sign that something they are saying is upsetting you, and it would be good to ask them to say more and perhaps clear it up before you respond.

Table 1 (con't)

5. NO BUT...!"-ING. INSTEAD, ASK FOR MORE. This is the new thing you are learning here: how to turn an interruption or an argument into a chance for understanding. When you feel upset or confused by what another is saying, instead of interrupting to say your side, ask them to say more about the specific part that is upsetting you. In this way, you get to point at your problem with what they are saying without clobbering them unjustly. If you ask someone to say more, you also automatically get the next turn (see 4. above), so you'll know that you'll still get to say your thing, if you still need to.

REMEMBER, NO "BUT...!"-ING OR INTERRUPTING. INSTEAD SAY "CAN YOU SAY MORE ABOUT...?" OR "CAN YOU SAY MORE?" You don't just have to sit and be confused or upset while they ramble on. Stop them and ask them to say more about the part where you got lost or confused or angry.

Example: A: "I think we should have a steering committee and that it should meet about once a..."
NOT B: "But this is supposed to be a collective!"
INSTEAD B: "Can you say more about why you think a steering committee would be helpful?"

6. The same thing applies when someone is having a heavy feeling, even if the heavy feeling is about you. Ask them to say more about what they are feeling or what's upsetting them about that, instead of ignoring them or putting them down or immediately rising to your own defense.

Example: A: "I feel scared to have us do that speaking engagement."
NOT B: "Oh, there's nothing to be scared of. I do it all the time."
INSTEAD B: "Can you say more about being scared?"
OR
A: "I feel really angry with you because you are always pushing us to be more political!"
NOT B: "I am not. It's just that you're so wishy-washy!"
INSTEAD B: "Can you say more about what feels bad or pushy in there?"

7. The same thing applies when someone is having trouble finding the right words to say their thing--either ask for more specifically to help them or just tell them to take their time--they have a whole three minutes. Don't let them give up just so the rest of you can hurry on.

Example: A: "It's something about...oh, I can't think of the right words!"
NOT B: "I have something to say about that..."
INSTEAD B: "Take your time" OR "Say more."

Table 1 (con't)

NOBODY HAS TO SAY MORE UNLESS THEY WANT TO, BUT IT'S WISE
TO ASK THEM. Remember, the more often you can find appropri-
ate times to ask people to say more, the better things will
go--the more possible confusions and misunderstandings you
will avoid. ALSO, STAY AWAY FROM "WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE,
WHY" SORTS OF QUESTIONS as much as possible (This does not
mean that you can't ask for a simple piece of information
where necessary. It just means not to put people to the
third degree). INSTEAD, PHRASE IT OPEN-ENDEDLY SO THAT
THE PERSON DOES NOT FEEL DEFENSIVE ABOUT GIVING THE RIGHT
ANSWER: "CAN YOU SAY MORE ABOUT....?"

Table 2

Categories For Experimenter Behavior

<u>Cue</u>. The presentation of a discriminative stimulus for the emission of one of the behaviors which was being elicited from the subjects. Included were statements describing or explaining the written rules.

<u>Model</u>. The emission of one of the behaviors being taught to the subjects. Modelling could be scored if the experimenter emitted an expression of negative feelings or a listening response.

<u>Positive reinforcement</u>. The presentation of verbal behavior indicating approval within ten (10) seconds after the emission of a specific behavior by a subject.

<u>Punishment</u>. Presentation of verbal behavior indicating disapproval within ten (10) seconds after the emission of a specific behavior by a subject. Punishment was to be used only following interruptions.

<u>Turn-giving</u>. Indication that a specific person may begin speaking.

<u>Information-giving</u>. Verbalization of information about mechanics of the experiment (e.g., in reference to the timetable for training).

<u>Other</u>. Emission of a behavior which could not be scored in any of the above categories.

Table 3

Percentage of Experimenter Behavior Scored
In Each Category, With Breakdown According
To the Behaviors of Group Members Modified

Experimenter Behavior	Behavior of Group Member			Total
	Feeling	Listening	Interruption	
Cue	0.0	13.6	16.5	30.1
Model	0.3	4.2	0.0	4.5
Pos. Reinf.	0.0	5.2	0.6	5.8
Punishment	0.0	0.0	10.4	10.4
Turn-giving	---	---	---	21.4
Info-giving	---	---	---	16.8
Other	---	---	---	11.0

Table 4

Total Number of Behaviors in Each Category
For Experimenter and Process Monitors

Performer	BehMod of Listening			BehMod of Interruptions		Turn Giving
	Cue	Model	PosR	Cue	Punish	
Experimenter	42	13	16	51	32	66
ProcMonitors	9	0	0	24	37	55

Note. The number of behaviors by process monitors has
been extrapolated from six to nine sessions by increasing
the original number by one-third.

Figure Captions

Fig. 1. Percentage of intervals in which an expression of
negative feelings occurred during each experimental condition
in each group.

Fig. 2. Percentage of intervals in which pausing for explication
occurred during each experimental condition in each group.

Fig. 3. Percentage of intervals in which a listening
response occurred during each experimental condition in
each group.

Fig. 4. Percentage of intervals in which an interruption
occurred during each experimental condition in each group.

Fig. 5. Percentage of intervals in which behavior modifi-
cation was done by the experimenter during baseline and
training and by the process monitors during carryover.

Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

Fig 4

Fig 5