Selected Readings
in

Communication Skills

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The Interpersonal Gap

by John L. Wallen

You cannot have your own way all the time. Your best intentions will sometimes end in disaster, while at other times you will receive credit for desirable outcomes you didn't intend. In short, what you accomplish is not always what you hoped.

The most basic and recurring problem in social life is the relation between what you intend and the effect of your actions on others. The key terms we use in attempting to make sense of interpersonal relations are "intentions," "actions," and "effect." "Interpersonal gap" refers to the degree of congruence between one person's intentions and the effect produced in the other. If the effect is what was intended, the gap has been bridged. If the effect is the opposite of what was intended, the gap has become greater.

Let us look more closely at the three terms.

By "intentions" I mean the wishes, wants, hopes, desires and fears that give rise to your actions. I am not referring to underlying motives of which you are unaware.

It is a fact that people can tell you after an action has produced some results, "That wasn't what I meant to do. That outcome wasn't what I intended." Or, "Yes, that's what I hoped would happen." We look at the social outcome and decide whether it is what we intended. Apparently we can compare what we wished prior to acting with the outcome after we have acted and determine whether they match.

Here are some examples of interpersonal intentions:

"I want him to like me,"

"I want him to obey me,"

"I want him to realize that I know a great deal about this subject,"

"I don't want to talk with him,"

"I wish he would tell me what to do."

Intentions may also be mixed:

"I want her to know I like her, but I don't want to be embarrassed,"

"I want her to tell me I'm doing a good job, but I don't want to ask for it,"

"I would like her to know how angry it makes me when she does that but I don't want to lose her friendship."

Intentions are private and are known directly only to the one who experiences them. I know my own intentions, but I must infer yours. You know your own intentions, but you must infer mine.

"Effect" refers to a person's inner response to the actions of another. We may describe the other's effect by openly stating what feelings are aroused by her actions. However, we are often unaware of our feelings as feelings. When this happens, our feelings influence how we see the other and we label her or her actions in a way that expresses our feelings, even though we are unaware of them.

A's Actions	***Effects on B***	***How B may talk about the effect of A's actions***
A lectures to B... Interrupts B... A does not respond to B's comments.	B feels hurt, put down, angry	Describing his feelings, "When A acts like that I feel inferior and resent feeling this way." Expressing his feelings by labeling A: "A is smug and arrogant."

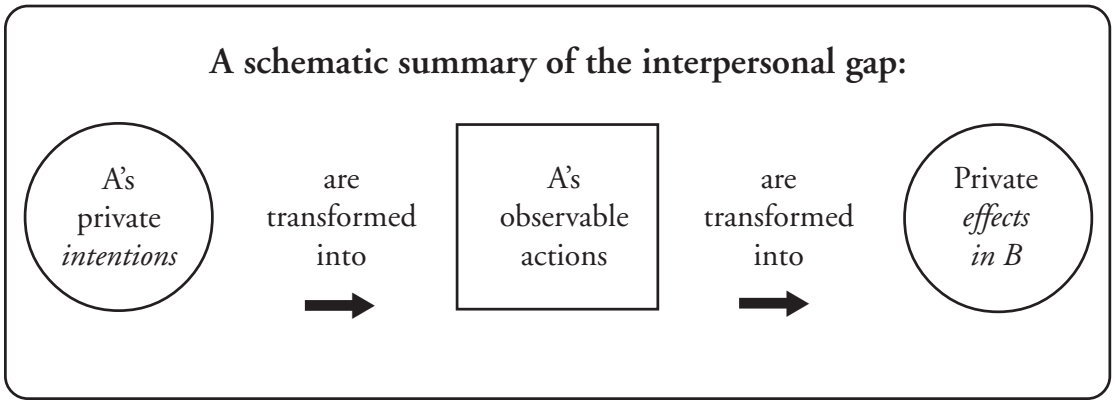
Here are some other examples showing how the same effect may be talked about as a description of one's own feeling or by labeling the other as an indirect way of expressing one's feelings.

Describing feelings:	"What she did makes me feel angry with her."
Expressing feelings by labeling other:	"He's self-centered. He wanted to hurt me."
Describing feelings:	"What she just did makes me feel closer and more friendly towards her."
Expressing feelings by labeling other:	"He's certainly a warm, understanding person."
Describing feelings:	"When she acts like that I feel embarrassed and ill at ease."
Expressing feelings by labeling other:	"He's crude and disgusting."

In contrast to interpersonal intentions and effects which are private, **actions** are public and observable. They may be verbal ("good morning") or non-verbal (looking away when passing another), brief (a touch on the shoulder), or extended (taking a person out to dinner).

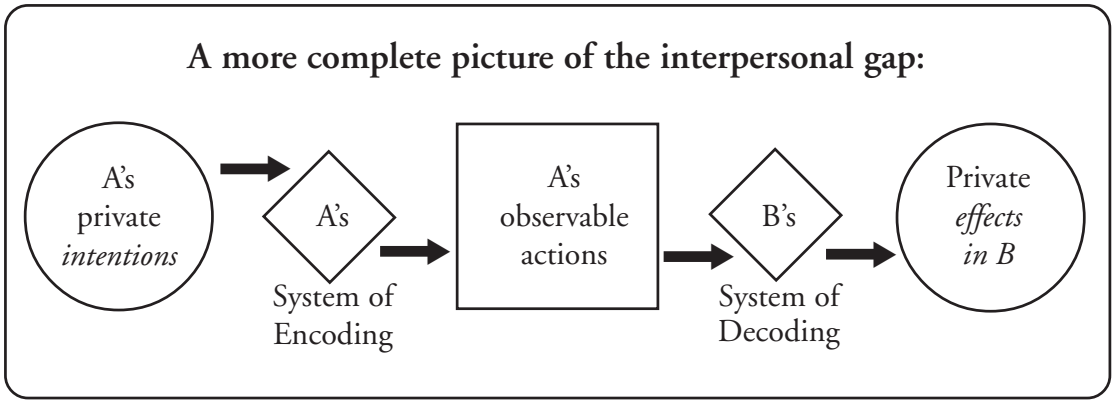
Interpersonal actions are communicative. They include attempts by the sender to convey a message, **whether or not it is received,** as well as actions that the receiver responds to as messages, **whether or not the sender intended them that way.**

The interpersonal gap, thus, contains two transformations. I shall refer to these steps as coding and decoding operations. A's actions are a coded expression of his inner state. B's inner response is a



result of the way he decodes A's actions. If B decodes A's behavior in the same way that A has coded it, A will have produced the effect he intended.

To be specific, let's imagine that I feel warm and friendly toward you. I pat you on the shoulder. Thus, the pat is an action expressing my friendly feeling. You decode this, however, as an act of condescension. The effect of my behavior is that you feel put down, inferior, and annoyed with me. My system of coding does not match your system of decoding and the interpersonal gap, consequently, is difficult to bridge.

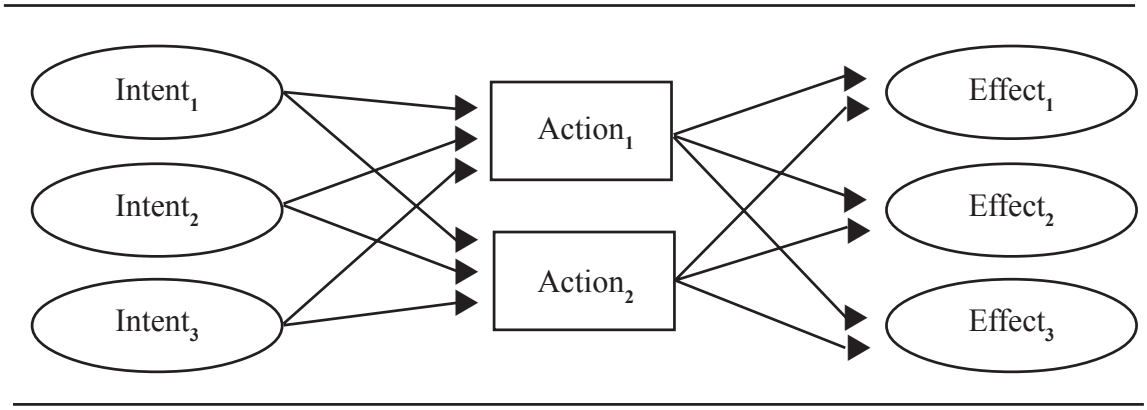


You may be unaware of the ways you code your intentions and decode others' actions. In fact, you may have been unaware that you do. One of the objects of this study of interpersonal relations is to help you become aware of the silent assumptions that influence how you code and decode.

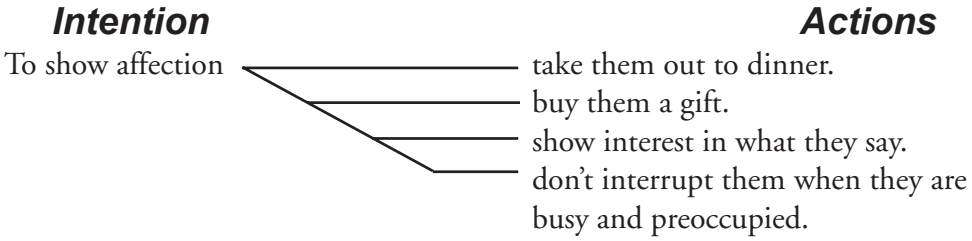
If you are aware of your methods of decoding the behavior of others, you can accurately describe how you typically act when you feel angry, affectionate, threatened, uneasy, etc. If you are unaware

of your method of decoding the behavior of others, you cannot accurately describe the kinds of distortions or misreading of others you typically create. Some people, for example, respond to gestures of affection as if they were attempts to limit their autonomy. Some respond to offers of help as if they were being put down. Some misread enthusiasm as anger.

Because different people use different codes, actions have no unique and constant meaning, but are substitutable. As the diagram below shows, an action may express different intentions, the same intention may give rise to different actions, different actions may produce the same effect, and different effects may be produced by the same kind of action.



The same intention may be expressed by different actions.

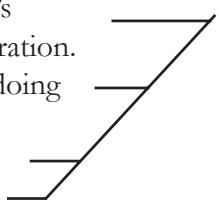


Different intentions may be expressed by the same action.

The same action may lead to different effects.

Action		Effects
A takes B out to dinner		B feels uneasy; thinks, "I wonder what A really wants of me?" B enjoys it; thinks, "A really likes me."

Different actions may lead to the same effect.

Action		***Effects***
A tells B he showed B's report to top administration. A tells B he has been doing an excellent job. A asks B for advice. A gives B a raise.		B feels proud, happy, thinks "A recognizes my competence and ability."

It should be obvious that when you and I interact, each of us views our own and other's actions in a different frame of reference. Each of us sees our own actions in the light of our own intentions, but we see the other's actions in the light of the effect they have on us. This is the principle of partial information: 1each party to an interaction has different and partial information about the interpersonal gap.

Bridging the interpersonal gap requires that each person understand how the other sees the interaction.

Emotions as Problems

John L. Wallen

The way we deal with emotion is the most frequent source of difficulty in our relations with others. Although each of us continually experiences feelings about others and about ourselves, most of us have not yet learned to accept and use our emotions constructively. Not only are we uncomfortable when others express strong feelings, but most of us do not even recognize, much less accept, any of our own feelings.

We know, intellectually, that it is natural to have feelings. We know that the capacity to feel is as much a part of being a person as is the capacity to think and reason. We are not aware of incompleteness in the one who seems only to think about life and does not seem to feel: to care about, enjoy, or be angered and hurt by what goes on around him. We know all this, and yet we feel that feelings are disruptive, the source of obstacles and problems in living and working with others.

It is not the feelings that are the source of difficulty in our relations with others, but the way we deal with them, our failure to use them.

Because of our negative attitude toward emotions and our fear and discomfort with our feelings, we spend much effort trying, in one way or another, to deny or ignore them. Look around you and observe how you and others deal with feelings. Make your own observations and see if they support or contradict the point that our usual response is some variation of "Don't feel that way."

To the person expressing disappointment, discouragement, or depression we say things like, "Cheer up." "Don't let it get you down." "There's no use crying over spilt milk." "Things will get better." In short, "Don't feel that way." We advise the sorrowing or hurting people, "Don't cry. Put your mind on something pleasant." We tell the angry person, "Simmer down. There's no point in getting angry. Let's be objective." To the person expressing joy and satisfaction in something he has done we caution, "Better watch out. Pride goeth before a fall." In our various group meetings we tell each other, "Let's keep feelings out of this. Let's be rational."

Another sign of the difficulty we all experience with feelings is that the more distant and remote the feelings, the more comfortably we discuss them. Try to pay attention to yourself and others when talking about feelings and ask, "How distant are these feelings?" I predict that you will find relatively few discussions of feelings that someone is having "right now" in comparison with the number of discussions about feelings they had in the past toward somebody else. Do you find that you talk more easily about feelings toward persons who are present? As you observe yourself and others discussing feelings, see whether the following scale roughly represents what you find.

Most Distant: Least Difficult to Discuss

I tell you how one person felt toward another, neither person being present, e.g., "Joe was angry with Jim."

I tell you my past feelings about somebody not present, e.g., "I was angry with her."

I tell you my present feelings about somebody not present, e.g., "I am angry with her."

I tell you my past feelings about you, e.g., "I was angry with you last month when you...."

I tell you my present feelings about you, e.g., " I am angry with you."

Here and Now: Most Difficult to Discuss

In general, the closer the feelings are to the here-and-now (to you and me in this present moment), the more difficult they are to discuss openly. The scale above implies many more subdivisions than shown. For example, it implies that I am more comfortable telling you that I was angry with you a year ago than that I was angry with you last week. The former topic is much more distant. Likewise, I can more easily tell you of last week's anger than of my annoyance with you yesterday.

This scale doesn't mean that people do not get angry in the present or even that they do not act angry, only that to discuss one's present anger openly is more difficult than to discuss one's past anger.

Why are we uncomfortable in dealing with feelings, both our own and others'? What is it that leads us to try to deny or ignore present feelings? Why do we look upon emotions as problems? I believe that the problem is that we recognize that we have less control over what we will feel than over what we will do.

I see myself as in control of my own actions. If I wish to run, I do so. When I wish to stop running, I stop. I can even decide to take longer series of actions, such as deciding to take a trip to the coast for the weekend, and then carry out my intention.

With somewhat less certainty, I see myself as usually able to control my thoughts. If I wish to plan a trip to the coast, I can think about that. If I wish to think about last week's trip, I do so. When I am unable to stop thinking of something it is usually because some strong feeling has been aroused.

My feelings, by contrast, seem to have a life of their own. I cannot start and stop them as I can my actions. My wish to feel happy does not lead me to feel happy. I can't decide to feel love for a person and then feel it. I cannot keep myself from feeling fear just by deciding not to be afraid, although I can carry out an intention not to show my fear, not to run away. I have less control over what I will feel than over what I will do.

Feelings are spontaneous responses to factors over which we have little direct control. To control the arousal of our feelings, we attempt to arrange the environment so that it will evoke the feelings we desire and not those we wish to avoid. Much of the interaction between persons can be viewed as an effort by each to control which feelings will be aroused. That is, I try to get you to act in ways that will elicit feelings in me that I desire and not those I dislike. You, in turn, attempt to get me to act in ways that will have a similar effect on your feelings. Thus, each of us tries to control the relationship (and the other's behavior) as a way of controlling his own feelings.

Others seem to have more control over what we will feel than we ourselves have. People usually say, "You made me angry," rather than, "I've become angry." One popular song declared, "You made me love you. I didn't want to do it." Maybe our discomfort with our own feelings springs from a belief (a recognition?) that to feel something toward another is to surrender some of our control of self to him. Certainly, if we believe that the other "made" us angry or "made us love him," he has some control over us.

Paradoxically, however, if we hold the other responsible for our anger, we probably expect that he should stop his annoying behavior because we feel angry. Our anger, then, is not just a felt inner state, but is felt as a claim against the other. Likewise, if we feel that the other "make" us love him, we will probably expect him to return our affection. Note your own tendency, when somebody expresses affection for you, to feel that you should reciprocate: a "you're nice too" effect.

I believe much of our discomfort with our own and others' feelings arises because interpersonal feelings precipitate a struggle for control between persons. Which of us will yield and thus give up our own identity? Do I have control over you because I can make you angry? Do you have control over me because you get angry or hurt when I act in a certain way? You and I must come to some shared understanding of the meaning of your feelings of anger, and my feelings of being hurt, of your feelings of affection, of my feelings of inadequacy around you. Are the feelings each of us has about the other really claims on the other, obligations to be and act in a certain way? Or are our feelings phenomena to be accepted and then understood? Your anger might tell us something about you and about me, if we can understand it.

To interact with another is to risk having feelings aroused by him and to risk arousing feelings in him. You and he cannot turn on and turn off your feelings toward each other merely by wishing or deciding to. Unless you avoid each other totally, you must each share some of yourself with the other. To feel something toward another, whether anger, disgust, fear, interest, or enjoyment, is to become interrelated, to lose some of our control over our own life. Thus, feelings seem to threaten our voluntary, planful control over our own affairs.

Response-Ability Axes in the Learning Group

Timothy Weber, Ph.D.

I.

The learning group affords continuing opportunities to learn from your experience with others. With the assistance of a faculty trainer, group members learn about themselves, not in isolation, but through their interactions with other group members. The learning group is a community where it becomes clear over time that I do not exist and learn alone. Rather, I exist, learn and grow in relation to others. I am a relational being, and all that I am is my story of my relating to others through my life. I can describe myself as "my remembrance of my relating with others."

I=the remembering of my relating

The learning group is a community which illuminates this key principle by focusing on the continuing interactions between group members, the learning derived by reflecting upon those interactions, and the greater consciousness and increased choices that result from such reflecting. Thus, the learning group is really a "magnified tissue sample of healthy living."

II.

The learning group, like most every other group, develops its potential for relatedness and learning as it successfully matures through stages of group development. These stages will become clearer as you learn about yourself and group development. There are two formats for the learning group: skill group and family group.

The learning group begins as a skill group, a highly focused group-on-group arrangement (an inside and outside group) where group members in the inside group are paired with learning partners in the outside group. In a series of brief segments, usually lasting no more than 10-15 minutes, the inside group "works" in an agenda-less, open-ended format where the only goal is to learn from your experience with others.

In this ambiguous context, group members work on developing a variety of skills in group membership and leadership such as giving and receiving feedback, being open and aware, communicating internal experience, dealing with conflict, exercising personal authority, tracking group patterns, and so on. The specific skills being practiced depends on the experience and training of the group member. The faculty trainer on the outside of the group assists group members in developing their skills through episodic interventions which may include joining the group for a moment. The inside group breaks after 10-15 minutes for a 5 minute consultation debrief with the learning partners. Group members then return for another round after the consultation break. The design continues as the outer group and inner group switch positions.

The skill group, therefore, is a more micro-focused format for the learning group. Attention is given to the development and sharpening of specific skills in personal awareness, openness and interpersonal interaction. The family group is a continuation of the skill group with more macro instead of micro focus. The lens widens to include the faculty trainer and all group members in the total group. The context widens to include more of the stories of group members, especially the intergenerational stories from the members' families of origin. The stories may also refer to experiences in other settings beyond the group such as in the immediate larger community or the work and friendship systems of group members.

As these stories are shared over time, there may be informational, educational, supportive, and therapeutic benefits for group members. The group may use a variety of experiential exercises (e.g., sculpting) to enhance its learning. However wide ranging the stories may be from the group's immediate experience (e.g., a family of origin story), the emphasis is always on linking the themes, symbols, issues, patterns, and dynamics of the story to the immediate, unfolding story of the self with others in the group.

Embedded in every story is a story of the moment. The struggle with father's authority, for example, appears now in the struggle with another member's personal authority. The hunger for recognition deepened in the midst of a chaotic, preoccupied family of origin now appears as one member attempts to overwork the business of others in the group. Pain in acknowledging lifelong vulnerability appears as its converse: a hardened rigidity with intellectual defenses as one member resists an invitation to connect with another group member. As group members fight to go first with the agenda, ancient sibling patterns are acted out with some members placating to others in fear.

The family group lives out its life at the **intersection** where the stories of living intersect with immediate experience. Learning in the family group is **intersection learning.** Why is it critical that learning stay connected with this intersection?

III.

Conversation in the learning group might range over a wide variety of issues which may indeed lead to some learning. A group member might bring up interesting and provocative therapeutic issues from his/her previous therapeutic or life experience. However, focusing on these issues in depth with one or more members is not the purpose of the learning group. In fact, this kind of focus may distract and hinder the group from the group's learning potential.

In some cases, group members have said as they begin skill group training, "Who are we going to go after today?" as if "going after" means some in-depth, personal exploration of someone's issues. Trainees might also expect that the "rule of pain and pathology" will guide group functioning. Here the expectation is that someone will be on the "hot seat," and the faculty trainer and other members will "dig deep" to find the "dirt" of the selected group member. Even when the "rule of pain and pathology" is not the norm, depth exploration of a trainee's personal life distracts from learning about the self in relationship with others. Sometimes, group members may erroneously believe that the goal in the learning group is to "let it all out, vent." In these cases, the "story" line of the intersection is being pursued in a quasi-therapeutic format without attention to the "immediate

experience" line of the intersection. Although the learning group certainly enhances therapeutic benefits, the learning group is a **learning group**, not a therapy group.

I want to propose a framework that I believe is helpful in increasing the potential for responses (response-ability) that lead to learning from your experience with others. By developing an attention to increasing these responses in your group experience, you also increase your personal responsibility, speaking from an "I" position with clarity, specificity, responsibility, and immediacy.

IV.

I believe there is a set of necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for optimum learning in the learning group. Whether or not there is learning is a function of many factors. However, the presence of these four conditions displayed on the four "response-ability" axes is necessary for maximum learning in the group (refer to the figure of the four response-ability axes on the last page of this reading [pg. 20].

There are four axes representing the four conditions necessary for optimal learning in the group. Each axis radiates from the center toward the periphery. When the conversation moves closer to the centerpoint, there is generally greater risk and responsibility and more opportunity for learning and change. As conversation moves more toward the periphery, risk and responsibility generally decrease, as do opportunities for learning and change.

Group members might assess themselves using these axes as a framework. A group member might be more centered on one axis, but peripheral on the other axes. The goal is to develop a competency in moving toward the center on all exes so that this "centered conversation" is at least a readily available option in all interpersonal experience.

The Four Conditions

1. TIME: Conversation will focus on the now, the immediate, vs. focusing on the past or the future.

2. FOCUS: Conversation will be specific (about internal experiences and external behaviors) vs. abstract, general and global.

3. PLACE: Conversation will refer to experiences in the present group ("inside talk") vs. references to experiences, places, people, context outside the group ("outside talk").

4. PERSON: Conversation will come from an "I" position, with members taking responsibility for their experience, vs. using more distant and removed referents, such as "you," "them," "we," "us" and "our."

V.

When these four conditions are present, this might be an example of conversation in the group: "John, I want to tell you that I am feeling defensive and angry when you just now referred to men as men and women as girls. And my judgment is that you are sexist!" In this example, the speaker is

taking personal responsibility for her experience, is referring to an experience in the immediate moment, is specific about both her internal experience and external behaviors (what exactly John said), and is focusing on an interaction in her present context.

In contrast to this "centered conversation" where the speaker is at the center of the four response-ability axes, the speaker could enter with "peripheral conversation" "where the speaker is at the periphery of the four response-ability axes). Here is an example of "peripheral conversation" in response to John's statement above: "You know, people seem to be so insensitive these days to other people's feelings. I read an editorial the other day about men not respecting women." Here, the speaker is not taking personal responsibility, conversation is general, vague, and referring to some abstract idea outside of the group, and there is no specific reference to an experience in the group. The opportunities for learning are clearly more abundant in "centered conversation" and are least likely in "peripheral conversation."

Some of the four conditions might be present, at least for a moment, and other conditions might not be present. An example: "Back at the plant, whenever Mary tells me what to do, I get angry inside, but I don't tell her. I keep it to myself. Last week, it happened to me again. What do you think I should do with Mary?" Here the speaker is making some specific references to both internal experiences and external behaviors and is taking some personal responsibility. However, the focus is on "outside talk" (the plant), both the past and the future, and there is more of a "you" orientation with Mary.

A trainer could nudge the speaker more toward "centered conversation" by asking this question: "Bob, I hear that that situation happens with Mary back at the plant. I wonder if the same thing might be happening with you in this group now…where you hold and hide your anger with others? In fact, I want to check out if you have a pinch with me when I give you a suggestion like I'm doing now. When I see you look down as I talk with you, I feel more distant from you, and my belief is that you are blocking what I'm saying. So I'm curious." The trainer now is moving the conversation more toward the center and away from the periphery. Bob will learn more about his life "back at the plant with Mary" by working with the trainer and other group members in this immediate moment.

Embedded within all conversation are specific stories about the self and references about how the self is in the immediate moment. When Bob begins his story about his experience with Mary back at the plant, he is symbolically referring to his experience in the immediate group. He is talking about his way-of-being-in-the-world, and his way-of-being has continuity from the plant to the immediate group and from the immediate group back to the plant. The trainer is enhancing the opportunity for learning by moving the conversation toward the center of all four axes in an intentional and explicit manner.

VI.

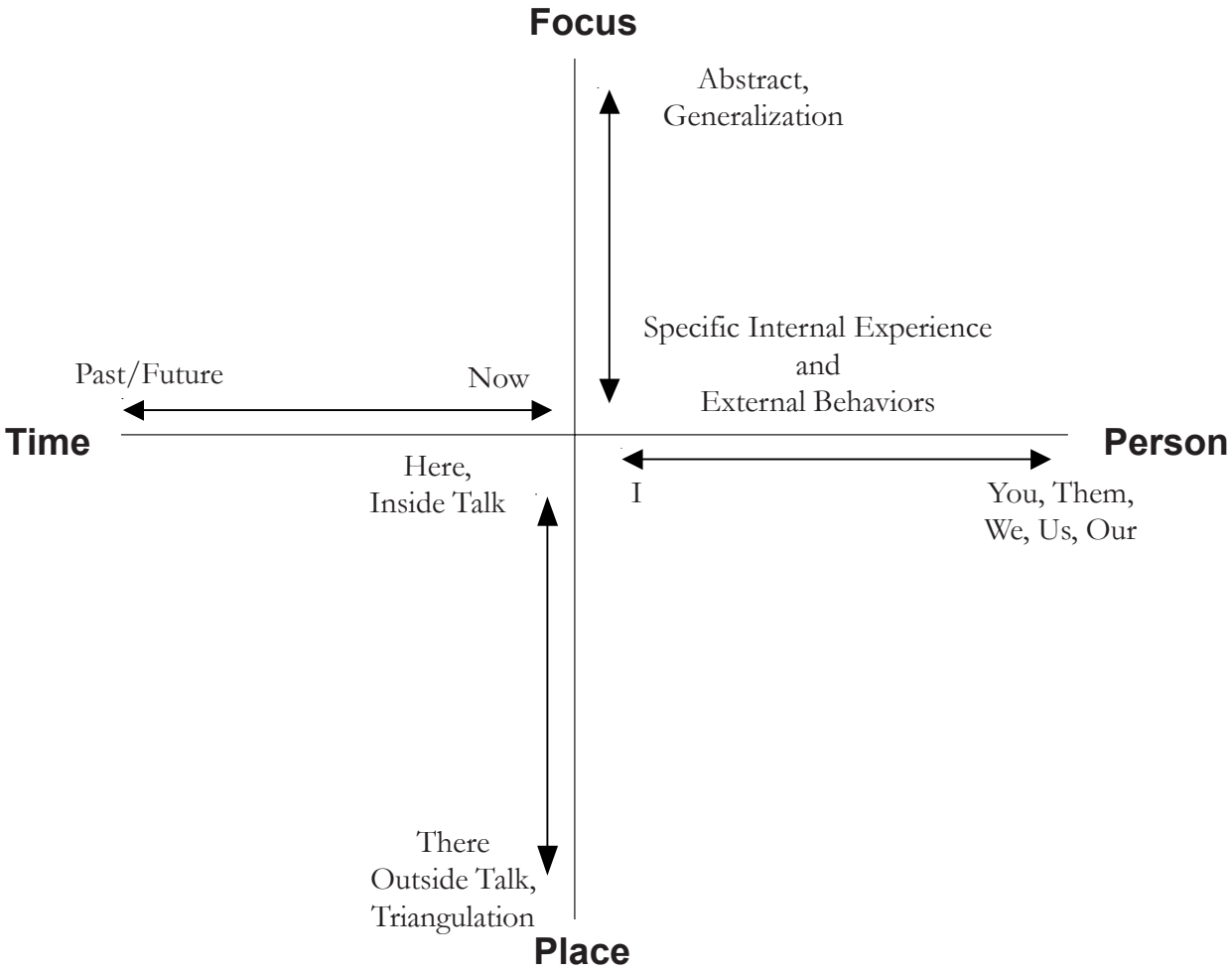
Learning can take place in the midst of many different types of conversation. There can be value in talking about the past. There might be risk and learning in imagining a different future. Engaging with others around an abstract idea may deepen creativity and intimacy. Linking myself together with others as I announce "We!" may be a powerful, political statement of cohesiveness and

responsibility. New ideas are generated as people talk about their experiences outside the immediate context. There are many avenues to learning.

Centered conversation as described in this paper is only one avenue toward learning, but it is one of the more difficult and skilled avenues toward learning that is often by-passed between people. This kind of conversation usually involves greater risk and responsibility than more peripheral conversation and, for this reason, is often avoided. What I can learn about myself in my experience with others is optimized when I am working with the other, focusing on specific experiences within me and specific behavior between us, and taking personal responsibility for my experience.

The learning group can include a wide variety of conversation, but develops a consciousness for moving all talk toward centered conversation. The focus is on this type of conversation because it is the most difficult and least developed conversation between people that creates the most optimal conditions for learning and change. Personal maturity involves being able to be more versatile in conversation, being able to choose what kind of conversation will be most useful in each specific situation. By focusing on centered conversation in the learning group, members develop more versatility and skill in using this kind of conversation in their experiences with others.

Response-Ability Axes


Focus
Abstract,
Generalization
Specific Internal Experience
and
External Behaviors
Past/Future
Now
Time
Person
Here,
Inside Talk
I
You, Them,
We, Us, Our
There
Outside Talk,
Triangulation
Place

The T/Skill/Family Group at LIOS

Robert P. Crosby with consultation from Brenda J. Kerr

When I introduced the T-Group into the LIOS educative process in 1969, my primary reference had been my history since 1953. That early T-Group training was my first encounter that distinguished between task and process. Paul Sheats and Ken Benne had written their classic *Task-Maintenance* paper in 1948. Sensitivity to group processes dominated the early T or Training Group. These were often called "sensitivity" groups, i.e., sensitivity to group process. The primary concepts we focused on in the T-Group I had in the fall of 1953, and the advanced T-Group I had in the spring of 1954, were similar to those later described in Hanson's paper. That is, who talks to whom, who interrupts whom, how are decisions made, how is maintenance being attended to, how are feelings being handled, and how are people dealing with conflicts within the group (as opposed to talking about conflict).

The early T-Groups were called laboratory education. That was the common terminology and meant the laboratory for learning was the here and now experience. This norm-centered systems approach with emphasis on the individual as a feeling/thinking creator of norms reflected Kurt Lewin's strong influence and his formula B=f(P x E). The stated values were individual choice and democracy. The influence of John Dewey was strongly felt at Boston University where I had my first two T-Groups. Dewey's critique of traditional education and progressive education powerfully impacted me at B.U. Dewey is often identified with progressive education and misquoted to have said, "You learn by doing." That quote belongs to Froebel, a 19th century educational philosopher. Dewey said, "You learn by doing and undergoing the consequences…" He emphasized that "by doing" without reflection and consequences people may develop destructive patterns. He rejected "permissive" education. For me, the current LIOS Skill/T/Family Group is grounded in these early emphases.

The early trainers used widely different practices. For instance, Ronald Lippitt paid careful analytic attention to process and would even put his cap on when he was part of the group and take it off when he was talking about processes. Ken Benne was characterized by a high degree of activity (contrasted with Ron Lippitt), which included a lot of cognitive interventions in the group. In the T-Group I viewed him leading, the room was covered with newsprint filled with theories interjected in the middle of the T-Group experience by this energetic leader.

Lee Bradford was much more staid than either of the other two when I saw him. He also made many conceptual interventions. He was a leader in interactive adult education. It was significant that these three people were from the adult education field, the social psychological field (Ron Lippitt) and the philosophical and ethics field (Ken Benne). So the early T-Group was primarily focused around sensitivity to group processes. This definitely included the emotional component and sharing feelings was an important part of that experience. In fact there was a popular pamphlet titled *Feelings are Facts* that was frequently referenced.

In 1965 NTL offered their first OD Intern Program for a month at Bethel, Maine. I was lucky to be there because this was the summer when the non-verbal touching approach from the west (represented by John and Joyce Weir and Bill Schultz) met the by-now-traditional social-psychological, verbal, non-touching, sit-around-tables group-process approach in the east

(represented by the founders and nearly all of the NTL trainers). The month was a profound one for me and I was excited by my work with these west-coast innovators, though I remained rooted in the experiences of my first twelve years of T-Group.

During my next five years I led a T-Group about once a month integrating the two influences. Previously, my first five-minute T-Group and fish bowl experience (in 1963 at an NTL T of T) had prepared me for the 1965 innovations. I'm sure my conservatism about the question of qualification to lead a Family/Skill group is related to my having had a three-week T of T in 1958, after having three T-groups prior to that, a one-week T of T in 1963, and the one-month Internship in 1965, which included a daily T-Group. I also co-trained several dozen times before I gave myself permission to lead alone.

The 1960s' psychological contribution was to emphasize personal growth and non-verbal activities that enhanced growth. The excesses of the encounter movement are noted in the paper "Touch and Tell" that I wrote in 1969 while at Gonzaga University. Carl Rogers had been on campus doing an "encounter weekend" three years earlier. This spawned an encounter movement which eventually involved nearly 1000 students and was led by people who attended the first Rogers weekend. These leaders were drawn from the counseling and education faculty and included bright, caring Jesuit priests. None had special training to be trainers. The "Touch and Tell" column typifies encounter groups on that campus and two that I experienced as a participant at Esalen in California. Gonzaga hired me to change the norms. With all my training and experience I was not successful. I had been elected to NTL in 1966. I had co-trained in twenty NTL labs. I was "Director of T-groups" for over five years for the national United Methodist Church. I brought to the campus outstanding trainers such as John Wallen and Dick Schmuck. I failed to effect change nevertheless..

I recommended to the Academic Vice-President, my boss, that a moratorium be declared on encounter weekends. He took my recommendation and announced the same in the school newspaper in early 1970. The moratorium was never rescinded. Soon thereafter, my contract at Gonzaga ended. I mention this to underline my deep concern and fear about these insidious norms that I believe are present in germinal states in every Skill\T\Family group, no matter how well-intentioned and skilled the leader.

I met John Wallen in early 1969. Sensitivity encounter, T-groups, Gestalt "Hot-Seat", Esalen, etc. were becoming indistinguishable from each other. The norms of Touch and Tell were dominant. A close friend went to an NTL lab in 1970 led by a psychiatrist trainer who worked with individuals one at a time, that is, doing individual therapy with the others observing. He announced on the last day that there were papers on the back table for anyone interested. Those "papers" were about group process, norms, decision-making, task/maintenance, etc.

John was the NTL Northwest leader. Around him a small group of us gathered with a fervor to "protect the faith." These included Drs. Fred Fosmire, Maury Pettit, Dick Schmuck, Chic Yung and, later, aspiring apprentices such as Lee Fine and Wendell French. Both Lee and Wendell were already professional in their own right, but wanted to become qualified as NTL trainers.

John Wallen was the intellectuals' intellectual. This Harvard Ph.D. and post-degree man was as precise as anyone I have known, which is quite a statement given my 30 years of association with

Ron Lippitt and the Schmucks. John cared deeply about people, but people looked at John's precision, position (as a T-group leader) and memory with awe and fear. In co-training situations, I remember when he would illustrate a point by quoting the statements of many people preceding a critical incident.

During that time John completed his papers on the Interpersonal Gap and the skills. The "gap" theory has a sociological basis rooted in early 20th century interactive theory which I mention to illustrate the continued strong emphasis of sociological constructs on the group movement. My "Personalness and Openness" paper is directly derived from his work. While the "group movement" had lost its clarity and quality in the interest of spontaneity, freedom, and unabashed "so-called" personal growth, John was guiding our Northwest NTL group to qualitative standards in the interpersonal arena and in group processes. Much of that work is reflected in the Schmucks' books, especially "Group Process in the Classroom" and "Handbook of Organizational Development in the Schools." (John chose to be funded by the federal government rather than publish commercially, so that his papers would be available to all.)

An accelerated T-group process was developed by the LIOS faculty in the mid- and late seventies. Crosby, Kerr, Scherer, Scherer, and Short developed the model for the "Skill group" in the LIOS curriculum. The eight design features of the accelerated T-group, or skill group, are described in an article published in University Associates by John Scherer titled *Accelerating the Stages of Group Development.*

Brenda Kerr, who joined the LIOS faculty in 1977, introduced family systems thinking into LIOS, originally in the form of family sculpting and psychodrama groups for students. The theories and methods used in these groups are based on the work of psycho-dramatist Jacob Moreno, and family therapist, Virginia Satir. Denny Minno, faculty member, joined Brenda in the leadership of this educational process. These groups became very popular with the students at LIOS who reported that the knowledge and insight gained through this work greatly enhanced their developing leadership abilities. Encouraged by the positive effects on students' learning, Brenda further developed the T-skill group process curriculum at LIOS in the early 1980s by introducing "family of origin" work to the program. The LIOS "family group" was born from this new educational material. The intense experience of the T-skill group provides fertile ground for the exploration of "family of origin" issues as they live in the present. The work of Murray Bowen and James Framo, and most particularly the theory and methods of Donald Williamson, influenced Brenda as she developed the designs which moved these concepts into the LIOS program.

Ron Short became interested in family systems thinking and was influenced by Brenda and Denny to take his sabbatical in Philadelphia at the Child Guidance Clinic, where he studied with Salvador Minuchin. Ron returned to write his paradigm shift paper, and began to influence the group training with structural concepts learned from Minuchin.

In 1984 Brenda and Denny met Edwin Friedman during an AAMFT conference in San Francisco. They were very impressed with his articulation of systems theory and concepts of self-differentiation. They invited Friedman to LIOS summer school for "Update 1985—Personal and Professional Growth." While LIOS has always been a place for personal growth, we had no clear "organizer" for that dimension until these aforementioned influences of the 1980s.

John Wallen spoke of the need to keep the skill of openness one step ahead of the revelation of personal history, if intimacy is the goal. In FOO work, I believe we have added the potential interrelatedness of FOO and the existential moment. The here and now and FOO intersect, which creates new meaning for "personalness."

Also from our current perspective about self-differentiation, the Wallen skills are transformed from:

- Skills focusing on interpersonal relations to

- Skills focusing on self-definition

In my personal-openness paper (written over a decade ago) I have illustrated colloquial ways of "expressing" emotions. I'm claiming those as examples of openness, although they would not "pass" the test as descriptions of feelings if exercise F-1 were the criterion. Saying "I feel" rather than "I feel that" is mostly irrelevant in human interaction in terms of its effects on others. The distinction becomes profound only if I care to distinguish within myself between thoughts and feelings. The distinction between behavior description and interpretation is also most critical for self-differentiation, though it also has great relevance interpersonally.

The intersection between the inability to distinguish one's interpretations from possible "family of origin" distortions has always been a recognized element in LIOS, though inadequately attended to in the 1970s. Early designs (dating to the 1960s) teaching behavior description included work with participants on judgments and their probable childhood origins.

So the current Skill-T-Family group has at least these two dimensions (paradigms). Differentiation encompassing the self in the FOO and differentiation about group processes are constant issues that permeate both dimensions.

The secret is to balance both dimensions, thus creating a new paradigm. To do so requires awareness about norms and especially about creating a climate for openness where norms can be challenged. It also requires leaving one's skin in the game with a willingness to be open and connected.

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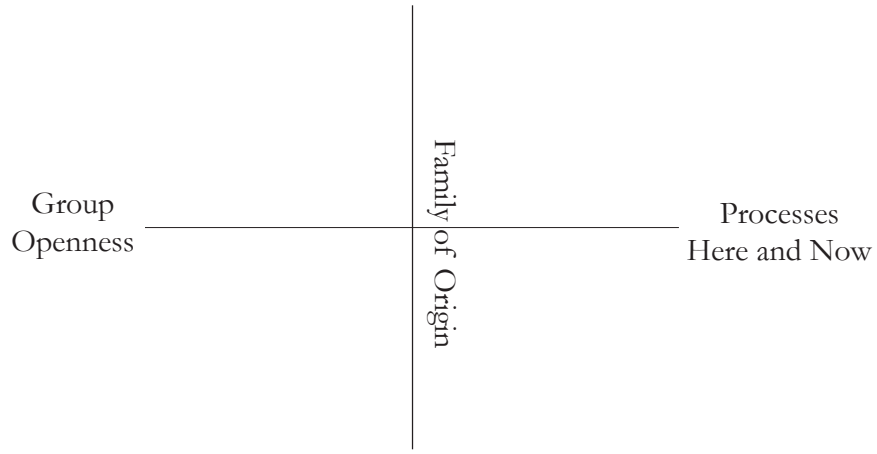

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The Trouble with Talk

Judy Heinrich, Ph.D

His long red hair was whipped against his face by the wind. His arms were jabbing at the air as he was making a point. A crowd had gathered to listen. He spoke passionately, vehemently—I no longer remember what he said. I had been walking through University Square on my way to the library when he drew my attention. A group of young men, fraternity men I guessed, had begun to heckle him. I watched their interchange with amusement for awhile. But as it became increasingly barbed and strident on both sides, my amusement gave way to a deep sadness. It's a waste, I thought—a terrible waste of talk. It seemed somehow depressingly familiar.

Two people or groups coming from very different worlds, using talk as a way to cement their own positions, convince the other, protect and defend a point of view. I recognized many of my own conversations, although far subtler and modulated, as similar attempts to defend my position, convinced I had nothing to learn from the other.

Talk. It hasn't been up to the job. It hasn't been able to bridge our different worlds, created as they are from tightly held but often limited perspectives. It hasn't been up to the job of creating learning between "pro-choicers" and "pro-lifers", between loggers and environmentalists, between liberals and conservatives, even at times between men and women. All those conversations seem to conclude with a cementing of positions. The opportunity for learning is lost.

The trouble with talk. The trouble is in the way we think about talk. Albert Einstein reflected that the world we have made as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far engenders problems that cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that created those problems. It is our understanding of the function of talk that limits us. As long as we think of talk primarily as a means of relaying information, as long as we believe the skills involved are primarily speaking clearly and hearing accurately, we won't be using the full potential of talk. And we won't have the means to deal with the dilemmas and polarities we are facing today. How did we begin to shortchange talk?

The Current Understanding of Communication

Our current conceptualization of communication builds on a foundation laid by two influential thinkers, Claude Shannon (Shannon and Weaver, 1949), an engineer from Bell Telephone Laboratories, and David Berlo (1960), a communication theorist.

Shannon saw the fundamental problem of communication as that of "reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point" (p. 3). He proposed a model of a communication system which consists of five parts:

1. An information source which produces a message or sequence of messages to be communicated to the receiving terminal.

2. A transmitter which operates on the message in some way to produce a signal suitable for transmission over the channel. In a telephone, for example, the transmitter changes sound

pressure into a proportional electrical current. In a telegraph there is an encoding operation which produces a sequence of dots, dashes and spaces.

3. The channel is the medium used to transmit the signal from transmitter to receiver. The signal may be disturbed by noise during transmission.

4. The receiver performs the inverse operation of that done by the transmitter, reconstructing the message from the signal.

5. The destination is the person for whom the message is intended.

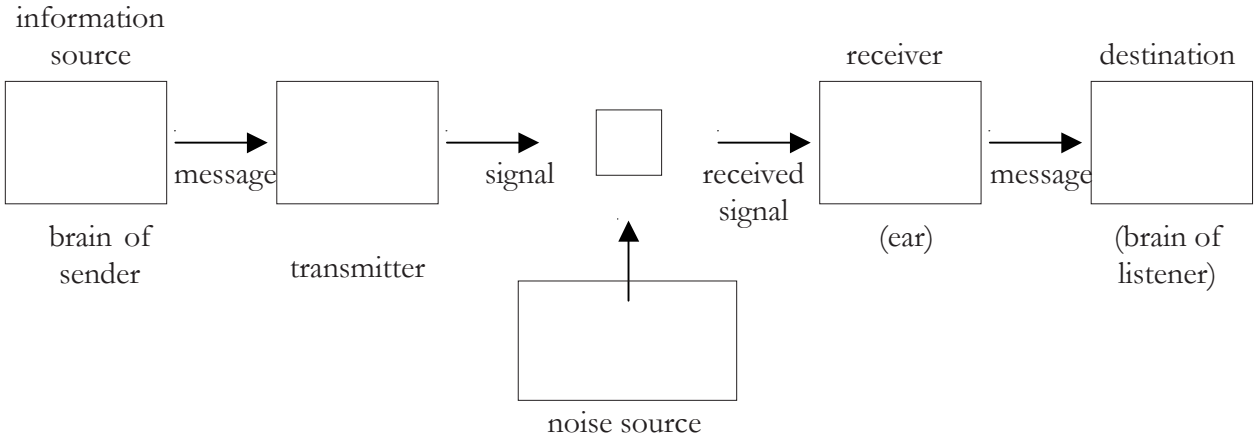

Figure 1. Shannon Communication Model

Since the fundamental task in Shannon's communication model is reproducing a message, the focus then becomes one of a "fidelity of recording" (p. 74). How faithful is the received message to that which was originally transmitted?

Shannon was interested in solving the engineering problems of communication and his model seems most appropriate to that task. Warren Weaver then adopted Shannon's model intact and applied it to the problems of human communication (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). According to Weaver there are three levels of problems:

Level A. How accurately can the symbols of communication be transmitted (the technical problem)?

Level B. How precisely do the transmitted symbols convey the desired meaning (the semantic problem)?

Level C. How effectively does the received meaning affect conduct in the desired way (the effectiveness problem) (Shannon & Weaver 1949, p. 96)?

Although Shannon was only addressing problems at Level A (the technical level), Weaver believed his model was also useful in addressing problems at Levels B and C. In speech communication, the information source is the brain; the transmitter is the voice mechanism producing the varying sound pressures (the signal) which are transmitted through the air (the channel); the ear of the listener is the receiver; and the brain of the listener is the destination. Weaver was convinced that this model was an important contribution to general communication theory:

It is almost certainly true that a consideration of communication of Levels B and C will require additions to the schematic diagram on page 28 [see Figure 1], **but it seems equally likely that what is required are minor additions and no real revision** (Emphasis added) (Shannon and Weaver, 1949, p. 115).

With this statement Weaver prophetically described the next four decades of communication theory. The Shannon model became the source of most attempts to lay out the communication process in diagrammatic form. It served as the set of eye glasses through which we observed, analyzed, and explained communication.

An Alternative Understanding of Communication

"It's all a question of story," Thomas Berry tells us (1978). The "story" he refers to is composed of underlying assumptions which make up the conceptual lens through which we view the world. This conceptual lens helps us make sense of the unknown; but rather than functioning like a light which illuminates dark corners, it works more like a slide projector showing transparencies made from an individual's conceptual background (Short, 1987). Moving to a new level of thinking requires examining assumptions hidden in the current thought.

There are three assumptions embedded in our current way of thinking about talk:

1. Language is a tool for sharing images of the world with others.

2. Communication is a translation of interior thought.

3. Communication is essentially a reproductive process (that is, a process to reproduce accurately at one end what was sent from another). The important thing is: Did you get what I sent?

Each of these assumptions is challenged by recent insights from philosophers (Hans-Georg Gadamer, Maurice Merliau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas). I believe their insights can lead us to a level of thinking about talk that is up to the job.

1. Language is far more than a tool for sharing what we already know. A tool can be put down when we have finished with it, but we can never put language down. We are embedded in it. We experience our world linguistically. We don't have a contact with the world first and then put the world immediately into language. For example, we rarely hear unidentifiable noises or complexes of sound. Rather, we note the roar of an airplane, or hear the wind or a friend's voice. When we think of language as merely a tool, we miss the fact that it constitutes the world we live in. If

we're unaware of this fact, we're blind to the ways that language determines the world we see. If we're blind to that fact, then our own prejudices remain hidden. For many years our language supported beliefs about what women were able to do—and that didn't include fireman, mailman, policeman, chairman, fisherman, councilman, etc. Authors who explain in a preface to their book that "the use of the male pronoun is meant to be inclusive of women" don't understand the active role of language in shaping perception.

> *When you take a word in your mouth you must realize that you have not taken a tool that can be thrown aside if it won't do the job, but you are fixed in a direction of thought which comes from afar and stretches beyond you* (Gadamer, 1985, p. 496).

2. The second assumption—communication is a translation of interior thought—hides the fact that thought resides in language. I believe the reason this assumption has remained unchallenged is that it is in the nature of language to be unconscious of itself. All thinking about language is already drawn back into language. It is a profoundly veiled process, like a fish in water. For example, the first time I become aware of a motorcycle, I see it as a motorcycle. I become aware of what it is in language. I then forget the "becoming aware" process that first happens, and remember the word as separate from awareness. I come to see the memory of these words as an inner life which is prior to expression. Speech simply loses sight of itself. This is where the trouble with talk begins. When we lose sight of the "becoming aware" aspect of language, we believe that the primary purpose of communication is transmitting our thoughts to others. The meaning of language is simply an exchange of information. We have sold it short!

   Language has a far more central role than sharing information—it creates our awareness. Interpretation is not something that happens occasionally after understanding. Understanding is always an interpretation. So all we ever have is our interpretation or perspective of the world. That's the bad news.

3. The good news is that we can transcend our perspective. The assumption that communication is essentially a reproductive process functions to hide the good news. As long as I believe that communication is primarily a means to relay a message, to reproduce accurately in the listener what was said by the speaker, then I miss the transcendent possibilities of communication. I am limited to relaying my perspective accurately and hearing another's perspective accurately. "Did I get what you said?" Certainly, there are many times when accurate communication is essential: "Here are the directions to my house." "The meeting starts at 10:00 a.m." "The procedure to shut down the nuclear reactor is …" But clarity is not the only, or even the primary, function of communication. Evolution is.

Communication is essentially a productive process, or is "generative," as Peter Senge describes it (1993). We can go beyond our own limits by the power of speech. There is a surplus of meaning in talk. We have the illusion that meaning was already contained and defined as we formed the words. But often I get clearer as I speak, or get a new slant on what I meant. And in dialogue with another it is possible to be led to a new insight that neither possessed before the conversation. Gadamer calls this phenomenon a "fusion of horizons." We each have a particular vantage point from which we view the world. That vantage point is influenced by all of our history up to that moment. From this vantage point we see an horizon, our view of the world. Since no two people have the exact same

history, no vantage point is exactly the same and every horizon is unique. In generative communication there is an integration of what is said with my present vantage point in such a way as to exceed and change my horizon. What is realized is neither one person's idea nor the other's but something new created by both—a fusion of horizons. For example, if one person comes to the conversation with idea X and the other comes with idea Y, the outcome of the conversation is neither X nor Y, nor is it simply X plus Y. It is X transformed by Y and Y transformed by X After this type of conversation I no longer see the world in the same way I did before. My horizon has expanded. That doesn't mean I now see the world as my conversational partner does. We still have different vantage points, but each has been changed by the conversation. We can go beyond our own limits by the power of talk. Merleau-Ponty claims that human beings do not exist in the world like a thing. Rather we are "an ever-recreated opening in the plenitude of being" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

I believe that generative communication is up to the job of dealing with the complexities and diversity of our world. This goes far beyond the mechanical model of a transfer of information and gives us a means of evolving something new. Talk can do this in at least two different ways. It can function to add clarity, richness and depth to what we already understand; or it can function to call into question our current understanding. In the first function, the conversation creates a new depth of understanding. It is not simply a transfer of information, but it creates clarity and depth that was not present before the conversation. This is not the same as an increase in understanding that comes from simply hearing a new piece of information. This is a degree of understanding that neither communication partner had before the conversation. It was created in the talk. The following quotes from colleagues describe their experience with this generative or productive conversation.

"I left the meeting with a clearer sense of what I'm not dealing with in my own life. My experience came into sharp focus with someone else's words. I saw more clearly what mattered to me."

"I came away with a stronger picture. I had a thought in watercolor and came away with it in oil."

"As the words left my mouth I became clearer about the source of my irritation."

The other function of talk—calling into question—is often a more painful one, and also often more transformative. The clearest way to understand this function is to reexamine the concept of prejudice. Understanding is always prejudiced. Prejudice is not an affliction to be overcome. The important thing is to be aware of one's prejudice, not to attempt the impossible task of being prejudice-free. Generative conversation can function to highlight a prejudice of one of the conversational partners and clarify that there is a need to revise the form that the prejudice has taken in the person's life. In other words, the conversation shines a light on one's way of understanding and demonstrates a need for a change in that way of understanding. Assumptions that may have been hidden or taken for granted are now revealed and challenged. In being called into question, one's prejudice stands out, thereby opening the way for further understanding. According to Gadamer, prejudice is the condition or ground of understanding. As human beings we are always prejudiced, but it is the "tyranny of hidden prejudices" that limits our understanding (1985, p. 239). A person who imagines herself free from prejudices not only becomes unconsciously dominated by them, but cuts herself off from their positive insight.

Conditions Needed for Generative Communication

This alternative view of communication calls for additional skills or abilities. In a previous research study I identified three skills that were critical to productivity or new learning in conversations (Heinrich, 1989):

1. Involvement (being in the game)
2. An attitude of openness to learning from others
3. An ability to let go of the outcome.

Involvement

The condition that most clearly surrounded examples of generative communication was involvement. By involvement I mean freely offering one's ideas, beliefs, thoughts and feelings about the subject matter. In other words, people said what was on their mind. This offering of experience was not necessarily self-disclosure—one person telling another personal information about his or her life. Rather, immediate experience was offered. One's thoughts or feelings about the topic and the person at this moment were contributed to the conversation. These contributions include judgments, but they are offered as a departure point for inquiry, not delivered as a final verdict. Before I can be led somewhere new I must begin where I am. As I bring my experience I am at the same time aware that my experience is a perspective (maybe even dearly held) but always open to revision. Levinas refers to this as "responsible communication:"

> *Responsible communication depends on an initial act of generosity, a giving of my world to him with all its dubious assumptions and arbitrary features. They are then exposed to the questions of the other and an escape from egoism becomes possible* (1969, p. 14).

This "responsible communication" was important in order to be caught up in the spirit of the conversation.

Gadamer (1985) uses the concept of play as a metaphor for conversation. In genuine conversation, he argues, we are played by the game. We are caught up in a reality larger than ourselves. To be caught up in that experience one must first get into the game. In fact, he extends the metaphor and says that one who does not play or enter the game is called a "spoil sport" (p. 92). For generative communication people need to share their relevant experience and enter the game.

An Attitude of Openness to Learning from the Other

Although one might expect positive feelings toward the conversational partner in productive conversations, that factor actually has little bearing on the generative nature of the outcome. More significant than type of feeling was an attitude of openness to learning from the other, a belief that there was a potential to learn something from the conversation, that the other had the capacity to surprise them.

The opposite of this openness, and a factor inhibiting generative conversations, is what Emmanuel Levinas calls "totalizing" (1969). Totalizing is our attempt to grasp or encapsulate another by knowing. Levinas claims that we can never totally know the other. The other overflows absolutely every idea I can have of him or her. But when we totalize we see just one dimension of the other yet call it complete. We hold a judgment of him or her in such a way that the thought stands in front of the person. Following are examples of attempts at totalizing:

"I just blew off reacting with my congruence because I thought it would go nowhere, as most of my disagreements usually did with Leah."

"I saw her as a Junior League type. I didn't expect to learn."

"She seemed so certain in her faith. I was scared she would judge me, so I didn't open up."

"I said little of personal importance to him. I had no expectation he would be interested or really take my feeling seriously."

In reflecting on Gadamer's analysis of conversation, Lawrence states:

> *…a more genuine experience of Thou is one in which we do not already know the partner's claim and therefore we allow him or her to say something to us that we might not have known before. This implies a fundamental openness…In other words, we only allow others to be themselves in the act of letting them have something to say—not simply in letting them have a voice, but also in granting them a hearing* (1948, p. 21, 22).

In other words, I listen to find what might be true about what the other is saying, not simply to gather data for my next rebuttal. This willingness to give the other a hearing is essential to generative communication.

Ability to Let Go of the Outcome

If productive understanding is built together in a conversation, then trying to control the outcome will impede the process of understanding. According to Gadamer, the more fundamental a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner. "We do not so much conduct a conversation as fall into it" (1985, p. 345). If I hold tightly to a particular outcome, I am not as likely to be caught up in the spirit of the game. The path of the conversation will still lie in my will. No one knows what the outcome will be in a productive conversation because it exceeds our current understanding. With attempts to control the outcome, the will of the individual player prevails at the expense of the understanding that develops when one is caught up in the spirit of the game. The cost of this is high. To use theological language, when I attempt to control the outcome of the conversation I often defend myself against grace.

Thomas Kuhn (1970) claims that stories do not change easily and that "retooling" should be reserved for the occasion that demands it. As long as science is able to identify problems lying within its paradigm and can continue to solve them with current tools, there is no reason for the upheaval that inevitably accompanies a shift in paradigms. It is only when the current paradigm prevents a thorough identification of problems or the implements at hand only partially solve the

problem that a search for a new paradigm should be undertaken. The current paradigm in interpersonal communication has been useful in identifying and solving problems of misunderstanding and problems concerning communication as the transfer of information. This has enabled us to understand how communication can become distorted in the process of transmission and has been useful in helping communicators insure transmission fidelity and prevent misunderstanding. This story, however, is limited to solving problems concerning communication as a transfer of information and that is not enough.

I believe it is time for a new story in interpersonal communication, one that goes beyond viewing communication as a reproductive process. I propose a paradigm which views communication as a productive or generative process, a perspective which acknowledges communication as a creative force in our lives. In the current paradigm, your limits and my limits are the limits of our world. In the new paradigm, communication can move us beyond the limits of both conversational partners. The process is not additive, but transformational. Because of the inability of the current story to account for this possibility, I believe that Kuhn's "retooling" is a timely imperative. We who study interpersonal communication have been fixed in a direction of thought that is limited. It is time for a shift in this concept. Talk needs to be reframed as an opportunity for being formed, not simply informed. Talk needs to be reframed as an opportunity for expanding one's current horizon and not seen as simply an exchange of information.

"Insight is more than knowledge of this or that situation. It always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive" (Gadamer, 1985, p. 319). We have been held captive by a view of talk that does not allow for its full power, and a view of human beings that does not account for transcendence. We need a new story.

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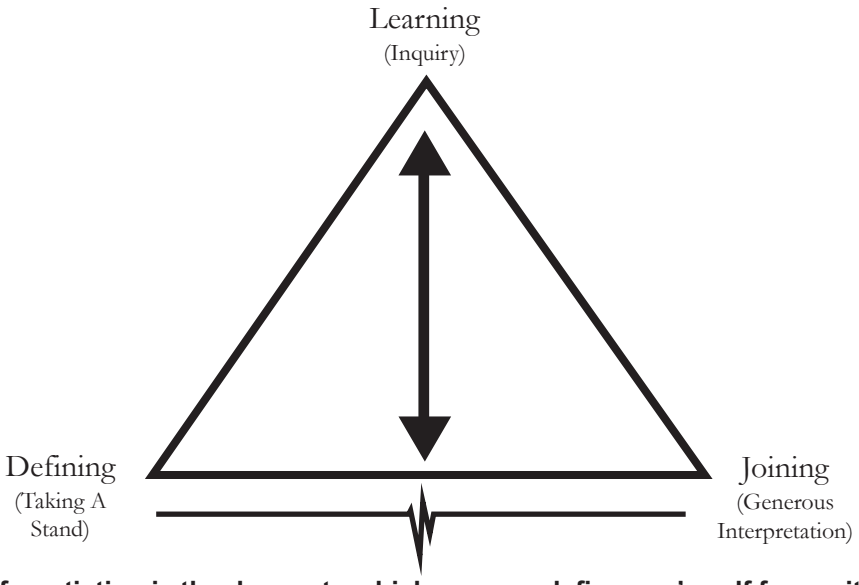
Self Differentiation *



Self-differentiation is the degree to which one can define one's self from within while remaining in contact with, and attending to, others.

There are two instinctive needs in all of us – the need to "Define one's self as separate from others," and the need to "Join with others." We often experience tension between these needs. This tension is especially present in times of intensity, and can be relieved by taking the stance of the Learner.

Key Points

- *Self-differentiation* is the degree to which a person defines self from within rather than being defined by the surrounding emotional field. The key to healthy self-differentiation is the ability to define one's self while staying in contact with others. In other words – to Define and Join simultaneously.

- Fusion is the opposite of self-differentiation. When we become fused with others we lose the ability to think and act toward our own goals and values. Four ways we fuse with others include: 1) complying with others, 2) blaming others, 3) rebelling against others, and 4) cutting off from others. All these types of fusion are forms of losing one's own autonomy and reacting to others instead of relating.

- When fused or stuck in the tension between Defining and Joining, the way out is to take the stance of the Learner. This means to Inquire: to become curious about your internal experiences and those of the other. Asking questions, seeking feedback, reflecting on your intentions and the impact you are having: all of these are effective forms of Inquiry.

* Based on the Leadership Triad Model by Donald Williamson, Ph.D. and Timothy Weber, Ph.D., Leadership Institute of Seattle

Self Differentiation Awareness Questions

Please identify a moment during Skill Group in which you experienced some intensity with another person:

How did you manage yourself? Did you:

- Comply with another person's wishes in order to reduce anxiety?
- Blame someone for something?
- Take an opposite position as an act of rebellion against someone else?
- Become distant or cutoff from someone else?
- Take a stand about something that was important to you **while** staying in contact with, and attentive to, someone else?

In these tensions between Defining yourself, and Joining with others, which way do you tend to lean?

Skills

Self-differentiation requires:

- Awareness of internal states (Awareness Wheel).
- Ability to articulate my position with clarity--especially in the midst of reactivity or intensity.
- Ability to manage my reactivity and stay open to influence from others.
- Ability to make decisions in the face of ambiguity.
- Willingness to take responsibility and consequences for my decisions and actions.

Define yourself

Take a stand about things that are important to you. Practice being intentional and clear about your positions. Develop your awareness of the emotional forces acting upon you. Defining is a matter of drawing distinctions between yourself and others. Defining requires (and may provide you with) courage.

Join with others

Offer generous interpretations of the actions and intentions of others. Find common ground. Express affection and other forms of "belongingness." Joining is a matter of finding the ways in

which you belong with others, and they with you. Joining requires (and may provide you with) compassion.

Take a Learning Stance

Self-differentiation is a matter of pursuing both Defining and Joining--**at the same time.** By practicing the stance of the Learner, you may find this process easier. Inquire into the motivation and processes of yourself and others. Learning is a matter of seeking insight. Learning requires (and may provide you with) comprehension.

Defining* (Courage: Take a Stand)

In the pursuit of self-ifferentiation, Defining is the ability to declare a position with courage, often in the midst of ambiguity and anxiety. When Defining yourself, you take responsibility for decisions without being unduly organized by the emotional field surrounding you.

To Define yourself, practice the following:

- Describe your experience (thoughts, feelings, wants), in the moment, here and now.
- Speak from the "I" position.
- Distinguish between thoughts and feelings.
- Choose to express or not express thoughts and feelings, knowing why in the moment.
- Describe the impact others have on you.
- Take a position, declare a point of view, especially in the midst of ambiguity, difference, and reactivity **and** stay open to other realities.
- Make a decision, often in the face of uncertainty, and be responsible for the consequences of your decision.

Joining* (Compassion: Generous Interpretations)

In the pursuit of self-differentiation, Joining is the ability to understand and acknowledge the world of the other while building a relationship of trust, mutuality, feedback and fairness.

To Join with others, practice the following:

- Reach out to the other with words and actions of nurturing and support and receive the same.
- Give and receive both supportive and challenging feedback as a way of learning and building trustworthy relationships.
- Explore your perceptions and understanding of the other, search for clarity by paraphrasing, and respond compassionately to the other's reality.
- Actively inquire about your impact on the other and be open and curious about that feedback.

	Challenge	Support
Give	Give Challenge	Give Support
Receive	Receive Challenge	Receive Support

Learning* (Comprehension: Inquiry)

In the pursuit of self-differentiation, Learning is the ability to inquire genuinely while being open to discovering new information about yourself or the other. You will know that you are successfully taking a Learning stance when you respond to points of view radically different from your own with genuine curiosity, rather than defensiveness or reactivity.

To take a Learning stance, practice the following:

- See every experience as a learning opportunity and every other human being as a potential teacher.

- Embrace diversity in all its forms, as an immediate opportunity for learning and personal enrichment.

- Be open to feedback from others in examining your sense of self and clarify when you're being influenced and when you're not.

- Develop skill in differentiating between Intent and Impact and work towards clarity in closing Interpersonal Gaps.

- Acknowledge attitudes or beliefs different from yours, without having to win or be right.

- Foster a collaborative, rather than competitive, spirit.
