Leadership in the Small Group

by

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The National Training Laboratory provided a unique opportunity for studying leadership from several points of view. For one thing, the leaders were observed as they functioned in their actual group environments. From a relatively free and intensive interview, we were able to determine the nature of their values and ideologies. We were also able to make an intensive study of their basic personality structures by the application of widely used clinical techniques. These aspects of leadership will be treated descriptively in this paper.

To date, there have been very few studies which have investigated leadership from these different vantage points. For the most part, the usual procedure in studies on leadership has been to select certain personality attributes and to attempt to relate them to success or lack of success in known leaders. Implicit in most of this research is the belief that the qualitative components which make for effective leadership are invariant with respect to the situation in which the leadership function is exercised. To the extent that such studies have overlooked the fact that leadership behavior is a complex function of many interdependent variables, they have not been fruitful. Leadership behavior occurs in quite a variety of situations and is determined, in no small measure, by the nature of the particular environment in which the leader perceives himself as functioning as well as by the characteristics of the person who is doing the leading.

The analysis of the "objective" group environment in the form of a descriptive history of a Basic Skill Training Group has been presented elsewhere in this journal. Here, we are concerned with the leader of that same Basic Skill Training Group—Mr. Ray Andrews. More particularly, there are three aspects of this leader to be dealt with: first, there will be a summary of the underlying personality features which seem to comprise some of the major determinants of his behavior. Secondly, the leader himself—Mr. Andrews—will interpret his behavior in terms of the conscious purposes operating in his leadership role. He will also attempt to describe the perceptions he had of the group situation which led to his behavior. Finally, a detailed description of his behavior observed in the group situation will be presented. In a summary we will attempt to point out some of the interrelationships among these three "levels", focusing primarily on the "determinants" of this leader's behavior.

A Summary of Andrews' Personality

The description of Andrews' personality which follows is a very condensed
account which does not do full justice to the richness of the personality being studied. Each faculty member was studied intensively by a variety of psychological techniques including the Rorschach, the Thematic Apperception Test, the Sentence Completion Test, an Ideology Interview and Questionnaire, and a self-administered Life History Interview. The following account represents an interpretative summary of the data provided by these clinical techniques. The interpretations, of course, were made independently of the observational measures.

The Rorschach findings clearly indicate that Andrews is of superior intelligence. He shows a creative imagination which he applies freely to the practical details of everyday living, but he is primarily a practical thinker, a realist rather than a generalizer or a theoretician. For an academico he shows little interest in the analytic-synthetic mode of approach so necessary for concept formation. In view of his potentiality to do more adequate conceptual thinking, one is led to suspect that his overemphasis of concrete practical details has some emotional basis. The interview and Sentence Completion Test reveal his rather strong doubts about his own intellectual adequacy, doubts sufficiently strong to explain an avoidance of the abstract.

His reactions to practical situations are quick, accurate and socially sensitive. Under stress, the quality of his intellectual effort is likely to be lowered though the quantitative output may be increased.

In the test and interview situations, Andrews is friendly and good humored but somewhat reserved. He appears to be socially at ease, frank, unassertive, and rather skillful in verbal expression. He speaks clearly and to the point.

From the various tests it seems clear that at the time of the Workshop Andrews was in considerable internal turmoil. The turmoil was engendered partly by social factors at the Training Laboratory and partly by the less transient aspects of his life space. The interview and the various tests reveal anxiety, a tendency toward depression, a fear of failure and an inclination to be dependent or escapist in the face of difficulty or conflict. Yet, despite these disturbing factors one would expect Andrews' social adjustment to have been good. His ego strength and his very high social adaptiveness would enable him to absorb turmoil without having it reflected to any great extent in his dealings with people in practical and social situations.

Andrews tends to be somewhat introverted, though the casual observer is likely to get an opposite impression because of his social flexibility and responsiveness. While he is sensitive and responsive, it is apparent that there is intellectual control which inhibits deep spontaneous feeling and expression. He is not likely to "let himself go" except under rather unusual circumstances.

The interview and the TAT stories appear to indicate that a major developmental theme in his life has been concerned with the conflict between his passive dependency needs and his desire to assume the responsibilities of an adult. It is possible that the conflict had its origin in his early experiences of rejection and lack of encouragement by his father. The consequences of this feeling of rejection have been a persistence of the dependency needs (at a deeper level) and a strong identification with the underdog. This identification has motivated him to direct his efforts toward social betterment. The core of his sincerely democratic ideology appears to be a strong emphasis on equality. He sympathizes with the oppressed and rejects discriminatory practices directed against minorities or against the underprivileged in general. The continued existence of the conflict is revealed in his boyish manner coupled with a resentment of being considered "a kid". The conflict is also reflected in his mixed feelings of inadequacy and satisfaction toward the responsibilities and encumbrances of adulthood. Having in actual behavior assumed adult responsibility, he feels burdened by the effort, feels himself to be under considerable pressure—an effort and pressure he is occasionally tempted to escape.

His needs tend to make him non-aggressive, non-dominating, equilibrant and affiliative with peers and subordinates. He is sensitive to the feelings and wishes of others and is also sensitive to criticism. He wishes to please, to be considered a "regular guy", yet it is evident that there exist fairly strong autonomy needs which would make him react to being "pushed around" and which would make him wish to be free and independent of social approval and recognition. The general picture indicates that his autonomy needs are probably not as deeply rooted as his dependency needs.

In summary, we have been describing an individual of superior intellectual ability who has turned his creative imagination to the more immediate and practical aspects of work. At the time of the Workshop he had sufficient social adaptability and internal resources to function effectively though in internal turmoil. His basic personality structure is such as to make him sensitive to other people, affiliative and non-aggressive. His skills in communication, his tactfulness and social responsiveness combined with his ideology should, one would expect, make him an effective democratic group leader.

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It is clear that in order to understand Andrews' behavior as a discussion leader, it is necessary to grasp the nature of his personality needs and emotional tensions, since what he does as a leader will depend significantly upon whether such action results in need satisfaction or the release of emotional tension. In addition, it is necessary to know the objectives toward which he is working as well as the paths that lead to those objectives.

It should be emphasized that what Andrews perceives depends not only upon "what is really there", i.e. the so-called objective situation, but upon various personality factors as well. On the other hand, what Andrews perceives surely
influences the state of his personality needs and tensions. Stated simply, the personality and the perceived "psychological" environment are interdependent variables operating in the determination of behavior.

It is at this point that we turn to an analysis of the paths and goals perceived by Andrews in his group environment. The following account is based on an interview with Andrews conducted some time after the Training Laboratory.

The Leadership Role in the Light of Andrews' Objectives

The faculty had the overall objective of improving the delegates' skills in handling human relations situations. This objective was differentiated into several goals which are listed and described in the article presenting the life story of Andrews' discussion group. It was in the light of these goals that he planned his behavior. Specifically, as he saw them such goals demanded that he:

1. Work with group members in developing plans that are agreeable to all of them instead of telling them what they are to do and how they are to do it.
2. Make statements as a leader which are intended to guide rather than direct.
3. Be responsible for making a frequent oral inventory of progress and for stating whether or not the group is staying on a path that will take them to their goal.
4. Work with all group members on the task of evaluating how effectively they are working together. He saw it within his authority to stop the discussion long enough for the members to look at themselves as a working group.
5. Give expert information only when it is pertinent to the situation and not when it is inappropriate.
6. Support the development of spontaneous shifts in activity by the group which are in line with the policy agreed upon by them.

In summary, his attempts to fulfill the general objectives agreed upon by the Workshop faculty demanded unassertive, socially sensitive and supportive behavior. There were, of course, other objectives which came and went as the situation, the group expectations, the needs of the members, and the discussion content varied. These can be summarized by describing the more salient means and goals as he remembers them.

It was frequently important as he perceived it to help the group arrive at an aim or purpose that was consistent with their general policy. It seemed to him that this was the reason the group spent a lot of time in determining what they would do with the "Change-Agent Outline" after having developed it to a point where it could be used as a study guide. In discussing exactly how the outline could be used in a concrete case, Andrews felt that it was often necessary to lead the discussion back to a consideration of the fundamental policy that the group had decided previously to follow. It was here that he felt the responsibility of seeing that the group determined its goals and paths to these goals. Though generally unassertive, he felt free to speak up when the group appeared to have strayed off the path. Usually this was a spontaneous expression describing the group behavior in the previous few minutes as being "off the beam". On the problem of selecting means or paths to the various group goals, he stated he often tried to help the members in seeing each other as possible means. In several specific instances he remembered pointing out that a particular member could well serve as a resource person to another member.

As he saw it, Andrews often attempted to determine the degree of progress to the group goal by summarizing the discussion and enumerating the points that had been made thus far. Such a summary, he felt, usually served as an opportunity for the members to suggest new questions for discussion.

On several occasions, it was necessary as he perceived the situation to give the group facts or experiences to help them in the acquisition of various skills.

Throughout the Laboratory Andrews had the objective of creating a perception of group cohesiveness. He sought to build a feeling of "we-ness" among the group members, and often mentioned explicitly to the group that he was helping them to see that they were becoming more and more a group. There were several related objectives that he had in mind. For one thing, he wanted to create in the members an awareness of the close interdependence existing in the group. He also wanted to increase the frequency of participation of each group member whom he knew could contribute in greater quantity. Finally, Andrews wanted to help create a unique sub-culture and he often encouraged the development of behavior that was typical for his group. In other words, he wanted to get the members to identify strongly with their particular group and to take especial pride in its performance.

Some Concrete Behavior Patterns As Perceived by Andrews

We have described those general goals and paths that seemed to guide Andrews' behavior as the leader of a Training Group. At this point we will attempt to summarize some of the more concrete behavior patterns which he saw as required in this situation.

Andrews seldom gave directions. He felt that his energies should be devoted to eliciting the group's ideas on any topic. If they were to arrive at a decision that would be heartily supported by them, or if they were to have a learning experience which would stick with them, it was important that they be actively involved in the decision or learning process. Andrews felt, therefore, that he could not insert positive opinions into the situation any more than the
degree overtly demanded by the group. Furthermore, because of his position of prestige as a group leader it was, as he saw it, especially necessary that he refrain from influencing the group judgment one way or the other.

For the most part, the factual information that Andrews gave to the group was closely restricted to that material felt to be appropriate to the discussion. The discussion of theories and research methodology was usually not necessary to facilitate group progress.

In order to help the group arrive at its own decisions, Andrews frequently asked questions designed to force the group members to reconsider their positions. In such instances, he would rephrase their remarks so as to probe for further clarification.

Andrews often tried to encourage member friendliness by addressing friendly remarks to them. He supported the formation of group folkways by using words or innuendoes meaningful only to members of that group. For example, he would frequently make fun of how their heads all nodded in unison around the table when agreement was strong.

When disagreement rose to the point of tense feeling among group members, he felt he tried to relieve the tension by some sort of humor. On a number of occasions, however, he felt that the group members involved in the conflict needed a full "catharsis", and consequently he permitted them to continue with their strong words and emotions without taking sides or attempting in any way to settle the dispute.

Since one of Andrews' objectives was to help the group in clarifying their best plans, he felt that he should integrate their ideas on the level of sophistication that they were offered. "My objectives did not allow me to manipulate their ideas or to seek more inclusive concepts."

Andrews' conviction that the group must be its own idea source, policy-maker, and critic, meant that he carefully avoided too much overt enthusiasm at the time new ideas came up for consideration. He did this to prevent the group from accepting the idea simply on the basis of his enthusiasm and out of respect for his position of prestige in the group setting.

Andrews' Objective Behavior

The description of this leader's behavior was contributed by three pairs of observers. Each pair included an Interaction Observer and a Content Observer, who together systematically recorded the actions and verbalizations of Andrews over the three-week Workshop period. The three pairs of observers saw this leader in his group for a total of fifteen hours. The written observational records were made in terms of a comprehensive outline of behavior categories which were similar to those used in personality diagnoses and which were thought to be particularly relevant to leadership behavior. From this point of view, many of the categories are what might be called "dimensions of leadership behavior". The descriptive statements of this leader's behavior based on these categories and recorded by each of the three observer pairs numbered well over five hundred. Only those statements which were in perfect agreement were thrown together and restated as an integrated observational description. The following summary, then, represents a behavioral sample of a Training Group Leader as seen and perfectly agreed upon by three pairs of observers.

The Behavior of Ray Andrews

The leader has a youthful appearance and a generally boyish manner. He grins and smiles quickly and often, giving the impression of friendliness and warmth. He dresses neatly and with simplicity in the style of the campus undergraduate. His voice is very soft and he talks smoothly and distinctly. His words are well spaced so that the overall tempo of his speech is slow. There are no outstanding gestures. His posture is relaxed and there is the general picture of casual, easy-going sincerity.

Andrews gets his ideas across to the group without much difficulty. Most generally, he uses non-technical words and a simple sentence structure. When technical terminology is used in referring to research data, he takes great care to explain the meaning fully.

He never interrupts a group member who is speaking. Before he speaks, he makes sure that the member has finished. When he is interrupted, the floor is yielded promptly. His relations with the group members in and out of the discussion period is characterized by considerable tact. In general, the sensitivity that he displays toward people does not appear to be calculated for effect or direct control. He is mild-mannered and appears to take care not to hurt anyone's feelings. This is particularly true when he attempts to arbitrate an overt conflict among some of the group members, though more generally he stays clear of the conflict altogether as long as possible.

Andrews seems to be friendly with everyone at the Workshop, though he does not actively seek out people to befriend. His unassuming manner, his apparent interest in people and their problems, his characteristic withholding of any sort of value judgment make delegates feel that he is easy to talk to. During rest periods or after the discussion periods, he always seems to be surrounded by a small group of delegates and engaged in friendly conversation.

There is never any strong emotional display in this leader. While he maintains a friendly manner and often laughs heartily, one gets the impression of a general emotional blandness. No swings to moroseness or depression are ever observed. Andrews never gets visibly disturbed or upset; rather he seems to remain on a pretty even keel of low emotionality. However, at times it is difficult to distinguish between low effective responsiveness and sheer physical fatigue due to insufficient sleep.
Andrews is extremely unassertive and often gives the impression of passivity when occupying certain roles. There are never any strong positive judgments or opinions expressed in the group, although when speaking as a resource person some highly qualified opinions are given. Only in this role, and then rarely, is a quiet self-assurance indicated. In general, he provides the group with some direction when needed, but more often he allows the group complete autonomy in operating on its own.

In summarizing the discussion, Andrews rarely undertakes a critical analysis. He does not seem to think in high-order conceptual terms, but rather remains on a relatively concrete level. He frequency will refer the point under discussion to a personal or professional experience. When citing data from various group experiments he tends to be quite specific in his report, and does not attempt to describe the broad conceptual framework in which the study was carried out. In general, Andrews does not seem to focus his thinking on the causation of the problem being discussed, but tends to integrate the problem as presented by the group. The integration of the discussion is done quickly and to the point, but always unassertively.

Andrews does appear to plan the course of the discussion but not in any great detail. He seems to set the limits of the discussion with his opening summaries of the previous meeting. He uses the blackboard simply to record the contributions of the members; rarely to develop systematic outlines of his own creation. For the most part, Andrews appears spontaneous in conducting the group discussion in the sense that his contributions are made according to the particular needs and problems of the group at the moment.

Andrews frequently plays the role of resource person in which he supplies relevant research information to the group. This function, however, is not performed in the manner of an expert. Often in describing experiments or in interpreting data definite fallibility is implied. The role of resource person is to be distinguished from Andrews' 'Leader Role'. In this latter position, he presents alternative means and goals to the group, he summarizes the discussion, he refers to the agenda, and gives routine directions like opening and terminating the session. Again, it is to be stressed that these functions are performed unassertively. Another general pattern of behavior exhibited by this leader can be termed the 'Observer Role'. In this position, Andrews lapses into almost complete silence in order to listen to the group discussion. When an open conflict is taking place among the group members, he typically does not interfere but lets it 'ride itself out'. When this observer role is seen, one gets the impression that he is testing the group to see whether it can carry on without him.

**Summary and Conclusions**

No attempt will be made to integrate in detail the material contained in the three major sections of this paper. Instead a rather brief summary and a simplified interpretation will be presented.

A comparison of the explicit and 'objective' goals for the Basic Skill Training Leader, as described in the previous article and the account given by Andrews in the interview would seem to indicate that this leader perceived a highly differentiated as well as a unique pattern of demands in connection with these goals. Studies of the other Training Laboratory Leaders show rather clearly that each one translated to some extent the objective statements of goals into specific terms more or less in keeping with his own needs, ideologies, values, conflicts, etc. In this connection, it is particularly interesting to note that Andrews' conclusion—'the general objective agreed upon by the Workshop Faculty demanded unassertive, socially sensitive, and supportive behavior)—reflects salient aspects of his personality with considerable accuracy.

Throughout Andrews' description of the social situation, there appears to be a strong ideological flavor. His refusal to insert his opinion into the group discussion and his desire to give his group maximum autonomy indicate values which appear to serve the personality function of providing a satisfactory rationale for behavior which reflects his passive dependency needs.

His tactfulness and noticeable lack of dominant behavior in the group and his tendency to avoid conflict seem in some way to be rooted in underlying dependency and affiliation needs. By placing himself at an equal level with his group members he is able to avoid the feeling of responsibility that goes with directive leadership. His noticeable avoidance of aggression and his tactfulness, to a certain extent represent the cautiousness of a person who is affiliatively dependent and who is sensitive to the possibility of being rejected.

It should be emphasized that the relation between personality and behavior is neither simple nor direct. Basic needs seem to be linked to behavior through a complex set of derived sentiments and values. The individual interacting with his environment in an attempt to satisfy his needs develops specific sentiments and values. Once acquired, they determine the particular channels through which activated needs find behavioral expression. It would be misleading to assume that one could understand or predict Andrews' behavior from needs alone without detailed knowledge of the sentiments and values by which this behavior is mediated. Thus Andrews' equilibrarian behavior could not be predicted from a knowledge of his dependency needs alone; it is also necessary to be acquainted with his democratic value system.

It would also be incorrect to think that Andrews' personality in the sense used here is the sole determinant of his perception and action. Much of what he perceived and did obviously depended additionally upon what was really in the social environment to perceive and what kinds of behavior were expected of him. Andrews was aware not only of the objective faculty leader goals (see
previous article) but certainly perceived the all-embracing and powerful ideology and action goals of the Workshop as a whole. For example, this leader says: "Throughout the Workshop I had the objective of creating a perception of group cohesiveness, I sought to build a feeling of 'we-ness' among the group members". Such a statement reflects both an explicit goal of the Workshop and an aspect of the extremely prevalent democratic ideology.

In addition, Andrews was faced with the "expectancies" and needs of the members in his group. The delegates of his Training Group as well as the others came to the situation with more or less defined conceptions of how the officially designated leader would and should behave. Also demanded of Andrews was behavior in accordance with certain standards which gradually developed in the group (see life history of Training Group). Furthermore, there is no doubt that Andrews' behavior varied with the nature of the discussion. These influential factors of the group environment are referred to by Andrews who says: "There were, of course, other objectives which came and went as the situation, the group expectations, the needs of the members, and the discussion content varied."

From this very simplified analysis it can be concluded that Andrews' leadership behavior results from the interplay of a great multitude of personality and environmental factors. We have mentioned the needs and values of the individual personality as being crucial in the determination of behavior. Also important are the individual's perceptions of his immediate group environment and the total workshop environment. As indicated previously, personality and the social environment are highly interdependent.

Functional Roles of Group Members

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The Relative Neglect of Member Roles in Group Training

Efforts to improve group functioning through training have traditionally emphasized the training of group leadership. And frequently this training has been directed toward the improvement of the skills of the leader in transmitting information and in manipulating groups. Little direct attention seems to have been given to the training of group members in the membership roles required for effective group growth and production. The present discussion is based on the conviction that both effective group training and adequate research into the effectiveness of group training methods must give attention to the identification, analysis, and practice of leader and member roles, seen as co-relative aspects of over-all group growth and production.

Certain assumptions have undergirded the tendency to isolate the leadership role from membership roles and to neglect the latter in processes of group training. 1) "Leadership" has been identified with traits and qualities inherent within the "leader" personality. Such traits and qualities can be developed, it is assumed, in isolation from the functioning of members in a group setting. The present treatment sees the leadership role in terms of functions to be performed within a group in helping that group to grow and to work productively. No sharp distinction can be made between leadership and membership functions, between leader and member roles. Groups may operate with various degrees of diffusion of "leadership" functions among group members or of concentration of such functions in one member or a few members. Ideally, of course, the concept of leadership emphasized here is that of a multilaterally shared responsibility. In any event, effectiveness in the leader role is a matter of leader-member relationship. And one side of a relationship cannot be effectively trained in isolation from the retraining of the other side of that relationship. 2) It has been assumed that the "leader" is uniquely responsible for the quality and amount of production by the group. The "leader" must see to it that the "right" group goals are set, that the group jobs get done, that members are "motivated" to participate. On this view, membership roles are of secondary importance. "Membership" is tacitly identified with "followership." The present discussion assumes that the quality and amount of group production is the "responsibility" of the group. The setting of goals and the marshalling of resources to move toward these goals is a group responsibility in which all members of a mature