

Community Models Without Experts

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The Camelot atmosphere of the sixties now appears to have been almost completely dissipated. The rush to disassemble and to discredit the Great Society is being vigorously conducted at the national level, and it appears that regardless of efforts by supporters, many governmental programs which are the result of almost three decades of social legislation will have their functions either severely curtailed or in some instances totally eliminated. Just as the sixties began with optimism, the seventies are developing under the pallor of a pervading national pessimism.

In all segments of our society there appears to be a withdrawal from the problems of society. With the young, the occult and mysticism are becoming popular. In academic settings, massive cutbacks in funds have turned discussions of professors and teachers from academic innovation to alternate careers for unemployed scholars. In communities where federal programs once abounded, child day care centers, legal aid, and other community services are being dramatically reduced. Compensatory education, once touted as a way that the disadvantaged could break the "circle of poverty," has now been declared a hopeless cause. In general, the official federal policy towards the poor, the black, and the young seems to be following a true spirit of "benign neglect."

As with most "failures," scapegoats are being sought, and one of the most frequently mentioned villains is the "liberal." Moynihan (1969) asserts that the antipoverty programs failed because "middle class liberals" applied poorly conceived social science theories in an effort to bring about a "mass behavioral change" (p. 191). In a rather devastating final passage of his book, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding*, Moynihan concludes that the failure of the liberal programs was also responsible for the great numbers of young people who learned "in many ways to loathe their society" (p. 203). With indictments such as this, it is small wonder that one black activist recently commented that most of the liberals he knew were now "basket cases."

The tool that Moynihan feels the liberals used to promote such havoc was the concept of "community action." According to his thesis, the dissatisfied middle class liberal used the poor, the black, and the student as a "battering ram" to bring about a change in society. By promising profound changes and "great leaps" into a better society, Moynihan charges that the above groups were urged into actions which led to the profound disturbances of American society. In the future, Moynihan warns, social scientists should stick to evaluating existing programs and let attitudes change through a slow "natural" evolution. This reasoning has obviously been accepted by the present administration, and

- organization member generally ends up with few co-workers. Work toward the goal of many doing a little, not a few doing a lot. Stress participation, not perfection.
3. I will be genuinely interested in my co-workers. In particular, I will attempt to make them aware of their strengths. Encouragement is contagious. As I encourage others, they will in turn encourage me. Never will I subordinate the interests and welfare of others to the demands of the "cause."
 4. I will have faith in my convictions. If a course of action does not "make sense" to me, I am obligated to voice my doubts. Creative disagreement is not only to be expected, but it is actually essential to the democratic process.
 5. I will continually remember Adler's dictum: "Everything can be something else as well." (Adler, p. 11, 1964). Even when the opinions of others sound unreasonable, I will attempt to convey a respect for their views. Being an "expert" will generally detract from the value of my ideas, and if I convey the feeling that I have all of the answers, honest group discussion may be inhibited. If my ideas have merit, others will eventually also recognize their value. No one person possesses the truth; we all only collectively struggle toward it.
 6. I will remember that progress always rests on a solid foundation of mistakes. Any human activity will always involve errors, and I must develop the "courage to be imperfect." Look not for the cause of an error, but rather what can be learned from it. Remember that history gives many examples of mistakes that have proven ultimately to be extremely helpful to mankind.
 7. Finally, I will judge the action of my group according to Adler's "Iron Clad Law of Social Living." (e.g.) Does the result of our effort enhance feelings of equality among people? Is cooperation encouraged and understanding promoted? Always remember that what is done says more about individual or group intentions than what is said.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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intended to explain Adlerian ideas to the public. The most famous of these books, *Children: the Challenge*, has been used as the reference in literally thousands of parent-study groups. A number of Dreikurs' students have made valuable contributions through their initiation of numerous family education centers and their training of teacher-counselors and parents in the application of Adlerian techniques. This writer has had the opportunity to closely observe these efforts with several groups particularly those located in Wilmington, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. Both of these groups have been highly successful and, significantly, have developed without the benefit of a resident Adlerian professional.

In exploring the success of the Wilmington and Washington groups, a developmental progression emerges which should be a valuable model for others involved in community groups. In the beginning, the Adlerian approach was found to have effective solutions to problems that parents were having in these communities. Once this effectiveness was demonstrated and the consequent enthusiasm was engendered, an Adlerian was contacted to provide the necessary leadership to those who wished to start an organization. He structured his involvement over a three-year period providing regular leadership in the beginning of that period, and then gradually phasing himself out of the active role. This "planned obsolescence" model proved most effective; each group knew that they had to learn to rely on themselves in order to develop and maintain an effective organization. Thus, dependency on an "expert" was not fostered.

Both the Washington and Wilmington groups are truly organizations of peers, and as such they have consciously attempted to apply Adlerian principles to the actual operations of their groups. From involvement in their growth and observation of their continuing success, this writer has formulated a "Creed for Effective Group Involvement." This statement attempts to pinpoint the ingredients which foster a democratic group atmosphere.

EFFECTIVE GROUP INVOLVEMENT

As a Member of this group:

1. I must feel that I personally am benefiting from my participation, that I am learning something which will aid me in my life. Genuine social interest is generally embedded in a healthy self interest. Only when I feel that I am learning and growing, will I be an encouraging force to others.
2. When I find that the fate of the organization or project rests entirely on me and that my work becomes drudgery, I should consider taking up yoga, growing flowers, or doing something else that I will enjoy. Just as the "good mother" can discourage cooperation in the family, the super competent

Purposeful Activities

Although the groups primarily consisted of discussion, the discussions revolved around activities planned for the purpose of eliciting productive behavior. Among the many activities used, the following were most successful in providing material for correlating action with behavior.

Selecting magazine pictures of families and factualizing stories about them gave an indication of what was happening within the children's own families.

Jill-7, had chosen a picture of a mother and father with two little girls. (Jill has a younger sister, five.) The discussion centered upon having fun in the family, to which Jill replied, "I don't have fun with my sister." When the group was presented with that particular problem, Lisa-7, replied, "Jill's sister probably isn't cooperative...and if she doesn't do exactly what Jill wants her to do, Jill doesn't think it's fun." The entire group agreed.

Acting out animals the children would most like to be, and those they thought to be most opposite themselves provided many opportunities to correlate the animal's behavior with that of the child.

Andy-7, tried to manipulate life so that somehow life was always on his terms, chose to act out a fox. The correlation was made of a fox's sly behavior and Andy's ability to turn rules around, so that they became his and not the group's rules.

Craig-5, a discouraged child, who would decide for himself whether to be a group or a non-group member depending upon the attention he would receive at the time, chose to be a frog. Since frogs hop from place to place, it was pointed out how Craig "hops from being a group member to being a non-group member."

Wishes such as "What I want to be when I grow up," or "If I had one wish," were insights as to what the child's image of himself was.

David-6, the older of two brothers, but "dethroned" in every aspect by the younger brother by 15 months, was the most discouraged child in the group and displayed his discouragement by withdrawing from people and life. He wished to be able "to beat up my brother." At that point, David was encouraged to continue his newly emerging socialization, for he was beginning to view himself as a worthwhile person.

Billy-6, a perfectionist whose goal it was to be first in academic affairs at the expense of having many friends, wished to be an archeologist. The ambitiousness and exactitude of this profession were discussed in relation to Billy's goal and view of peers.

Allison-7, the older sister of two younger brothers in the group, played the "little mother," feeling very responsible for her brothers' behavior, even to responding for them, lest they shouldn't present the picture she felt was needed. She wished to be a "mother and housewife." The children were quick to point out the obvious correlations.