GROUP EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH LABORATORY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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Communication, Cooperation, and Negotiation
in Culturally Heterogeneous Groups

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Abstract

In the last quarter increasing emphasis has been placed on the
theoretical problems arising from the construction of Culture Assimilators.
A number of issues have become crystalized: What kinds of cultural data
are maximally effective in Culture Assimilators? Should assimil tors
emphasize cultural similarities or differences? What is the op mal for-
mat of a Culture Assimilator? What is the optimal balance between Culture
Assimilator episodes of various kinds?

While analysis of a number of attitude change studies, mentioned in
previous Quarterly Reports, is still in progress, planning of studies
designed to answer some of these new questions is currently under way.

A second line of research has dealt with the effect of cooperation
and collaboration on task performance and interpersonal relations. Our
particular emphasis here has been on the constraints which the task
structure imposes and the effects of certain methods of organizing groups.
Since almost all intercultural encounters of concern to us take place in
a work context, these problems closely impinge upon strategies for t ain-
ing and leadership.

Current Work in Progress

A considerable amount of effort during the past three months has been devoted to the completion of research and the preparation of technical reports of studies which were conducted earlier this year.

a. A technical report describing the antecedent-consequent method has now been typed and will be distributed shortly. This report [Technical Report No. 56(1-68)] is authored by Triandis, Kilty, Shanmugan, Tanaka, and Vassiliou.

b. Triandis prepared a paper entitled "An analysis of cross-cultural interaction and its implications for training," which presents an analysis of theoretical and methodological problems to be considered in training individuals to interact successfully with members of another culture.

c. Osgood is working on an extensive report describing the Semantic Feature Analysis project. This summary will also appear as a chapter in a book to be published later this year.

c. Wichiarajote and Wilkins have completed a technical report of an empirical study of Thai language and culture based on the semantic feature approach developed by Osgood. This report, entitled "Role differentiation in Thai social structure in terms of a semantic analysis of Thai pronouns and roles," is now in final draft stage and should be ready for distribution within four to five weeks.

d. Judith Ayer is completing the final analysis of a project
which involves a "Semantic Game" in which three persons attempt
to place adverbs on a target surface so as to minimize the
number of clusters. Work on this study commenced last year
but has been moving forward slowly because of various methodo-
logical problems.

e. In order to obtain systematic information on the effect of
various cooperation structures on group relations and group
productivity, O'Brien developed a method of measuring coopera-
tion and then conducted a laboratory study with Ilgen dealing
with the effects of cooperation structures upon group creativity.
The method of defining forms of cooperation was described in
Technical Report 46(67-2). A revised version of this report
will be published later this year in Organizational Behavior
and Human Performance.

Organizations which required a high degree of collaboration
allowed members to pool their ideas but prevented them from
developing these ideas in a systematic manner. Organizations
which required a high degree of coordination allowed members
to pool as well as integrate their ideas. The results suggest
that "brainstorming" in creative verbal tasks is not very
effective unless accompanied by definite procedures which allow
a group to work out the implications of their ideas. Biglan and

Ilgen will present the results of these studies at the Mid-
western Psychological Association in May 1968. A technical
report by Ilgen and O'Brien is in draft form, as is a technical
report by Biglan and O'Brien.

f. The study conducted by Chemers in Iran during the last year
has how been completely analyzed. A draft of the technical
report is in preparation. This study was conducted to develop
an Iran Culture Assimilator and to test the program in Iran. A
field experiment was conducted in which 48 Americans participated
as "leaders" and 96 Iranian nationals as group members. The
participants were assembled into three-man groups, half the
groups with culture trained leaders, half with leaders trained
on a control program on the physical geography of Iran. The
study indicated that the culture trained leaders changed their
behavior in the expected direction, and that the culture-trained/
task-oriented (low LPC) leader emerged as more effective in
negotiation situations.

Theoretical issues and strategies in providing culture training.
We are now at a point where we have established the effectiveness of the
Culture Assimilator as an aid for training individuals for interaction
with members of another culture. It is now essential that we develop a
theory which explains the results which have been obtained, as well as
pointing the way for further development in this area.

There is much that we do not know about the construction of Assimila-
tors. For example, it might well be that the best kind of Assimilator is
one which focuses on the values of the learner's culture. One needs to
learn something about the values of the learner, first, and then it is
possible to "re-interpret" most significant features of the host culture
in terms of those values which are high in both cultures. For example,
suppose that valuing the country before individual good is a high level
value in America and a reasonably high value in some other culture. It
may be possible to relate many of the features of the host culture to
this value. Since cultural elements are often highly intercorrelated,
this may not be particularly difficult. Would such an Assimilator be
more effective than Assimilators constructed on other principles? This
is a question for future research. Another research question is "How
specific should be the Assimilator episode?" O'Brien has evidence that
the more specific the Assimilator episodes, the more likely it is that
training will improve performance.

It is also possible to construct Assimilators so as to emphasize the
similarities or the differences between the two cultures. For example,
one could search for similarities and differences in subjective culture
and then emphasize either the similarities or the differences. The
similarities will create positive interpersonal attitudes, but are likely
to raise the expectations about the degree to which interaction with
members of the other culture will be successful. When this does not

happen, the disappointment may be very great. Conversely, emphasis on the differences may create negative interpersonal attitudes, but contact may reduce the detrimental effects of this factor.

A recent unpublished working paper examined what the derivations from consistency theories would suggest about this problem. The conclusion of this analysis is worth a moment's discussion: It suggests that we must construct Assimilators in which we emphasize similarities in values and differences in customs and opinions. This is a deduction that depends on a number of assumptions, but it makes sense because when we emphasize similarities in values we make the host culture more attractive to the American, but since we are talking about very general and intangible features of the host culture the American has little chance of disconfirming the training. On the other hand, differences in customs generally produce little defensiveness and result in a minimum of negative affect. Furthermore, these differences are too obvious to ignore.

The final mode developed in that paper discusses eight types of Culture Assimilator episodes: Those in which the American and the host (a) agree about a value; and (b) disagree about a value; and those in which (c) the American feels positively about a value towards which the host feels negatively; and (d) the American feels negatively about a value towards which the host feels positively. Four additional types are obtained by substituting customs for values. The model proposes a quantitative statement of how many Culture Assimilator episodes of each type would provide the optimum training. Given that the American will interact in real

life with the hosts in a corresponding set of eight kinds of interaction
situations, and the frequency distribution of these interactions will
depend on the nature of his assignment as well as the cultural similari-
ties and differences between the American and the host, it is possible
to derive the optimal training. Much more research is needed to determine
the best strategy and the kinds of topics on which to emphasize different
kinds of similarity. Still another unresearched area is the question of
whether or not to train the American, the host, or both. It is likely
that by training both we will obtain a maximum improvement in performance,
but we suspect that optimal training may require a very different formula-
tion of the problem.

Consider, as an example, what might happen if you have a West African
and an American. As Dawson (1968) has shown, the African is likely to
have a good deal of value conflict concerning witchcraft and much less
conflict concerning "the role of women." Dawson showed that even university
students in Western Africa agree with both Western (modern) and traditional
concepts concerning witchcraft. In other words, there is cognitive com-
partmentalizing so that contradictory cognitions co-exist. On the question
of the status of women the Africans are neutral to both Western and tradi-
tional concepts and they agree with semi-Traditional and semi-Western
concepts. The American who interacts with such people will find them
agreeing with many of his concepts about witchcraft and also agreeing
with certain concepts that are completely different from his own. As

mentioned earlier, we suspect that on many non-objective concepts, such as those dealing with value and the supernatural, disagreement produces the maximum affective response. People are most defensive and insecure about such ideas. When their ideas are challenged they are likely to get very defensive. But note that a science-based cognitive system, such as the American's, is not likely to be challenged by disagreement about witchcraft while the traditional African's system is likely to be severely challenged by such disagreement. For example, consider what might happen if someone argued with you that the earth is flat. You would not get very angry with him. Your belief that the earth is flat is quite unshakable, because it is based on all kinds of objective evidence, including Pan American Airlines schedules. On the other hand, suppose someone challenged your religious beliefs. This is likely to make you much more angry. The reason is that you cannot check such beliefs against objective data, and there is more room for doubt. Thus, we must train the American to be careful when he discusses values, such as beliefs related to traditional witchcraft, yet explain to him the full degree of his disagreement with the African, since this will not challenge him. On the other hand, we must tell the African that the American is Western (like him). In other words, emphasize similarities, but we should not mention the American's disagreement with traditional witchcraft, since this would make him very defensive. In sum, a different set of Assimilator episodes may be appropriate for the American and for the African.

A different strategy may be appropriate for a discussion of the
status of women. Here if we reveal the full range of disagreement we
might make both trainees quite defensive.

Our current thinking is that the optimal kind of Culture Assimilator
will be a very flexible device, which will begin by finding out what the
trainee knows and does not know about the other culture. For example, it
will ask the trainee to guess the basic attitudes, values and role percep-
tions of members of the target culture. Deviations between the actual
judgments made by members of the target culture and the trainee's guesses
of how these members will behave will reveal his major weaknesses in
understanding the other culture. A problem consisting of interaction
episodes that are specially designed to remove these weaknesses will
than be presented to the trainee. Such a program will take into account
transfer effects of the type discussed in Hypothesis I (see paper entitled
"An analysis of cross-cultural interaction and its implications for
training). However, the explanations of cultural differences might be
different, depending on the values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs of
the trainee. Some trainees will receive, for example, a discussion of
cultural differences emphasizing the equalitarian aspects of the target
culture while others might receive a discussion of the same differences
emphasizing the aesthetic values of the other culture. Furthermore, in
discussing highly heterogeneous cultures, such as India, one would have
to describe different groups whose values are similar to those of the

trainee and orient the trainee to seeking interactions with members of such groups. For example, a trainee may learn that by working with Sikhs he will accomplish more than by working with other Indian grou. . Some material will emphasize similar' ies, and other material will emphasize differences.

In other words, we see in the Assimilator a device for the flexible, tailor-made training of an individual. This training would give as much information about cultural differences as the trainee can handle without getting defensive and hostile, and would interpret the other culture in such terms as to emphasize its most attractive aspects. At the same time it would provide the trainee with skills in effective interaction, with the flexibility of making different responses to different members of the target culture and with the ability to suspend judgment and to tolerate and like cultural differences. Such training devices are a long way from where we are at the present time, but there is a clear path of research ahead of us that can lead to such Assimilators.

Professional Personnel

(Contract Nonr 1834 (36)

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Personnel Supported by Contract

Ayer (Goodrich), Judith	Research Assistant	50%
Bates, Peter	Research Assistant	50%
Gramling, William	Research Assistant	50%
Hewett, Thomas	Research Assistant	50%
Mitchell, Terence	Research Assistant	100% (2 mos)
O'Brien, Gordon	Research Assistant Professor	33%
Oncken, Gerald	Research Assistant	50%
Stewart, Thomas	Research Assistant	50%
Summers, David	Research Assistant Professor	33%
Symonds, John	Research Assistant	50%
Wood, Michael	Research Assistant	50%

Other Personnel Working on ARPA ONR Project or Related Research*

Chemers, Martin	Research Associate
Fiedler, Fred	Professor
Osgood, Charles	Professor
Nealey, Stanley	Assistant Professor
Triandis, Harry	Professor

Foreign Consultants

Archer, W. K.	Teheran
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(M. Nassiakou)	
Lekhyananda, Duangduen	Thailand

*Paid from other funds.

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