What to Look for in Group

Two Components to Groups

- Content
  - Subject matter or task
  - What most people attend to
- Process
  - Between people
  - dynamics

Dynamics Include

- Morale
- Feeling tone
- Atmosphere
- Influence
- Participation
- Leadership struggles
- Conflict
- Competition
- Cooperation
- Here are some observation guidelines

Participation

- High participators
- Low participators
- Shifts in participation
- Reactions to silence
  - How are the silent treated?
  - How is their silence interpreted?
    - Consent?
    - Disagreement?
    - Disinterest?
    - Fear?
    - Other reactions?

- Who talks to whom?
  - Any reasons for this?
- Who keeps the ball rolling?
  - Why?
  - Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions

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Influence

- Influence and participation are not the same
  - Some speak little yet capture the attention
  - Others speak a lot but are ignored by the group
- Which members are high influence?
- Which members are low influence?
  - Is there a shift in influence?
  - Who shifts?
- Is there rivalry, struggle for power?
  - What effect does it have on other group members?
  - What currency do people build in the struggle?

Influence Styles

- There are both positive and negative influences
- Members can enlist support, cooperation, or alienation
- **How** members attempt to influence may be crucial

Influence Style Types

- Autocratic
  - Values imposition
  - Judgmentalism
  - Action blocking
  - Pushing organization
- Peacemaker
  - Support of others' decisions
  - Avoiding conflict
  - Deferential treatment
  - Negative feedback avoidance (only positive feedback)

- Laissez faire
  - Lack of involvement
  - Going along, but noncommittal
  - Withdrawn/uninvolved
  - Avoiding initiating activity
  - Mechanical participation
  - Response only when questioned
- Democratic
  - Inclusion
  - Expression without judgment
  - Open to feedback
  - Problem solving high emotional states

Decision-Making Procedures

- Groups tend to make decisions without considering the effects on various members.
- Two types of decision patterns
  - Imposition of decisions
  - Participatory decision-making

Decision-Making Observations

- Does anyone authorize themselves to make decisions without consultation?
  - What effect does it have?
- Does the group drift through topics?
  - Who does?
  - Is there a reason that it happens?
- Who supports others' suggestions?
  - Does it result in mutual decisions?
  - Is a vote called for?

- Is there an attempt at consensus?
  - What effect does it have on the group?
- Does anyone offer contributions that are ignored?
  - What effect does this have on the group?

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Task Functions

- These behaviors of group members and of the group as a whole are geared toward either getting the job done and accomplishing tasks or stalling

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- Does anyone ask for or suggest ways to proceed or tackle problem?
- Does anyone summarize what was covered and what has gone on?
- Are facts, ideas, opinions, feelings, feedback or searching for alternatives given or asked for?
- Who keeps the group on target?
  - Who prevents topic jumping or tangents?

Maintenance Functions

- This concerns group morale, harmonious working relations, and creates an atmosphere that enable each member to contribute maximally.
- Insures smooth and effective teamwork.

- Who helps others get into the discussion (gate openers)?
- Who cuts off others or interrupts them (gate closers)?
- How well are members getting their ideas across?
  – Are some preoccupied?
  – Are there attempts to help others clarify ideas?
- How are ideas rejected?
  – How do members react when ideas are rejected?
  – Do members attempt to support others when they reject their ideas?

Group Atmosphere

- Atmospheres vary according to group preferences and group themes. But cooperative and productive groups get more done and are more cohesive.

- Who seems to prefer a friendly, congenial atmosphere?
  – Is there an attempt to suppress conflict or unpleasant feelings?
- Who seems to prefer conflict and disagreement?
  – Do any members provoke or annoy others?
- Are people involved, interested?
  – Is atmosphere work, play, satisfaction, taking flight, sluggishness, etc.?

Membership

- Acceptance and inclusion are major concerns of members. Interaction patterns develop that give clues to degree and kind of membership.

- Is there subgrouping?
  – Do some members always agree and support each other or consistently disagree/oppose others?
- Do some seem "outside" the groups?
  – Do some members seem to be "In"?
  – How are "outsiders" treated?
- Do members move in and out of the groups
  – Look at nonverbals
  – Under what conditions do they move in and out?

Feelings

- Feelings are frequently generated by interactions. They are seldom talked about.
- Clues
  – Tone of voice
  – Facial expressions
  – Gestures
  – Other nonverbals

- What signs of feelings do you observe?
- Do you see attempts to block expression of feelings, particularly negative ones?
  - how is this done?
  - Does anyone do this consistently?

Norms

- Standards, ground rules, the group's morals are developed t control behavior of members.
- Usually based on majority opinion of what SHOULD take place.
- Norms may be clear (explicit) or only sensed (implicit), or even operating below awareness level of the group.
- Some norms facilitate progress, some hinder it.

- Are certain areas avoided?
  - Who reinforces the avoidance?
  - How do they do it?
- Are members overly polite?
  - Are only positive feelings expressed?
  - Do members agree too readily?
  - What happens when members disagree?
- Do you see norms operating about participation or kinds of questions allowed?
  - Do members feel free to probe each others' feelings?
  - Are questions restricted to intellectual topics or outside events?