

Social Psychology II
Group Processes
Psychology 457G TLN:3207
Winter 1985

This course is concerned primarily with the study of individuals interacting in groups of two or more. While we will be discussing topics of importance to disciplines such as law and business, this is not a course in applied social psychology. Many of the topics covered in this course have been researched by both psychologists and sociologists (and often by anthropologists, cognitive scientists, management theorists, etc.); hence, we will draw on the literature of several different disciplines; however, psychological research will be the basis for this course.

Course Requirements

Undergraduates: You will be required to participate in four small group sessions during the course. During each session a short group-behavior demonstration experiment will be conducted. You will be either a subject in the experiment, or an observer or both. After each experiment, you are to write a brief (around 5 page) paper in standard APA research paper format (introduction, method, results, discussion) describing your observations and any insights you may have had as well as noting the purpose of the exercise and citing the relevant literature (I am assuming that you have completed the departmental statistics and research methods courses). These papers will be due one (1) week after the exercise. At the end of the course, there will be a final examination consisting of short answer/essay questions taken from a larger set of study questions which will be distributed earlier.

Graduates: You will be required to lead four small group sessions during the course. This will involve meeting with me prior to the session and doing a little (not much) preparation. This is meant to give you an opportunity to both conduct a little research and practice working with groups. The undergraduate students in your group will be asked to comment on your performance at the end of the quarter but these comments will be for your use only (just as you will not be involved with grading the undergraduates in the course). Also, you will be required to write a term paper on a subject in the field of group behavior, broadly defined, due on March 7, 1985. You must have the topic of this paper approved by me prior to February 5, 1985. Finally, you will be required to take the final examination described above.

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Office Hours: TuTh 2:00-3:30 & by appt.

*: recommended reading (not required)

F: D. Forsyth "An Introduction to Group Dynamics"

The required reading not in the textbook is in the reading packet.

- 1/10 Introduction and course organization.
F ch. 1-2.
- 1/15 Forming Groups. The development of norms and roles.
F ch. 3 & 5.
Festinger, Schachter, & Bach "The spatial ecology of group formation".
- 1/17 Group influences on the individual.
F ch. 9.
Newcomb "Attitude development as a function of reference groups."
Lewin "Group decision and social change"
- 1/22 Planning and creativity in groups
F ch. 6
Dunnette, Campbell, & Jaastad "The effect of group participation on brainstorming effectiveness"
- 1/24 Exercise 1
- 1/29 Problem Solving in groups; Groupthink
F ch 12.
Cartwright "The nature of group cohesiveness"
- 1/31 Decision making in groups.
F pp 440-447
Davis, Bray, & Holt "The empirical study of decision processes in juries".
- 2/5 Decision making (continued).
McGrath "Decision-making tasks"
Davis "Group decision and social interaction"
- 2/7 Exercise 2
- 2/12 Decision making (continued).
Bem, Wallach, & Kogan "Group decision making under risk of adverse consequences".

- 2/14 Exercise 3
- 2/19 Intergroup conflict and conflict resolution
 F ch 4.
 Dawes "Social Dilemmas"
 * Appelfelbaum "On conflicts & bargaining"
- 2/21 Exercise 4
- 2/26 Working in groups; Communication patterns
 Zajonc "Social facilitation"
 Bavelas, Hastorf, Gross, & Kite "Experiments on the alteration
 of group structure"
- 2/28 Social interaction in groups
 McGrath "Interpersonal interdependence; Intimacy & privacy"
- 3/5 Social interaction in groups - cults and mass movements.
- 3/7 Leadership & power
 F ch 7 & 8.
 Lippitt & White "An experimental study of leadership and
 group life".
- 3/12 Deindividuation
 Zimbardo "The human choice: Individuation, reason, and order
 versus deindividuation, impulse, and chaos".
 Mann "The baiting crowd in episodes of threatened suicide"
- 3/14 Review
 * F ch 14 & 15
- 3/21 Final Examination 10:15

A SIMPLE CATEGORY SYSTEM FOR OBSERVING INTERACTION IN GROUPS

I. What to Observe

This decision depends largely on the problem one is studying. Considering the hypothesis of this exercise, and to simplify the observer's task, we will restrict ourselves to verbal interaction. Thus, gestures, incoherent mutterings and other forms of non-verbal behavior are not considered interaction in this exercise. While some of this non-verbal behavior might be important for the group task, for example, the thumbs-down gesture, the difficulty of training observers precludes recording the more subtle forms of interaction.

II. Definition of an Act

An act is the single continuous speech of one individual. A speech is considered continuous, regardless of pauses, if not interrupted by the speech of another individual. A single word or a single phrase is considered an act only if the word or phrase expresses a complete thought. Thus, "What?", "Why?", "Yes," and "No" are considered acts, but "er," "Mmmm," and "We..." are not.

To facilitate scoring, it is necessary to establish some conventions to cover ambiguous cases.

Conventions:

1. If a person starts to speak, but does not complete a single thought before being interrupted, he is not recorded as having acted.
2. If a person begins a thought, is interrupted, and then continues with the same thought, his speech is considered a single act.

Example: Person A: "What if..."

Person B: "But..."

Person A: "...we did this?"

A is scored as having acted once and B is not scored.

3. Although pauses generally are not considered to break up single acts, an excessively long pause (greater than 15 seconds) may be scored as two acts. If, during this pause the speaker or other group members engaged in some other activity, such as reading the case material, then two acts should be scored.

III. Aspects of Each Act to Be Classified

Each member of the group will have a number in front of him to identify him. For each act record:

- A. Who initiated the act. Use the identification number of the group member in your scoring. Classifying each according to its initiator will not present any serious problem if the observers use the following conventions:

1. An act is only initiated by an individual. The "group as a whole" cannot initiate. If two people are talking simultaneously and each completes a thought, score both acts. The order in which you score simultaneous acts is NOT important.

2. As soon as a speaker completes a thought, record him as "initiating". Do not wait until he has finished his speech. For the second aspect of the act (Part B below), you will wait until the end of the speech. Since the observer must make a more difficult decision in determining who receives the act, he should make the simpler decision as soon as he can.

- B. Who received the act. Any individual member or "the group as a whole" can be the receiver of an act. Record the member's identification number, using "0" for the "group as a whole".

Scoring the receiver of an act presents serious problems. The observer must infer the intent of the speaker. If the speaker mentions his receiver by name, then the inference is clear. Most of the time, however, the observer will have to use more subtle cues. Among these cues are: (1) the person at whom the speaker looks, (2) the content of the previous speech, and (3) physical gestures such as pointing. To help decide the receiver of an act, the observer should pay attention to the eye movements of the speaker.

Since the speaker may change his intended receiver in the middle of his speech, the observer should wait until near the end of a speech before recording its receiver.

The following conventions will help improve reliability:

1. If an initiator speaks first to one person and then shifts to another, score the person who was the object during more than half of the duration of the speech. If you are unable to make this decision, score the act to "the group as a whole".
2. Insofar as possible, try to score individual members as receivers, rather than "the group as a whole". That is, err in the direction of too few scores to the "group".

(It should be noted that it would be easier to decide who the receiver is, if we used a finer unit of interaction. If, for example, we defined an act as a simple sentence, there would be fewer problems of shift in receiver. However, it would be much more difficult for observers to agree on what constitutes an act, and would require many hours of training to use such a definition.)

IV. Further Suggestions

- A. If you miss an act, forget it. If you spend time worrying over a missed act, you will make mistakes on many later acts.
- B. Don't spend too much time making your decision about a single act. The first decision is usually the best.
- C. An example of an observer protocol is:

12

20

32

41

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Classification of Acts

After an act has been completed, try to classify it into one of the following four categories:

Positive social-emotional/expressive

1. shows solidarity
2. shows tension release
3. agrees

Active task-instrumental

1. gives suggestion
2. gives opinion
3. gives orientation

Negative social-emotional/expressive

1. disagrees
2. shows tension
3. shows antagonism

Passive task-instrumental

1. asks for orientation
2. asks for opinion
3. asks for suggestion

If the content of a speech act could be classified into more than one category, write down both of the category numbers. Don't miss acts trying to classify previous acts. Make a decision and go on. Leave the classification blank if you are having trouble keeping up with the discussion or deciding between categories.

LABORATORY EXERCISE NO. 2

Observation in the Small Group Setting

Introduction: Many problems of small group studies are common to other research in which the human observer is the measuring instrument. This exercise will focus on two of these problems. The first concerns obtaining agreement among observers, while the second deals with utilizing reliable human observations to test hypotheses. We will use a small group setting to show one way of increasing reliability and also one way in which this kind of data can be used.

In addition to illustrating problems of method, the purpose of this session is to acquaint the student with what has become a major area of research in the behavioral sciences. Investigators considering substantive topics such as interpersonal relationships, attitude change, group structure, leadership, and power relations, have tested many of their hypotheses in the small group setting. Because a variety of questions can be studied in discussing group situations, it is important for the student to gain familiarity with some aspects of group research.

There are a number of difficulties with observation in a field setting where we were unfamiliar with the structure of situation. Under such circumstances, disagreement among observers is to be expected. Two of the sources of this unreliability in field observation are: (1) lack of a common frame of reference for the observers and (2) the occurrence of disturbing events which are extraneous to what is being observed.

One way to provide observers with a common viewpoint is to develop a category system of observing. A system for categorizing human interaction is a set of rules for deciding what behaviors are relevant and into which category each item of behavior should be classified. Some of these systems are quite complex; others are quite simple. In general, the complexity of a category scheme increases with the complexity of the situation being studied, so that field observation often requires a larger number of categories than does the observation of a small discussion group. Suppose we had a scheme that regarded a "speech" as the relevant item of behavior and required us to classify each speech according to who said it and who listened to it. Even this simple scheme would become very cumbersome and unreliable if fifty people were talking. Although a category system restricts the range of behavior to which the observers pay attention, the investigator, in order to obtain high reliability, must also limit what takes place. The scheme above requires the observer to categorize only verbal interaction; it rules out foot-tapping, gestures, physical movement, and other forms of non-verbal expression. Yet in a situation in which there was a high noise level, much physical movement, many exits and entrances, and other extraneous disturbances, it would be extremely difficult for observers to agree on how often each person spoke. While such complex situations cannot always be avoided, sometimes these complications add little to the understanding of the problem and only confuse the observers. Under these circumstances, studying the problem in the restricted setting of the small group is often fruitful.

Accordingly, one of the major advantages of the small group setting is the control which the investigator can exercise over the behavior he is studying. Some of the ways he can exercise this control are:

1. He can decide on the population from which to draw his groups, and thus make his groups very homogeneous as to age, education, social class, and other background factors.
2. He can fix the size of his group.
3. He can decide on the group's task.
4. He can require the group members to remain in the observer's view throughout the time the group is meeting.
5. He can fix the length of time the group is in operation.
6. He can limit external noises, interruption of the group by outsiders, and sights and sounds which might distract the group from its assigned task.
7. He can use microphones and recording devices to insure that the observers hear all that is said.
8. He can use one-way mirrors to lessen the effect of the observers on the group.

By using controls like these, the investigator greatly simplifies his problems of observation and measurement.

The researcher pays a price for this increase in control. In bringing his problem to the small group laboratory, the behavioral scientist eliminates many of its complexities; hence, he cannot immediately generalize his results to the more complex "real life" situation. Studying an individual's participation in the decision process in a five-man group does not directly yield knowledge about an individual's participation in decision-making in the family, where there are distinctions of age, sex, authority, and other differences implied by these distinctions. What is not generally understood, however, is that an insightful investigator who can capture the central features of his problem in a small group may discover important relationships which the extraneous features of the real life situation might obscure.

Statement of the Problem: The purpose of this exercise is to acquaint the class with observing small discussion groups and to train the students in the use of a simple category scheme. We also hope to show how the data collected from even this simple scheme may be used to test an hypothesis.

The hypothesis we will investigate is drawn from Bales, et. al. (2)

Hypothesis: When the participants in small discussion groups are ranked by the total number of acts they initiate, they also tend to have the same rank for the number of acts they receive.

In order to test this hypothesis, we will need a measure of how many acts each member initiates and how many each receives. That is, we need some way to quantify how much each person talks and how much he is talked to. On the surface, it may appear that obtaining these measures poses no problems. But even using a simple category scheme presents questions which must be resolved before we can hope for a

high level of interobserver agreement. For example, we must define an act in such a way that all observers will agree as to when an act has occurred. The definition we will use is presented in the description of the category system in the appendix.

One caution is necessary. Observers require considerable training before they become proficient with any category system; and, of course, the more complex the scheme, the more training is required. The amount of instruction and practice is here inadequate to train skilled observers.

Results:

1. Tally the number of acts initiated by number of acts received on the Tally Sheet. Count up the total number of acts initiated by each subject and place this number in the column labelled Total Initiated. Count up the number of acts received by each subject and place this number in the row labelled Total Received
2. Transfer the total number of acts initiated by each member of the group of subjects to the column entitled "Raw number of acts" in Table 1. In the column labeled "Rank order" assign each of the raw numbers a rank, giving the largest number rank 1.
3. Copy your partner's data in the appropriate columns of Table 1.
4. You have already been taught how to compute a rank order correlation. Using the computation form at the bottom of Table 1, compute Rho between your rank order on initiating and your partner's. This is one of our two measures of reliability.
5. Carry out steps 1, 2, and 3 for "Acts received", entering the data in Table 2. Omit from this analysis "Acts directed to the group as a whole," that is, acts scored "0".
6. Average the raw number of acts initiated which you and your partner assigned to each group member. Enter these averages in Table 1 and rank order them, also entering the ranks in Table 1.
7. Compute the averages for acts received and enter them in Table 2. Again, omit "Acts directed to the group as a whole". Rank order these averages and enter the ranks in Table 2.
8. Copy the ranks assigned to the averages for acts initiated and acts received into the appropriate columns of Table 3. Using the computation form provided, compute Rho for these two rank orders. This is the test of our hypothesis.

Discussion: In discussing this exercise, consider the following questions:

1. In studying amount of participation, what assumptions do we make by defining an act as a single speech?
2. On the basis of your experience in this and other exercises, what are some of the problems involved in using the human observer as a measuring instrument?
3. Were there any differences in reliability for acts initiated and acts received? Cite data. If so, why do you think these differences occurred?
4. Are there any other conventions we might have adopted to improve inter-observer reliability?
5. Was the hypothesis supported by your data? Under what conditions would you expect this hypothesis to hold, and under what conditions would you expect it not to hold?