EFFECTS OF THE HUMAN GROWTH GROUP PROCESS ON SELF-ESTEEM

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
JAMES MICHAEL GOSSE
1974

ABSTRACT

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The examination of the Human Growth Group process was undertaken in an attempt to establish the factors of that process which are conducive to the enhancement of self-esteem for group participants. The developmental stages of the Human Growth Group were outlined along the two dimensions of Group Structure and Task Activity. Self-esteem was presented as a higher-order human need which manifests itself throughout human development, and which is affected by crucial factors in infant dependency, language acquisition, peer-group relations, and self-evaluation. Special emphasis was placed on the parallels between the developmental stages of the group process and the development of self-esteem, as a means of demonstrating how process-learning facilitates the enhancement of self-esteem.

As experimental support for the theoretical conclusions derived from a review of the literature, data from three Human Growth Groups and a control group were introduced. These data were in the form of participant self-reports on a scale of group behavioral goals as well as self-reports on self-esteem. Facilitator observations augmented participant self-reports.

The conclusions from this combined theoretical and experimental approach were that the Human Growth Group process, in an effectively functioning goal-oriented group, can facilitate the enhancement of self-esteem by simulating interpersonal social conditions which are crucial to the development of self-esteem.

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A Thesis

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Educational Psychology

1974

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

Our society is characterized by a relatively high level of basic need satisfaction. The basic human needs for food, water, shelter, and safety are not emergent problems for most individuals, as most of these requirements of life are provided through job specialization in a fairly wealthy nation. On the other hand, our society is also characterized by a somewhat lower level of satisfaction of such human needs as belongingness, love, and esteem, described by Maslow (1970) as higher-order needs which can only be met once the basic needs are satisfied. Therefore, since our basic needs are fairly well met, these higher-order needs begin to emerge and require fulfillment.

However, while our basic needs for food, shelter, and safety are met through a highly organized, technological society, our ability to satisfy higher-order needs is much less developed. We have not been able to provide for a person's sense of well-being, of worth, of being loved, as we have for his physical body. The rapidly growing numbers of people who have turned to group therapy-like experiences (Blum, 1970) is an indication perhaps, of the attempt on a large scale to meet higher-order needs. If this is the case, more must be learned about the way in which these experiences are able to provide satisfaction of higher-order needs such as esteem.

In view of the large numbers of people who are seeking help through the group setting, our old methods for solving interpersonal concerns are becoming inadequate. The limited client capacity of therapeutic processes which involve a one-client-to-one-therapist technique is unable to accomodate the numbers of people seeking help. Moreover, this medical model (Szasz, 1961) does not make use of a vast resource, which is the inherent healing capacity which most humans possess and are able to apply to one another, even as they work toward solution of their own problems in living (Szasz, 1970). A more appropriate, and likewise economical procedure presents itself in the form of human growth groups which can simulate the social conditions of everyday life and call upon the powerful forces of the social group to reinforce and legitimize conclusions about a person's relationship to his social world.

Learning to satisfy the need for esteem is a task particularly well-suited to the social environment of the Human Growth Group, for the issues of self-acceptance, belonging, and an awareness of common human characteristics are in prime focus. The group can become a source of self-esteem through the creation of an environment in which people can learn to develop and cultivate self-esteem in their interactions with other human beings.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is three-fold:

1) To examine the Human Growth Group process in some of its forms by describing its origins, underlying principles, developmental sequence, and procedures;

2) To examine the concept of Self-Esteem through study of its origins in human development, the critical factors which contribute to self-esteem, and its manifestations in adult life;

3) To determine, through theoretical as well as experimental methods, how the Human Growth Group process is related to the conditions which help people improve their ability to satisfy the need for self-esteem.

BACKGROUND OF THEORY AND RESEARCH

This thesis involves the intersection of the theoretical concept of self-esteem as it relates to human needs, with the Human Growth Group process as a means for dealing with need-gratification through learning. It also attempts to utilize

an experimental design which enlists the assistance of group participants in the generating of data about the group process and its effects through subjective self-reports.

Our examination of the Human Growth Group process will focus upon the types of group formats, procedures, and processes which are described by Carl Rogers, Gerard Egan, Eugene Gendlin, and Bruce Tuckman. Special emphasis will be placed upon the relatively non-structured, facilitator-led, goal-oriented group process and the sequence of developmental stages through which this process evolves.

As a theoretical foundation for the examination of the concept of self-esteem, we shall rely primarily upon the work of Stanley Coopersmith, Abraham Maslow, Nathaniel Branden, Snell and Gail Putney, and Erik Erikson. From these and several other sources will be developed a conceptualization of the origins, contributing factors, and manifestations of self-esteem.

The theoretical framework for the experimental observation of the effects of the Human Growth Group process on self-esteem is based upon a model proposed by Carl Rogers. In this model, group participants are enlisted as co-experimenters in the discovery of the dynamics of the group process. The generation of data will be accomplished through collection of subjective self-reports from group participants and co-facilitators, rather than by the more common method

of measuring by empirical means only the observable behaviors of subjects who are assumed to be naive and unbiased. This model will focus more upon the phenomenological events in the participants lives as they experience the group process.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

DEFINITION OF THE HUMAN GROWTH GROUP

The Human Growth Group has been labelled as such in order to retain some distinctions between this particular process and a wide variety of other formats which go by such names as "T-groups", "sensitivity groups", "encounter groups", "marathon groups", "training laboratories", "experiential groups", "psycho-drama", "reconditioning groups", "supportive groups", and most certainly, "therapy groups". This is not to say that the Human Growth Group does not have features in common with some of the formats named above; it is simply an attempt to divest ourselves of erroneous connotations derived from employing over-used and under-defined labels. In this chapter, we will encounter terminology which is common to many forms of groups as well as to other contexts. In order to minimize confusion, the following brief definitions of the basic terms and concepts used in this study are offered:

Human Growth Group: Approximately five to ten people who meet on a regular basis with one or two facilitators, with the purpose of exploring their methods of interacting and of experimenting with new methods so that they may grow in the area of self-awareness.

Facilitator: A person trained in the group process; he/she functions as a model for group process behavior, as a processor, and as a referee in the event that group dynamics begin to diverge from intended goals and contracts.

Interaction: The basic experiential material for the Human Growth Group. It is the real, primary experiencing of one another, either through verbal or non-verbal means. It is also the closest parallel to day-to-day social experience outside the group.

Behavior: In the broad, general usage of the word - overt actions: bodily movements, verbalizing, facial expressions; or covert actions: attitudes, silence, non-attendance or withdrawal.

Group Process: The behaviors through which the small group attains growth in self-awareness; they include such behaviors as self-disclosure, giving feedback, striving toward honesty in interactions, confrontation, setting goals, and making contracts for behavior.

Feedback: A form of group communications in which the group provides a participant with reactions to his/her behavior. Feedback entails feelings, impressions, and attitudes which group members have toward one another as they

experience one another during an interaction.

Contract: A series of group-developed rules that is intended to make the group operative and to give it direction; the participants agree, either explicitly or implicitly, to follow these rules in order to achieve the purposes of the group.

Goal: A behavior, attitude, ability, or outcome which a participant, facilitator, or entire group is seeking to achieve; goals can be expressed or can remain private to the participant.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE GROUP

The prime function of the group is to provide the participant with the opportunity to actively contribute to an environment where he and others can learn about the subjective phenomena present in his life - his feelings, behavioral styles, needs, and methods of establishing his interpersonal relationships. We will focus on the setting - the group - and upon the purpose - learning about the subjective self - before going on to the actual description of the group process.

The Setting of the Human Growth Group

The Human Growth Group has some very clear differences from other settings in which learning is meant to take place. It differs from the authoritative didactic setting to the extent that the participants themselves assume the responsibility for providing leadership, direction, and material for exploration, rather than relying upon a leader or teacher. The assumption which makes this format appropriate is that the individual member is the best possible source of knowledge about himself, and the only person who can present his feelings, behaviors, and needs to the group. The participant determines at what point he will venture to share his feelings and reveal his needs, while helping to create an atmosphere of trust and support for fellow group members who are similarly involved in sharing. As observed by Seashore (1972, p.56), "Each participant is responsible for his own learning. What a person learns depends upon his own style, readiness, and the relationships he develops with other members of the group". The facilitator's role, then, necessarily becomes one of modeling, helping to maintain boundaries and group-established contracts, and of helping the group to process their interactions, rather than one of teaching.

The group setting differs from the one-to-one, counselor-to-client setting in that the "client" in a group is immersed in a social milieu. This situation is most closely representative

of his day-to-day existence in which he will ostensibly practice what he learns about himself in the group. Thus, the group is not only a familiar, and - hopefully - comfortable, background for learning, but it is a necessary source of information. The feedback offered by the group members to one another carries with it the opportunity for immediate testing of the assumptions about one's own methods of interacting. Current social-psychological theory has demonstrated the enormously powerful capacity of the social group for reinforcing or for producing change in attitudes, which consist not only of cognitive (objective) components, but also of affective (subjective) components not readily available to the didactic setting (Hollander and Hunt, 1971).

The Human Growth Group setting is also particularly well-suited to the task of establishing and maintaining its own norms for behavior. Once the group is able to define and operationalize its goals and contracts, it is the responsibility of all of the group members to enforce the behavioral boundaries. The phenomenon of normative behavior and its implications for group activities has been documented extensively by Thibaut and Kelley (1971), and will be discussed later in the section on Group Processes.

The three characteristics of the setting - the responsibility of the participant to provide content and leadership, the information/feedback pool of the group, and the normative

phenomena of the social milieu - create a set of conditions which leads to what South (1972, p.130-131) calls Process Learning as opposed to Traditional Learning. South suggests that some of the highlights of the process-learning approach, vis-a-vis the traditional approach are:

1) The definition of problems, development of methods for solution, and identification of relevant information are tasks for which the learner is primarily responsible, with the "teacher" acting as a resource.
2) The roles of student and teacher become far less important due to a sharing of social power; the group relationships move in the direction of a network rather than radiating from the teacher, and therefore, much more emphasis needs to be placed on communication for understanding, participation at a level satisfactory for all members, and self-direction (risk-taking).
3) The focus of learning entails not only external phenomena, but also the learner's internal, subjective phenomena; an integration of these two realms helps provide more relevant indicants of progress, for learning can be measured by the individual (instead of the teacher) according to the relationships and choices he makes, and the knowledge he seeks.

Thus, the group setting as an appropriate place for learning is established: it provides its own direction, its

own pace, its own subject matter. The lessons imparted by group members to one another are reinforced by the very fact that they are offered by real people living real lives while in the group. Just what is meant to be learned is the subject of the following section.

The Purpose of the Human Growth Group

The primary purpose of the Human Growth Group is to help an individual learn about himself. He is in an uncommon position to encounter others with a minimum of interference from defensive behavior, and to process the interactions in such a way that he will come to better understand how and why he interacts in a particular manner, and to learn how others perceive, react to, and feel about him.

This kind of learning is well-suited to a small group because of the opportunity for experimenting with interaction behavior. The group functions as a mirror, reflecting back to the participant a perspective of himself not often available outside this special setting. By presenting himself to the group as honestly as he can, the person contributes data about himself. The participant quite often is not cognitively aware of many of his behaviors, and by demonstrating them to the group in real situations, he allows those behaviors to be made the subject of feedback. Such information is usually unavailable to him either because few people venture to offer

direct, honest feedback about his interaction behaviors, or because he is not actively attuned to messages others give him about his behavior.

However, the giving and receiving of feedback about interaction behavior is not a sufficient condition for learning. Gagne (1970) has demonstrated that the participant must begin with at least some level of motivation to attain a different capability for performance. The different capability might involve becoming a more effective listener, or speaker, or to be able to express feelings with less fear of being vulnerable or of being considered weak or odd. The desire for better communication skills may involve a belief that increased quality of communications with other people will lead to a happier existence; or the participant may feel that he is functioning, as a person, at only a fraction of his potential, and that he may become what Rogers (1961) calls a "more fully functioning", or "actualized" person as a result of learning about his interaction behaviors.

The belief or need of the participant helps determine what it is that the person can learn from a small group experience. In his article, "Purpose and Process in Groups", Herbert Thelen (1972, p.15-16) proposes this summary of the purposes of the small group and the way in which the group member is related to that purpose:

"...the purpose of the group, ... is to move toward

> the fulfillment of implicit and explicit purposes held for the group and for themselves by each individual in his capacity as a member of the group. This definition is cast to call our attention to several facts about groups: (a) members have different purposes, hopes, expectations, and wishes, depending on their different ways of life - identifications, loyalties and values; (b) the purposes, wishes, etc., exist in different degrees of awareness in the minds of the members; (c) the purposes of a member respect both the changes he would like to make in himself but also those he thinks others ought to make; (d) within the life-style of each person, only certain of the purposes (or only certain ways of achieving the purposes) are legitimate ingredients in the negotiations of the group; and (e) each person must accept responsibility for defining what being a member or developing membership in the group is to mean to him."

The process by which this learning can be facilitated in the group setting is the topic of the following section.

GROUP PROCESS

In the two preceding sections on Group Function, the theoretical framework of the group was developed through a description of the group setting and subject of learning. Within this framework there are specific activities, phases of development, and of course - human beings, all operating in a unique interaction that produces the Human Growth Group experience. The purpose of this section will be to describe the activities and developmental phases which have been found to recur in small groups, hopefully with some insight into

the reasons why people tend to follow this pattern. A special attempt will be made to identify the kind of learning which occurs at each stage, as a means of introducing the integration of the Human Growth Group process with the concept of self-esteem.

For the overlying structure of this section, we will adopt the approach of Bruce Tuckman (1972), who has conceptualized the developmental sequence of the small group as a function of two parallel realms: 1) the realm of Group Structure, or the pattern of interpersonal relationships within the group; and 2) the realm of Task Activity, or the content of interaction as it relates to the purpose of the group. This model is supported by the social-psychological theories of R.B. Cattell (Shaw and Costanzo, 1970), who saw basic parallels between the characteristics of group behavior and that of individual behavior. In his theory, Cattell proposes the concept of synergy - the sum total of the group members' energy as applied to the existence of the group. He divided this sum of energy into two portions - group maintenance synergy and effective synergy - which correspond to Tuckman's categories of Group Structure and Task Activity, respectively. Group maintenance synergy is that portion of the total group energy which is exerted in dealing with conflict and cohesion (Group Structure); effective synergy is that portion of group energy exerted in behalf of the stated goals of the group (Task Activity), once its cohesion is assured.

Through this model, we will examine the sequence of behaviors which generally characterizes a Human Growth Group, moving from the initial phase of acquaintance and disorder, through group conflict, to cohesion, and finally to fruition.

Lest we become overly concerned with a mechanical flow of specific developmental stages and events, it is important to note an observation made by Carl Rogers (1967, p.263) while observing the irregular movement of groups toward their stated goals:

> "...I believe that I see some threads which weave in and out of the pattern. Some of these trends or tendencies are likely to appear early and some later in the group sessions, but there is no clear-cut sequence in which one ends and another begins. The interaction is best thought of, I believe, as a varied tapestry, differing from group to group, yet with certain kinds of trends evident in most of these intensive encounters and with certain patterns tending to precede and others to follow."

With this word of caution, let us move ahead to explore the first stage. Tuckman proposes as the first stages under Group Structure and Task Activity, respectively: Testing and Dependence, and Orientation to Task. Let us look first at Testing and Dependence, the social interaction of the group.

Group Structure in Stage One: Testing and Dependence

This is the stage during which the group first comes together; group maintenance synergy is directed toward establishing some group identity where none existed previously.

Since the group members have not yet been sufficiently exposed to process-learning, there is an attempt by the members to express their dependency needs by reverting to the traditional-learning approach in which the facilitator is given the authority to establish structure. This serves the dual purpose of maintaining a safe, unobtrusive posture for each member in a strange setting, and of testing the facilitator and separate individuals, though they act in a common attempt to thrust responsibility for structure upon the authority-figure.

Carl Rogers (1969) terms this period of testing and dependence, "milling around". The group searches disjointedly for an agenda, for introductions, for topics - for leadership. The facilitator in turn presents the format, or ground rules, in which the members are declared his equal in setting the agenda. This perceived shirking of responsibility by the facilitator usually leads to frustration on the part of the participants. In the process of setting limits on his own behaviors, the facilitator moves the group into the first area of Task Activity, described by Tuckman as Orientation.

Task Activity in Stage One: Orientation

During Stage One group synergy is directed at overcoming the discomfort felt by members while establishing goals and

boundaries. There are mixed views on the value of allowing the group to mill around during this period.

Gerard Egan (1973) feels very strongly that "milling around" is appropriate to a group whose purpose is to search for goals; however, he does not feel it is appropriate if the purpose is to help members improve their interpersonal skills. As a means of orientation, he favors the presentation of explicit goals, since he believes that other, concealed goals will be substituted without the benefit of full understanding or acceptance by the group. The following is an example of a set of explicit goals which are presented to a small group as a prelude to their actual participation in the group (Thomas, 1971, p.60):

1. To increase each person's understanding of:
   a. Ways he sends messages - how others see his actions differently from the way he sees them.
   b. His tendency to misread other people's behavior.
   c. How feelings influence behavior - his own as well as the behavior of others.
   d. His silent assumptions (those he has been unaware of) that give rise to his feelings about other people's actions.

2. To increase each person's skill in:
   a. Understanding the feelings and ideas of others: using skillful checking responses to decrease damaging misunderstandings.
   b. Communicating his own feelings and ideas in ways that are maximally informative and minimally hurtful to others.
   c. Dealing with conflict and misunderstanding.

In order to operationalize the goals suggested by the facilitator, Egan encourages the use of a contract, or set of behavioral guidelines which will serve to create an

external authority to which all members, including the facilitator, can appeal in the event that the group begins to diverge from its stated goals. The contract specifies each goal which the group chooses to adopt, and the procedural rules which serve to operationalize behavior. Egan (1973, p.29-30) suggests as procedural rules:

1. Initiative. Don't merely react to others; don't wait to be contacted by others. Take the initiative, reach out, contact others.

2. Genuineness. Be yourself. Don't be phoney, don't hide behind roles and facades, ... or play interpersonal games with the members of the group. Whatever you do, do it genuinely and sincerely.

3. Concreteness. Be direct, concrete, and specific in your interactions. Avoid speaking about generalities and abstractions and theory. Speak about behavior - yours and that of other members.

4. Speak to Individuals. As a general rule, speak to individual members rather than to the entire group. ... a major goal is to develop individual relationships.

5. "Own" the Interactions of Others. Part of taking initiative is "owning" the interactions of others. ...when two people speak to each other, it is not just a private interaction. Other participants may and should ... contribute their own thoughts and feelings when they are deemed appropriate.

6. Speak for Yourself. Avoid using the word "we". When you use "we", you speak for the group, and you should, generally speak for yourself. The word "we" tends to polarize; it sets the person spoken to off from the group. ...when you are speaking for yourself, use the pronoun "I" rather than less immediate and distancing substitutes - "we", "you", "one", "people".

7. Say It in the Group. As much as possible ... say what you mean while in the group.

8. The Here-and-Now. Deal with the here-and-now. When you talk about things that are happening or have happened

> in the past outside the group, do so only if what you are saying can be made relevant to your interaction with these people in this group. The there-and-then can prove quite boring even when it takes the form of analyzing past interactions of the group.

In contrast to this fairly structured, facilitator-dominated approach to orientation, there is a far less structured method of working through the task of establishing goals. Rogers (1970) suggests allowing the group members to discover their own goals. This method can be expected to take more time, to generate more frustration with the facilitator, and possibly to produce goals which are not commonly accepted or agreed upon. However, its proponents believe that these goals are more meaningful to the individual, having been developed out of the individual member's own needs.

A middle ground between explicit goal and contract formulation in which the facilitator plays a dominant role, and the non-directive approach, is offered by Gendlin (1972) who proposes the use of Ground Rules. Special emphasis is placed upon the tentative nature of these ground rules, which require member endorsement to become operational. These ground rules consist of basic assumptions regarding each member's right to be in the group, the purpose of making contact with one another, the value of honesty and listening, and confidentiality. It then becomes the task of the group to operationalize these assumptions or rules in a way which

is of their own choosing, as long as they do not increase the leader's responsibilities beyond the two functions of protecting the belonging of every member and of protecting their being heard.

Of particular relevance to the question of the leadership role of a facilitator during the early stages of Testing and Dependence, and of Orientation, is Gendlin's ground rule of realism: "If we know things are a certain way, we do not pretend they are not that way". According to Gordon (1972) the group members begin by placing the facilitator in the role of a leader, and it is difficult to pretend otherwise. As the group begins to deal with, and hopefully overcome, their dependency needs - thus becoming more self-directing - the facilitator loses his leadership role to the group.

Attempts to actively control group direction run the risk of stunting the group's ability to become self-directing; attempts to deny any form of leadership role can produce undue amounts of frustration by ignoring reality. In either approach, it appears that the facilitator's role carries with it an unavoidable amount of influence which weights his behaviors - the group perceives extremes as it learns to adjust to the process-learning approach. Therefore, leading can be perceived as dominating, and non-direction can be perceived as non-support. Perhaps the most valuable function which the facilitator can serve in Stage One is to help members

become aware of the ways in which they express their dependency needs, needs for orderly structure, and for other-directed rather than self-directed behavior.

Group Structure in Stage Two: Intragroup Conflict

Once the process-learning format has been presented, and the expectations as well as opportunities for group members have become more clear, there occurs a phenomenon which characterizes the second stage of group development - intra-group conflict. One way in which to explain this phenomenon is to assume that some group members are more willing to accept and experiment with the new learning approach, while others respond more cautiously and resist the perceived dangers in an unstructured environment (Tuckman, 1972). Progress appears to stall due to lack of agreement over procedure. One faction desires to engage in self-disclosure, probing behavior, and even presumes to take on the leadership function which has been offered by the facilitator. The other, more cautious, faction desires to refrain from immediate self-disclosure, resists probing, and resents the abdication of power by the group leader as well as the assumption of power by the first faction.

Another possible source of this conflict behavior is the level of frustration aroused by, and originally focused upon, the facilitator who first presented the process-

learning format. As some group members propose more structure, or as others propose acceptance of relative non-structure, each faction takes upon itself some of the responsibility for giving the group some direction (a leadership function) and are met with the hostility which their opponents still feel toward the original "leader".

A third possible explanation for the hostility and conflict which dominates the Group Structure during the second stage is that the group members are engaging in a form of social aggression similar to that observed in lower animal forms by Konrad Lorenz (1969). The group members are, in effect, in the process of establishing psychological "territories", and in order to create boundaries which feel safe, they engage in a ritual of testing one another's psychological aggressive strength. The territory has as its base the person's safest posture, which is non-disclosure. The member is, initially, least likely to elicit hostility if he does not venture forth from his base. On the other hand, by being assertive and exhibiting psychological strength through risk-taking and self-disclosure, another member poses a threat to the more anxious members by encroaching upon their territory, and is met with hostility.

Whatever the reasons for the intragroup conflict, it involves the participants in social interactions, thus producing subject matter, or content, for future processing.

This content characterizes the Task-Activity of Stage two.

Task-Activity in Stage Two: Emotional Response to Task Demands

Occurring simultaneously with the intragroup conflict is the emotional response to the task demands. The realm of Group Structure is difficult to distinguish from the realm of Task-Activity, as members are exhibiting hostility toward one another as well as toward the task. Progress in task-activity procedes at an extremely slow pace during Stage Two, as the effective synergy which energizes task-activity is channelled back into maintenance synergy, as the group attempts to deal with intragroup conflict.

Rogers (1970, p.16-18) describes group process behaviors which are representative of this Stage Two Task-Activity: 1) Resistance to Personal Expression or Exploration: Rogers quotes one group participant's reactions to the task-demand of self-disclosure:

> "There is a self which I present to the world and another one which I know more intimately. With others I try to appear able, knowing, unruffled, problem-free. To substantiate this image I will act in a way which at the time or later seems false or artificial or 'not the real me'. Or I will keep to myself thoughts which if expressed would reveal an imperfect me."

This resistance is typical of the more dependent participant described earlier. He might be expected to conflict with the more probing and self-disclosing member.

2) Description of Past Feelings: This is a more subtle form of resistance to self-disclosure, in that it deals with feelings which are entirely removed from the group experience. The effect of this "story-telling" approach to self-disclosure is that it maintains distance between speaker and listeners, by not allowing them to be a part of those feelings.

3) Expression of Negative Feelings: Rogers sees this form of expression as the first attempt at here-and-now feelings, albeit safer than the expression of positive feelings, which are always vulnerable to rejection. By reacting negatively to the immediate task and other members, the person tests the freedom and safety of the group by observing the punishment and/or support he receives for his statements.

During Stage Two, then, the social interactions and reactions to the task demands are characterized by hostility and conflict. The learning which is available to the group participants is directly related to their own expression of hostility, to their being the recipient of hostility, and in being introduced to the processing of conflict interactions. The facilitator as well as other group members observe the conflict-behavior and share with each other their feelings about the conflict, their perceptions of one another, and their insights into their own behavior during this stage.

Group Structure in Stage Three: Development of Group Cohesion

Immediately following the period of Intragroup Conflict, the small group develops a cohesive direction in its interpersonal relationships. In his review of relevant studies, Tuckman (1972) cites unanimous concurrence in this observation of group cohesion following the period of Intragroup Conflict. The reasons for this phenomenon appear to bear upon the individual group member's realization that the group, as it has progressed and developed to this point, is partly a result of his own efforts - some of which were painful ones, to be sure. Boundaries have been tested; the process-learning orientation has become more acceptable through testing and experimenting; fears about self-disclosure as well as some basic expectations have been expressed by the participants. The group knows itself better and is beginning to feel comfortable. From this initial relaxation of hostility comes the recognition that the participant can engage in much more risk-taking and can trust the group not to punish him when he is allowing himself to be more vulnerable. With the group relationships in fairly stable order, some of the maintenance synergy can be re-channelled back into effective synergy, and the group task can be resumed.

Task-Activity in Stage Three: Open Exchange of Relevant Interpretation

The immediate impact of this new-found sense of group cohesion upon Task-Activity is that it accelerates and becomes centered around actual sharing of feelings. The opportunity has arrived for participants to exchange relevant feedback, to confront one another - this time as partners in exploration rather than as combatants - and to reveal more intimate, personal feelings which carry with them more of the essense of the speaker's "being" than have previous messages.

Despite the presence of a general sense of group cohesion, not all of the feedback is positive. Rogers (1970, p.29) reminds us that the genuine negative feedback "... can be decidedly upsetting, but so long as these various bits of information are fed back in the context of caring which is developing in the group, [it] seems highly constructive". In cases where the feedback is more intense and delivered with more of a sense of urgency and personal involvement, the group engages in what Egan (1973) calls "confrontation". Egan has analyzed the nature of confrontation as a specific kind of feedback, the manner in which it can be delivered, the potential impact which confrontation can have upon the confrontee, and even suggests guidelines for confrontation. Suffice it to say here that confrontation is a powerful tool

available to the small group, and must be used with a constant awareness of its potency as a form of direct, honest feedback, and its place in the overall Task-Activity, which is to help one another grow in self-awareness.

Thus we have moved during Stage Three into an area which is summarized by Rogers (1970, p.34-35):

> "... an inevitable part of the group process seems to be that when feelings are expressed and can be accepted in a relationship, then a great deal of closeness and positive feeling results. Thus as the sessions proceed, an increasing feeling of warmth and group spirit and trust is built up, not out of positive attitudes only but out of a realness which includes both positive and negative feeling."

For some, the learning which is available in the Third Stage is a rewarding end unto itself. Learning to take risks, to reveal feelings - positive and negative - to become involved with another human being in direct confrontation out of a sense of caring and trust, are all important lessons to be learned if one values an increased ability to deal honestly with fellow humans and with oneself. Much hard and sometimes painful work has been done to arrive at this point in communications quality; however, the group is still at a stage of sharing information. The potential use of this information is the subject of Stage Four.

Group Structure in Stage Four: Functional Role-Relatedness

Having developed through the stages of Testing and Dependence, Intragroup Conflict, and Development of Group

Cohesion, the Human Growth Group arrives at the final stage of growth.

Tuckman's survey of group process literature indicates that the affective level decreases in the group's interactions during Stage Four, and that they are characterized by an atmosphere of (relatively) smoothly-functioning normative behavior. This can be interpreted as a shift of more maintenance synergy to effective synergy - from the maintenance of functional relationships to active production of growth. This in no way implies that the relationships among group members are no longer important - quite the contrary. It is the firmly established interpersonal relationship which is the foundation upon which the learning process is built. Through the improved functioning of these relationships, the group has the capability to move on to the Fourth Stage of Task-Activity, which is the acquisition of insight.

Task-Activity in Stage Four: Insight

With the interpersonal development of the group operating with a minimum of maintenance synergy, the Task-Activity of Insight has the best opportunity to blossom. Insight may be thought of as the broader application of the learning which has been acquired from within the confines of the group, to situations and settings in each person's day-to-day

life. This means that the person is upon the threshhold of behavior change, and his patterns of behavior begin to undergo change in the group as well as outside the group. We will not focus upon the kinds of change that group members may undergo, or attempt to argue the still unproven degree of permanence or range of change; these issues depend very much upon the individual and his or her circumstances, and are beyond the scope of this study.

Throughout the development of the Human Growth Group, the participants have been involved in a learning process in which communications style and content has been a major focus. The group member has experienced strong affect in his interactions, which ranged from non-involvement to hostility to support and acceptance. The things that the member was able to learn about himself from others and from processing his own reactions to the group process, have similar applications in his interactions outside the group simply because in both settings he is dealing with fellow human beings.

As mentioned in the discussion of the fourth stage of Group Structure, the tools used to develop insight are the same ones used to develop cohesion in the group. The difference is that the group has refined the tools of feedback and disclosure, and has become attuned to the possibility of wider application of learning. The Task-Activity of Insight

is, more than any other, dependent upon the self-direction of the members themselves, with the facilitator taking the role of a source of additional feedback. The internalized application of the learning available in this stage is up to the individual member.

DEFINITION OF SELF-ESTEEM

Prior to developing a definition of self-esteem, let us establish a sense of the person's awareness of himself as a living entity. The construct "self" implies that an individual is in some way reflecting upon himself - that the "I" regards itself. Considerable philosophical arguments could be waged for or against the notion that there is such an entity as the "self", or that it has the capacity to stand apart from itself for review. In order that we may proceed beyond even this basic assumption, it will be useful to note Rollo May's (1967, p.55) treatment of this issue:

> "What does it mean to experience one's self as a self? The experience of our own identity is the basic conviction that we all start with as psychological beings. It can never be proven in a logical sense, for consciousness of one's self is the presupposition of any discussion about it. There will always be an element of mystery in one's awareness of one's own being - mystery here meaning a problem the data of which encroach

> on the problem. For such awareness is a presupposition of inquiry into one's self. That is to say, even to meditate on ones's own identity as a self means that one is already engaging in self-consciousness."

As an individual engages in self-consciousness, he encounters a person - himself. His collected impressions of his person and the properties, abilities, and potentials which he assigns to it has come to be described as the self-concept. The self-concept as described is subjective, to be sure. The biases which the individual holds toward himself create a distinctly unique picture of himself as a person, one which no other self can fully appreciate or come to understand. However, in attempting to share and describe one's self-concept, or more simply, as one presents himself to others, the individual deals with value-judgments of himself. The image or concept that a person has of himself can be acceptable, unacceptable, enormously pleasing or equally displeasing to that person. It is this subjective, evaluative appraisal of the self-concept, which we will label "self-esteem", that will be the focus of our inquiry.

It is important that self-esteem be defined as a conceptual tool, rather than as something which is tangible or real. Self-esteem is a theoretical construct which allows us to grasp and retain the essence of what we understand to be the ways in which people value themselves. As a construct, it has a certain subtle disadvantage, for

in the process of assigning meaning and definitions to a construct such as self-esteem, we can forget that it does not truly exist in the same sense as do physical objects. In short, we begin to reify the construct and to treat it as a fixed, and therefore less flexible, entity (Gergen, 1971). By reifying the construct, we expend energy trying to sharpen definitions and to calibrate its functions, when the original need for a construct of self-esteem was in response to the larger problem of gaining a vantage point for understanding the phenomenon of self-appraisal and its implications for human interaction behavior.

With our purpose of developing a useful tool - the construct of self-esteem - clearly in mind, let us examine briefly some definitions of self-esteem, in order that we may establish some limits for the scope of this investigation.

Stanley Coopersmith (1967) has described the concept of self-esteem as a subjective percentage of an individual's successes when compared against the sum total of his aspirations in life - the goals toward which an individual's value system leads him to work. Here we have a sense of the self as a score-keeper. If the individual is able to achieve a relatively high proportion of his goals in life, he will view himself as an effective, and therefore, esteem-worthy, person.

A composite definition of self-esteem is offered by

Nathaniel Branden (1973, p.110):

> "Self-esteem has two interrelated aspects: it entails a sense of personal efficacy and a sense of personal worth. It is the integrated sum of self-confidence and self-respect. It is the conviction that one is competent to live and worthy of living."

Again we are confronted with the sense of an active evaluation of self, a careful inspection of specific achievements and failures, or a conscious measuring of self-confidence and self-respect. However, Branden (1973, p.109) also feels that this self-estimate...

> "...is ordinarily experienced by him, not in the form of a conscious, verbalized judgment, but in the form of a feeling, a feeling that can be hard to isolate and identify because he experiences it constantly: it is part of every other feeling, it is involved in his every emotional response."

Here we get a sense of a much less empirical, more sub-conscious and continuous flow of impressions which become integrated with affect. Branden's psycho-epistemological approach to self-esteem deals with the process of choosing the values which a person attempts to uphold, and the evaluation of that effort has very much to do with the sense of being "worthy of living". This view of self-esteem is reflected in Boyd McCandless' (1970, p.452) remark that self-esteem is, "...the degree to which the subject regards himself as a worthwhile person".

Self-esteem, then, is consistently described as a product of an evaluative process, the most personal and inescapable evaluation, and probably the most important evaluation, which

an individual can experience. A self-evaluation of this import must surely have a profound impact upon the manner in which the person relates not only to himself, but to the environment as well, for his sense of competence, or worthiness, can only be determined by the effects of his interactions with the world. As Coopersmith (1967, p.4-5) states it:

> "By self-esteem we refer to the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself. It is a subjective experience which the individual conveys to others by verbal reports and other overt expressive behavior."

From the preceding definitions, we have some sense of what the concept of self-esteem is, and how it embodies the process of self-evaluation. For the purposes of this thesis, we shall use the term self-esteem to indicate the subjective, evaluative feeling which a person holds about himself - a feeling which arises from continuous appraisal of his competencies and shortcomings, virtues and faults, and which results in a sense of his own acceptability and worthiness as a human being.

The person attains a level of self-esteem by first regarding himself as he experiences the world, and in turn meets the world with a sense of his own worthiness to take part in life. But when and how does the individual come

to begin this process of evaluation of self? What are the factors which contribute to the blending of environment with self-evaluation? What effect do the early evaluations have upon future interactions with the environment, and what are the manifestations of low and high levels of self-esteem? We will attempt to deal with these questions in the following sections.

ORIGINS OF SELF-ESTEEM

The roots of a person's sense of self-esteem can be found among the very earliest interactions with other human beings - primarily the parents. Just as a child's sense of basic trust is believed to develop through the extent of his need-gratification in infancy (Erikson, 1963), a child's sense of being esteem-worthy is intimately linked to the extent to which he is cared for. Wenar (1971, p.168-169) feels that, "...the well-loved infant feels good all over, enjoying the maximum amount of physiological and psychological pleasure. From this rudimentary notion of 'good me' will come the ego ideal, which ... will assure the child of his own goodness...". If we assume that the infant's role in this relationship is basically passive, it is not clear how he could relate need-satisfaction with esteem-worthiness.

However, Leland Stott (Endler, 1968) points out that the infant does play an active part in establishing a give-and-take relationship with his parents; indeed, the infant can contribute to his parents' own sense of self-esteem according to his responses to their attempts to take on the role of good parents. Thus, almost immediately in life, the foundation for the sense of self-esteem is formed.

A new dimension to the origins of self-esteem is added with the acquisition of language. Through language, the child's parents can convey approval and disapproval, can affix value-labels to the child's behaviors and experiences, and begin to explain the restrictions of socialization (Ferguson, 1970). Thus, as the child is able to distinguish himself as a separate person, and as he acquires a symbolic labelling system for registering approval and disapproval, he has the necessary tools for evaluating himself. Not only are a child's parents able to convey their evaluations of the child through language, but the child himself is now able to attach self-evaluations to his behaviors. Admittedly, he takes his cues from those around him. Consider, for example, the following observation by Putney and Putney (1972, p.31):

> "We once watched a small boy in a pediatrician's waiting room building a tall tower of blocks. When the tower was finished he deliberately knocked it over with one sweeping blow. As he did so, he chortled, 'Good boy!'. Then he looked carefully

around the room to see how other people (above all his mother) would evaluate his action and what consequences it might have for him."

The issues which Erikson (1963) categorizes as Basic Trust versus Mistrust, Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt, and Initiative versus Guilt, are primarily encountered within the immediate family. The child's level of success in dealing with these issues has a powerful impact upon his level of self-esteem due to the numerous occasions for feedback from parents. However, as the child broadens his circle of significant others from mother and father to include peers, he encounters yet another crisis, the resolution of which contributes to his budding sense of self-esteem. Erikson labels this crisis the issue of Industry versus Inferiority. The child is confronted with standards for performance which he and his peers have established. Among his peers, the child gains esteem not because he is a member of a family, where love is nearly impossible to separate from esteem; rather, the child garners group esteem through physical prowess, intelligence, sociability, and generosity (Wenar, 1971). For the first time, the child can compare his worthiness as a person with other people of similar physical and mental capacities, and truly earns a sense of integrity which stands apart from the family's love and esteem which was his birth-right.

The most salient factors relating to the origins of self-esteem reviewed thus far are the interactions the person

has with the significant others in his life, and with the material environment. The child gathers impressions from parents and peers about his worthiness as a person. He begins to acquire a sense of his own worthiness by testing his capabilities and mastery of the environment.

The stream of evaluations upon the individual has begun - but how do future evaluations from self and others interact to further build upon this foundation? Will self-esteem become more difficult to change as time goes on, and what factors are likely to have the greatest effect? Coopersmith (1967, p.5) has done considerable research into the subject of self-esteem, and concludes that, "... at some time preceding middle childhood the individual arrives at a general appraisal of his worth, which remains relatively stable and enduring over a period of several years." A not entirely contradictory, yet surely a more present and future-oriented approach to self-appraisal is offered by the Putneys (1972, p.34):

> "The self-image can never be established once and for all; if it is to be accurate, it must reflect the self as it exists in the present. Although drawn out of past experience, it must accurately mirror what the individual is now. Verifying and expressing a self-image which he values is a source of deep satisfaction for the individual. Moreover, by expanding the self in ways consistent with his desired self-image he opens new areas for the fulfillment of his self needs."

Our next step will be to examine the factors contributing

to self-esteem, to determine how they spring from the origins established above.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SELF-ESTEEM

The key to understanding the manner in which various factors affect self-esteem, is to view self-esteem as the end-product of continuous social comparison. The process of social comparison gives the person a sense of "being" in relation to other persons. The individual differences which are discovered by the person allow him to place himself on a spectrum for any given focus of comparison. Thus, the person can view himself as "better" than some, "worse" than others, more or less esteem-worthy, more or less able, and so on. The process of social comparison is both an internal and an external process, in that comparisons can be made by the individual about himself, and they can also be made for the individual by others; the latter process is commonly referred to as feedback.

The four major factors which contribute to the on-going development of self-esteem as described by Coopersmith (1967, p.37) are:

1) "... the amount of respectful, accepting, and concerned treatment that an individual receives from the significant others in his life."

2) "... our history of successes and the status and position we hold in the world."

3) "Experiences ... interpreted and modified in accord with the individual's values and aspirations."

4) "The individual's manner of responding to devaluation ... [this] ability to defend self-esteem reduces the experience of anxiety and helps to maintain personal equilibrium."

In each of these factors, the process of social comparison plays an active part in allowing the individual to determine his sense of self-esteem.

The first factor is important from the earliest days of life, as discussed previously. Specific conditions which parents can create, with the intent of enhancing the child's level of self-esteem, are "nearly total acceptance, firm and clearly defined limits leniently enforced, respect and latitude for individual action within the clear limits, and last but not least, good models for behavior" (McCandless, 1970, p.355). The message conveyed to the child is that he is valued and loved enough to be restrained where necessary, and allowed freedom where possible. His own behaviors have direct impact upon the amounts of freedom and restraint, thus giving him some sense of control over his own existence, an issue which Branden (1973) feels to be at the very heart of self-esteem. Not only parents, but teachers and valued peers are capable of conveying to the individual a sense of his worth to them by accepting and respecting him, and by showing concern

for his welfare. Of course, the absence of these kinds of messages, or behaviors clearly opposite those mentioned above would tend to undermine the person's level of self-esteem with equal power.

The second factor - the person's history of successes and failures, and the social position held by the individual - entails both internal and external social comparison. Success can have very specific definitions for different people, and success for one individual in a given set of circumstances could very easily be interpreted by another individual as failure (Hamachek, 1971). To this extent, success and the impact of success upon self-esteem, is primarily defined in an internal process of social comparison. On the other hand, status and social position in the world are largely products of social comparisons made by others. Self-esteem which is based upon these external social comparisons, however, is subject to misinterpretation, or can at least be founded upon reactions influenced by values not embraced by the individual. Maslow (1970, p.46) states:

> "... we have been learning more and more of the dangers of basing self-esteem on the opinions of others rather than on real capacity, competence, and adequacy to the task. The most stable and therefore most healthy self-esteem is based on deserved respect from others rather than on external fame or celebrity and unwarranted adulation."

The values and aspirations of the person, and their effect upon his interpretation of experience, comprise the third

factor which contributes to self-esteem (Branden, 1973, p.114).

> "Whether the values by which he judges himself are conscious or subconscious, rational or irrational, consistent or contradictory, life-serving or life-negating - every human being judges himself by some standard; and to the extent that he fails to satisfy that standard, his sense of personal worth, his self-respect, suffers accordingly."

In the area of self-judgments based upon values and aspirations, we are one step removed from direct social comparison, for the person is comparing his perceived real self with his ideal self. Nevertheless, the ideal self has been formulated through careful selection of values and aspirations deemed worthy by his normative reference group (Hollander and Hunt, 1971). To that extent, self-esteem which is based upon the degree of congruence between "real" and "ideal" selves, is still very much influenced by perceptions of what others value.

The fourth factor which Coopersmith cites as crucial to development of self-esteem is the manner in which the person responds to devaluation by others. To the extent that social devaluation can be equated with failure (to acquire approval), it seems logical that some amount of failure is necessary for the establishment of realistic goals and expectations from others. Likewise, the person who has weathered some criticism and failure seems far more likely to survive with self-esteem intact, just as tempered steel is less brittle and vulnerable than steel which has not been exposed to the extremes of hot and cold. Of course, a history of frequent

success provides a fairly hopeful outlook for the person who fails occasionally, for the probability of success on subsequent attempts is still relatively high (Hamachek, 1971).

Finally, we must consider briefly the capacity of the preceding factors to enhance self-esteem in relation to the person's sense of being perceived by others as he really is. As long as the person feels that feedback he receives from others is directed toward him, and not toward a masquerade-self which has been constructed out of fear of non-acceptance of the real self, then that feedback will be useful. If, however, parents and significant others are not willing to accept an individual on the basis of what he is, the person will quite likely seek compensation for this loss of self-esteem by presenting himself as he believes they would like to see him. Acceptance of this false self, however, cannot lead to increased self-esteem, for "the opinion of others can contribute to self-acceptance only when the individual believes that others see him as he really is", (Putney and Putney, 1972, p.72).

Clearly, the building of a high level of self-esteem is dependent upon requisite conditions. It should not be surprizing then, to find that different people have very different levels of self-esteem due to variance in the conditions in which self-esteem is fostered. We will examine next the manifestations of varying levels of self-esteem.

MANIFESTATIONS OF SELF-ESTEEM

In the previous sections we have examined the sources of and factors contributing to self-esteem. We have seen that the building of a sense of self-esteem is subject to crises similar to those described by Erikson in his treatment of personality development. The measure of success or lack of success in traversing the crisis of feeling esteemed in infancy, the acquisition of language and subsequent ability to receive and make evaluations of oneself, gaining mastery over the physical environment, and acquiring approved techniques for social interaction are all variables affecting self-esteem. A person's history of receiving and dealing with external valuations and devaluations from significant others is a crucial factor in determining self-esteem, as is the manner in which the individual interprets his own behaviors and motivations as esteem-worthy. Of prime importance, also, is the extent to which the person can feel that he is being evaluated on the basis of his true self, and whether or not his true self is capable of receiving positive feedback.

With such a vast array of possible sources of self-esteem, we might safely predict that in any sizeable population, the range of levels of self-esteem would be quite large. Indeed, research has shown that people generally can be classed in one of three large groups according to their level of self-

esteem - high, medium, and low self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967).

Persons who have high levels of self-esteem have characteristic ways of confronting others and of viewing themselves. For instance, Carl Rogers (1961, p.153) says of the person who is relatively high in self-esteem: "The self becomes increasingly simply the subjective and reflexive awareness of experiencing. The self is much less frequently a perceived object, and much more frequently something confidently felt in process". The person who can feel confident in the "reflexive awareness of experiencing" reacts in a characteristicly comfortable manner with other people, as noted by the Putneys (1972, p.88):

> "People who are self-accepting have no anxiety about the aspects of themselves which are not apparent at a given moment. As a result ... they are comfortable with other people because they are first of all comfortable with themselves."

This comfortable self-acceptance characteristic of people with high self-esteem is not a static, permanent condition. It is the product of continuous self-evaluation, of a self which is aware of the relationship between values and behavior, of keeping the real self in focus, and of venturing to risk occasional devaluation as a means of maintaining realistic goals. Nevertheless, Maslow (1970) feels that a person with a high level of self-esteem tends to become more consistently high in self-esteem, just as a person low in self-esteem tends to steadily lose ground. The effect of old experience

seems to reinforce the expectation for continuation of movement toward higher or lower self-esteem.

Another manifestation of a high level of self-esteem is an increased willingness to live primarily in the "here-and-now", rather than dwelling upon the past or escaping from reality by living in the future (Shostrom, 1968, p.58):

> "Looking closer at this idea of the healthy individual as being the one who lives primarily in the present, we see that living fully in the moment or the present requires no concern for support or sustenance. To say 'I am adequate now,' rather than 'I was adequate once,' or 'I will be adequate again,' is self-validating and self-justifying. Being - in the moment, being - an active process, is an end in itself. It is self-validating and self-justifying. Being has its own reward - a feeling of trust in one's self-support."

Yet another characteristic of the person with high self-esteem is the ability to be more honest about himself. In the event that he finds shortcomings, he can face the problem squarely, confident of his competence to solve it, and feeling that he indeed deserves to make progress.

Just as the person with a high level of self-esteem is honest, present-oriented, and self-accepting, the person who is low in self-esteem tends to be dishonest with himself and others about revealing his true self; he tends to either fall back on past glories (real or imagined) or feels compelled to invest heavily in the future; and he is unable to feel comfortable with the person that he is. Coopersmith (1967, p.32, 48, 138) has made great strides in characterizing the

person low in self-esteem:

1) "The individual is continually guarding himself against a loss of self-esteem, for it is this loss that produces the feelings of distress that are elsewhere termed anxiety."

2) "We find that persons with low self-esteem exhibit higher levels of anxiety, but are otherwise lower in the affect they express, and are likely to exhibit more frequently psychosomatic symptoms and feelings of depression."

3) "... persons low in self-esteem are more destructive, more anxious, and more prone to manifest psychosomatic symptoms than are persons medium or high in self-esteem. But they are no more aggressive or delinquent, presumably because such acts require qualities of initiative and assertiveness ... lacking in individuals with low self-esteem."

Thus we arrive at a picture of a person who is characterized by feelings of helplessness, inferiority, and plagued by doubts; he avoids closeness for fear of exposure of weaknesses. He is unable to reveal his real self because he does not hold it in esteem - consequently, even positive feedback from others is of little comfort, since he cannot feel that they are valid appraisals of himself. Eventually this self-alienation causes the person of low self-esteem to treat himself as someone external and foreign (Shostrom, 1968, p.26).

> "The more he disvalues himself the more of himself he must project or disown and treat as "things" outside himself. When we do something that we dislike, we say: 'It came over me,' or 'That's not like me'. Soon this tendency to disown or deny spreads into all areas of our lives. When the home team is losing, it is no longer 'our team' but 'that team' or 'them bums'. Similarly, one's sweetheart becomes 'the nag' or 'the ball and chain'. Hubby becomes the 'meal ticket' or the

'dictator'. When you feel like an 'it', others about you seem like 'its' too."

The third category is medium self-esteem. In this case, a medium level of self-esteem is not necessarily a combination or half-way point between the two types already described. In fact, Coopersmith has quite a specific set of characteristics which describe the person of medium self-esteem. He says the medium self-esteem people have been subjected to more parental intrusion and protection; they have had lower goals, demands, and aspirations from their parents; and they rely more upon others for their self-evaluations. There is more dependency upon the family, and usually strong commitment to external values, which suggests that the middle portion of the esteem continuum may reflect uncertain self-appraisal.

This high degree of commitment to values is indicative of a less clearly defined self-worth than is found in high or low self-esteem people. Those who have high levels are more self-oriented than value-oriented; those who have low levels are much less self-oriented, and are likely to accept the community's values, although they do not enthusiastically support those standards which "virtually commit them to judgments of failure" (Coopersmith, 1967, p.142).

The various manifestations of differing levels of self-esteem seem disparate, even to the point of having very little in common. What must be held firmly in mind is the fact that self-esteem is a product of a complex interaction

of variables. Certain social forces have come to bear upon an individual, and combined with the uniqueness of the individual, have produced effects which are not necessarily permanent, although they tend to perpetuate. If a person desires to effect a change in his level of self-esteem, it would seem valuable to keep in mind the kinds of sources, contributing factors, and manifestations which helped produce the kind of self-esteem which the individual experiences. With the proper motivation and a suitable setting for simulated as well as real social forces to come into play, the person should be able to work toward positive change in his level of self-esteem. A setting which seems particularly well-suited for this type of movement is the Human Growth Group. We will proceed to explore the ways in which the Human Growth Group process can be applied to the problem of enhancement of self-esteem.

SYNTHESIS

The synthesis of the concept of self-esteem with the processes of the Human Growth Group will be divided into four stages, corresponding to the four stages of group development.

Stage One:

The origins of self-esteem are rooted in infancy as the child learns to distinguish himself from the totality of his environment. Essentially he is involved in a process of gathering a set of definitions about life. There are very basic rules to follow, specific behaviors which elicit specific responses from others, sensations to be valued - warmth, a full stomach, tactile support from others - and sensations that are less desirable, even painful. The role of significant others in his life is unmistakable - they provide him with life-supporting necessities. In a word, the child is dependent. Dependency is a fact of life for the helpless infant. But being dependent can be either a rewarding or a punishing situation for the child; if he is loved and valued (esteemed), his lot in life generally begins on a positive note, and he begins to develop a basic sense of trust in his environment. The child whose needs are not met, or are met irregularly, is provided with a confusing, frustrating environment.

Much the same kind of environment is set up for the new group member. Because of old learning settings such as home and school, the member is aware of his dependence upon the group in general and upon the facilitator in particular. They have at least some control over his level of comfort in this new situation, and he has some amount of experience - good and bad - in being dependent. The

member learns that there are very basic rules to follow, specific behaviors which elicit specific responses from others, sensations to be valued - warmth, general acceptance, recognition - and other, more painful sensations. There are new discoveries to be made also, for the group experience is likely to be different from life outside the group. Therefore, the new member is not sure of the amount of esteem others hold for him, though he is likely to have a more clear sense of the esteem he holds for himself at this point.

Just as the child gains a new tool for determining how much he is esteemed by others when he acquires the use of language, the new group member begins to learn about his esteem-worthiness for the group when he ventures to involve himself in the very early interactions, mostly with the facilitator who still symbolizes authority and power. He tests his boundaries ever so slightly and carefully by asking about limits for behaviors, for expectations, for a definition of his role. He learns that he is valued just for being, though in different degrees by different members. He also is made aware that some behaviors such as self-disclosure, honest feedback, and listening, will be valued more than others. Finally, he learns that he is not to be allowed the safety of a dependent relationship with the facilitator or the group for very long. There are certain things which he must provide himself such as initiative,

helping with decision-making, processing, direction, and making his own needs known. Above all, he is responsible for letting the group know who he is in order that feedback may be offered to the real person and not to a mask. The group is to be a relatively safe place which will demand some risk-taking. It will be a group much like the family in which he is given support and responsibility, acceptance and challenge, positive and negative feedback.

Stage Two:

Now that the group member has learned the expectations for his behavior and has learned that the facilitator does not want a dependent relationship with the group, the member has some evaluations to make. First, he must decide if he is willing to accept the guidelines that have been established. He must also determine whether his acceptance or rejection of the guidelines will be supported by his peers - the other group members. As noted earlier, the group members usually have some differences in their need for dependence, and conflict arises when some attempt to take an active role in making contracts, in self-disclosure, in giving and asking for feedback, while others seek to establish a more structured, authority-oriented environment where the facilitator takes a more active role in decision-making and orchestration of events.

An issue at stake at this point is one of productivity - similar to Erikson's crisis of Industry versus Inferiority. This is not to say that the crisis of Industry versus Inferiority appears for the first time in the group; if we are to accept Erikson's theory, we must assume that each group member first encountered this issue during childhood. However, the degree to which each member resolved this issue during childhood - for that matter, the degree to which each member resolves the issue every day of his life - contributes to the response he makes to the task demands presented in the group. Some are content, even eager to accept the challenge provided by an unstructured process-learning setting. They, in effect, set the standards for performance; once the standard is set, the process of social comparison begins. As in childhood, the group member finds himself immersed in a peer group which is setting standards for performance. His performance becomes a locus of evaluation, and esteem follows closely after evaluation.

Moreover, the participant has the opportunity to disclose his feelings about performance, standards, Industry and Inferiority, and to learn what others feel about these issues. Through processing, he can not only re-create situations which are representative of real-life issues, but also gain a perspective upon his feelings relative to those of people who share his situation. Fears of being odd or alone can

often be eased through the sharing of apprehensions about performance and evaluation.

Also at stake during the Second Stage is the issue of psychological boundaries. Through aggression and conflict, the members test one another and themselves to determine whether or not the group can be trusted to accept them when they disclose negative feelings. Rejection is more easily taken when the participant has not yet risked the vulnerable posture of trying to be close to another member. Again, through processing, by examining the conflict behavior and its implications, the participants can become aware of the ways in which they approach uncertainty in social relationships. Feelings of inferiority or guilt associated with disclosure of negative feelings is a conceivable cause of loss of self-esteem, and can be regained through an understanding of the dynamics and acceptability of such behavior. Thus self-evaluation and evaluation by others, both crucial factors in the development of self-esteem, begin early in the group process.

Stage Three:

Once the group has developed through the stage of Intragroup Conflict, the peer standards have been established and self-evaluation has begun - aided by the tool of processing - the group moves into the stage of Cohesion

Development and Exchange of Relevant Interpretation. Just as the individual emerges from childhood with a basic sense of self-esteem, formed in his interactions with the significant others in his life, the group member has a foundation of information upon which to build. With some sense of his place within the social group, the child and group participant alike can venture to experiment with the environment and his own capabilities. The increase in sharing of feelings, the more open interactions, the giving and receiving of positive and negative feedback in the group all serve to provide a rich learning experience for the participant.

The other group members have taken on the role of significant others for the participant. Therefore, just as in childhood, the "amount of respectful, accepting, and concerned treatment that an individual receives from the significant others in his life" has a great deal to do with the participant's level of self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967, p.37). Their acceptance of his feelings, of his value as a person, of his observations, strengths and weaknesses cannot but make it easier for the participant to accept himself as he is.

Furthermore, growth is not dependent solely upon the giving and receiving of positive feedback. Just as the complimentary opposites of success and failure enable the

individual to establish realistic limits for his behavior, so too the encounter with negative feedback gives the participant a sense of boundaries. Provided that negative feedback is presented with a spirit of caring for the recipient - as information that will be useful to him as he seeks improved methods of interacting - it is just as helpful as positive feedback. Through processing, the individual is able to place both positive and negative feedback in a perspective seldom available during day-to-day encounters. Feedback is not only information; it is also experience, for in the giving and receiving of feedback, the individual displays values, defenses, biases, and needs. By processing these factors the individual is able to learn more about himself and his motivations for certain behaviors.

Outside the group, the person's level of self-esteem is affected by his interpretation of experience according to his values and aspirations (Shostrom, 1968). Likewise, the participant comes to regard his group experiences as more or less satisfying depending upon the manner in which he integrates them with his value system. If he feels that his growth needs are being met (one responsibility of the group member is to make his needs known) and that the interaction experiences are contributing to a general sense of well-being, the opportunity for enhancement of self-esteem is increased. Again we see the need for the participant

to share in decision-making and to risk self-disclosure in order for his own goals to be realized.

The key to the value of the group experience is the degree to which the participant is able or willing to present his real self to the group. The treatment he receives from these significant others, his successes and failures, the positive and negative feedback he receives are all irrelevant if they are offered to a false self. One of the prime reasons for establishing an accepting environment at the onset of the group experience is to encourage members to present their real selves in order that they may come to esteem the persons that they really are. If the participant can find acceptance from others and himself for the person that he truly is, there will be less need to invest energy in pseudo-selves and more energy to invest in becoming a more self-actualized person (Maslow, 1970). The recognition, acceptance, and appreciation of one's own self is crucial in realizing a high level of self-esteem.

Stage Four:

In the fourth stage of group development, the Human Growth Group begins to function as a mature social unit. The Group Structure is relatively stable and the Task-Activity has shifted to the development of solutions or insight. Through an increased level of trust for one another, as

well as a commitment to process-learning, risk-taking, self-disclosure, giving and receiving feedback, the group as a whole begins to manifest the characteristics of a person with a high level of self-esteem. The individual members are more consistently willing to interact in ways which contribute to the enhancement of self-esteem:

1) They focus predominantly on the here-and-now, preferring the reality of the present situation to an escape into the past or future. This enhances growth opportunity, since the here-and-now is the only real common ground on which the group members can meet.

2) They are able to keep their real selves in focus, as contrasted with pseudo-selves, roles, or ideal-selves. Only that feedback which is directed toward the real self which is honestly and openly presented to the group can contribute to growth of the self.

3) They continually engage in self-evaluation as a means of incorporating new growth into the developing self. The result of growth is continuous change in self-perception, and changes need to be shared with the group as a means of keeping the real self in focus.

4) They continue to risk devaluation of self-esteem through acceptance of negative feedback. Since the self-concept is undergoing change, reality boundaries must continually be tested and re-established.

5) They are more able to integrate their selves with actual experiences rather than treating themselves as objects to be molded, shaped, or changed by exposing them to various experiences. The self is more easily owned, and taken to be the totality of the person who is involved in group interaction.

In essence, the group has arrived at the level of self-esteem which becomes conducive to self-perpetuating growth. To repeat Maslow's observation, this time with greater understanding about the dynamics involved in the phenomenon, the person with a high level of self-esteem tends to become more consistently high in self-esteem. He values himself enough to invest more time, effort, and interactions in the interest of furthering his own growth and enhancement of self-esteem.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

HYPOTHESES

The first hypothesis to be tested is that the experimental Human Growth Groups will demonstrate greater improvement than will the control group in ten areas of behavior: 1) Empathy; 2) Warmth, respect; 3) Genuineness; 4) Concreteness; 5) Initiative; 6) Immediacy; 7) Self-disclosure; 8) Feelings and emotions; 9) Confrontation; 10) Self-exploration. It is expected that some increase in self-rating will occur in all groups as a function of familiarity and subsequent relaxation of some defenses among participants. However, the experimental groups are expected to produce more positive change in the ten behavior areas as a result of the growth-producing processes of the Human Growth Group.

The second hypothesis to be tested is that the members of the Human Growth Groups will report more feelings of increased self-awareness, increased self-acceptance, and increased self-esteem as a result of their group experience than will members of the control group.

SUBJECTS

Each of the three Human Growth Groups in this study was composed of six participants and two co-facilitators. Two of these groups had three men and three women each; the third group had four women and two men. All six co-facilitators were men.

The six participants in each group were undergraduate college students who had responded to a Human Awareness program offered by the counseling center. Each had been screened for membership in a Human Growth Group by a professional staff member of the counseling center, who was also responsible for the training and supervision of the six group co-facilitators.

The control group was composed of six undergraduate resident assistants in a residence hall on campus who met weekly during the same nine-week period that the Human Growth Groups were meeting; four were men and two were women. One of the facilitators was their supervisor and one was a staff member of the counseling center; both were males. Their purpose in meeting as a group was to engage in discussions about their job performance with their supervisor and to discuss their relationships with one another as co-workers. The control group was characterized by a fairly structured format, with the supervisor taking most of the responsibility

for initiating interactions, providing topics of discussion, and providing exercises designed to stimulate group interaction; these exercises consisted of a group concensus task, writing personal inventories of strengths and weaknesses, and listing personal values - each was used as an entry-point for group discussion.

The facilitators for the Human Growth Groups were four upper-classmen and two graduate students who had responded to a group-leadership training program offered by the counseling center. During the fifteen weeks of training the facilitators met as a Human Growth Group in order to obtain experiential training as well as content learning. Once the facilitators had begun to work with their own groups, they continued to meet weekly as a group to review problems, share ideas and feedback, and obtain suggestions from their staff supervisors. One of the facilitators for the experimental groups was also a facilitator in the control group.

INSTRUMENT

The instrument used by all four groups (see Appendix) was a scale developed by Gerard Egan (1973, p.19-21) to determine self-ratings on behaviors which he considers to be

essential to high-level human relating. According to Egan, the goal of a group experience such as the Human Growth Group is to develop and increase one's skills in ten behavior categories: Empathy; Warmth, respect; Genuineness; Concreteness; Initiative; Immediacy; Self-disclosure; Feelings and emotions; Confrontation; and Self-exploration. Each group member was to rate him/herself on a scale of one to nine, with nine being the highest rating, for each of the ten categories. The instrument was administered as a pre-test at the beginning of the nine-week period, and again as a post-test following the last group meetings.

The mean score for each group was determined for each of the ten behavior categories on both the pre-test and post-test. The change in the mean group scores between pre- and post-testing was taken to be an indicant of the progress or growth in a particular behavior during the nine-week period. In addition, the scores of all three experimental groups were combined to produce mean scores for the pre- and post-tests for purposes of comparison with the control group. In this manner, the instrument was to provide not only a general indication of growth in interaction behavior, but also an indicant of those particular behaviors which showed the most improvement, and which the least.

LIMITATIONS

The inherent limitations in this design are primarily the low number of available subjects and the imprecise matching of control and experimental groups. While it is not the purpose of this study to attempt a rigorous empirical approach to human behavior, there is nevertheless a greater opportunity to generalize observations and conclusions with a larger sample population. The difficulty in providing a matched control group for Human Growth Groups centers around the format for the control group. Once a number of people are organized and defined as a group, some interaction will occur; it is difficult to control for the growth in the interaction that occurs as a result of familiarity.

Moreover, the reliance upon self-report as a technique for measuring change is subject to problems in the area of validity. The attempt to incorporate phenomenological events within empirical statements does not allow for rigorous mathematical analysis; however, the relative empirical efficiency of measuring only observable behavior does not provide an accurate understanding of the whole person.

PROCEDURE

In the Human Growth Groups the facilitators began by introducing the format to the participants. They were told that they should be concerned with focusing upon the interactions within the group itself and upon the "here-and-now" situations which would arise. The facilitators emphasized their own role as one of modeling group interaction behavior, of giving and receiving feedback on equal terms with the participants, and as co-equals with the participants in determining topics, the direction of interaction, and of enforcing the ground rule of here-and-now interaction. The facilitators also told the participants that they, themselves, were being supervised in their facilitator role by professional staff members.

The relative vacuum of authority and structure left by the facilitators' initial remarks and behaviors elicited a dependency reaction in most group members. Most participants pressed the facilitators for more detailed instructions, asked for appropriate topics to discuss, and focused very little attention upon one another. The facilitators, in turn, focused upon the participants' need for and feelings associated with dependency, as well as their own feelings about being placed in an authority position.

Soon the participants were exhibiting hostility toward

the facilitators for not providing structure in the groups. Some resisted by withdrawing from interactions while others persisted in demanding structure from the facilitators. Occasionally a less dependent participant would attempt to initiate an interaction and would meet with resistance and hostility.

Following the period of dependency upon the facilitators, the groups moved into a period of conflict among themselves and continued hostility toward the facilitators. Most of the conflict occurred between those participants who wanted to move ahead with self-disclosure, probing, and confrontation, and those who resisted. The feelings of anger and frustration generated in this period were brought into focus by the facilitators. Direct expressions of anger were rare; the participants initially tried to be very polite with each other while angry, which in turn added to their own frustrations and eventually resulted in more honest expressions of anger. The participants expressed their hostility toward the facilitators by challenging their feedback, by withdrawing, or by giving them only negative feedback.

Eventually, as the participants were able to test their own and others' anger and hostility, the groups began to establish some cohesion. Participants noted that criticism they had received had not destroyed them, and that they could accept people with whom they had exchanged angry words. The

facilitators were given some positive feedback as well, and the groups seemed to relax and enjoy their feelings of acceptance. The aggressive interactions which had occurred earlier became the topics of discussion, with participants focusing upon their own feelings of anger, frustration, isolation, fear, and later - warmth and acceptance. By disclosing themselves and their feelings, they came to realize that others had similar feelings, which contributed to a sense of closeness.

In the final sessions, the participants began to discuss their increased sense of self-awareness, and seemed surprised at times that they still liked themselves in spite of the weaknesses which they had discovered and owned. They discussed their plans for improving their interaction skills and their desires to be more open and honest with others. A considerable amount of time was spent in discovering and discussing the roles they found themselves playing in their social interactions. These roles were seen as growth-inhibiting and most stated that they would prefer to be their true selves. A few of the participants were not pleased with the parts of themselves they had discovered while in the groups and focused primarily upon their perceived weaknesses - however, they all seemed optomistic about their chances for improvement.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a demonstration of the effect of the Human Growth Group process on self-esteem, the results from the control and three experimental groups will be presented. These results are a product of self-reports by group participants as well as observations by group facilitators. The collection of these data is an attempt to establish the quality of the interaction in each group, measured on the list of "behaviors that are essential to high-level human relating" offered by Gerard Egan (1973, p.19).

In addition to the self-reports on the Egan scale, Human Growth Group participants offered and were encouraged to talk about their feelings about themselves, particularly in the realm of self-esteem. As this information was offered in the context of interaction behavior, it was not possible nor would it have been appropriate to interrupt these interactions for the purpose of obtaining "empirical" data. According to Rogers (1970) in his discussion of a means of developing a realistic phenomenological human science, any empirical data on phenomenological events growing out of group processes are probably minute and of questionable validity. This is due to the difficulty in obtaining naive and unbiased behavior as well as operationalizing definitions for phenomenological events. The attempt, therefore, was to gather information from participants themselves about their own self-esteem, and

their perceptions of the effects of the group process upon self-esteem.

The results of the pre-test and post-test self-ratings follow in Tables 1 - 5. Tables 1, 2, and 3 represent the difference scores between pre- and post-test administrations of the instrument in the three experimental Human Growth Groups. Table 4 contains the results from the control group. Table 5 compares the difference scores of the control group with the average difference scores of the experimental groups.

TABLE 1

Mean Group Scores for Experimental Group 1

Behavior Category	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
Empathy	6.00	6.17	0.17
Warmth, respect	5.00	6.00	1.00
Genuineness	4.33	5.00	0.67
Concreteness	4.33	5.33	1.00
Initiative	2.83	5.17	2.34
Immediacy	4.33	6.00	1.67
Self-disclosure	3.33	5.67	2.34
Feelings, emotions	5.50	6.33	0.83
Confrontation	3.83	5.00	1.17
Self-exploration	5.33	6.83	1.50

TABLE 2

Mean Group Scores for Experimental Group 2

Behavior Category	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
Empathy	4.83	5.17	0.34
Warmth, respect	5.67	5.67	0.00
Genuineness	4.83	6.00	1.17
Concreteness	4.83	5.50	0.67
Initiative	5.00	5.67	0.67
Immediacy	4.83	5.17	0.34
Self-disclosure	4.83	5.83	1.00
Feelings, emotions	4.67	5.33	0.66
Confrontation	4.67	4.67	0.00
Self-exploration	5.83	6.67	0.84

TABLE 3

Mean Group Scores for Experimental Group 3

Behavior Category	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
Empathy	4.67	5.17	0.50
Warmth, respect	4.83	5.33	0.50
Genuineness	4.67	4.33	-0.34
Concreteness	4.17	3.83	-0.34
Initiative	4.00	5.50	1.50
Immediacy	3.83	4.83	1.00
Self-disclosure	4.00	5.00	1.00
Feelings, emotions	4.33	5.33	1.00
Confrontation	4.33	4.67	0.34
Self-exploration	5.67	6.00	0.33

TABLE 4

Mean Group Scores for Control Group

Behavior Category	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Difference
Empathy	5.67	6.67	1.00
Warmth, respect	6.17	6.33	0.16
Genuineness	6.17	6.67	0.50
Concreteness	5.83	6.00	0.17
Initiative	5.33	5.67	0.34
Immediacy	5.50	5.67	0.17
Self-disclosure	4.83	5.67	0.84
Feelings, emotions	6.33	6.33	0.00
Confrontation	6.33	6.33	0.00
Self-exploration	6.67	6.67	0.00

In Table 5, the Difference scores of all three experimental groups have been combined and averaged. These figures have been compared with the Difference scores for the control group. The third column of Table 5 represents the difference in the amount of change (between pre- and post-test administrations) in self-report between the control group and combined experimental groups.

TABLE 5

Differences in Change of Mean Scores for the Control and Experimental Groups

Behavior Category	Control Group	Exper. Groups	Difference
Empathy	1.00	0.39	-0.61
Warmth, respect	0.17	0.56	0.39
Genuineness	0.50	0.50	0.00
Concreteness	0.17	0.44	0.27
Initiative	0.34	1.50	1.16
Immediacy	0.17	1.00	0.83
Self-disclosure	0.84	1.44	0.61
Feelings, emotions	0.00	0.78	0.78
Confrontation	0.00	0.50	0.50
Self-exploration	0.00	0.89	0.89

The results of the pre- and post-test ratings indicate that the first hypothesis - that the experimental groups would demonstrate greater improvement than the control group in the ten areas of human-relating behavior - was verified in eight of the ten cases, with one category (Genuineness) showing no difference between control and experimental groups; the control group showed greater improvement in the area of Empathy.

The Empathy category showed the greatest increase for the

control group and the least increase for the Human Growth Groups. Possible explanations for this result are two:

1) one entire session in the control group was spent in the discussion of Empathy as it applied to their jobs, thus giving greater emphasis to this category; or
2) random chance.

The categories in which the experimental groups surpassed the control group by the largest scores - Initiative, Self-exploration, and Immediacy - are all areas which were essential to the Human Growth Group process. In the absense of authoritative structure, the participants in the experimental groups were forced as well as permitted to exercise initiative; the here-and-now emphasis of the groups favored the development of skills in immediacy; and the supportive, stimulating environment of the third stage of group development (Group Cohesion and Open Exchange of Relevant Interpretations) encourages self-exploration.

An area in which both the control and experimental groups showed large improvement was Self-disclosure. This behavior is perhaps the most dependent upon trust among group members. While both the control and experimental groups showed improvement, the experimental groups engaged in much more risk-taking.

Perhaps the most striking result from the instrument was the lack of improved ratings for the control group in the areas of Feelings, emotions; Confrontation; and Self-exploration.

It seems highly improbable that any of these behaviors would have the opportunity to flourish in structured group settings, as the interactions among members in the presence of an authority figure rarely involve confrontation or the expression of feelings and emotions. As noted above, self-exploration has its best opportunity when the group has reached the third level of group functioning, a level never attained in the control group.

In the area of self-esteem, the facilitators of the experimental groups reported nearly unanimous concurrence by participants that they were more confident about themselves, more willing to risk self-disclosure in their interpersonal relations, more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and more willing to accept themselves as a result of their group experience. Many voiced the intent to continue working on specific areas of their personal dynamics, such as expressing anger more openly, expressing caring for others, being more concrete or specific in their communications, and being more active in initiating contacts with others. Several participants felt that the social roles they had been playing in order to gain approval were no longer appropriate for them, and that they were willing to experiment with different behaviors while relying more upon self-approval. Nearly all participants expressed a general, undifferentiated positive feeling about themselves also. Those who were less glowing in their self-

appraisals were nevertheless able to be more honest about themselves with other group members, more comfortable in their interactions, and more willing to focus upon the here-and-now aspects of their lives - all indicants of the higher levels of self-esteem.

In contrast, the control group facilitators did not encounter declarations of increased self-confidence, of willingness to improve interaction skills, of increased self-awareness except in two cases, or any appreciable increase in honest self-disclosure. Three participants reported an improved interpersonal relationship within the group, but the other three reported no improvement. The control group was seen as essentially unchanged in its ability to deal with feelings, confrontation, or self-examination - defenses remained intact. Reliance upon group structure remained high and hostility toward the facilitators was at a peak when structure was not consistently provided, even during the last sessions. The level of self-esteem in the control group was seen as medium - that is, they had a high level of commitment to external values (related learning more to job performance than to personal growth), and their self-appraisals were highly dependent upon the opinions of others. Most striking was the lack of willingness to engage in self-exploration which took on increasing relevance and importance in the experimental groups.

That the experimental Human Growth Groups reported greater increases in self-esteem than the control group, thus verifying the second hypothesis, was amply clear. The conditions present in the Human Growth Groups which most directly contributed to enhanced self-esteem for participants were the respectful, supportive, and concerned treatment which each person received from persons who had become in some ways "significant others"; and each was afforded the opportunity to strengthen his/her self-esteem by risking occasional devaluation and negative feedback within a more encompassing environment of acceptance.

The Human Growth Groups involved in this study quite clearly progressed through the first three stages of group development. While in Stage One (Testing and Dependence; Orientation to Task), they struggled to define goals, formats, and roles for themselves. Issues of dependency, both upon the facilitators and upon structured proceedings were evident to some degree in all cases. During Stage One, comments offered by the members regarding self-esteem were mostly guarded, modest declarations of a desire for new learning experiences combined with assurances that they really did not need them.

In Stage Two (Intragroup Conflict; Emotional Response to Task Demands), the groups were clearly involved in intragroup conflict, offering one another primarily negative feedback

and engaging in quite a bit of defensive interaction behavior. They would at times react negatively to the group format, often passively through withdrawal. The effects upon self-esteem, however, began to appear as realizations that neither the negative feedback nor the perceived dangers of a relatively unstructured environment were destructive, and that each member had a measure of strength which had weathered criticism and which other group members seemed to respect.

Quickly following Stage Two came the cohesive behavior of Stage Three (Development of Group Cohesion; Open Exchange of Relevant Interpretations). The division between these stages was not clear-cut but rather, blurred, as the groups shifted from conflict to cohesion and occasionally back to conflict. Self-reports indicated that self-esteem was enhanced during this stage as group members found acceptance and shared their positive feelings with one another. A less threatening environment had been established in which they could now relax their defenses and deal more openly with the issues of growth and learning.

In the nine weeks that the groups were in session, they met together for an average total of twenty to twenty-five hours each. While there were signs that the experimental groups were approaching the Fourth Stage of development (Functional Role-Relatedness; Insight), they did not fully enter the last stage in the time which was available.

Expected outcomes during this stage would have been a continued strengthening of self-esteem through confrontation and subsequent defense of self-esteem, increased awareness of interaction dynamics through feedback, and experimental interaction behavior within the group as a testing ground for extra-group interactions.

The implications for the use of Human Growth Groups to help participants increase self-esteem should be considered within the broader context of goals for such group experiences. To establish a group solely or primarily for the purpose of enhancing self-esteem would seem to be inappropriate. Rather, enhancement of self-esteem is an outcome of a group process whose function is to deal with more specific goals such as the improvement of human interaction skills, or reducing self-defeating behaviors, or any number of therapy situations. The fact that participants can experience enhanced self-esteem as a result of Human Growth Groups and quite possibly from other similar formats could be a powerful determinant in establishing goals at various stages of group and member development. By monitoring levels of self-esteem throughout the group experience, facilitators and members could gauge progress, estimate current potential for increased growth, and even provide themselves with an indicant of the effectiveness of the group process. By focusing upon the issue of self-esteem as an on-going outcome of group interactions,

the group can broaden its own awareness of the impact of the group process as it is occurring. As important a by-product of Human Growth Groups as enhanced self-esteem deserves careful consideration as a possible therapeutic tool within group settings.

Inasmuch as the group setting is gaining much popularity in this society as a learning environment, involving many times more people in various forms of group interaction similar to Human Growth Groups, the possibility for providing esteem-enhancing environments for a large portion of the population is increased considerably. The basic interaction skills required to maintain productive relationships can be learned in a relatively short span of time. They can also be introduced into educational, governmental, and industrial settings as a part of an over-all attempt to improve working conditions and increase efficiency through improved human relations.

Coopersmith's (1967) observations about self-esteem in delinquent adolescents suggests further applications of esteem-enhancing environments in an attempt to come to grips with problems of motivation, delinquency, and mental health in general. Maslow's (1970) and Rogers' (1961) observations that a high level of self-esteem is a self-perpetuating phenomenon leads us to speculate that the ultimate application of such human relations training as offered in the Human

Growth Group is in the child-rearing setting. Adults, even prior to parenthood, could be educated through group experiences in the importance of and establishment of esteem-enhancing environments in the home as a means of producing healthier, more self-accepting and need-fulfilled children. If a high level of self-esteem is indeed a self-perpetuating phenomenon, the impact of a generation of children whose need for esteem is primarily fulfilled could lead to practically limitless possibilities in the realization of meaningful human existence.

Group Rating Scale, (Gerard Egan)

Listed below are a number of behaviors that are essential to high-level human relating. Rate yourself on these behaviors, using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very weak	Moderately weak		Adequate	Moderately strong		Very strong		

Note that a rating of 5 means that in a particular category you would consider yourself a resource person (if only minimally so) in a human relationship or group, a giver in that category rather than just a receiver.

_____ Empathy: I see the world through the eyes of others; I understand others because I can get inside the skin of others; I listen well to all the cues, both verbal and nonverbal, that the other emits and I respond to these cues.

_____ Warmth, respect: I express (and not just feel) in a variety of ways that I am "for others, that I respect them; I accept others even though I do not necessarily approve what they do; I am an actively supportive person.

_____ Genuineness: I am genuine rather than phony in my interactions; I do not hide behind roles or facades; others know where I stand; I am myself in my interactions.

_____ Concreteness: I am not vague when I speak to others; I do not speak in generalities nor do I beat around the bush; I deal with concrete experience and behavior when I talk; I am direct and specific.

_____ Initiative: In my relationships I act rather than just react; I go out to contact others without waiting to be contacted; I am spontaneous; I take initiative over a wide variety of ways of relating to others; when in a group I "own" the interactions that take place between other members and get involved in them.

_____ Immediacy: I deal openly and directly with my relationships to others; I know where I stand with others and they know where they stand with me because I deal with the relationship.

_____ Self-disclosure: I let others know the "person inside"; I am not exhibitionistic, but I use self-disclosure to help establish sound relationships with others; I amopen without being a "secret-revealer" or a "secret-searcher", for I am important, not just my secrets.

_____ Feelings and emotions: I am not afraid to deal directly with emotion, my own or other's; in my relationships I allow myself both to feel and give expression to what I feel; I expect others to do the same: but I do not "inflict" my emotions on others.

_____ Confrontation: I challenge others responsibly and with care; I use confrontation as a way of getting involved with others; I do not use confrontation to punish.

_____ Self-exploration: I examine my lifestyle and behavior and want others to help me do so; I respond to confrontation as nondefensively as possible; I am open to changing my behavior. I use confrontation as an opportunity for self-exploration.

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