     A PATTERN OF PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATION AMONG STUDENT
COUNCIL MEMBERS AND BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND ITS FACULTY
ADVISORS CONTRIBUTED TO A DECISION TO SUBSTITUTE A PROGRAM OF
SENSITIVITY TRAINING FOR THE USUAL STUDENT COUNCIL
ORIENTATION PROGRAM. IT WAS HOPED THAT SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD
FACILITATE A FLOW OF EXPRESSION AND A REDUCTION OF
INTERPERSONAL TENSIONS. COUNCIL MEMBERS AND ADVISORS MET WITH
PROFESSIONAL T-GROUP LEADERS IN AN INTENSIVE 2-DAY SERIES OF
SESSIONS. RESPONSES TO A STUDENT EVALUATION FORM INDICATED
THEIR BELIEF THAT THE POTENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
HAD BEEN INCREASED BY THE EXPERIENCE. ADVISORS NOTED MORE
FREE AND OPEN COMMUNICATION AMONG STUDENTS, AMONG FACULTY
ADVISORS, AND BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND FACULTY GROUPS. (AL)

HOW CAN LABORATORY TRAINING IMPROVE

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ADVISERS AND

STUDENTS IN STUDENT GOVERNMENT?

A preliminatry study of laboratory training as used with the
Los Angeles City College Student
Council

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of requirements for
Education 243D: Junior College Administration

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by

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"To had some power the giftie give us to see ourselis as others see us."
Robert Burns To a Louse, Stanza C

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Participants in junior college student government need
to establish more effective working relationships in
order to carry out their assigned functions.

IMPORTANCE TO JUNIOR COLLEGES

Since most junior colleges provide opportunities for students
to participate in student government, and exercise varying
amounts of control over certain aspects of college life,
the problems of establishing an effective group is felt
by many junior colleges. Los Angeles City College has
an Executive Council, made up of elected students who
serve one semester. They work with an advisory staff
made up of the Assistant Dean of Student Personnel, two
coordinators, and the Dean of Student Personnel.

PROPOSED METHOD OF SOLUTION

To determine to what extent the use of laboratory train-
ing (or T-Group) experience makes members and advisors
of junior college student governments more effective
participants in group action. The LACC Executive Council
and the advisory staff have experienced two days of
laboratory training in an attempt to establish a more
effective working relationship.

SOURCES

The primary source of information will be direct

observation. Other sources will include such authorities

as Weschler and Schein who list as laboratory training

aims:

1. to facilitate increased sensitivity toward group
   processes

2. to increase awareness of the character of one's
   own group participation

3. to increase one's ability to deal with a
   variety of groups and situations (15)

LABORATORY TRAINING: HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT, AND CURRENT STATUS

In this paper the term laboratory training is used to identify

the educational experience which is also known as sensitivity training

and the Training Group (T Group).

The course description of laboratory training in the University

of California Graduate School of Business Administration reads as follows:

> "Knowledge and skills leading to effectiveness in interpersonal
> relations. Understanding one's self as a leader, and others as
> individuals and as members of working groups. Understanding of group
> process, including group leadership. Practice in methods and
> procedures available to managers in effectively dealing with sub-
> ordinates, peers, and superiors."

Laboratory training is an educational procedure designed to increase

social sensitivity (the ability accurately to sense what others think

and feel) and behavioral flexibility (the ability to behave appropriately

in a variety of interpersonal situations).

To increase the effectiveness of our relations with others we need to

know more accurately how they see us...what we do that is useful and what

we do that detracts from our usefullness. This need led to the development

of the educational program called laboratory training which is being used

by a rapidly growing number of business, educational, governmental, and

civic organizations to increase the effectiveness of those who carry

important responsibilities in dealing with people.

BRIEF HISTORY OF LABORATORY TRAINING

The genesis of the principles underlying laboratory training may be

traced to a workshop held at State Teachers College in New Britain,

Connecticut, during the summer of 1946. The aim of the workshop was to

develop more effective local leaders in facilitating understanding of

and compliance with the FEPC under which the Connecticut Interracial Commission had been recently created. The co-sponsor, the Research Center for Group Dynamics of MIT, had as an objective the testing of several hypotheses about the effects among participants in terms of transfer of behavioral changes to back-home situations. (4)

The participants were divided into three groups of ten in which the participants spent much of their formal training time on the analysis of back-home problems.

An evening meeting for discussions by the observers and leaders was planned as part of the schedule. Some participants asked if they might attend these meetings in addition to the daily sessions. The open discussion of their own behavior and its observed consequences had an electric effect on both the participants and the training leaders. What had been a conversation between research observers and group leaders in earlier meetings was inexorably widened to include participants who had been part of the events being discussed. Before many evenings had passed, all participants were attending these sessions. To the training staff it seemed that a potentially powerful medium and process of re-education had been inadvertently hit upon. (4)

Group members, if they were confronted more or less objectively with data concerning their own behavior and its effects, might achieve highly meaningful learnings about themselves, the responses of others to them, and about group behavior and group development in general.

DEVELOPMENT

During the year 1947-48 several other agencies joined the Research Center for Group Dynamics, including the University of California. One of the features during this year was a small continuing group called the Basic Skills Training (BST) Group, designed as a medium for several kinds of learning, one of which was training in human relations.

From 1949 to 1955 the history of laboratory training is marked by a variety of experimental attempts to create training formats and technologies to serve learning objectives seen, now, as extraneous to those peculiarly within the province of laboratory training. The period from 1956 to the present in marked by efforts to re-integrate laboratory training experiences. (4)

Beginning in 1960, the National Training Laboratory has conducted a more comprehensive intern program addressed to the pressing need to professionalize the field of human relations training. This program is designed primarily to help in the development as trainers of university-based persons who can subsequently undertake a variety of training and consultation tasks under NTL and other auspices. With this aim in mind, interns selected have earned, or nearly earned, their doctorate in one of the basic or applied behavioral sciences. Typically, they have demonstrated aptitude for developing and handling "helping" relationships with other persons or with groups. Their initial program occupies a complete summer. (4)

CURRENT STATUS

The central theme in laboratory training operation has become clarified in the 17 years of its evolution. It is now seen basically as a group devoted to the mutual facilitation of learning by all of its members. A major content of the learning sought is the developing experience of the group and its members in here-and-now behavioral events. Each member is encouraged to function as observer-participant, as diagnostician-actor, as planner-executor-evaluator, as theorist-practioner, as expresser of feeling and critic of expression, as helper-client. (6)

These hyphenated functions of participations are separated in much of life as it is lived, both among persons and within persons. Laboratory training experience confronts members with areas of disintegrity and fragmentation in their own patterns of response, personal and collective. It presses each member to understand the bases of his disintegrity and to invent patterns of response that are more integral in quality and in effect.

WHAT A LABORATORY TRAINING GROUP CAN DO

Laboratory training produces a deeply personal experience. Perhaps more than any other form of human relations training, it stirs and prods people into taking a good, close look at themselves and at their relationships with others. Throughout a full-length training experience, spasmodic peaks of excitement, even exhilaration, seem inevitable followed by long periods of apathy and frustration, which in turn are characterized by expressions of futility, disgust, and anger.

Until recently, very little was known about the personal and individual reactions of the trainees as — for better or for worse — they committed themselves to the uncertainties, the trials and tribulations of the typical laboratory training experience. On the Outside, even unskilled observers could note that something was happening. The intense huddles of small groups after each training session, the hasty departure of some members as if "trying to find fresh air," the friendly glances in the halls, the knowing look of sharing — all these contributed to the "mystique" of the laboratory training process. (14)

Laboratory training can be employed to influence personal learning and
organizational change -- the two main target systems. Laboratory
training is an educational strategy which is based primarily on the
experiences generated in various social encounters by the learners
themselves, and which aims to influence attitudes and develop
competencies toward learning about human interactions. Laboratory
training attempts to induce changes with regard to the learning process
itself and to communicate a particular method of learning and inquiry.
It has to do with "learning how to learn."

PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATING THE IDEA OF LABORATORY TRAINING

Laboratory training does not fit into the conventional categories
of education or therapy. It contains elements of both but maintains
its uniqueness.

Laboratory training is new, starting as recently as 1947 and has not
yet truly settled or codified its concepts and practices.

Laboratory training is experience-based learning which besets us with
the problem of matching symbols with experience. It is always difficult
to convey our own varied observations and experience with Laboratory
training to others who have had other experiences.

Laboratory training is far from being fully understood, either in
terms of processes or outcomes. We are concerned with the multitude
of data generated rather than the lack of it.

LABORATORY TRAINING GROUP STYLES

Laboratory training groups can be placed along a continuum with five
focal points. One extreme of this continuum contains trainer styles that
resemble group therapy; at the other extreme, we can find trainers that
have only a remote resemblance to group therapy.(10)

THEORY A: PROBLEM SOLVING — This theory states that learning takes place through identifying group problems, finding the relevant behavioral science theory for the problem which will suggest the direction of the resolution and then practicing the skills needed to resolve the problem. This focuses primarily on group membership, and only secondarily on personal learning. It is an approach that is highly cognitive and skill oriented.

THEORY B: PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT — This theory states that learning takes place through becoming sensitive to one's own and other's feelings. The trainer and training activities attempt to produce a psychologically safe climate which focuses on emotional processes. Evoking personal responses is encouraged and rewarded. Theory is based on emotional dynamics, existentialist and humanistic psychology.

THEORY C: VALID COMMUNICATION AND AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS — Overlapping with Theory B, this one states that learning in the laboratory takes place through the development of more authentic interpersonal relationships, learned primarily with and through the trainer who presents a role model of how to be authentic or congruent. This is based on the interpersonal theories of Harry Stack and Carl Rogers.

THEORY D: A MODEL OF INQUIRY — This theory states that learning takes place through the development of a new attitude toward the learning process itself and the discovery that intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group phenomena can be studied systematically by gathering data, analyzing them, and drawing conclusions from them. Part of the learning becomes salient, and a recognition process whereby data about one's own and other's feelings can be observed. This theory focuses primarily on the learning process itself.

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THEORY E: UNCONSCIOUS MOTIVATION -- This states that learning takes
place through making conscious certain feelings and reactions in group
members toward key issues that are unconscious or unnoticed. The assumption
is made that bringing unconscious feelings to the level of awareness
in itself leads to personal growth. (10)

The five categories represent a very rough approximation of reality.
This is stressed because certainly there are some trainers who range over
all five theories and others who would deny membership in any one. Most
trainers can be included in one or two categories.

ESSENTIALS IN LABORATORY TRAINING EXPERIENCE

1. The Here-and-Now-Focus. The immediate experiences of participants furnish
the basic ingredients for laboratory training. The struggles of
groups to achieve satisfactory organization and forward movement,
the strivings by members to find a place in the formation and functioning
of their groups, the efforts of members to integrate discrepant demands
stemming from multiple memberships, within and without the laboratory--
all these experiences yield vivid and personal content for learning.
Such learning can be accomplished best if participants are assisted
in collecting data about their efforts--personal and collective--and
in analyzing these data collaboratively. A major focus in every
laboratory program is on releasing significant here-and-now experiences for
analysis, conceptualization, practice, and generalization.

2. The there-and-then focus. At appropriate times, attention needs
also to be directed to situations away from the laboratory, more
particularly to those situations in which participants have lived and
will iv- again. If learnings and behavioral gains begun in the
laboratory training group are to weather transplanting from the laboratory
island to the mainlands of life and work, participant attention needs to
be focused on the relations between there-and-then and here-and-now.
This ordinarily involved the diagnosis of forces at home which are resistant
to or supportive of better ways of functioning. It includes assistance
in developing realistic commitments to continue such diagnosis in collab-
oration with associates at home.

3. Focus on Social and Value Perspectives. In the associational life of
the laboratory the participant is challanged to reassess the adequacy of
his value orientations and social perspectives as well as his motivations,
knowledges, and skills. .This may deeply threaten self-concepts. The
participant ordinarily needs support in focusing reconstructive attention
upon discrepancies among the differing values he lives by in various
parts of his life or between his interpersonal values and the values implicit
in his orientation to larger social issues and problems.

4. Focus on the use of Tools and Skills of Inquiry. Learning and growth
can be materially advanc d as the individual improves his skills in inquiry -
in data collection, data analysis, diagnosis, experimentation, and evaluation.
As these inquiry skills are developed, the individual becomes less dependent
upon authority figures to teach him what he needs to learn and better
able to use peer resources in clarifying and solving problems in his life.

Skills of inquiry may also help him to be more competent in assessing forces which affect him in situations away from the lab. and in enlisting others in joint assessment and modification of these forces.

5. Focus on Self as an Agent of Change: Unless the individual perceives his need for continued learning and growth and accepts personal responsibility for initiating steps toward learning, unless he has reduced internal barriers and blocks to his learning, and unless he has learned to receive help from others and to give help to others in processes of changing, little continuing learning or change will take place in himself or in the social systems of which he is a part outside the lab. The laboratory training experience assists the participant to see himself, actually and potentially as an agent of change. (4)

Lab Design:

1. The Laboratory design must support an integrative learning experience for each participant. This calls for developing creative interrelationships among a number of aspects of learning often treated as antitheses in educational programs: common and individual learning, emotion and ideas, involved action and objective analysis, practical experience and research knowledge, learning with the help of peers and learning from an expert teacher.

2. An adequate design is seen as a set of structures to induce and guide participant experience, and analysis, and evaluation, with increasing initiative from participants in directing and evaluating their own learnings.

3. Finally, an adequate design achieves a balance between the use of tested methodologies and activities and the introduction of new training inventions which will advance staff learning and contribute to the professional knowledge of a growing community of laboratory trainers. (9)

Adapting Training to a Particular Population of Participation

Participants in one lab differ from participants in another lab. First, their needs for learning differ. Learning needs cannot be fully antici-pated in advance of training, but data collected from participants before the lab are useful to a staff in getting a feeling for initially perceived learning needs of the particular population with whom they are to work. Expectations concerning what the lab will be like also vary from one participant group to another.

While shock to unrealistic expectations is a part of every lab experience, it is well for staff members to know and respect the initial expectations of participants, even as they seek to reshape them realistically. Parti-cipants also differ widely in degree of sophistication in the content and language of the behavorial sciences and the helping professionals. It is useful for staff members to know the sophistication level of the particular population as they make decisions about program content and emphasis.

Adapting Training Plans to Available Time:

One of the more obvious limitations to which a training staff must adjust its plans is the time available. Lack of adequate time makes more acute the difficulties of integrating staff differences which center in different valuations of various training experiences. Yet the same short-ness of time forces a confrontation of differences in training ideology among staff members. If the resulting conflicts can be handled creatively, innovations in training technology and staff growth can result.

The Impact of Laboratory Training on Individual Learning and Change

The laboratory training group is aimed toward facilitating learning of a special type: increased sensitivity toward group processes, increased

awareness of the character of one's own group participation, and increased ability to deal with a variety of group situations. The learnings which an individual gains at a human relations laboratory are valuable to the extent that he is able to utilize them in the groups which are important to him in his back-home setting. (3)

The Course of Development in Laboratory Training

It is generally recognized that, while each laboratory training group is unique, there is a family resemblance among all groups which includes an initial period of exploration and floundering, the gradual emergence of some sort of functional structure, and a concomitant attention to problems of authority and power and of relationships among peers. It is assumed that the development of a functioning group out of the initial vacuum and the associated examination of interpersonal and group issues constitute the medium in which learning can occur. As the laboratory training group continues to meet, definite structure emerges out of an initially more undifferentiated state. (12)

The Beginning of a Laboratory Training Group

The initial remarks made by the group trainer are extremely important in defining the character of the group. One approach is to begin the group with as little detail as possible so that the situation is barely defined. This leads to a relatively ambiguous situation into which projection of individual perceptions of the group can take place easily. The impetus for the drive to obtain responses from the training leader lies in the newness of the situation. When someone is beset by anxiety in a new situation the natural response is to seek help from experts or people who seem to know what is going on. When the trainer fails to supply this help, anxiety and dependence increase. As dependency is frustrated, hostility increases.

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The general approach of nonparticipation in the socially expected
leader role at the start of laboratory training can be understood best in
terms of anxiety and learning. Some of both is needed for change. The
concept of optimal anxiety is especially significant for the rationale
of laboratory training. If group members are uncomfortable in their
bewilderment about the trainer's abnormal silence to the point where they
are beginning to disintegrate, then there is some need for the trainer either
to interpret this confusion or actually to reveal himself more to decrease
the anxiety. (2)

Defenses Against Involvement

Variations in involvement show up all during laboratory training meetings.
Noninvolvement is sometimes the chief and lifelong defense of people who
go through life never involving themselves with anybody.

1. Overintellectualization: These people treat life and laboratory
training as an exercise of the intellect. Their use of the jargon and
going through the motions of group interaction is often impressive, but
their real involvement in the group is carefully guarded against. They have
come to observe, learn and watch the others interact.

2. Overaffective behavior: These people are overidentified with the group
and its process to the point where they really are not involved with any
of the group at all. They look as if they are the most avid group members,
but on an ego level they are not participating.

3. Selective Inattention: This is a perceptual defense and means that a
person sees what he wants to see. (15)

SOME LIMITATION OF THE LABORATORY TRAINING EXPERIENCE

The Lowest Common Denominator: The laboratory training group can move along only as rapidly as the slowest member. In rare instances, a group can successfully "seal off" a deviant or laggard member and proceed as if he were not there. But even then, it is almost as if the group is keeping its eye cocked on this member and it feels constrained repeatedly to return to the problem of this wayward member and try to include him.

The Tenacity of Habit Patterns: The optimal conditions for change are mild anxiety, group and trainer support and protection, interpretation of group and individual behavior, models of alternative solutions of problems, and heterogeneous composition. Opposing change are the time limitations of laboratory training, the successful defenses against involvement and commitment, and the energy-saving characteristics of automatic habit patterns.

From the supportive, questioning, experimental atmosphere of the laboratory training group the individual must return to his former habitat. There he meets all the internal and external forces which maintain the status quo. It is an unfortunately common experience that laboratory training participants' initial enthusiasm often quails before the jaundiced eyes of their superiors and fellow workers in their attempts at innovation. (2)

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III

THE LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE STUDENT COUNCIL AND LABORATORY TRAINING

. Some understanding of the structure and background of the LACC Student Council
is necessary before a discussion of its experiment with Laboratory Training
is possible.

LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE STUDENT COUNCIL STRUCTURE

The Los Angeles City College Student Council is an elected body of 14
student leaders. The three officers are President, Vice-president, and
Treasurer; eleven commissioners make up the rest of the Council. These students
are elected by the members of the Associated Students for one semester and
they may run for re-election. Council members are elected at the end of one
semester and serve during the next full semester. Meetings are held weekly
and usually run from two to three hours in length. The Assistant Dean of
Student Personnel attends all Council meetings as the adviser and other members
of the staff attend all or parts of some meetings as the need arises.

Of major importance is the range of subjects and possible actions open to
the Council for consideration. These are constrained only by the limits of
student imagination and, of course, the limits of the law. The student
leaders are constantly encouraged to think freely and imaginatively in their
various duties. Each week every member of the Council has an individual
conference with his faculty adviser during which the many and varied actions
are discussed, proposed, and formulated.

It is during these weekly conferences that discussions are held about such
topics as methods and procedures for working with committees, relations with
faculty members, the role of the student leader as moulder and reflector of

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student opinion, and strategies for obtaining a favorable vote on a motion before the Council.

Several problems have recurred during past semesters with each student council. Even though the student personnel has changed from semester to semester, the same kind of problems have returned. The advisory staff in discussion with other advisers from other junior colleges has found a similar pattern.

Despite the fact that the particular manifestation of the recurring difficulties may vary from one council to another, the basic problems seem to fall into three categories:

1. development of cliques or factions

2. lack of trust and communication between members

3. "Wheel-spinning", introspective meetings

DEVELOPMENT OF CLIQUES OR FACTIONS

At some point in the semester, usually after the 10th week, the members of council seem to polarize around two (or sometimes three) unofficial leaders. These groups are not openly announced and yet their presence and effect is known to the entire council. The members of each group tend to vote as a block instead of as individuals. The effect of this polarization of opinion is to stifle creativity, imagination, flexibility, and effectiveness. At the date of this writing, advisory attempts to encourage individual action and free discussion during the entire semester have not been completely successful.

LACK OF TRUST AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MEMBERS

The lack of trust centers primarily around the evaluation of motives. Members of councils have listened to each other cite the reasons for a particular vote, and yet they will often attribute unspoken, more politically motivated, pressures as the real reason for a strongly held opinion. In many cases this

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attributing of hidden reasons arouses animosity. A challenge to one member by another to reveal the real reason for a particular vote is rarely observed in the council meetings. It is during the individual conferences with the advisers that feelings of hostility and suspicions of undebated reasons are voiced. And, seemingly, no amount of advisory urging has resulted in a frank confrontation of this lack of trust between students.

Even though the eleven commissioners share a single office, and the three officers share another office, communication between the students seems to break down as the semester progresses. This has been noted by the advisory staff as they compare notes on the individual conferences held with the various student commissioners. Reports on various projects and programs will vary both as to factual content and the feelings of the students involved. This leads to the supposition that while discussing the surface features of a particular issue, the deeper feelings and convictions are left unspoken between the students and advisers. Some small indication of the extent of communication gap between participants in student government is seen in the passing of a motion at one meeting and then at a subsequent meeting, the rescinding of the same motion because of additional communication. The impression of going forward, then backward, sometimes sideways, seems to snowball the communication gap between student leaders and with their advisers to the great detriment of council morale.

"WHEEL SPINNING", INTROSPECTIVE MEETINGS

As the factions develop and the trust and communication diminish among council members, the meetings become more and more concerned with petty, inconsequential business. Long periods of time are spent over some parlimentary manuver while the action on a particular issue is stalled. After about the 10th week, concern over replacing members who have had to drop out because of academic pressures causes the council to concentrate on internal affairs.

Concern over the end of the semester council awards, where the council banquet will be held, how much will the dinner cost, who will wear the newest blazers, also contribute to the emphasis on internal business. Going through the form of a meeting, but getting little accomplished because of an attempt to demonstrate parliamentary skill, is a "wheel-spinning" activity that is particularly frustrating to the advisory staff. In the individual conferences, agendas are planned, admonitions about falling into procedural traps are given, and yet the introspective lack of concern for the rest of the campus is still prevalent.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AT PREVENTING COUNCIL PROBLEMS FROM RECURRING

During each semester various student leaders have commented upon the recurring council problems. Some students serve more than one semester in leadership positions and are able to recognize the symptoms of impending council difficulties. The attempts by these students and their advisers to prevent the return of cliques, or lack of trust or "wheel-spinning" have centered around the idea of a pre-semester retreat.

The retreat pattern has been for several years to take the student leaders for a week-end stay to a University of California dormitory during the between-semester breaks. At these locations (U.C. at Riverside and Arrowhead) the environment makes possible a pleasant balance between serious discussion and recreation. The students are housed in the temporarily vacant dormitory rooms and spend much time discussing and planning ways to have a successful Student Council in the back-home situation.

The retreat schedule has been to spend Friday afternoon and evening and all day Saturday focussing on the various aspects of Student Council operation.

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The available time was divided into blocks devoted to such topics as:

1. Orientation

2. Parliamentary procedures

3. Recurring council problems

4. The role of a student leader

5. All campus concerns

6. Council unity

7. Budget

8. Program calendar

With a few variations in details this pattern was followed for several semesters with only moderate success in the total life of the council.

NEED FOR NEW APPROACH TO COUNCIL ORIENTATION

A growing concern among the advisory staff and student leaders led to the re-evaluation of the orientation for council members and their advisers. The pattern described above was in use by several other junior colleges apparently with about the same re ults. The conventional pattern of holding one or two day orientation sessions away from the home campus to discuss council structure, purpose, and method of operation was not preventing problems of a more serious nature.

PROPOSED INNOVATION IN STUDENT LEADER-ADVISER ORIENTATION

With this background the suggestion was made to consider laboratory training with the newly elected student leaders and their advisers. Contact was made with the Behavorial Science Laboratory of the Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of California at Los Angeles. Much of the previous content of this paper was communicated

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to members of the training staff. After several conferences between the UCLA trainers and the LACC advisory staff and students, a design for a laboratory training experience was established.

LABORATORY TRAINING DESIGN

Invitations were sent to all of the elected student leaders who were to assume offices in the Spring semester to participate with their advisers in a laboratory training experience as an experiment in orientation. The following schedule was proposed:

1. check in at the UCLA residence hall
2. lunch
3. introductions of new council members and staff
4. Friday afternoon: 1st laboratory session
5. picnic supper and recreation
6. Friday evening: 2nd laboratory session
7. Saturday morning: 3rd laboratory session
8. lunch
9. Saturday afternoon: 4th laboratory session
10. departure

At the first session all of the participants met together - students, advisers, and trainers. Seated in a circle, the members made out name tags - with just first names - and listened to the trainer's short introduction of the ground rules. All included were the facts that there was no agenda, no formal leader, and that the group must decide what to do and how best to learn from its experience.

The response of the LACC participants to the opening of the laboratory training is difficult to describe. This description by Schein and Bennis reflects some of the feelings:

> The members are struggling with many emotional issues at
> once. They are confronted with a violation of many
> expectations.they have taken for granted in educational
> settings...most of all that the trainer will define
> an agenda and some goals which are meaningful for the
> group. Instead, each member now confronts some major problems:
> "What do we do and what are our goals? Who am I to be in this
> unstructured situation and what kind of role should I Play?
> How can I keep sufficient control over the group to prevent
> it from doing things which will make me too uncomfortable?"(10)

The opening silence after the trainer's introduction was eventually
broken by nervous laughter, some feeble jokes to fill the vacuum, and then
silence again. Then the member who was to become the "lowest common
denominator" complained that the school was not getting its money's worth
if all they were going to do was to sit around a circle in silence. This
was the first expression of anxeity and frustration and provided the impetus
for much of the interaction which followed.

The Saturday morning session was differentiated by the formation of
two groups: the students interacted while the advisers acted as observers;
the roles were then reversed as the advisers interacted while the students
observed. This morning session concluded with all participants together;
it reached a climax when one of the students felt free enough to express
some pent up feelings with a great amount of emotion.

The Saturday afternoon session was dominated by reactions to the
experiences of the morning session.

The UCLA trainers used the laboratory training style discussed earlier
called Personality Development in which the attempt is made to produce
a psychologically safe climate which focuses on emotional processes. The
evoking of personal responses was encouraged and rewarded.

EVALUATION OF LABORATORY TRAINING

The evaluation of a purely subjective experience such as laboratory

training has yet to be perfected. As Schein and Bennis write:

> The meagerness of evidence does not reflect lack of
> concern on the part of practitioners of laboratory training
> but the actual difficulties of gathering data which have
> empirical validity. Two very general problems can be identified:
> 1. difficulties of achieving rigor of research design
> in a setting devoted to achieving practical change and
> learning goals; and, 2. difficulties of gathering data
> in which we can have confidence as to their reliability
> and validity. On the whole research studies are
> positive and warrant the optimism we have about laboratory
> training. But vastly greater efforts will have to be
> made before we can firmly say that laboratory training
> has been proven to be an effective method of personal learning
> and organizational change. (10)

There have been four patterns of evaluation research proposed:

1. Integrated research-training design - The laboratory planners and

researchers work together from the outset to create a training design

that will make it possible to gather the kind of research data useable

for evaluation.

2. Before-after measures of delegates - The laboratory population is

measured on certain variables prior to the laboratory and again after

the laboratory.

3. Measures of delegates only after the laboratory

4. Informal observation, questionaire administration, and interviews. (12)

For the purposes of this paper evaluation technique number four

was used.

Evaluation of the LACC laboratory training experience by the advisory staff has centered around a series of continuing and on-going discussions of student leader behavior. The general impression of a more free and open attitude in individual conferences with student leaders is held by the advisory staff. Conference appointments are kept regularly and are marked by feelings of warmth and rapport between the student and advisor. Even-though the entire advisory staff has not continued with the student efforts for additional laboratory training, enough positive values have been asertained to result in plans for the repetition of the laboratory training orientation.

The communication between the advisors which was considered to be adequate prior to the laboratory training, has improved greatly. This was an un-anticipated plus factor in what was planned as an effort to improve relations between students and advisors.

Student evaluation of the laboratory training experience has been accomplished by means of informal interviews, questionaire administration and observation.

The questions fall into three broad categories:

1. personal reactions

2. effect on student council

3. student-advisor relationships

The figures in the response section of the questionaire represent the percentage of students who checked that square. (To conserve space the zeros have been omitted; 4 equals 40%.)

LOS ANG LES CITY COLLEGE

Laboratory Training Evaluation

This form will be used to collect the impressions of those students
who participated in the LACC laboratory training experience in September,
1966.

Please indicate your reaction to each question with a check mark in the
column which comes nearest to expressing your opinion.

number 1: tremendously
2: a great deal
3: moderately
4: just a little
5: not at all

1	2	3	4	5	
	4	5	1		1. Did the laboratory training experience change your relations with other student council members?
1	3	3	2	1	2. Do you feel that your participation in laboratory training has improved your performance as a student leader?
	3	3	2	2	3. Has your effectiveness in working with members of student council who did not participate in laboratory training been improved?
	6	2	1	1	4. To what extent has your ability to communicate with council members who did participate been improved?
2	1	3	4		5. How significantly have you been changed by the experience?
	3	3	2	2	6. To what extent are you more aware of your own motivations?
1	2	7			7. To what extent has your ability to express your feelings been improved?
	2	4	2	2	8. Has your behavior in the council meetings been affected by your experience with laboratory training?
		1	2	7	9. Have you felt any resentment between those members of council who participated in laboratory training and those who did not?
			7	3	10. To what extent are you still "wearing a mask" in your relations with other council members?
4	2	2	1	1	11. Would you like to participate in future laboratory training sessions with persons not on the council?

(Zeros have been
omitted: 4 = 40%)

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1	2	3	4	5		
2	2	2	2	2	12.	To what extent do expressions of personal feelings interfere with council meet ngs?
2	2	4	2		13.	Has your friendship improved with any one or more of the participants in the laboratory training experience?
	1	7	2		14.	Do the other students who participated seem to work more effectively with you?
3	2	2	3		15.	Would you like to participate in more laboratory training with the members of student council?
2	3	3	2		16.	To what extent do you feel that laboratory training can have a beneficial effect on the operation of a student council?
3	3	2	1	1	17.	How strongly do you advise future councils to participate in laboratory training sessions?
4	2	2	1	1	18.	How strongly would you recommend that other junior colleges try laboratory training with their councils?
	1	2	2	5	19.	Has the LACC Student Council laboratory training experience been of benefit to the general student body?
2	2	5	1		20.	Do you feel that the LACC Student Council has been helped by the laboratory training experience?
	4	3	3		21.	Has your relationship with your faculty advisor changed?
	4	4	2		22.	Did the laboratory training experience change your relations with the student activities advisory staff members?
3	4	2	1		23.	How much more comfortable do you feel with your adviser?
6	3	1			24.	How strongly do you recommend that the advisors participate in the laboratory training sessions with the members of council?
	1	2	4	3	25.	To what extent do you feel that your adviser is "wearing a mask?"
1	6	2	1		26.	To what extent are you trying to "be yourself" in your relations with your adviser?
6	2	1	1		27.	Were the two U.C.L.A. trainers effective?

In the first section only questions 4, 7, 9, and 10 received
60% or more in any one response. The other responses were all 50% or below.
In question number 4, 60% of the students feel that their ability to communicate
with other council members who did participate has been improved a great deal.
In question number 7, 70% feel that their ability to express feelings has
improved moderately. Seventy percent feel no resentment at all between
those members who participated in the laboratory training and those who did
not; only 10% feel a moderate amount of resentment. The tenth question shows
that 70% still feel that they are "wearing a mask" just a little in their
relations with other council members.

The second group of questions dealt with the effect of the laboratory
training on the student council. In this group only three questions
received a 50% or more response. That 70% of the students feel moderately
more effective in working with the group was shown in question 14. While
10% of the students feel that the student council laboratory training has
been a great deal of help in helping the general student body, 50% feel that
the laboratory training has been no help at all (question 19). And yet
question 20 shows that 50% feel that the student council has been moderately
helped by the laboratory training experience.

Sixty percent was the highest indication in two questions of the third
section, pertaining to student-adviser relations. Question 24 indicated
a tremendously strong recommendation that the advisers participate in the
laboratory training with the students. In question 26, 60% indicate that
they are trying a great deal to "be themselves" in their relations with advisers.

The one question which did not fit into the three broad categories was number
27 in which 60% indicated that the UCLA trainers had been tremendously effective.

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EVALUATION OF QUESTIONAIRE

    Certainly no clear cut trend is evident in the widely scattered responses on the questionaire and the three basic problems remain unsolved. Except for a brief period Friday evening no time was allotted for recreation. And yet hone of the participants mentioned the lack of free time. This is in marked contrast to the previous retreats at which many requests for shortening some discussions were heard to allow more recreation time. This was indicative of the high degree of involvement by all participants – students and advisers alike.

    No attempt at a formal evaluation was made during the first few weeks of the semester. However most of the students were enthusiastic enough about the experience to contact the LACC Psychology Department to obtain further opportunities in laboratory training.

    However the responses on question 17 (How strongly do you advise future councils to participate in laboratory training?) total 80% from "moderately" to "tremendously." This indication plus the improved advisor-student relationships reported by the advisory staff, and generally favorable (and total lack of absolutely negative responses) attitudes shown in the third group of questions, have resulted in a positive attitude toward continuing the experiment with laboratory training.

    Mary Margaret Fuller has summarized the evaluation of laboratory training dilemma in these words:

> Slowly there is research being done which may help suggest some
> of its benefits. 'Scientific evidence' will probably
> do little convincing in and of itself. Laboratory training
> like Grandma's chocolate cake—well, you remember that
> it tasted so good when you had some. You can tell someone
> else all about it—even give out the recipe—but they
> probably won't understand. (6)

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SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

Statement of problem and proposed method of solution

Participants in junior college student government need to estab-
lish more effective working relationships in order to carry out their
assigned functions. This paper has discussed the techniques of
laboratory training and their application to the student council of
Los Angeles City College.

Laboratory Training: history, development and current status

Laboratory Training is an education procedure designed to increase
social sensitivity (the ability accurately to sense what others think
and feel) and behavioral flexibility (the ability to behave appropriately
in a variety of interpersonal relations.)

The beginnings of laboratory training can be traced to a workshop
held in 1964 at the State Teachers College in New Britain, Conneticut.
The purpose of the workshop was to develop more effective leaders
in facilitating the provisions of the FEPC. A chance request by some
of the workshop participants to attend a staff evaluation resulted in a
meeting of unusual effectiveness in understanding the group process.
Capitalizing on the extremely high degree of involvement at the staff-
participation level, several sponsoring agencies, including the University
of California, continued experimenting with small groups called Basic
Skills Training (BST) Groups. From these beginnings the National
Training Laboratory became the center for research and development
for such groups. The central theme in laboratory training is the
facilitation of learning by all its members. A major content of the
learning is the developing experience of the group and its members in
here-and-now behavioral events.

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The LACC Student Council and Laboratory Training

The LACC Student Council is an elected body of student leaders which serves for one semester. The Council is advised collectively by the Assistant Dean of Student Personnel and the members are advised individually by other members of the student activities staff.

For the past several years several problems have recurred which seem to fall into three categories:

1. development of cliques or factions

2. lack of trust and communication between members

3. "wheel-spinning", introspective meetings

Previous attempts at preventing these problems have centered around the pre-semester retreat for student leaders and advisors. The traditional organization was to spend two days away from the campus discussing such topics as parliamentary procedure, the role of the student leader, budget, all-campus problems, etc. The consistently recurring problems, in spite of the traditional orientation sessions, led the advisory staff to search for a different type of orientation.

Proposed Innovation in Student-Advisor Orientation

The use of laboratory training was suggested as a possible alternative for the traditional orientation pattern. Contact with the UCLA Behavioral Science Laboratory was made and after several conferences the decision was made to proceed with a week end retreat devoted to a laboratory training experience.

Laboratory Training Design

The laboratory training design included four T Group sessions which took place between Friday noon and Saturday evening. The sessions were interrupted only by breaks for meals and sleeping; there was only one brief recreation period before the evening meal on Friday night.

The training style called Personality Development, in which participants are urged to give personal responses and to express feelings, was used.

Evaluation of Laboratory Training

From various techniques of evaluation, these were chosen: informal observation, questionaire administration and interviews. The advisory staff has observed a greater rapport with the student leaders -- more regularly kept appointments and greater warmth in communication. An unexpected benefit has been the improved communication between the advisory staff, which had previously been considered quite adequate.

The student questionaire was grouped into three catagories: 1. personal reactions 2. effect on student council and 3. student-adviser relationships. While there is no clear cut trend evident in the responses and the three basic problems have not been solved, enough positive indications have been noted to warrant further investigation of laboratory training as a device for the orientation of student leaders and advisors.

Suggestions for Further Study

These questions expose some of the areas for further investigations of laboratory training:

1. What kinds of learning take place?

2. Which personality variables are most relevant to group functioning?

3. To that extent are learnings transferred to back-home groups?

4. Are some people better able to profit from laboratory training?

5. What about laboratory training contributes to change?

6. Can the values of laboratory training be achieved more effectively by other educational approaches?

7. What effect does laboratory training on a follow-up basis have on maintaining or increasing knowledge and skills atta ned?

8. What effect does the trainer have on the results of laboratory training?

9. Is it more or less effective to utilize a trainer from the same professional group as the trainees?

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