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ABSTRACT
                Three evaluators with different backgrounds and
interests were involved in a program evaluation at Cornell
University's Center for International Studies, where two of the
evaluators had serious conflicts and the third served as an in-house
mediator. The third evaluator questioned why he had credibility with
the first two, looked at how he developed professional and
interpersonal skills, examined how he reinforced a task-oriented
atmosphere, analyzed how he worked, assessed his role effectiveness,
and summarized how the entire process helped him. He saw his role as
that of a facilitator/consultant/problem solver. (BJG)

IMPACTS ON A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST-CONSULTANT

David B. Macklin

You have a picture of overlapping spheres of action -- the Center of International Studies (CIS), the faculty of the courses, and Brown, Paine and Brock as the first; the second as Center for Improvement of Undergraduate Education (CIUE), featuring Brock, Paine and me. Paine was located in both spheres; Brock was also -- but less actively in the period of my concern; Brown was mostly intra-CIS, and I was strictly intra-CIUE.

You've heard the problems Paine and Brock had. I was brought in as in-house consultant, translator, mediator, etc., at a pretty early stage of the Brock-Paine conferences, say, late September.

Question 1. How did I fit in? I had some credibility in both men, based on:

a) My general background in research and teaching various social sciences (social psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, even a concentration and inter-disciplinary research on rural development);

b) From intermittent instances and the summer together at CIUE, Brock and I shared respect for each other's interests and abilities;

c) Paine had a need for a "friend-in-camp" at CIUE, and my background made me easily relevant. This was accepted because Paine found he could trust me -- no tales behind his back, no two-faced dealings, etc.

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d) Finally, the content area of the study, plus my rela-
tionship with Brock, gave me confidence in my own cre-
dibility -- for this was a quite new kind of role for
me.

Question 2. What feelings did I bring to the task of mediator
and collaborator?

a) I had a lot of sympathy/empathy regarding Paine's being
somewhat "at sea" vis-a-vis the questions Brock was try-
ing to ask. I've been there too. And in this situation,
Brock had to educate me some to understand the meanings
of his project interests;

b) There were some feelings I had to control. I felt I
had a strong background (learning, research, teaching)
in the content of the first course to be evaluated. As
Paine reflected the main professor's performance and
theory, I had feelings I could do a better job. It's
entirely possible this is an endemic problem for evalua-
tors -- namely to respect the performance as given,
when the evaluator may or may not think she/he knows
more than the performer. Moreover, as I came to under-
stand Brock's conceptual concerns, linked with my re-
search abilities, I had some feelings I could do the
research more efficaciously than Paine.

c) But I didn't let these dominate. Why?

i) This research/evaluation was not my formal
assignment and Paine had been specially hired on

a grant to do it. I was on more "general" money;

ii) I had plenty to learn to prove myself within my
main responsibilities -- since it was my first
Educational-Evaluation position. Also, my pre-
ference is very much for direct, systematic com-
parative analyses -- I didn't want to have Paine's
responsibilities for so "nebulous" a program.
Speaking of my preference, I think it may be useful
to characterize the "professional preferences" of
us three:

> Brock -- principally interested in new con-
> ceptual knowledge, with method sort of
> "philosophical" questioning; exploring
> assumptions, usages, meanings.
> Paine -- evaluation: analysis of empirical
> reality with an un-mechanical, less cate-
> gorical "systems" viewpoint to find "natural"
> elements and their interrelationships.
> Macklin -- hypothesis specification and de-
> ductive research; predict the important
> questions and answers and test them by
> extraction from reality, creating thereby
> an "artificial reality".

All these can strengthen one another -- as we have
have indeed found. However, our natural lines of
thinking accentuated the differences and lack of
understanding.

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One of the genuinely positive impacts has been to
learn more fully what each orientation can do for the
others, and to understand <u>how</u> more clearly.

iii) I respected Paine's ability to deal with and advise
the less-than-cooperative faculty of Rural Develop-
ment course. He had more knowledge of teaching
techniques and ways to interact than I did.

Question 3. I took, and reinforced, the group's (Brock-Paine-
me) priority as <u>task</u>-oriented, not affective. Why?

a) Brock's request for my assistance concerned "things"
and activities", not some kind of statement of "we can't
get along".

b) There was a strong implicit assumption among all of us
that we are "mature people", able to work out our differ-
ences while being productive.

c) Contributing to this was the fact that we all conceived
of CIUE as a work group. Paine stresses pre-existant
regarding this -- even though our Center is small, so each
individual has a highly visible effect, it's still an
ongoing organization one has to "fit into".

d) As stated, the time pressures were felt very strongly
right at the start -- the first course to be evaluated
was underway; our mistaken idea of what was required --
some thorough, lengthy statement -- for the first OE
Progress Report at the end of the first three months.

e) Each of us, when faced with an interpersonal problem prefers to approach it intellectually, analytically. Probably there's a continuum here, from problem-solving to unconscious defense -- so a consistent retreat into defensiveness would be available potentially. Academic selection and training reinforces this sort of personal style. For us, this contributed to the consequence that there was an implicit agreement on "how to define the problem", i.e., it was mainly a cognitive one.

(Some questioning of one another's competence existed, but no one permitted it to predominate in his perception.)

f) Brock and I lacked direct experience with the possibilities and limitations of an emotionally focused (e.g., "encounter") confrontation and resolution. Therefore, we weren't about to experiment with it under severe time pressures.

g) Paine had significant human relations training. I didn't want to inexpertly invade his turf -- which would result in my losing any effectiveness and not advance solution to the problem either.

Question 4. How did I work?

a) I was "on call" in effect, as we had a small office, a high priority task, and my time allocations were flexible.

b) Each could "ventilate" to me separately, so meetings of

the three of us didn't have to-be "heavy" emotional confrontations. We talk out some differences, find some possible convergences or "better ideas". But I always took care not to align myself to either person. Also, if I thought an idea was being pushed on me in a I:I situation that I believed the other person would question/ disagree with, I deliberately and explicitly resisted closure -- so it could be discussed by the three of us. I noted the intellectualizing bent of all of us -- the danger that seemed most probable in the process was both

    i) instances of polarization, and

    ii) the accretion of these into strong, antagonistic general positions. (Each of these people, Brock and Paine, had a strong, not necessarily latent, "need to be right".

c) I tried to help the cognitive tasks forward -- they accepted me as an equal in our discussions, in seeking clarity, agreable compromises and syntheses, defining choices, etc. Typically, I took as given, or relied on asking them "the facts". Only in recent months -- as we're putting the Final Report together -- have I developed a comprehensive view of the courses, the International Studies Center, the faculty, etc. The need to do this comes from the more active and independent content-related role I've assumed. -- Going back to Paine's distinction

of "lumpers vs. splitters", I'm working on the lumping

side.

Question 5. Did the role I played, and the fit of that role

into the whole nexus have a conseq●nce on our work that could be labelled

"loss-minimization", as opposed to a gain-maximization, via confrontation?

Briefly, the answer would have to be yes -- but in the light of so many

powerful factors pushing us in this same direction, its questionable the

alternative was a possibility.

However, we have also worked in a way that moves us from the

extreme of mere "loss-minimization" -- namely, by extending the amount

of time we've put into the entire project and by gaining added leverage

from what we've learned from each other.

Question 6. What have been the main outcomes or "impacts" for

me?

a) I've been fortunate in not experiencing any crises or

incipient crises in relation to this study. That we're

reaching the end, with a final product, reflects well

on us all -- and that has to include me.

b) I've gained in my interpersonal/listening skills, with

probably the biggest conscious aspect an increase in my

confidence to undertake such.

c) Also, I'm more aware of what it means to do heavy con-

ceptual "work" and how you can go about it. This use-

fully supplements the typical social science ability to

analyze into parts and to generalize a little.

d) The biggest impact has been as a major experience in the

whole process I've gone through since joining CIUE: of

moving from my previous definition of my professional

self as a producer of identifiable products (research,
teaching), which provide a form of proving-oneself, to
the more nebulous, no-final-product-identifiability
role as facilitator/consultant/problem-solver. I'm
getting more comfortable with this, but I still want
some of the other.