Reading 38

An Intergroup Perspective on Individual Behavior

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The history of psychology has been filled with attempts to understand the behavior of people either in terms of their personality, or as an interaction of individual and environmental characteristics (Lewin, 1947). In the latter case, the environment has been conceptualized at many levels, ranging from global influences of the culture at large to specific properties of the groups of which individuals are members. Although a great deal of attention has been given to group influences on individuals' beliefs, values, perceptions, and behaviors (Hackman, 1976), to date the impact on individuals of forces generated by relationships *between* groups has been largely unexplored.

Since there now exists an expanding body of knowledge about intergroup processes (Sherif, 1962; Rice, 1969; Levine & Campbell, 1972; Lorsch & Lawrence, 1972; Smith, 1974; Alderfer, 1977; Alderfer, Brown, Kaplan, & Smith, in press), our concept of individual behavior can be significantly augmented by including this aspect of the social environment as a determinant of how people behave.

In this paper I explore the proposition that, when intergroup situations exist, *behavior can be viewed primarily as an enactment of the forces those intergroup processes generate.* This is not to claim that individual or group interpretations of the same behaviors have no validity. Rather, it is simply an assertion that if an analysis is made at an intergroup level, a substantial proportion of the variation in individual behavior is explainable in terms of the intergroup dynamics. I propose that intergroup processes: (1) color profoundly our perceptions of the world, and may play a critical role in determining how we construct our personal sense of reality; (2) help define our individual identities; and (3) contribute significantly to the emergence of behavior patterns that we traditionally label as leadership.

Each of these assertions will be explored and illustrated by examining salient data from three very different social systems: (1) the experiences of a high school principal, and the way his personal sense of reality has been influenced by the various intergroup forces in his school system; (2) the development of the individual identity of a "village lunatic" in an experiential laboratory; and (3) the repeated changes of leadership behaviors in a group of survivors from an aircraft crash.

THE INTERGROUP AS A DETERMINER OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY

It has long been recognized that people in different groups often perceive and understand the same event in radically different ways, particularly when there is an "ingroup" and an "outgroup." In such cases, one group usually will perceive an event in highly favorable terms, while the other sees the same event in an entirely derogatory manner. This phenomenon, referred to as "ethnocentrism" by Levine and Campbell (1972), is so powerful that group members may be unable to develop a view of reality that is independent of the group they belong to. The phenomenon becomes additionally potent when a person is caught in the context of multiple intergroups that involve interlocking sequences of events across time, and when the groups exist in a hierarchy of power relationships. Under these circumstances, the way one constructs his or her sense of reality may be almost completely determined by the interplay of intergroup processes.

Smith (1974) illustrates such a situation in his description of how Lewis Brook, principal of the high school in Ashgrove (New England), constructed his sense of what was taking place within the school system. Brook's perspectives changed dramatically from moment to moment, and these changes often were related directly to changes in his

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relative position in the power hierarchy of intergroup relationships.

For example, on one occasion Principal Brook was vociferously berating the superintendent, his superior, for something the superintendent had recently "done to" him. Lewis's recounting of the episode was cut short by a teacher who entered his office. Whereupon Lewis, without a moment's pause, responded to the teacher exactly as the superintendent had interacted with him. When confronted with this resounding obviousness, Lewis refused (or was unable) to see the similarity. When the two sets of events were dissected so that Lewis was caught by the brutal certitude of the similarities, he responded, "But it's different! I have reasons for treating the teacher that way." And when it was suggested that perhaps the superintendent had reasons for his treatment of the principal, Lewis, with more than a hint of impatience in his voice, retorted, "But mine were reasons; the superintendent's were merely rationalizations!"

This observation led me to formulate a theory of hierarchical intergroup relations in which the behavior of a person can be examined from the relative positions of upper, middle, and lower in the organizational structures in which he or she is embedded. Lewis Brook, as principal of the Ashgrove high school, had three assistant principals and a staff of one hundred teachers who served the educational needs of some 1,400 children in the ninth to twelfth grades. Relative to these two groups, the teachers and the students, Lewis was in an *upper* position. Superimposed on the school was an administrative and political hierarchy of a superintendent and an elected Board of Education. In relation to these two groups, Lewis was in a *lower* position. Finally, Lewis was in a *middle* position in the constellation of relationships between his subordinates (the teachers and students) and his superiors (the superintendent's office). Brook's life as principal can be examined from each of these three relative positions in the hierarchical structure, as shown in Figure 38-1. In particular, it is possible to see how his perceptions of events were influenced by the position he happened to occupy at the time they took place.

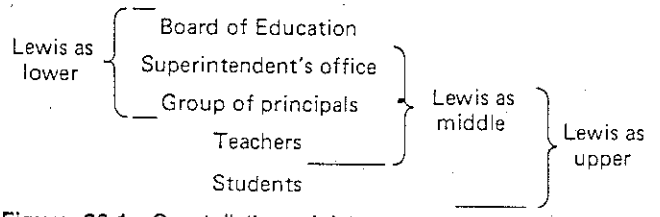

Figure 38-1 Constellation of intergroup relations with Lewis Brook in each of the three positions.

Lewis as a Lower

When in a lower position, Brook regularly demonstrated a high degree of suspicion and excessive personal sensitivity. For example, on the day following each Board of Education meeting, Lewis would sit for long, anxious hours waiting for a call from the superintendent advising him of Board discussions that might be relevant to the life of his school. Usually no such call would come, and Lewis complained regularly and bitterly about how he was so faithfully ignored. But his protestation never triggered anything more than a retort from the superintendent that if anything relevant to his high school was discussed, he would be contacted within hours.

From the Board of Education's upper perspective, it was simple to conclude that if Lewis heard nothing it simply meant that the Board had not been debating anything relevant to his school's life. But from Lewis's lower perspective, hearing nothing did *not* mean that nothing was happening. Rather it meant "all hell is about to break loose," an inference that activated his "lower paranoia." Because Lewis assumed there was a conspiracy of silence, he would fantasize with meticulous dedication about all the possible things that could be "done to him," and would search for cues that might validate his worst suspicions. His failure to uncover a "plot" designed to undo him as principal was never interpreted by Lewis to mean that no such plot existed. Instead, he would conclude that his detection devices simply lacked the finesse required to detect what was happening in the "closed" ranks of the uppers.

Ironically, while Lewis was overcome with all this suspicion, reality for the Board of Education was that they were doing "nothing to anybody." In fact, they felt so paralyzed by their own stagnant inactivity that they would have been simultaneously dismayed and pleased to discover that someone, in his wildest imagination, was perceiving them as being in a state other than immobility. Ignorant of this alternative view, Lewis continued to construct a picture of the world about him that hung on trivial contingencies, but which for him was the pillar of his personal reality.

Brook's suspiciousness and oversensitivity when

in a lower position can be seen as being a direct consequence of how people who feel powerless respond in intergroup exchanges with more powerful groups. Lower groups often develop strong protective devices and high cohesion to lessen their feelings of vulnerability. And one result of this response is that a lower group comes to define its essence in terms of this very cohesion and unity. In order to feed this sense of unity, members feel the need for the external threat to be continued. This creates a double bind: if the uppers cease to present a threat, that situation may be experienced by lowers as equally threatening, for it lessens the demand for their cohesion. This, in turn, recreates the sense of vulnerability of the lower group, because the *lack* of overt attack is a challenge to the very basis of unity on which group life is predicated. Either way it becomes imperative for members of the lower group to treat the uppers with suspicion. The bind reads as follows: "If they're getting at us, we've got to watch out. If they're not getting at us we've also got to watch out because they'll probably be getting at us in the long run by taking our unity away from us now by lessening the threat we feel." It is this process that ensures a lower group's paranoia and which, in my opinion, stirred Lewis Brook's intense feelings of sensitivity and suspiciousness when relating to his superiors.

Lewis as an Upper

Despite the disdain Lewis felt about his superiors' failure to consult him on matters in which he believed he had a basic right to participate, he reacted toward his own subordinate teachers and students with an equally elitist air. When in his upper position, Lewis always had a myriad of reasons why it was impossible to let the teachers participate fully in decisions that influenced their lives. The teachers felt these reasons were without substance, and they were perpetually distressed by the lack of confidence shown toward them by their principal, who demanded that approval be obtained for even the most trivial and routine of tasks.

When Lewis was in an upper position, he acted out the tendency of superior groups to see the behavior of subordinates in pessimistic terms—the very behaviors that he reacted to so negatively when he was a lower. As a member of the upper group, Lewis, like other uppers, tended to delegate responsibilities very willingly, but not the authority required to carry through on those responsibilities. This behavior of superiors guarantees that the actions of subordinate groups will not fulfill satisfactorily the expectations implied when the responsibilities are delegated. Although such shortcomings are caused largely by the uppers' withholding of necessary authority, they also are used by the superiors as justification for their original unwillingness to delegate authority. This phenomenon ensures a self-reinforcing and self-repeating set of perceptions, in that it heightens the likelihood that the subordinate groups will be seen as less competent than is desirable.

An insidious dimension of this phenomenon is that it enables upper groups to avoid taking full responsibility for their own behavior. In taking for themselves the role of designing organizational policy—but then delegating the implementation of that policy to the middle group—the uppers are able to build for themselves the perfect defense against failure. They can always conclude that their own policy was good but that the middles simply failed to implement it satisfactorily. Negative feedback can then be viewed merely as an indicator that subordinate groups are not as competent as is necessary. And, at the same time, the superiors can continue to avoid confronting their own expertise (or lack thereof) as uppers. Such a process locks upper groups into a way of viewing the world that ensures they will see the behavior of subordinates in increasingly depreciating terms.

Lewis Brook, as a member of an upper group, was caught by this intergroup dynamic as strongly as he was by the double binds of suspiciousness when he was located in a lower position.

Lewis as a Middle

When Brook was in a middle position, he was always espousing the need for "better communication" within the system. Despite this, he became caught in the trap of wanting to restrict information flow by making sure upper and lower groups communicated with each other only through him and his middle group. This situation is illustrated by the event described below.

Lewis was regularly embarrassed by learning about what was happening in his school for the first time from superiors who had been "leaked" information from below. Since he was an upper within the confines of the school itself, he often was

unheeding to things teachers were trying to say to him. Therefore, they regularly felt the need to circumvent him in order to have their concerns attended to by the superintendent or the Board of Education. When teachers made attempts to contact the superintendent directly, Lewis became highly threatened and eventually decreed that no one could have access to the superintendent without first obtaining permission from one of the principals. By this action, Lewis clearly was working to preserve the centrality of his middle group's role as moderator of information flow.

Not to be daunted by this restriction on their liberties, the teachers found informal ways to gain access to the superintendent. The most frequently used device was to apply for study leave, even when not qualified for it. Such an application automatically led to an interview with the superintendent, which Lewis Brook allowed to occur without questioning his teachers. When ritualistically informed by the superintendent that they had not met the prerequisite conditions for study leave, the teachers willingly withdrew their applications and then confided the real reasons why they had sought an audience with him.

Lewis Brook never became aware of this practice, but he always felt distressed by the amount of information about his school of which the superintendent was aware. This distress only reinforced his dedication to make sure that teachers used his office alone as the means of communicating with the upper echelons of the system—an aspiration that he never realized.

To legitimize their own place in the system, middle groups need the uppers and lowers to be operating in a relatively polarized and noncommunicating fashion. Indeed, one of the ways for middle groups to be "confirmed" in the system is for them to become the central communication channel between the two extreme groups. This is possible primarily because both upper and lower groups use the withholding of information as a major strategy for dealing with each other. Upper groups limit information flow by using labels (such as "secret" or "in confidence") that designate who has legitimate access to what. For lowers, ground rules specifying what constitutes loyalty to the group determines what can be said to whom and under what circumstances, with the major concern being to minimize the vulnerability of the group.

If it were not for the rigid polarization of uppers and lowers, and their refusal to allow information to flow freely in the system, the middles might not be needed. But once the middle's role has become established as the communication link between upper and lower groups, the middles become very anxious to keep those polarized groups from talking frankly and openly. The middles become most threatened when the other two groups pass information to each other directly, or through any channel other than those the middles feel they have legitimized for the system. For this reason, the middles invest an inordinate amount of energy in defending the principle that all communication must pass through them. The net result of this dynamic is that middles will be constantly talking about the need to improve system-wide communication—while at the same time playing a vigorous role in restricting direct communication between other groups.

Summary

From the above account it is possible to recognize that intergroup processes cause groups at each of the three levels to become locked into a particular set of binds, and to create unique views of reality that are characteristic of those specific levels of the system. If these intergroup phenomena are conceded, it is predictable that an individual in a lower position will be supersensitive and suspicious of the activities of others. In an upper position, he or she will view the behavior of subordinates in a pessimistic light, and accordingly will delegate responsibility without the necessary authority. When in a middle position, the individual will espouse the need for greater communication, while acting to keep many communications restricted.

All these behaviors were exhibited by Lewis Brook in his role as Ashgrove's high school principal. It is easy to attribute these behaviors to Brook's unique personality. Yet, when viewed in the context of the intergroups operating in Brook's school system, it also becomes possible to understand how powerfully his own behavior and sense of reality were influenced by intergroup phenomena.

THE INTERGROUP AS A DETERMINANT OF INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

Smith (1976) describes how intergroup interactions in a five-day power laboratory led to the creation of

an identity for one individual that other members of the social system came to symbolize as "the village lunatic."

A power laboratory is an experiential, social, and psychological simulation designed for people interested in experiencing and learning about the dynamics of power and powerlessness. The laboratory is structured to create three classes of people: (1) the powerful "elite," who have access to and control over all the basic resources of the society, such as food, housing, money, and so forth; (2) the "ins," who have minimal control over some resources, at the discretion of the elites; and (3) the powerless "outs" who are totally deprived and have no control over any community resources. All conditions of living, such as standards of housing, quality of food, and so on, are differentiated to heighten "class" differences. For example, the outs live in a ghetto-like life style, while the elites live in comparatively leisurely luxury. On arrival at the laboratory all members are "born into" one of these three classes, without individual choice.

In the power laboratory described by Smith, the elite group of seven arrived half a day before the middles, and produced a plan which would enable them to keep their eliteness hidden. They decided to act as if they were regular, nonelite participants, while they actually would be quietly and powerfully pulling the strings of the social system like backstage puppeteers.

The plan ran into trouble, however, within hours of the arrival of the nine middles. The "birth" trauma of the middles was quite extreme: at induction, they had all their belongings (save one change of underwear) taken from them, an event that stirred their anger and their determination to discern "who did this to us." Anthony, one of the middles, had brought with him a tape recorder that he wanted to use for his learning and post-laboratory reflections. He was not allowed to keep the recorder, however, and his resentment about this heightened his sensitivity as to who was powerful and who was powerless in the system. It took him very little time to differentiate the elites from the nonelites—simply by observing the interactions that took place among various participants. In response to his awareness, Anthony tried to initiate a public debate intended to flush out the elite group. He was generally unsuccessful in this, partly because others lacked his acumen in discerning what was taking place, and partly because of the skill of the elite group in keeping their identity hidden.

After half a day all but two members of the elite group had tired of the charade and had made public their real status. This made the middle group angry, and Anthony became even more determined to end the elites' game of phantomness. But this did not occur. The most influential member of the upper group—Richard, a tall, strong, bearded, black man —did not identify himself as an elite and remained with the middles, continuing to manipulate them to do exactly as the elites ordained.

The successful smoking out of most of the elite group fanned Anthony's fires. He became consumed with his fixation to force all the elites to become visible, Richard included. That was not to be, because Richard was blessed with a resolve equal to Anthony's and the two became bitterly pitted against each other. Anthony's energies were focused entirely on Richard's eviction from the middle group, while Richard, with a simple indifference to these pressures, worked at massaging the middles into accepting obediently their role as servants of the elites.

Whenever Richard attempted to make an initiative, Anthony immediately attempted to frustrate it by accurately, though boringly, accusing him of being an elite spy, and arguing that the middles should no nothing until such time as all the elites had been ousted. Eventually Richard became symbolized as a force for *activity* while Anthony came to be seen as someone reinforcing *stagnation.* Richard skillfully presented himself as the champion of the middles' cause, and successfully led negotiations with the elites for return of some of their personal belongings. This success elevated Richard to the sole leadership role in the bourgeoise and he accordingly dealt with Anthony's accusations by simply dismissing them as part of a personal vendetta against him as the middles' leader.

The middle group did very little in the first day and a half other than debate the spy issue, and this inactivity produced such intense frustration that some reached the point of being willing to do anything, including being led down any path by Richard, simply to escape the paralysis of their inertia. Whether or not he was a spy ceased to matter much.

Anthony recognized that his group had adopted the spirit of going along with anything that produced

activity, yet he could not reconcile himself to the fact that almost everything Richard proposed served to make the middles into the elite's lackeys. Soon Anthony's fight was being stifled by others in his group who would audibly groan their protest over his persistent regurgitation of a theme they all wanted to ignore. To buffer himself against this visible hostility, Anthony began to preface his remarks with a statement designed to lessen his vulnerability. He could have said, "I know I'm the only person who is concerned about this issue," but that's not the way he phrased his protective remarks. Instead he would say, "I know you think this is just my problem, but . . ."

By articulating this "buffer" statement in this way, Anthony provided other middles with the opportunity they had been looking for. By simply agreeing, "Yes, Anthony, that's just *your* problem," they could quickly close him down and avoid the agony of further monotonous reiteration of the spy theme.

The symbolization processes began to develop at a fast pace, and very soon the middle group had made "Anthony's problem" the receptacle for all of their frustrations. (Of course, the middles would have experienced frustration having to do with their need to keep their relationships with both elites and outs functional, independent of Anthony's role. As middles, they found that whenever they acted in the possible interest of the elites, the outs would abuse them for having been co-opted. And whenever they responded to pressures from the outs, the elites would treat them punitively and leave them feeling alienated and alone. The reality was that no matter what they did—even if they did nothing—the middles would end up feeling uncomfortable.)

Since the middles had begun to believe that the cause of their discomfort was "Anthony's problem," they came to view that "problem" in more extreme form as their sense of impotence heightened. Eventually they settled on the belief that "he really must be crazy." To make matters worse, Anthony had been successful enough to convince many of the middles that the spy issue was critical, but this only reverberated back on him: given the way the group's "problem" had become symbolized and projected into Anthony, it made more sense to many members of the middle group to suspect that Anthony was the real spy rather than Richard.

When this possibility was raised in the group, Anthony recognized that his battle was lost. By then he was so much on the periphery of the group that he knew there was little chance of his finding a comfortable place in the middle group. He therefore began to search for an alternative role in the system. The alternatives were, of course, very limited. The doors of the elites clearly were closed to him. That left only the outs—who in fact welcomed him with open arms. For them, the possibility of someone becoming *downwardly* mobile had real strategic value in this particular society, and they quickly grasped at the opportunity Anthony's plight presented. In addition, the outs had developed a strong emotional support system. They sensed Anthony's pain, and willingly reached out to provide him a haven.

Anthony became so overwhelmed by the level of acceptance and warmth accorded him by the outs that he quickly concluded that this was where he wanted to see out his days in the society. Here he ran into a new problem. It had been their common pain, their collective fears and uncertainties, and their desperate need for each other in psychological survival tasks that had forged the group of outs into its particular shape. Nothing in Anthony's middle experience paralleled those forces, and there was no way to revise the "out history" to allow Anthony to be made a full partner in the "real" life of the group. At best, he could become only an adopted son.

Anthony needed acceptance by the outs so badly that he was willing to comply uncritically to any of the group's wishes. And here, Anthony's "way of being" changed dramatically. The overly perceptive characteristics he displayed in his bourgeois period now became clouded by an obsessional overconforming to the norms of the out group—a response which attempted to compensate for his sense of historical exclusion from the outs' world, and to pay an adequate price for his acceptance by them.

Another event added appreciably to the complexity of everyone's perceptions of Anthony's behavior. At the time of Anthony's migration to the outs, Richard (keen to keep tranquility disjointed) returned to the relative comfort of the elite group. However, still wishing to maximize deception, the elites continued the charade by refusing to acknowledge that Richard had been one of them all along. Instead they described his move as "upward mobili-

ty," provided to Richard because of his good leadership behavior and his service to the society.

The impact of the dual departures of Richard and Anthony from the middles left a powerful vacuum. The remaining middles started to experiment with new behaviors. Collectively (though only temporarily) they gained a new sense of vitality. This caused them to lay, even more vehemently than previously, total responsibility for their earlier stagnation at Anthony's feet. They attributed none of it to Richard. For his departure they grieved. For Anthony's, they celebrated.

The remaining history of this laboratory was filled with examples of how tension in the system—the byproduct of unhandled intergroup conflict—became attributed to Anthony's "craziness." No matter what discomforting event occurred, it was symbolized as being Anthony's fault.

Why?

My basic thesis is that once the society had created for Anthony alone a totally unique experience within the society, and once a chance was provided for his behavior to be seen as "crazy," the system gave him an identity that powerfully served the needs of the intergroup exchanges. The "village lunatic" identity provided a receptacle for the craziness of the whole system—the deceit, the multiple and conflicting senses of reality, the myriad of covert, unarticulable processes, and so forth—which enabled the society at large to avoid having to confront its own pathology. In short, the social system had a vested interest in having Anthony become and remain crazy because it served admirably the continuation of the essential intergroup exchanges of the society at large.

And what became of Anthony himself?[1] Initially he was convinced his own perceptions were accurate. But across time, as others failed to see what was so obvious to him, he began to doubt his own sense of reality (even when he actually was perceiving correctly) and to wonder whether he was going mad. This eventually forced him to experience such discomfort that all of his energy became directed toward uncritically finding a place where he could feel support and acceptance. When the society transformed him into the "village lunatic," it created a form of madness aptly described by the poet Roethke, as mere "nobility of soul, at odds with circumstance."

One further question remains. What was it about Anthony as a person that caused him to become the lunatic? In my view, it was virtually accidental. The fact that he came originally with a tape recorder (and with a very high investment in being able to use it for his personal learning) meant that Anthony felt even more deprived than the others at induction time. This additional sense of deprivation heightened his activity to find out who the elites were much earlier than his fellow middles. Because he saw things differently than did the others, he started to become separated from the dominant sense of "reality" in the system. From there, the processes already described took off.

If Anthony had not come to this laboratory, would someone else have been made into a "lunatic" for the society's purposes? I suspect not. The forces which ended up focussing on him might well have been acted out in some other way—perhaps by creating another special identity for one individual, or by generating conditions of war between the groups, or even by the collapse of the society at large. The intergroup dynamics had to find *some* way to be acted out; the particular circumstances surrounding Anthony and his induction into the system were such that he became a convenient and useful vehicle for meeting that need.

The learning of overwhelming importance from this account is that often the personages or identities we take on may have very little to do with our own desires for ourselves, with our particular upbringings, or with our own values. Instead, they may, in fact, be mostly defined for us and forced upon us by external processes similar to those experienced by Anthony in the power laboratory.

THE INTERGROUP AS A DETERMINANT OF BEHAVIORS CHARACTERIZED AS LEADERSHIP

Perhaps one of the most gripping, passionate, and socially educative experiences ever recorded is the story of sixteen Uruguayan football players and their friends who not only survived an aircraft crash in the completely inaccessible heights of the Chilean Andes, but then existed for ten weeks in icy and

[1]Anthony left the laboratory in good emotional health. During the critique phase of the experience, the staff of the laboratory spent a great deal of time with Anthony and others exploring how this "village lunatic" phenomenon had occurred.

desolate conditions with only the wrecked fuselage of the aircraft as their shelter and home (Read, 1974).

Of the original forty-three people on board, sixteen were killed in the crash or died in the next few days from injuries. Seventeen days later the surviving twenty-seven were further reduced to a group of nineteen by an avalanche of snow that buried alive almost the whole group, eight of whom could not be dug out before they froze to death. After the avalanche, the group of survivors (reduced later by another three deaths) kept alive for fifty more days before two of their number, under unbelievable conditions, climbed a cliff-faced mountain of ice to a height of 13,500 feet, and eventually stumbled across civilization and help.

The story is a deeply touching account of human relationships under the most extreme survival conditions. In order to stay alive, it was necessary for group members, despite the repugnancy of the idea, to eat the raw flesh of the dead. Much of the early life and struggles of these survivors revolved around the agonies of acknowledging and accepting this imperative. As dreams of rescue faded, and as the struggle together under intense conditions heightened, the earlier revulsions became translated into a very mystical and religious experience—to the extent that several of the boys, when they realized that their own deaths were imminent, asked their comrades to feel free to eat their bodies.

In the discussion that follows, I will explore the social system composed of the survivors, and show how behaviors that traditionally would be described as personal "leadership" can be understood in terms of the relationships between various groups that emerged within that system. Specifically, I will propose that who becomes focal in leadership activities (and what leadership behaviors are seen as appropriate) changes radically from situation to situation—largely as a function of changing intergroup dynamics.

Immediately after the crash, many of the survivors were bleeding and in desperate need of medical care. In this initial phase, during which group life was defined by the visibility of wounded bodies, the key survival task was seen as caring for the bleeding. Accordingly, two of the group, who had been medical students in the earliest phases of their training, were automatically elevated to dominant status. An intergroup structure emerged which delineated all survivors into one of three classes—the wounded, the potential workers, and the doctors. The medical students were given tremendous power, despite the fact that their skills and competence in the setting were minimal, especially given that they had not facilities or medical supplies. Others willingly subjected themselves to directives the students issued around appropriate work or treatment programs. The need for medical help was so intense that the differential status of the survivors enabled limited skill to become symbolized as expert competence, which, in turn, gave the "doctors" inordinate power to influence everyone else's behavior.

Within a day or so, new demands appeared. The acquisition of food and water, and the preservation of hygiene in the fuselage—which constituted the only shelter from sub-zero temperatures, blizzards, and thoroughly treacherous conditions—became critical. These demands required a group structure that was radically different from the one that had developed in the period immediately after the crash. In particular, it became important for someone to play an overall "social maintenance" role to give coherence to the whole system. The captain of the football team, who had been overshadowed in the first day by the medical students, was reelevated to his former position. Beneath him were two groups of approximately equal status: (1) the medical team of two "doctors" and a couple of helpers, and (2) a group that searched battered luggage for tidbits of food, and who made water by melting snow on metal sheets and bottling it in old soda bottles. At a still lower level, was a group of the younger boys who served as a clean-up crew to maintain livable conditions in the cabin. The football captain himself became the general coordinator, and at noon each day he distributed the carefully rationed food to each person. In this role he clearly brought with him the ethos of his earlier influence as captain on the sports field.

The hierarchies of social influence changed during this period. The medical group now were granted authority related only to their specialist function, and they lost virtually all of their influence over nonmedical domains of the social system. For several days the football captain remained the key figure, mediating potential clashes over the food, and deal-

ing with conflicts between the medical and work teams. Much of his power was predicated on his effusive optimism that they would all be rescued within a few days. He used this hope, which he constantly rekindled, as the major substance for social cohesion. But as time passed, and it became clear that rescue was not imminent, the hopes he had fostered began to sour and the captain's social maintenance skills slowly became devalued.

A new plight confronted the survivors several days after the crash. The food supplies were nearly exhausted. It was clear that if survival were to be sustained, the group maintenance orientation of the captain would no longer suffice. Parrado, who previously had played no significant role, moved to prominence. During the past few days he had been coping with the loss of both his mother and his sister, who had died from crash injuries. In the process, he had developed an unbelievable desire to survive. Parrado became the articulator of two new and key dimensions in the life of the group: (1) the suggestion that the only hope of rescue was for a group of expeditionaries to walk out of the mountains, and (2) the idea that life depended on consumption of the flesh of the dead, which was being preserved by the freezing cold. The force of these suggestions provided new energy for the group, and started the process of delineating new internal social structures within the mountain-top society.

At the same time, the role of the "doctors" was further diminished. With virtually no medical supplies, their "special expertise" had been exhausted. The worst cases had died, and it was now clear to everyone that there was very little more that could be offered in the medical domain. The collapse of the medical team's function added to the power vacuum and increased the uncertainty about social relationships among group members.

Eventually another new social structure did emerge. It was defined primarily by each person's willingness or reluctance to eat human flesh. Those who did so early, and with a reasonable degree of spontaneity, were the ones who maintained the physical energy to persevere—and thereby to provide vitality for the endurance of the social system itself. Those who could not bring themselves to overcome their natural abhorrence to the idea became weak, and eventually degenerated into a new "poorer class." A third group struggled with the tensions of survival on the one hand, and their natural revulsion to the consumption of human flesh on the other. In so doing, members of this group came to formulate a new way of symbolizing the activity. They developed a very mystical and spiritual interpretation of their group experience, reinterpreting the eating of the flesh of the dead as being parallel to a religious communion in which they would consume the body and blood of Christ. This resymbolization of experience facilitated survival by helping everyone respond to the imperative that they eat the flesh of the dead, no matter how strongly the idea initially had repelled them.

During this period, the football captain moved further from his earlier position of prominence. This was, in part, because of his unwillingness to take the lead in eating human flesh. But, in addition, the captain lost credibility because his repeated assurances that rescue was imminent came increasingly to sound hollow.

When the survivors eventually heard on a transistor radio that all rescue operations had been called off, the energy in the system changed dramatically. Despair and outrage hit members like clenched fists, and produced radically different responses in different people. Parrado was ready to leave on an expedition immediately, while others were ready to resign themselves to the inevitability of death. Despair was heightened further a couple of days later when an avalanche of snow caused the death of eight more persons, including the football captain. Reluctantly, it was concluded that an expedition now offered the only hope for survival. And the internal social structure of the system went through yet another readjustment in response to this imperative.

Any social system can become subjected to crisis conditions which produce extreme pressures from the outside, or from within. When this happens, members of the system must respond to these pressures or else risk long-term internal chaos. One common response is for clusters of people to form which eventually evolve into critical groups for the system. Moreover, the pressures that emerge from crisis experiences invariably demand that groups within the system relate to each other more intensely than had previously been the case. Even the composition of these groups will need to change. In the present case, the medical group was dominant initially, with others subservient to them. This struc-

ture was altered by the emergence of the football captain as the major mediator between several specialized work groups, and eventually by the emergence of an entirely new social structure defined in terms of members' willingness to consume human flesh.

When these changes are taking place in response to extreme pressures, it often is most unclear what should happen to produce a new form of stability in which both directionality and internal coherence are present. What an individual might do personally to provide leadership is unclear and speculative. Instead, each new set of stresses causes changes in group memberships or behaviors which, in turn, move the system toward some new equilibrium. As this happens, power, authority, critical resources, and ability to influence events become distributed differently than before. Only when the directionality and coherence of the system achieve a reasonable degree of stability is it possible to determine which behaviors actually moved the system in productive directions, or served to keep the various parts of the system integrated. Acts of leadership, then, are merely responses to the forces that emerge from the exchanges among groups within the system, and it would *not* be valid to construe them as reflecting a conscious intent to lead. If, in hindsight, an act appears to have been one of effective leadership, it may have been virtually accidental at the time it happened—and identifiable as leadership only in retrospect. This phenomenon is especially visible in the next phase of the survivors' experiences.

As preparations for the expedition went forward, all energies were dedicated to that task. Medical duties had slipped from any prominence, and the doctors simply took their place in the mainstream of the social structure. Four identifiable groups emerged as planning for the expedition proceeded. They were: (1) a collection of ten individuals who were designated as too weak to undertake any significant walking; (2) three first choices for the expedition, including one of the ex-doctors and Parrado, whose robust constitution and steely resolve to escape had helped buoy the energy of the fainthearted; (3) three cousins who were not fit for the expedition and who previously had not played significant roles in the system—but who had coalesced as a critical subgroup because of their strong support for each other in a common struggle (theirs, a blood relationship, was the only precrash grouping of friends that had not been fragmented by the ordeal); and (4) a trio of younger fellows who were potential expeditionaries—but who first had to be tested to prove their fitness.

Eventually a group of four was selected as the key expeditionaries. Once chosen, they became virtually a "warrior class" with extra rights and privileges. They were allowed to do anything that could be construed as bettering their physical condition. The whole group coddled them, both physically and psychologically, and everyone made sure that the only conversations within their earshot were optimistic in tone.

Read (1974) reports that the expeditionaries were *not* the leaders of the society. They were basically a class apart, linked to the rest of the system by the group of cousins, whose cohesion was the only force available to balance the unbelievable power that had been given to the expeditionaries. Because the cousins were the only ones able to keep the "warriors" in check (and thereby keep the system in equilibrium) they became the major locus of power within the remainder of the system. They virtually ruled from then on. The cousins controlled food allocation, determined who should do what work, and mediated when the "workers" (those who cut meat, prepared water, attended to hygiene, and so forth) felt that some of the sick were merely "malingering" and therefore should not be fed unless they also worked.

Beneath the cousins, a second echelon of three emerged. These individuals took roles equivalent to noncommissioned officers, receiving orders from above and giving them to those below. One of this trio, the second of the two doctors, became the "detective" in this phase of the society. He took upon himself the task of investigating misdemeanors and norm violations, and he flattered those more senior to him while bullying those more subservient.

It was several weeks before the expeditionaries departed. There were some valid reasons for the delay, but eventually everyone began to suspect that the ex-doctor was stalling and that he was using his expectant expeditionary status as a way of accruing privileges and minimizing work. At that point, his privileges were terminated. When one of the cousins volunteered to go in his place, the ex-doctor stirred himself and prepared for what proved to be a

successful expedition: after a grueling ten-day trek, help was located and the remaining survivors were rescued.

One would have imagined that the ordeal was now over, but the system still had to face another extremely difficult event. Within a short time after the rescue, news leaked that the survivors had sustained themselves by consuming the flesh of the dead. This produced a strong reaction, especially among members of the press, who were poised to give world-wide publicity to this remarkable story. Religious figures, parents, and close friends were basically supportive during this period of new threat. But it soon became obvious that, if the survivors were ever to return to normal lives, it would be necessary for them to confront this issue together. So they called a press conference to tell their story.

The group debated at length as to who should explain the eating of human flesh. Several individuals felt they would be too emotional. It was eventually agreed that Delgado, who had been almost completely insignificant on the mountain top, should describe this aspect of their experience. His public presence and his eloquence—which of course had been of no value during the seventy-day ordeal—now came into its own, and he mediated brilliantly between the survivors, and the press, relatives, and other interested parties. His statement was a moving, passionate, religious, and emotional event, and through it he provided a way for everyone to resymbolize the meaning of the survival experience, thereby quelling criticism and laying to rest concerns over the consumption of the dead.

In this setting, Delgado's behavior, which to date had influenced nothing, was now seen by others as outstanding leadership. But did he lead? Or was it simply that his particular response to the tensions which intersected in his personhood in that situation touched the nerve fibers of the new sets of intergroup interactions, thereby triggering a new directionality and a wholesome coherence for the system?

CONCLUSION

The literature of organizational behavior is filled with concepts that help us understand the behavior of people in terms of their personal characteristics, or as a response to what takes place in the groups of which they are members. The material presented in this paper offers an alternative view: namely, that it is imperative to move beyond explanations that lie within people and within groups—and to include perspectives that derive from more global and systemic forces, including forces that derive from the dynamics of intergroups.

If, for example, the tools of personality theorists alone were applied to Lewis Brook in Ashgrove or to Anthony's identity struggle, we would obtain only a limited understanding of what affected their perceptions and their behaviors. Likewise, if we restricted our explorations of leadership among the aircraft survivors to traditional concepts that imply specific intentionality on the part of individuals (i.e., using notions such as participation, initiation of structure, socioemotional behavior, and so on), much of the essence of the leadership phenomena that developed on the mountain top would have been lost.

But how much relevance do the principles extracted from the materials presented in this paper have for understanding everyday experiences in everyday organizations? I submit, a great deal—and more than we usually realize or are comfortable acknowledging.

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