

relation to the subsystems, identified needs and resources, and skills at the worker's disposal.

The writer presents a diagrammatic summary of the five subsystems outlined by Wassenich (1972).

Subsystem	Nature of the Subsystem	Direction of social work intervention
1. Production	In the school the main part of the production subsystem is the classroom where the major school functions of educating and socialising take place. Social workers do not normally have a direct function in the classroom although "education for living" programs may be taught by them either in the classroom or in external groups.	Intervention in this subsystem is <u>institutional</u> - serving the total institution and all the people in it.
2. Maintenance Subsystem	The maintenance subsystem is concerned with "tying people into their functional roles". The teacher has a large responsibility in defining the pupil's functional role to him.	Intervention in this subsystem is <u>residual</u> - aimed at helping people who have failed in some way. He may help define teachers roles or with the pupil focus on goals such as improved social relationships, stress alleviation, adjustment to norms, improved attitudes to education and study habits.
3. The Supportive Subsystem	The supportive subsystem is primarily concerned with the importing of material into the production subsystem, and exporting of products into the environment. School Committees may carry out this function in being a liaison between professional education and community control of schools.	Intervention in this subsystem is of a <u>boundary</u> nature. It involves work in the community and families to affect input into the system, and involves liaison with community health, welfare and vocational and employment services in helping the pupil leave the school, or maintain him there satisfactorily.

Subsystem	Nature of the Subsystem	Direction of social work intervention
4. Adaptive Subsystem	The adaptive subsystem ensures "organisational survival in a changing environment and involves the areas of research and curriculum development to enable the school to adapt to environmental advances and changes. Its concerns are with changing curriculum to ensure its relevance to environmental demands, preventing drop outs, helping students develop educational goals within an alien school system.	Intervention at this level is of an <u>innovative, research nature</u> - identifying groups of 'problem' pupils and poor performers, consulting and advising on curriculum, liaising between community bodies and the school, introducing new modes of intervention and control in the classroom.
5. Managerial Subsystem	The managerial subsystem is concerned with control, co-ordination and direction of the other subsystems in the school, these functions being carried out by principals and school administrators.	Intervention at this level involves <u>interpreting systems, establishing system goals</u> and helping people carry out tasks to reach them. Use of group skills to <u>enable functioning of committees</u> .

Figure 4: A diagrammatic summary of subsystems in the school as described by Wassenich (1972).

2.6.1 Selecting a subsystem for intervention

Systems theory

presupposes a relationship between the individual and his nurturing group that can be described as symbiotic - each needs the other for its own life and growth and each reaches out to the other with all possible strength at a given moment. The social worker's field in intervention is at the point at which two forces meet - the individual's drive toward health, growth and belonging and the organised efforts of society to integrate its parts into a productive and 'dynamic whole'. (Schwartz, 1974, p.1256)

The interactionists propose the social work function to be one of mediating the transactions between people and the various systems through which they carry on their relationships with society, such as the family, peer group or the school.

The writer proposes that education is the common need of the pupil and the school. The pupil needs an education to function effectively in his larger society, but often appears to have difficulty in remaining in school and in studying effectively. The school, to fulfil its function and responsibility to society, needs to impart knowledge effectively, but in the Coloured community seems to experience difficulty in retaining its pupils.

In terms of his intervention in this research study, the writer proposes that his function was both residual and innovative, in that through his research he sought to illustrate new ways of helping malperforming pupils to adjust more effectively to the demands of the school system. As such intervention could be seen as occurring primarily in the maintenance and adaptive subsystems of the school.

However the central subsystem in the school, that most clearly reflecting the symbiotic relationship between school and pupil, is seen by the writer to be the production subsystem. It is in the meeting between teacher and pupils to carry out the daily business of the school that the most overt transactions between parts of the school system take place, and the area where most problems directly involving pupils are likely to occur. To intervene most effectively in the maintenance and adaptive subsystems, the worker perceived an understanding of classroom dynamics to be essential.

2.6.2 The production subsystem: classroom dynamics

Literature on the classroom (production subsystem) has shown it to be an important source of schooling problems.

Nash (1973) completed an observational study in the United Kingdom on the effects of teacher perception on pupil performance in the classroom, emphasising the importance of understanding pupil behaviour within the context of the school situation.

Nash found that regardless of streaming procedures, or the lack of them, children were able to correctly infer their relative status in the class from their teacher's behaviour toward them, and that lowerclass children tended to be underestimated more than their peers in this process. As a result of this process self-concept and role adoption take place.

The child in school is in a position where teacher and the other children all, by their relationship with him, place him in certain positions with respect to themselves, and oblige him to take up certain roles. From these positions he must build up his ideas of who he is. In such a manner is the schoolchild's self-image fashioned. (Nash, 1973, p.16)

Nash noted that children modified their responses to a teacher in terms of perceived teacher attitudes toward them. Rosenthal (1971) states

More often than one could reasonably attribute to chance, when there is an increase in the teacher's expectation for her pupil's performance, we find a corresponding improvement in her pupil's achievement, measured intelligence, symbol learning, classroom behaviour, or even swimming ability. (Rosenthal, 1971, p.64)

Rosenthal goes on to propose that a person's perception of another's behaviour is a potentially significant determinant of the other's behaviour in "interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies", citing examples of experimenter expectations affecting performance on the Weschler Intelligence Scale. He alerts his reader to Kenneth Clark's (1963) view that culturally deprived children are often "unfortunate victims" of teacher's self-fulfilling prophecies.

Rosenthal and Jacobson (in Rosenthal, 1971) claimed to show that teacher expectation could influence performance on IQ tests when teachers were told that children were either 'bloomers' or not, and that teachers tended to see 'bloomers' as more appealing, adjusted, affectionate and needing less social approval than their peers.

Fischer and Gochros (1975) assert that inappropriate pupil responses in school are often maintained by teacher and peer responses, that teachers are often poorly equipped to manage 'problem behaviours', their most common resort being to aversive methods of control. These methods tend to lead to fear and avoidance of the teacher and the school. O'Leary and Wilson (1975) review a study by Morrow et al (1970) which revealed 77 percent of teacher interactions with pupils to be negative, only 23 percent being positive. They assert this may reflect a tendency to criticise or be disparaging when observing things not approved of, but an expectation of good behaviour with only intermittent positive recognition of it. It is unfortunate that disruptive pupil behaviour and aversive teacher responses are often mutually reinforcing, the child learning to gain

teacher and peer attention via his unacceptable behaviour, the teacher learning to temporarily stop the behaviour via his angry responses.

Nash (1973) alleges that owing to traditional studies of deprived children, teachers tend to regard such pupils as lacking the same abilities as their privileged peers. He says that while there is no relationship between class and ability, there is one between teacher perception and ability. In essence he asserts that subjective ideas of teachers are more important than reality.

Certainly children of low social origin do poorly at school; because they lack encouragement at home, because they use language in a different way from their teachers, because they have their own attitudes to learning, and so on; but also because of the expectations their teachers have for them.
(Nash, 1973, p.38)

Sociological factors do not operate in a vacuum, they are mediated through the interaction between teacher and child, and the quality of the interaction depends on how favourably the teacher perceives the child.¹

Nash reveals how brighter, more favourably perceived boys in a class received greater freedom and less censure in class than their less favourably perceived peers. Brighter boys disturbing classes were stopped with "whoever is making that noise, stop!" whereas less favourably perceived ones were identified by name first. In such ways the teacher insidiously shapes the child's identity in class, at the same time transmitting her perceptions to the class. The child, sensing this, modifies his behaviour accordingly.

The less favourably perceived child is chivvied and chastised more than his peers, and Nash gives evidence to the fact that children are more often placed in remedial classes owing to unfavourable perception than academic ability. The poorly perceived child tends to develop a depressingly low self-image, his negative status becoming commonly identified by teachers, peers and himself.

1. Eysenck (1975) in an attempt to re-establish genetic factors as significant in children's school performance does not entirely agree with this view. His approach is more fully elucidated in the conclusions chapter of this study.

Nash asserts that the pressure of being aware of oneself as negatively perceived is enormous and that such a child tends to withdraw or 'play up' when he perceives a teacher as 'soft'. The child, his peers and the teacher are involved in a continual process of mutual evaluation which helps form self-concepts and develop consistent behaviours.

Aggravating this process is the tendency for children to select friends whom they consider to be of similar attainments, attitudes and backgrounds - Nash found in his sociomatrices that cliques of favourably or less favourably perceived boys tended to develop, further strengthening self-concepts and behaviour patterns. Teacher attitudes and perceptions of individuals helped construct the cliques they formed and then reflected this membership back to their members in terms of *differential* attitudes and behaviours.

Nash reviews Jackson as pointing to three central messages which the classroom as a place of learning transmits:

1. the child must learn to live in a crowd;
2. the child must learn to live under constant evaluation; and
3. the child must learn to live under conditions of power.

Nash states

All genetic and sociological factors are mediated and realised through the interaction between teacher and the child in the classroom. If for working class children, the outcome of these interactions is a sense of failure, then the responsibility is as much that of the teacher as that of the child. (Nash, 1973, p.123)

However he perceives more chance of change occurring in the school system than in the attitudes of working class parents and before concluding reminds readers that the teachers often transmit cues unintentionally and are themselves parts of systems and subject to pressures, expectations and conformity pressures.

2.7 The cyclical nature of systems

Wassenich (1972) notes the cyclical nature of systems,

Former students get jobs that provide income from which they pay taxes to support the schools. They send

their children to school. Some return as employees to the school system. Collectively they form the community attitudes that influence the school. (p.202)

The school social worker should be aware of how negative school experiences develop into negative attitudes to education which may be transmitted to children, aggravating their poor school performance, enhancing the likelihood of early drop outs and perpetuating community disinterest or hostility towards the school. By the same token intervention in this cycle may set up small but growing counter-attitudes and experiences to improve the deprived child's chances of achieving an adequate education, obtaining a job and providing a secure home and as a result the chances of him engendering more positive attitudes to school achievement in his children.

SOCIAL GROUPWORK: SELECTING A METHOD FOR INTERVENTION

CHAPTER 3 - SOCIAL GROUP WORK: SELECTING A METHOD FOR INTERVENTION

3.1 Social Groupwork: An historical perspective

Social group work has its origins in the first decade of the twentieth century, the settlement house era in the United States of America. Early group work programs were essentially of a social action nature aimed at alleviation of stress for the poor, and were based more on an intuitive but practical helping motivation than on principles, techniques, methods or theories.

At the end of World War I, a period of growth in recreational and community centres saw such people as Coyle, Wilson and Newstetter begin to develop group work methodology on a social science base to incorporate it into the social work profession. In 1923, Western Reserve University introduced the first course in social group work, but despite a growth in concepts and theory in group work practice, it was not until psychiatrists and psychoanalysts started showing interest in groups that caseworkers began to realign their attitudes to a method they had scorned as being centred around games and non-formal education. The American Association of Social Group Workers united eventually with the social work profession in 1946, but this unity was characterised by a difference in attitude and approach which has continued even as the group work method is recognised as one of significance in education and practice. A controversy continues as to whether there should be an emphasis on traditional group work in leisure service agencies or therapeutic group work. The work of the Michigan School, with a therapeutic emphasis, utilising principles of social learning and behaviour modification has shown impressive advances in social work intervention at all levels, and has received increasing support (Briar 1974, Wilson 1976).

3.2 A rationale for the use of group work as a means of social work intervention

Northen and Roberts (1976) and Schwartz (1976) hold the view that criteria for deciding on whether services should be delivered on a one to one or a group basis are unclear, being of the opinion that the choice should be left with the potential user of the service.

On the other hand, McBroom (1976) has proposed that the only viable method for socialisation problems is the group approach. Besse!! (1971),

Sundel, Radin and Churchill (1974), Douglas (1976), Davies (1975) and Glasser and Garvin (1976) propose a number of criteria for the choice of the group context for individual and environmental change including: the client's informed wish to try out the group situation to meet his needs; sensitivity to peer pressures and ability to imitate or model appropriate behaviours in the group; the likelihood of his being harmful to or being harmed by others in the group, or the group process itself; and the existence of others with similar or complementary problems. Davies (1975) points out that people interact in groups everyday, it being in fact a more normal situation than the one to one. Group living is the source of many individual problems, and the group situation therefore provides a more life-like situation for diagnostic and treatment purposes, as well as social exploration and growth. Essentially the classroom situation is one of a group nature. Jackson (in Nash, 1973) observes three central messages which the classroom as a place of learning transmits to the child - he must learn to live in a crowd, under constant evaluation and under conditions of power.

The writer proposed that the group in the school setting was likely to be a more natural and effective modality for change than the one to one method of social casework.

3.3 An overview of modern theories of social group work

A number of attempts have been made to classify theories of social group work (Papell and Rothman 1977, Encyclopaedia of Social Work 1974 and Roberts and Northen 1976). While Roberts and Northen (1976) discuss and compare nine different models of social group work, three basic modern approaches are clearly identifiable: the developmental or humanistic model of Tropp, the mediating model of Schwartz and the preventive and rehabilitative model of the Michigan School of Social Work, led by Vinter and his colleagues. These models represent not only the main approaches to social group work but also embody basic differences of philosophy in approach.

The preventive and rehabilitative model places primary emphasis on the individual as the focus for change, perceiving the group as both the means and the context for treatment, and seeing the worker's actions rather than the group's process as the primary change force in the group.

'The treatment group is viewed as a deliberately structured influence system in which improvements in social functioning come about through social interaction with others'. (Feldman and Wodarski, 1975, p.63). The model draws on social-behavioural theory, cognitive theories, social systems theory, role theory and the social psychology of influence for a knowledge base, placing considerable emphasis on the importance of empirical research as a basis for practice.

The developmental and mediating models on the other hand are opposed to the remedial model's emphasis on the empirical, being based in an existential humanistic philosophy which discredits the 'medical model' as reductionist and dehumanising. While proponents of the preventive and rehabilitative model would concur with Tropp's three end goals of enhancing social functioning - effectiveness in role performance, responsibility to others in that role, and satisfaction of self in that role - the two schools of thought differ in hypothesised modes of attaining such goals.

The developmental approach proposes that an individual's social functioning abilities are enhanced through the engagement of others in group goal achievement, through the 'growth' producing experiences of release, support, reality orientation and self appraisal which the group provides. The model perceives the individual as a self-realising, developing being responsible for his use of and contributions to the group process, the group worker as being only a small part of all the interpersonal forces in the group.

Similarly, but on a broader perspective,

The interactionists have sought to develop a model in which a self-realising, energy producing client with certain tasks to perform and a professional with a specific function to carry out engage each other as interdependent actors within an organic system. (Schwartz, 1974, p.1256)

The mediating model presupposes a symbiotic relationship between the individual and his nurturing group, each reaching out to and needing the other for its life and growth. The social worker's area of intervention is seen as being at the point where these two forces meet - '... the individual's drive toward health, growth, and belonging and the organised efforts of society to integrate its parts into a productive and dynamic whole'. (Schwartz, 1974, p.1258)

The social work group is seen as having four major features: it is a collective in which people interact, the members need each other

for certain specific purposes, they come together to work on certain specific tasks, and the work is embedded in a relevant agency function. 'The group is a project in mutual aid, focused on certain specific problems, and set within a larger system - the agency - whose function it is to provide help with just such problems.' (Schwartz, 1976, p.185)

Thus the preventive and rehabilitative model perceives the group worker as a 'change agent' attempting to structure the individual's group experience to his benefit; the developmental model sees him as an 'enabler' - trying to enhance a self-realising individual's social functioning through the group experience with an emphasis on the powers of the group rather than the worker; and the mediating model as a 'mediator' or 'facilitator' in helping the individual and society negotiate and maximise the potential inherent in their mutual, symbiotic, need for each other.

These broad differences in conception of the group worker's role are reflected in their respective attitudes to the concepts of diagnosis and treatment. The remedial approach with an emphasis on social learning theory and verified research tends toward a 'medical model' with a structured diagnostic-treatment orientation. Tropp and Schwartz reject such an approach as simplistic and inadequate for a conception of man as an organism constantly interacting in a multitude of reciprocally influencing systems. Tropp warns of the danger of perceptual distortion of members in a group if the group worker places an emphasis on diagnostic information, and states

Also there is no presumption of the need for anyone to 'change', since any member is respected in his right to choose to reaffirm his present means of coping, either as truly the most appropriate choice or the best he can do at this time. (Tropp, 1976, p.214)

Similarly the mediating model rejects concepts of diagnosis and treatment with respect to the individual, focusing its efforts on 'diagnosing' common ground and obstacles to achieving 'client system' goals, and 'treatment' to helping achieve such goals.

Northern and Roberts (1976) state that none of the nine schools of group work thought they reviewed are extreme, observing that Tropp agrees that man's behaviour is constrained in some areas, and those adhering more to the medical model not being totally opposed to the concept of free will, and respecting the value of client self-determination.

Modern behavioural theory (Bandura 1969, O'Leary and Wilson 1975) in fact presents cogent arguments to the effect that its approach is in line with humanistic ideals, seeking to improve behavioural repertoires which enable an individual to exert more control over his own life.

The preventive and rehabilitative model is more structured than those of Tropp or Schwartz, recognising and demanding conscious use of worker influence in the group work process. While placing importance on the value of client self-determination it recognises that in terms of age and ability clients are not always able to assume full responsibility for, or autonomy in, group processes (Vinter 1974). Tropp (1976) himself notes that his approach is only appropriate for groups oriented to the 'social growth' of their members, and despite stating that group selection can only be carried out on the grounds of commonality, recognises that common interests, ages, sex, capacities, limitations and cultural variants are important aspects of group formation. In addition his considerations for worker intervention in the group, despite being 'group focused' involve work with individuals, and his formulations for this process move him to a position not entirely opposed to that of the Michigan School.

The writer sought a group work paradigm that would utilise a systems perspective as well as provide a structured approach to the group work process.

3.4 The preventive and rehabilitative approach

The model has six major practice principles.

- (i) The individual is the focus for change, the group being viewed as both the means and context for the achievement of individual treatment goals. Efforts are made by the group worker to structure and influence group processes differentially to this purpose.
- (ii) The model stresses that whether goals refer to aspects of client social functioning or environmental conditions, they be specific enough for measurement at the conclusion of the group process.
- (iii) Like other group work approaches, this model regards the formation of contract as important, but unlike other models it emphasises not only mutual responsibilities for the development of group processes but also specific goals to be attained by members as a result of the group

experience. Rather than being a rigid legal agreement, contract in social group work is a flexible process, having its roots in ethical and practical considerations, ensuring respect for client self determination as well as commitment to work toward goal achievement.

(iv) The group is regarded as the means and context for goal achievement, wherein the group worker makes conscious use of peer pressures, modeling processes, group rules, norms and structures to assist in individual goal attainment.

(v) The model asserts that goals achieved in, and through, the group should be transferred and stabilised in the client's social environment, necessitating changes in the environment on organisational or individual behavioural levels, either concurrent with, or prior to, group work intervention.

(vi) The approach stresses the derivation of empirically proven principles on which to base practice, and from which to propose a series of propositions about the effects of practitioner actions on client and client group outcomes. (Garvin and Glasser 1974; Glasser and Garvin 1976)

Glasser and Garvin (1976) have developed from the basic preventive and rehabilitative model, an organisational model which perceives man as functioning in a social environment, in a systems approach, and seeks to understand forces impinging on the client outside the group to guide the worker's efforts in the group.

Organisations serve as society's attempts to maintain stable patterns of behaviour among the majority of people for purposes of continuity, and allow for change as required by society and demanded by conditions surrounding particular groups. Social work organisations provide services to people in transition from one status or position to another, or those in the midst of social conflict. Services to those in social transition include anomie reduction and socialisation, and to those in social conflict, resocialisation and social control. This study has its focus on resocialisation functions of group work:

Resocialisation organisations emphasise the development of new values, knowledge, and skills to replace outdated or dysfunctional attitudes and behaviour. While the client is or is likely to be in trouble with his environment because the world has changed around him or her, there has not been a major violation of social norms or legal sanctions. (Glasser and Garvin, 1976, p.83)

However these writers acknowledge that the line between organisations offering resocialisation or socialisation services is often vague, socialisation services serving those not in states of social conflict, but who in the course of natural development need to develop in an anticipatory manner new attitudes, values and behavioural skills based on those already known. The writer is of the opinion that his particular approach lies within this 'grey area' in that it seeks both to change and to develop behavioural skills in group members.

One of the criteria for selection of group members was violation of school behavioural norms which were seen as representative of requirements for education and employment by society.

As with other models, this approach seeks to enhance the social functioning of individuals, perceiving it as follows:

Social functioning is conceived of as the ways in which individuals behave with reference to their social roles, through either seeking to change their own role performance or the social structures and processes relevant to their roles, or both. (Glasser and Garvin, 1976, p.84)

The remedial/organisational model proposes intervention by the group worker in a logical assessment-treatment sequence, including the individual and significant groups, individuals or organisations in his environment as targets or resources for the change process. In essence the treatment sequence follows a process of intake and assessment, decision-making as to the most appropriate means of intervention, composition of a viable group, selection of targets and strategies for intervention, employment of these strategies and finally evaluation of their effectiveness and termination of the group. (Vinter 1974, Garvin and Glasser 1974, Glasser and Garvin 1976, Johnson 1974, Sundel, Radin and Churchill, 1974, Bertcher and Maple 1974)

Within the remedial model, the worker may intervene in the client system to achieve individual goals, at varying levels. Vinter (1974b) refers to these as follows:

1. Direct means of influence - where the worker acts as if the individual is the client, target and action system. In this respect he delineates four major types of direct influence; the worker as central person or object of identification and drives; the worker as symbol and spokesman or agent of legitimate norms and values; the worker as motivator and stimulator or definer of individual goals and tasks; and the worker as executive and controller of membership roles.

2. Indirect means of influence - where the worker acts as if the individual is the client and target system, but the group becomes the action system. Vinter (1974) identifies worker intervention in this area as being concerned with group purposes, member selection, size of the group, group operating and governing procedures and group development. Garvin and Glasser (1974) enlarge on this conceptualisation, seeing the worker's means of indirect influence in the group after it has been formed as being in two broad areas - the use of group structures and the use of group processes.

Group structures refer to patterns of interpersonal interaction in the context of the group, and means which workers may employ in developing, maintaining, or modifying them include use of program, behaviour modification, problem solving, conflict resolution and logical reasoning approaches, changes in group composition and influence over group development.

Group processes refer to the sequence of behaviours of individuals in interaction with each other in groups, and may occur within a single session or over numerous sessions. The worker gives attention to processes related to changes in the worker-client organisational system, including sociometric flow, processes of role differentiation and communication, as well as processes related to activities and tasks such as problem solving, and processes related to the development of group culture such as its norms and values.

Bearing in mind treatment goals the worker tries to assess which processes are enhancing or hindering progress in the individual, and to influence such processes accordingly. (Vinter 1974; Garvin and Glasser 1974, Feldman and Wodarski 1975)

3. Extragroup means of influence Garvin and Glasser (1974) regard extragroup means of influence as essential to all rehabilitative or preventive efforts, and define it as a process whereby the behaviour and attitudes of significant others in the group member's environment are changed to bring about positive changes in attitudes and behaviours of group members. Vinter and Galinsky (1974) identify four major areas of extragroup relations: the client's prior roles and relations which often constitute 'the problem' the group member brings to the group, intervention with significant others bearing in mind those maintaining deviant behaviour and those involved in coping with that behaviour, social systems interventions and in terms of the group as a unit, its social environment with which it interacts.

Where possible these aspects of worker intervention, and means of influence are illustrated in the record of the research group processes.

3.5 The suitability of various approaches of social group work for use in schools

3.5.1 The developmental approach

Polatinsky (1978) has observed that this approach is more suitable for smaller groups than classroom groups, where it is not feasible in terms of intensity of interaction required. Zeff (1971) used the developmental approach in her study of the effects of a group work program for twenty problem children aged fourteen to fifteen years. This study is discussed in a later section (see p.53). Zeff herself recognises the faults of a lack of objective data and matched control group in her research design, although this is consistent with the model's attitude to empirical data which is that it is extremely difficult to obtain in social work, and that for the present an emphasis on accumulated practice wisdom is more feasible (Tropp 1976).

Nevertheless the writer is of the opinion that criticisms levelled at the social goals model of Konopka and Coyle by Rothman and Papell (1977) are also applicable to Tropp's approach, namely that it is more ideologically than scientifically based, and lacks in theoretical design and applicability in remedial situations. As noted already, Tropp (1976) has stated that his approach is applicable only to groups oriented toward 'social growth' rather than groups of a remedial nature.

While retaining goals of social growth for group members, the writer felt that the developmental model was neither entirely appropriate, nor sufficiently structured, for the purposes of the proposed experimental group.

3.5.2 The mediating approach

Polatinsky (1978) utilised the mediating model in her study on preventive social group work in schools, finding it suitable for working with the large groups that characterise the school system. Common ground exists between the school and the pupils, the school

making certain demands of learning and discipline on pupils to achieve its purpose, and pupils demanding knowledge and security of the school to meet their own needs as growing members of society.

It will be noted that in the present study the writer employs a broad systems perspective in 'tuning in' to the school and his method of intervention in it, and he is in full agreement with Polatinsky's observation that 'the school is an ideal setting for the worker to play his mediating role in a group situation'. (Polatinsky, 1978, p.64)

At the same time, however, he concurs with criticism of Schwartz's mediating model by Schopler and Galinsky (1974) to the effect that it lacks method and fails to take into account the worker as an independent source of purposes, goals and influence within a system. Schwartz (1976) has stated

The systems terminology is growing in popularity, precisely because it promises to meet the need for an active and reciprocal view so sorely missed in our traditional descriptions of the helping process. But too often it is only the words that are used, rather than the total gestalt; the latter would require a surrender of the old paradigm, rather than simply garnishing it with up to date terms ... The effort to have it both ways produces strange effects, as when the worker is said to intervene in the client worker system. The idea of intervening in a system of which one is an integral part violates the whole model and obscures the tasks it sets before us. (Schwartz, 1976, p.181)

Thus while Garvin and Glasser (1976) ascribe importance to the concepts of perceiving the individual in the context of his social environment and the worker as mediator among group members and between the group and its social environment, their organisational model's (Michigan School) adherence to concepts of intervention would make it unacceptable to a systems 'purist' such as Schwartz.

The writer is of the opinion that having provided a conceptual framework for an understanding of individuals and groups within systems, Schwartz fails to make full use of this by unrealistically restricting the group worker to a role of mediator while ignoring the inevitable independent influences the worker will have on individuals and groups he comes into contact with. To try and ignore such influence is to reduce the potential inherent in the group situation to assist people toward enhancement of social functioning. Jehu (1967) has pointed out that if social workers

are capable of influencing their clients they must take responsibility for such influence. The writer is of the opinion that it is more honest to be aware of processes of social influence and to try and employ them in a conscious manner based on professional values, than to work from a vague philosophical stance and influence unwittingly and haphazardly.

Thus while adhering to the systems perspective, the writer was of the opinion that the mediating model as advocated by a 'purist' such as Schwartz was restricted somewhat by its philosophical outlook. Evidence of this is apparent in Gitterman's (1971) study on the use of the mediating approach in group work, which while employing the model to assist pupils with social and learning difficulties failed to provide any objective data as to its effectiveness (which in any event is anathema to the mediating model).

3.5.3 The preventive and rehabilitative approach

Polatinsky (1978) evaluated this approach as being inappropriate for use in group work with classroom groups on the following grounds:

- (i) it has a rehabilitative rather than an educational focus
- (ii) classroom groups are too large to allow the worker to maintain an individual focus
- (iii) classroom groups are not amenable to member selection, being already formed
- (iv) classroom groups are not subject to recomposition to meet individual needs as required by the preventive and rehabilitative model.

This writer was not working with classroom groups, and did not have access to the classroom situation. The focus of his intervention was with selected class members considered likely to benefit from the group work experience. As such the preventive and rehabilitative approach was considered an appropriate model for intervention, and bearing in mind the limitations of the other models already discussed, to be the most structured model on which to base practice. In addition its emphasis on the empirical, and its incorporation of social learning theory and behaviour modification, allowed for an objective evaluation of intervention. Other models discussed here reject both the empirical approach and the use of behavioural techniques on philosophical and ethical grounds.

3.6 A review of relevant studies on group work in the school setting

A variety of group work services have been used to assist pupils in the school setting, encompassing programs for pupils with poor self-esteem (Caplan, 1968), underachievers with or without behaviour problems (Woal, 1968; Zeff, 1977; Harris and Trotta, 1968; Cohn and Sniffen, 1968; Lodato and Sokoloff, 1968; Vinter and Sarri, 1965 and 1974; Gitterman, 1971; Lodato, Sokoloff and Schwartz, 1968) and the personal and social "growth" of 'normal' children (Bessell, 1968; Blaker and Samo, 1973).

Practitioners such as Blaker and Samo (1973), Zeff (1977) and Bessell (1968) adopted a humanistic approach in their group work programs, being oriented toward enhancing members' self-confidence, promoting positive interaction, concern for others and improving their motivation and learning. Program activities included communications games, magic circle techniques and informal, innovative teaching methods. None of these researchers attempted to evaluate their programs by means of objective data. However, each of them claimed successes such as movement toward increasing self and group awareness, improvement in communicative and interactional skills of members, improved school motivation associated with a decrease in problem behaviours, and improved self concept of pupils involved.

Caplan (1968) in a better constructed study using control groups, conducted groups of a permissive nature aimed at assisting male pupils exhibiting disruptive classroom behaviours. Using the Q sort, he assessed boys in the experimental group to have improved their self-concept, as well as to have decreased their disruptive behaviours. However no significant changes occurred in their academic achievement. Caplan proceeded to state that boys in the experimental group had developed more integrated self-structures characterised by less tension and disturbance, and greater acceptance of others. No explicit details are given as to group work methods he used other than that the group was of a permissive nature.

Harris and Trotta (1968) running a group for 'normal' but under-achieving pupils, reported a failure for the group to develop into a cohesive, functional unit owing to the development of two cliques - one of serious intent, the other of 'jokers'. Program activities involved the discussion of academic and personal problems. The researchers reported that four of the eight pupils involved showed marked improvement in school performance, but voiced doubt as to the ability of such a

group to contain even one seriously disturbed individual, and stated a feeling that more time should be spent with members of serious intent. This would seem to imply that efforts be directed primarily at overtly motivated pupils, and to be in contradiction to observations by McBroom (1976) and Feldman and Wodarski (1975) as to the effectiveness of groups in dealing with socialisation problems, especially where membership comprises a majority of adequate individuals with a minority of those with problem behaviours.

Gitterman (1971) employing the mediating approach of social group work attempted to assist children with learning and emotional difficulties to negotiate the school system more effectively. While working with pupils and teachers as parts of the school system, and suggesting the systems approach as a basis for future planning of schools programs, Gitterman failed to provide objective data (which is anathema to the mediating model) to evaluate the effectiveness of his approach, thereby limiting its usefulness.

Vinter and Sarri (1965 and 1974) conducted a large well structured group work program for malperformers in the school setting. Difficulties of pupils were regarded as interactional in nature, occurring and being judged within the school system. Control groups were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the group work method while ruling out change which may have occurred as a result of maturation or chance. Before and after measures included measures of school performance and attendance, teachers' ratings of pupils' behaviour and tests of pupils' attitudes, self-images, commitments to educational objectives and peer relationships. In addition process records compiled by group workers were also used.

Group activities and discussions were oriented around problems manifested in school, and goals included trying to motivate pupils to improve school performance and to develop more effective, alternative modes of coping with stressful school experiences. Members were reminded of the serious purposes of the group experiences, though they were of a pleasurable nature. Consideration was given to exploring cause-effect sequences in interactions, and seeking and practicing new more appropriate social responses in the school context.

Vinter and Sarri made a preliminary evaluation of their findings in terms of two parts of the school system - pupil characteristics and school conditions. In terms of the former they found that though of average intelligence most malperformers, while having appropriate long term educational goals, did not have commitment to immediate academic

and behavioural norms and believed themselves rejected by the school system. The negative effects of 'labelling' pupils in school was observed to result in poor self concepts and reductions in motivation to try to achieve in an apparently hopeless situation. Opportunities for successful achievement in school were regarded as essential. In terms of school conditions, sanctioning procedures were regarded as having negative personal and social effects on pupils, and systems of recording played an important part in perpetuating a negative image of a pupil reducing his chances of a 'fresh start'.

While these researchers reported that teachers had noted some behavioural and academic improvements in group members, they state that the results of the intervention were partially disappointing. 'The results after the first year indicated that there were no significant changes for either the experimental or control groups in grades received, absences, truancies, suspensions or leaving school', (Sarri and Vinter, 1974, p.442) although some boys in the experimental group showed positive changes in behaviour. These results were attributed by the researchers to a failure to take enough cognisance of school practices and conditions. A study of these conditions revealed insights as to how pupils' academic and behaviour patterns led to specific responses from the school which tended to isolate them from the mainstream of school life, and decrease their chances of success in the system.

This review of relevant studies reported in the literature would seem to indicate that group work services in schools have been at least partially successful in attaining their goals. In most cases, however, a lack of objective data and experimental design, coupled with a failure to fully elucidate details of program activities used, raises questions as to the true effectiveness of such projects and hinders their replication in further research. The writer found the most valuable guideline to emerge in his survey of previous research to come from Sarri and Vinter (1974) who state

It is now apparent that effecting innovation and change in today's public school is a complex and difficult task requiring attention not only to attributes of individuals in the system but also, and perhaps more importantly, to the behaviour of the school itself. Findings indicate that planned change can be effected, but that no single technique is likely to succeed unless it is addressed to the complexity of the total situation. (Sarri and Vinter, 1974, p.456)

BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION: SELECTING TECHNIQUES OF INTERVENTION

Author Anstey Mark

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