

Conflict in Workgroups
DisRes 603
Fall, 1996
Tuesdays, 7:00-9:30 p.m., Room TBA

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Mon. 3:00 - 4:30, Tues. 4:00 - 5:30
and by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Conflict in organizations, both within and between workgroups, can be a critical drain on resources, and/or a major source of growth.

This course provides the participant with an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of work groups, with an emphasis on processes of conflict within them, and to develop skills to deal constructively with intra- and intergroup conflict.

The problem is approached in both didactic and experiential modes. During the Tuesday night class sessions we will grapple with conceptual issues, drawing from various literatures on groups. These sessions will consist of a combination of lecture and seminar-discussion format.

Students will also participate in weekly meetings with a small workgroup, consisting of a sub-set of the class, which will offer an opportunity to study group processes in vivo with the aid of a consultant. The consultant will be available for one and a half hours each week for each group. The workgroups will have a variety of tasks, or projects, with different types of product expected, over the course of the semester.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Participation & Readings

Please be prepared to discuss in class the readings assigned for that meeting. The reading load is light, and the expectation is that all students will keep up. Readings will be drawn from the attached bibliography.

Participation in the Workgroups

Attendance at all meetings of the workgroups is essential to

the growth and development of the groups, and is therefore mandatory. Missing meetings not only degrades your own learning, it interferes with the continuity of the group, and therefore with the learning experience of all the other members of the group. This is discussed further under Notes on the Workgroups.

"Journal" Entries

To make the most of the experiential portion of the course, students will be asked to write weekly journal entries reflecting on events in their groups. These will be short, informal (but typed) pieces (i.e., 1-2 pages). Each entry should address three questions: 1) what are the major events taking place in the life of the group; 2) what are your feelings about what is taking place in the group; 3) how do you relate what is going on in the group to the readings?

Term Paper

Each class member will write a paper (about 10 pages, double spaced) analyzing a workgroup (other than the class small groups) of which they are or have been a member, in which manifest conflict occurred or is occurring. The paper will discuss the dynamics of the group and the conflict processes involved, and should draw on both class readings and at least one outside source. Papers are expected to be prepared in APA style, as described in the Publication Manual. You will have the option of getting peer feedback on the paper before you hand it in.

Grading

Participation & Preparation	20%
Journal Entries	10%
Group Projects	20%
Term Paper	50%

SCHEDULE (MAJOR POINTS OF INTEREST)

Week Of	Notes
9/2	1st Class
9/17	Begin Workgroups
10/15	Presentation of grading system proposals
10/22	Final grading system in place
11/5	Intra-group conflict model presentations
11/12	Data collection
11/24	Interventions; Thanksgiving Break: no groups
12/2	Intergroup Event; Last week of workgroups
12/9	Last class

SCHEDULE OF GROUP PROJECTS

Week Of	Task
9/17	Study the process of the group
9/24	Study the process of the group
9/30	Study the process of the group
10/7	Develop grading system proposal for presentation in class on 10/15
10/14	Reconsider grading proposal. Final decision to be made on 10/22
10/21	Develop one or more models of intra-group conflict for presentation 11/5
10/28	Continue last week's task
11/4	Intervention I: Develop plan; prepare for data collection 11/12
11/11	Intervention II: Data analysis/ diagnosis
11/18	Intervention III: Intervention design/planning for intervention in class 11/24
11/24	NO GROUPS: THANKSGIVING
12/2	Closing: Studying the process of the group

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bandura, A. (1990). Selective activation and disengagement of moral control. *Journal of Social Issues*, 46 (1) pp. 27-46

Berg, D. N. & Smith, K. (1987). *Paradoxes of group life*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Chs. 5, 10.

Bion, W. R. (1975). *Selections from: Experiences in groups*. In A. Coleman and H. Bexton (Eds.), *Group relations reader 1* (pp. 11-20). Washington, D.C.: A. K. Rice Institute.

Blake, R. R. & Mouton, J. S. (1984). *Solving costly organizational conflicts*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Chs. 1-3, 10

Burke, W. W. (1982). *Organization development: Principles and practices*. Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company. Ch. 3

Deutsch, M. (1985). *Distributive justice: A social psychological perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 6.

Hackman, J. R. & Oldham, G. R. (1980). *Work redesign*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. pp. 161-217

Horwitz, L. (1985). *Projective identification in dyads and groups*. In A. D. Coleman and M. H. Geller (Eds.), *Group relations reader 2* (pp. 21-35). Springfield, VA: A. K. Rice Institute.

Katz, D. & Kahn, R. L. (1978). The social psychology of organizations, 2nd Ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons. Chs. 7, 18

Kernberg, O. (1980). Internal world & external reality. New York: Jason Aronson. Ch. 11

Klein, E. B. (1985). Belfast communities intervention. In A. D. Coleman and M. H. Geller (Eds.), Group relations reader 2 (pp. 299-307). Springfield, VA: A. K. Rice Institute.

Klein, M. (1985). Our adult world and its roots in infancy. In A. D. Coleman and M. H. Geller (Eds.), Group relations reader 2 (pp. 5-19). Springfield, VA: A. K. Rice Institute.

Rioch, M. J. (1975). Group relations: Rationale and technique. In A. Coleman and H. Bexton (Eds.), Group relations reader 1 (pp. 3-9). Washington, D.C.: A. K. Rice Institute.

Rioch, M. J. (1975). The work of Wilfred Bion on groups. In A. Coleman and H. Bexton (Eds.), Group relations reader 1 (pp. 21-33). Washington, D.C.: A. K. Rice Institute.

Schein, E. H. (1988). Process consultation, volume I: Its role in organization development, 2nd Ed. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Co.

Yukl, G. (1994). Leadership in organizations, 3rd Ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc. Chs. 7, 14

POTENTIAL CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dates to Assign

1. 9/3 Bion, W. R. (1975). Selections from: Experiences in groups. In A. Coleman and H. Bexton (Eds.), Group relations reader 1 (pp. 11-20). Washington, D.C.: A. K. Rice Institute.

1. 9/3 Klein, M. (1985). Our adult world and its roots in infancy. In A. D. Coleman and M. H. Geller (Eds.), Group relations reader 2 (pp. 5-19). Springfield, VA: A. K. Rice Institute.

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2. 9/10 Berg, D. N. & Smith, K. (1987). Paradoxes of group life. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Chs. 5, 10.
2. 9/10 Horwitz, L. (1985). Projective identification in dyads and groups. In A. D. Coleman and M. H. Geller (Eds.), Group relations reader 2 (pp. 21-35). Springfield, VA: A. K. Rice Institute.
3. 9/17 Kernberg, O. (1980). Internal world & external reality. New York: Jason Aronson. Ch. 11
4. 9/24 Klein, E. B. (1985). Belfast communities intervention. In A. D. Coleman and M. H. Geller (Eds.), Group relations reader 2 (pp. 299-307). Springfield, VA: A. K. Rice Institute.
4. 9/24 Schein, E. H. (1988). Process consultation, volume I: Its role in organization development, 2nd Ed. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Co.
7. 10/14 Blake, R. R. & Mouton, J. S. (1984). Solving costly organizational conflicts. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Chs. 1-3, 10
7. 10/14 Katz, D. & Kahn, R. L. (1978). The social psychology of organizations, 2nd Ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons. Chs. 7, 18
8. 10/21 Burke, W. W. (1982). Organization development: Principles and practices. Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company. Ch. 3
9. 10/28 Yukl, G. (1994). Leadership in organizations, 3rd Ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc. Chs. 7, 14
10. 11/4 Hackman, J. R. & Oldham, G. R. (1980). Work redesign. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. pp. 161-217
11. 11/11 Bandura, A. (1990). Selective activation and disengagement of moral control. Journal of Social Issues, 46 (1) pp. 27-46
11. 11/11 Deutsch, M. (1985). Distributive justice: A social psychological perspective. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 6.

NOTES ON THE WORKGROUPS

A major portion of the course is devoted to learning in the workgroups. The major purpose of these groups is to provide an opportunity to learn about group processes in general, and

conflict processes in particular, working with "live," here-and-now data. The groups will also provide an opportunity to develop skills in the resolution of intra-group conflict, both as a group-member, and as an external consultant.

The groups are formed primarily for the purpose of self-study. Some meetings will be devoted to this task exclusively, while at other meetings there will be work-product oriented tasks as well. The consultant will intervene only to the extent that in his view it will further the accomplishment of the group's task(s).

CONTRACTING ISSUES

1. In a course of this nature, there is an especially strong interdependence among group members. Attendance at all meetings of the workgroups is essential to the growth and development of the groups. Missing meetings not only degrades your own learning, it interferes with the continuity of the group, and therefore with the learning experience of all the other members of the group. Anyone who decides to take the course is therefore asked to agree to attend all workgroup meetings.

2. The focus of the course is on the functioning of groups, and on techniques for intervention in conflict processes in groups. While the role of individual personality in group process is not denied, it is left to the individual for private examination. This marks a clear distinction between the methods used in this course and group psychotherapy. It is essential that everyone thinking of taking the course carefully examine their reasons for taking the course, and be clear that this course is intended neither as psychotherapy, nor as an alternative to it.