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Editor’s Comments
Larry Litwack

As we begin the 21st year of publication for the Journal, it is encouraging to see the continued growth in the depth and breadth of material coming from contributors around the world. If a stated purpose of the William Glasser Institute is to teach the world Choice Theory, the ideas seem to be continuing to spread. At the same time, as evidenced both by the diversity in the content of the articles submitted and by the increasing flow of books and other creative materials coming from different authors, the ideas originally developed by William Glasser continue to evolve. That is the mark of something that is active and kinetic.

At the same time, I continue to solicit material for the Journal. Of particular interest are articles that are research based. I receive a constant stream of inquiries for material that presents research data about the application of reality therapy and choice theory. Also of major interest would be articles that focus on lead management, as well as the applications of CT/RT on the world of business and industry. Finally, I would particularly encourage international groups to submit material. A good model comes from the material sent me by Rose Kim from Korea – an excellent series of research-based reports.

The timing of this issue also comes at a moment in American history that is relatively unique. For the first time for many individuals, their lives seem to be out of their control. They view world events as living examples of external control. Americans who viewed their country as a beacon of safety and peace now have begun to fear – for many, the rear wheels have taken over.

This presents a challenge to those who believe in choice theory and the concepts of internal control psychology. We need to concentrate our efforts in helping people develop coping strategies that are internally motivated and effective for each of them. As teachers, counselors, parents, friends – in short as human beings with our own thoughts and feelings – we can serve as living examples to others by what we do and say. We can also learn much from many of our international members who have lived with external and internal threats for much longer than we have. The world continues to change – let us hope that we can contribute to its positive evolution.
ABSTRACT

Women are still living in a state of deprivation and subjugation in Albania according to socio-religious norms and practices. Choice Theory allows them to identify their basic needs and to choose behaviors that will meet these needs more effectively, even within a climate of coercion and the relative absence of respect for human rights.

Premise

In April 2000 and again in 2001, I had the opportunity to visit Albania to conduct training in Choice Theory and Reality Therapy. This experience has been an eye-opener for me to the realities of a part of the world that I had hitherto not paid much notice to before—the Balkans.

My interest in the background of Albania was awakened by a visit to its national museum in Kruje, a five-minute walk from our training venue. Dedicated to one of its greatest heroes, Georg Skanderbeg, the exhibits speak of a people who remember where they come from and what they have been fighting for. Today they may be poor, land-locked and left behind by the developed and developing worlds, but their defensive nationalism remains strong, and their monuments a source of pride and collective memory for the old and young alike. In their respect for the past and their heritage lies the saving strength of the Albanian people.

Background to Albania

Albania is of Illyrian origin, according to Edith Durham, a renowned journalist and author of several books about Albania. It is a country locked within itself, a little stationary world within our vast whirling outer one, where medievalism is preserved in the most delicious freshness. A forbidding mountain homeland and resilient tribal society enabled the Albanians to survive into modern times with their identity and their Indo-European language intact.

The Albanians are probably an ethnic outcropping of the Illyrians, an ancient Balkan people who lived in the closest proximity to Greece, the cradle of contemporary European culture and the source of civilization, agriculture, jurisprudence and laws. Later, they succumbed to Roman rule around the time of Christ. Together with the other Balkan states, Albania served as the gateway to Europe for the ambitions of the Moslem Turks and the rest of the Middle East. A great part of the Balkan peninsula was under the administration of the Byzantium and the rule of the Greek Orthodox church since the 6th century.

"The Albanian people have hacked their way through history, sword in hand" proclaims the preamble to Albania's 1976 Stalinist constitution. To understand Albania, one must understand its heroes. The outstanding hero of the country is George Kastrioti Skanderbeg, leader of the Epirots, 1405 - 1468. He led the Albanians in resisting the Turkish invasion for 25 years with unsurpassed skill and courage. Together with him, thousands of Albanians shed their blood before the gates of Europe in the face of the Ottoman onslaught. The art gallery in the national museum of Kruje stores paintings of the heroic struggle of Skanderbeg.

The heroism of Albania is remembered by European writers, composers and painters: George Byron, Vivaldi, Delacroix. In "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage", Byron writes: "Here the Albanian proudly treads the ground, clad in fistanella, a sword in one hand, a book in the other, signs of the ideal for freedom and yearning for knowledge." In painting "the Albanian woman", Camille Carot wrote, "The costumes of the Albanians are the most magnificent in the world." Byron calls Albania "a country of rich popular creativeness", full of color, life and art.

Albanian nationalism

Albanian nationalism stirred for the first time in the late 19th century when it was threatened by neighboring Balkan states. Refugees were driven out by violence by the Serbs between 1875 - 1912. In 1912, Albania gained her independence through the National Revival. However, under King Zog, a feudal regime obstructed the country's democratic development. This led to the beginning of the labor movement and the founding of the Communist party in 1941. Albania adopted communism officially in 1944, re-aligning her economy along strict Stalinist lines and seeking assistance first from Yugoslavia, then the Soviet Union, and later China. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism, Albania is now struggling, against great odds, to find its place in the world order after having been reduced in the past to economic ruin.

The women of Albania

The Albanian women stand out in the country's history as equal partners in the resistance movement alongside the men. They fought against the Ottoman aggressors on the battlefront with the same bravery as the men did. That is why their suppression under Islamic laws imposed by the Turks has never been total nor accepted. In Albania, three religions have always persisted and co-existed: Catholicism, orthodoxy and Islam. The Moslem faith of the Albanian people has been, at most, superficial or perfunctory, unable to penetrate its Christian roots.

Albanian women are still being kept in a state of deprivation and subjugation to the men-folk, and the only way to offer them training is to guarantee their families that they will be "safe" in a women's-only environment under credible supervision. In April '68, women received basic week training, with the assistance and interpretive services of four local staff who had already undergone training a year prior. The knowledge and the practice has made a radical difference to the quality of their lives.
Freedom of choice in Choice Theory

A genuine freedom of choice implies the absence of restraints both from within and without. However, with the history and background of Albania rooted in coercion, domination and conquest, external freedom for the people seems more illusory than real. This is felt even more by the women as they are restricted by social norms and conventions from making choices such as, for example, the choice to go for further education, the choice of employment and choices for their future. For example, as long as they are unmarried, they will have to ask for permission before going out in the evening and should be accompanied on the road after dark by their brother or father.

However, freedom from external coercion is only one aspect of Choice Theory. Freedom from internal compulsions and reactions is another aspect of choice and involves:

- freedom from reactive feelings and behaviors in the stimulus-response mode
- freedom from compulsive behaviors (thinking and doing) and other addictions
- freedom from behaviors and wants that do not respect the rights of others
- freedom from prejudices, discrimination and unrealistic judgments about others different from self

Through the knowledge and practice of Choice Theory and the deliberate release of inner freedom, the women of Albania have learned to identify their problem situations more clearly. The process was very evident in their role-plays and group work. They were also encouraged to use personal memorabilia, symbols and objects such as keys, watches, photos and phone-address lists, to personalize their Quality World and the external reality in a concrete and eloquent form. Evaluative questioning evoked awareness that led to painful and, at times, pointed answers such as the following:

Examples of Role-plays

Case 1

A I want to go on to secondary school but my parents objected because of the boys there and, as a girl, I am not allowed to be in mixed company. I was very upset and angry with my parents for depriving me of the chance for further education and for companionship with my peers.

Q Will feeling upset and angry get you what you want?

A No, I realize that. That’s why I looked for an alternative and I found the chance to attend a tailoring course for women. At least, I am having some professional training there and, more importantly, I’m developing some friendships with other women in the course.

Case 2

B I’ve met this really nice man but my parents objected because they have already chosen a distant relative for me. I have been arguing with them to get them to change their minds but they are very fixed on their decision. They are also affected by what the other relatives have to say.

Q Is arguing helping or hurting you?

B Of course I get very flustered and emotional when I talk to them. I don’t seem to be able to stay cool and rational. I’m weak in self-control.

Q Is it important for you to be strong and logical in the way you express yourself?

B Very much. I think my parents and friends will respect me more if I’m clear about what I want and how I say it.

Q So is the marriage decision only part of the bigger problem which is actually your lack of clarity and ability to express yourself convincingly?

B I understand now that my style of getting emotional about issues is actually a waste of time and energy. Perhaps mastering my own feelings first will actually strengthen my arguments. Even my boyfriend has pointed this out to me.

The message of Choice Theory

The women who have participated in the basic week training have expressed their appreciation of what the training has done for them. Here is an excerpt of their reflection of what Choice Theory means to them:

“Every one of us have discovered, through the training, a powerful awareness of our personal identity and dignity and the freedom of choices that open before us even within the restrictive norms of the society in which we live.

For a long time we have agonized and suffered in silence the lack of personhood and freedom that is the historical lot of the women of Albania. Some have not had the strength to endure this and have expressed themselves in extremist ways, with painful consequences for themselves and their families. Others have lost the deeper sense of living and go through life as non-persons directed by their fathers, brothers or their husbands.

We have received the message of Choice Theory as an invitation to create a more meaningful existence for ourselves. We know now that our needs will drive us to choose behaviors that will most effectively satisfy our Quality World and bring about a better understanding of the All-we-see World. When we run into difficulties and frustrations, we will use our skills of evaluation and comparison to restore our balance. Above all, we now have the freedom to choose the way we will respond to the restrictions we face and the courage to change ourselves and become wholesome and balanced for the sake of our daughters and those who will share our society.
Thank you, Dr. Glasser, for this liberating message. If possible, we hope to meet you one day to thank you personally. If this does not happen, we will express our gratitude by trying to live out the skills suggested by Choice Theory."

Conclusion:

Even though it is highly unlikely that these women will be able to further their training in Choice Theory beyond the basic level, their very enthusiasm to live out these skills in their daily lives will ensure that the knowledge will not be put aside. These women may be pioneering in their families and villages a fresh approach to identity and belonging, and may break the cycle of violence and coercion that has pervaded for far too long. They deserve our esteem and our support.

References

Durham E. (1920) Some tribal origins and customs of the Balkans.

International Resource Library

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The Evolution of Reality Therapy to Choice Theory

William A. Howatt

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ABSTRACT

William Glasser broke away from the traditional model of psychotherapy in the early 1960s to develop his own model for counseling. He believed the prevalent Freudian model was built on weak and ineffective constructs (Wubbolding, 2000b). The purpose of this historical review is to explain how the development of a working therapy provided the basis for Glasser’s theory.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe, employing an historical timeline, the development of William Glasser’s “choice theory,” as it evolved from a successful counseling therapy (which Glasser originally dubbed “reality therapy”). Although the therapy came first, both therapy and theory are still taught today. A unique point about commenting on the work of William Glasser is that he is still alive, well, and evolving in thought. This paper will focus on the evolution of the ideas he has published to date only.

Glasser’s career as a psychiatrist started with his rejection of the Freudian model (Corey, 2001). “Towards the end of my psychiatric training,” he wrote in 1996, “I found myself in the uncomfortable position of doubting much that I had been taught (p. xxv). Under the support and encouragement of his favorite teacher, G.L. Harrington, M.D. (to whom he dedicated the book Reality Therapy: A New Approach to Psychiatry), Glasser devised and articulated his own model to help people help themselves.

Glasser’s epiphany took place during a conversation with Harrington: “When I hesitatingly expressed my own concerns, he reached across the desk, shook my hand and said ‘Join the club’” (p. xxv). This affirmation set Glasser on his quest for a new psychology, in good conscience.

Corey (2000) explains that William Glasser’s work can now be found in numerous professional settings, such as mental health, education, business, and corrections. “Reality therapy is a philosophy of life that has extensive applications to nearly every aspect of human relationships” (Howatt, 2000, p. 126).

Reality therapy and choice theory are both mainstream in the world of counseling, and are now taught in many mainstream academic counseling programs at colleges and universities around the world. Gerald Corey, of Cole/Wadsworth, and Raymond Corsini and Danny Wedding (2000), of Peacock Publishers, have cited Glasser’s work in their abstracts. Other evidence of the growing influence of choice theory was the endorsement by Albert Ellis. Corey (2001) describes Ellis as the most influential psychologist alive today. Ellis (2000) has commented on similarities between his rational-emotive behavioral therapy and choice theory. Both center on the concept of internal locus of control, and operate on the premise that clients first change themselves to obtain their desired outcomes.

Historical Overview

William Glasser was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1925, and lives today in California with his second wife, Carleen. Glasser began his secondary education with the goal of becoming a chemical engineer. For personal reasons, he decided this was not his calling, and opted to become a psychologist (Howatt, 1997). He returned to school and graduated from Case Western Reserve University in 1945 with a B.Sc. in clinical psychology, and graduated again in 1948 with a Master’s in clinical psychology.

After a few years of private practice, Glasser wanted to make more of an impact in the field of psychology, and thought the best route was to return to medical school with the goal of becoming a psychiatrist (Howatt, 1997). In 1953, he returned to Case Western Reserve and started his quest to become a medical doctor. In 1957, he completed his psychiatry training at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Los Angeles. In 1961, after a long road of learning and career decisions, Glasser became a board certified psychiatrist. This was his last formal degree training. However, in 1990 the University of San Francisco awarded Dr. Glasser the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa.

Glasser had a private practice from 1956 to 1986. He has also been active lecturing and writing on reality therapy and choice theory. In 1967, Glasser founded the Institute for Reality Therapy. In 1994, he changed the organization’s name to the Institute for Reality Therapy, Control Theory and Quality Management. Since 1996, it has been known as The William Glasser Institute.

The William Glasser Institute’s website reports that about 45,000 professionals from various professions have completed at least one of Glasser’s formal training programs on reality therapy (www.glasserinst.com). To date, more than 6,500 people around the world have been certified in Reality Therapy. At the age of 76, Glasser continues to be a very active speaker, and has written 20 books and numerous articles and related videotaped presentations. Many of his shorter articles are published in The William Glasser Institute’s newsletter.

Historical Review of Glasser’s Work

Palmatier (1998) explains how Glasser categorically rejected the idea that forces beyond the client’s conscious mind control his or her behavior. According to Palmatier, Glasser believed these forces can be seen in terms of an information supply only, and therefore an individual ultimately has the final choice. One of the main constructs for Glasser’s divergence from Freud was based on the notion of responsibility and people’s ability to exert self-control over
their own behavior. Glasser (1984) argues, "Nothing we do is caused by what happens outside of us. If we believe that what we do is caused by forces outside of us, we are acting like dead machines" (p.1).

According to Freud, the personality consisted of three parts: the id (biological component), ego (psychological component), and the superego (social component). Freud (1949) explained in his teachings that behavior was determined by the energy battle between the three components. The premise of this theory is that deep unconscious processing is needed to achieve a balance in individual energy systems so people may regain or stay in control of their lives. Glasser disagreed with Freud's premise that choice is unconsciously motivated (Glasser, 1965).

Freud (1949) established his model of psychoanalysis on clearly defined structures of personality that provided sound explanations for all mental health concerns. Once Freud had created this frame of reference, he then sought techniques to help people overcome their mental illness. According to Plotnick (1999), Freud developed all his therapy techniques by seeking strategies to unlock the unconscious mind; free association, dream interpretation, and analysis of slips of the tongue. Trained in psychoanalysis, Glasser found it impossible to accept the Freudian school of thought (Peterson, 2000).

In a personal conversation with Glasser, he told me of one case study that supported his thinking that people had personal control over their behavior (Howatt, 1997). This experience was one of many he used to support his conviction that the conscious mind is, not the unconscious - is in control, and convinced him he could legitimately challenge the prevailing view of mental illness.

While working in a veterans hospital unit during his residency, Glasser conducted a simple, informal, non-rigorous qualitative experiment with the mental illness client population he was serving as a resident psychiatrist.

Glasser moved all the pinball games into one corner of the ward, and made a clear line with a sign to mark the entrance to this section. He informed staff, and told all the clients on the ward that "no crazy behavior" was allowed in the games room. They could act crazy if they chose to, outside the game area. However, within the games area, they had to suppress crazy behaviors (e.g., yelling at invisible people) or they would be asked to leave.

He reported that the majority of the patients were able to function very well in the games room, once they understood the consequence of being removed. He concluded that the need to play the games was at that moment in time more important than acting crazy. Peterson (2000) argues that for Glasser, this provided him with far more evidence than that which supported his psychotherapy training, and this set him off to create a new psychology.

Glasser (1984) argues that individual human behavior is the result of people's best attempt, at any moment, to meet one or more of their basic needs: love, power, fun, freedom, recognition, and survival. In 1962, however, he defined only two basic needs: love and the need to be accepted. It was not until he wrote "control theory," the prototype for reality therapy, that he expanded the list to five basic needs; four psychological and one physiological, and advanced the idea that humans are genetically motivated to fulfill all five needs at every waking moment of life. The survival need is described by Glasser as an innate unconscious need that we all have. It includes all the behaviors that are primary to human survival, such as reproduction, food, safety, and shelter.

The games room experiment that Glasser conducted in the veterans hospital unit was one case study that led him to believe the accepted models for treating mental illness were ineffective. He concluded that people are not so much sick as they are discouraged (Glasser, 2000). Glasser does not mention any influence Alfred Adler's work may have had on his thinking, although his position is congruent with Adlerian psychology. Adler (1958) advanced the theory that people want to fit in with the social interest, and be accepted. Adler designed his therapy to encourage clients to see their current situation as a byproduct of their perceptions and behaviors. Nystul (1999) describes Glasser's choice theory in terms of Adlerian psychology.

According to Dreikurs (1952), Adler believed a person's basic mistakes in life could be understood as mistakes in commonsense thinking. Glasser (1984) argues the behavior we present to the world is always a choice. His divergence stems from the concept of self-control.

On the same track as Adler, Glasser (1990) believes most symptoms are not due to an illness, but rather to the choices we make in our lives. For example, people who are "depressing" (he uses this term as a verb, not an adjective) would be, according to Glasser (1986), often choosing to feel miserable. Glasser (2000) believes that a great deal of the world's misery results from choice. Glasser (1984) states, "...it is always a choice and after a while, almost always a bad choice" (p. 3).

Glasser did not espouse prevailing thinking when he started assembling reality theory. Glasser (1965, 1984, 1998, 2000) makes it clear that he does not believe mental illness exists. In his latest book, Reality Therapy in Action, he refers to Thomas Szasz' work to corroborate his thinking:

...I agree with Thomas Szasz, that mental illness, as it was understood then, did not exist. What existed in 1965 was a theory of mental illness that was based on Freud's explanation of unresolved, unconscious conflicts... Clients were not sick - they were responsible for their behaviors and should not be labeled mentally ill (xv).

Peter Breggin, director of the International Center for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology, states, "Dr. Glasser's therapy is based on inescapable truths: meaningful relationships are central to the good life, the choices we make will determine their quality, and we can create them only if we take responsibility for ourselves without controlling other people" (Glasser 2000, p. xiii).

The origin of all human problems is, from Glasser's perspective (1969), unmet needs. When Glasser started out with the concept of basic needs in 1962, he believed that there were only two basic needs that all human beings had in common, regardless of culture or age: "psychological needs:
Glasser wanted to help people find the key to their personal freedom (Glasser, 1986). That key, he believed, was the insight of personal responsibility for one's choice of behavior. His model of reality therapy is based on an education model to assist clients to learn the knowledge and skills they need to take charge of their life, a model that he believes "is applicable to all people with a psychiatric problem" (Glasser, 1965, p. 3). Glasser expressed this goal in the original introduction for reality therapy. This intention provided the basis for the thinking that ultimately led to choice theory.

Hobart Mowrer wrote in the foreword of reality therapy: "late in his training as a resident psychiatrist, Glasser saw the futility of classical psychoanalytic procedures and began to experiment with a very different therapeutic approach, which he eventually named reality therapy" (in Glasser, 1965, p. xi). Glasser (2000) does allow that there are some biological mental illnesses (e.g., Alzheimer’s). This type of client has what he calls a "real mental illness," and benefits more from a neurologist than a psychiatrist.

Glasser (1984) also allows that in some cases clients whose lives are out of control, due to depression or anxiety, may benefit from psychotropic drugs. But he qualifies this by saying these kinds of drugs should only be used to help people take initial control of their world. They cannot be the intervention for life or sole intervention. It does appear that Glasser had different views of mental health both in regard to psychotherapy and psychotropic drug applications. For example, Glasser also clearly states his concerns with the futility of classical psychoanalytic procedures and began to experiment with a very different therapeutic approach, which he eventually named reality therapy" (in Glasser, 1965, p. xi). Glasser (2000) does allow that there are some biological mental illnesses (e.g., Alzheimer’s). This type of client has what he calls a "real mental illness," and benefits more from a neurologist than a psychiatrist.

Glasser (1984) argues that medications, then, are a transitional tool. In a conversation with me in 1997, he confided that he had not written a prescription since his early days as a resident psychiatrist in the veterans unit. Glasser (1965) credits his mastery of reality therapy techniques and practice with work at Ventura Institution, which treated serious behavior problem adolescent females in Santa Clara Valley, California.

Overview of Reality Therapy

The first (1965) definition Glasser published for reality therapy is as follows: "A therapy that leads all patients towards reality, towards grappling successfully with tangible and intangible aspects of the real world, might accurately be called a therapy towards reality, or simply reality therapy" (p. 6).

Wubbolding (1988) describes reality therapy as one that helps individuals regain control of their lives. Clients are the ones who will ultimately determine their success in therapy, through the choices they make. The premise of "choice and responsibility," on the part of the person in difficulty, provides the core of Glasser's work.

Glasser (1965) stated, "we hope that the reader will try to substitute responsibility for mental health and irresponsibility for mental illness and its many subcategories" (P. 18).

Reality Therapy in Action

‘Reality therapy had two defined steps when it was first created. One was setting the counseling environment, and the other was procedure that leads to change. What Glasser (1965) wanted to do in the first part of his therapy was to develop a humanistic relationship with the client.

Although Glasser does not mention Carl Rogers' work in his writing, the first part of reality therapy stresses the importance of gaining the trust and acceptance of the client, as does Rogers, who argues (1961) that the most important part of the counseling process is to show core behaviors such as empathy, congruence, and warm regard, so the client can feel comfortable and safe in therapy.

The first part of the process will set the stage for what Wubbolding (1991) calls the procedures that lead to change. This part of the process is the active part of therapy, where clients determine what they want and what they are willing to do to get it. If Glasser’s goal is to teach clients self-responsibility, they must first learn to believe that they have control over their own behavior (Howatt, 2000).

Glasser (2000) saw the application of reality therapy as a series of questions designed to get clients thinking of a simple and well-defined action plan to improve their current circumstance. The following four questions are samples of questions that you will find throughout Glasser’s Reality Therapy in Action (2000):

1. What do you want or what do you really want?
   This question was to seek out the unfulfilled need.

2. What are you doing?
   This question was to teach clients total behavior and to help them realize who is (they are) choosing the behavior they are now presenting.

3. What is your plan?
   This is a question to determine the actions the client will choose to do to work towards meeting one need that may not be being fulfilled.

4. What will happen if you continue to do what you are doing?
   This is another kind of question he used for clients to self-evaluate the behaviors they can choose, or are choosing.

The use of the questions in reality therapy can be viewed more as art than science (Wubbolding, 2000a). In Glasser’s reality therapy counseling process, he recommends that the counselor flow back and forth between these kinds of questions until clients are clear that they can do something to improve their current life challenge.

Not only will Glasser ask these kinds of questions in therapy, but teach choice theory in a psycho-educational format. Howatt (1999) discussed the value of using a cognitive behavioral journal that teaches choice theory to adult learners, to help them learn to take responsibility for their behavior. The process of reality therapy is rather direct, and is intended to help clients move beyond excuses to actions that they can take to be in charge of their life (Corsini & Wedding, 2000).
Overview of Choice Theory

One critic of Glasser’s work (Bourbon, 1997) has argued Glasser needed more evidence that reality therapy worked before he went seeking a theory to explain it. In 1972, Glasser reports reading a book by William T. Powers called Behavior: The Control of Perception, and how this prompted him to explore the ideas of therapy in action, prior to gathering research (Glasser, 1981). In essence, reality therapy was the art of change, and control theory was the theory of what needed to be changed and why.

Bourbon (1997) corroborates Glasser’s statements about Powers, and goes on to explain that Glasser asked Powers to teach him more about his theory. Powers indeed took the time to explain his model to Glasser. After reflecting on this experience for nine years, Glasser wrote a book that was his first attempt at explaining human behavior. Stations of the Mind was published by Harper & Row in 1981.

Critics such as Bourbon and others viewed Stations of the Mind as another slant on Powers’ work. However, this motivated Glasser to find a theory that he could call his own, that would explain why reality therapy worked (Howatt, 1997).

After almost 20 years without a theory, Glasser published Control Theory in 1984. Comparing the two works of Powers and Glasser, there appear to be a few similarities. Glasser had taken his theory into another direction, tying in the core components of ‘basic needs’ that he originally explained in reality therapy. Glasser used Powers’ approach, however, to explain the efficacy of reality therapy without a full-scale study (Glasser, 1984).

So, he ended up with control theory in a manner that was traditional, and at the same time, unorthodox. Corey (2001) and Corsini & Wedding (2000) described how most of the mainstream counseling techniques such as Freud’s, Adler’s, and Ellis’ were first developed as theories before they became therapies.

While speaking in Australia, in 1996, Glasser announced that he was going to start referring to what had hitherto been control theory, as “choice theory,” and in 1998 published Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom, with Harper & Row. He no longer uses the term control theory anywhere in his writing, having become convinced the term was misleading and suggestive of coercion.

Glasser (2000) now believes that reality therapy and choice theory have been merged to work hand in hand. It is clear by reviewing his work, that when he wrote Control Theory he had no conclusive scientific evidence to support the logic of the theory or its operations.

Choice Theory in Action

The word control, in control theory, was thought by many to mean control(s) over other(s) or the environment (Wubbolding, 1991), when what Glasser meant was control over oneself. Control theory operates on the model of “internal locus of control.” Julian Rotter (1982) postulated that there is a continuum where on one end, people are motivated by an external locus of control. This means they are motivated by what others think of them, very similar in essence to Pavlov’s stimulus control psychology (Plotnick, 1999). On the other end of the continuum, where Glasser’s scrutiny fell, is the internal locus of control (Howatt, 2000).

Based on his field observations, Glasser (1965) came to believe that people are in control of their conscious behavior. This insight is congruent, and again falls on the end of the continuum that Rotter (1982) defined as internal locus of control. Rotter goes on to explain that at this end of the continuum, people accept and acknowledge that they are responsible for their behavior and choices. Glasser (1984) believes all conscious human behavior is internally motivated. This construct was a guiding principle for the unfolding of his reality therapy. Glasser (1990) purports throughout his writings that all human behavior is created independently of what is going on in one’s particular life situation, and that we always have a choice of action. Glasser (1972) does not accept that people are victims of circumstance; they are only victims of their own ineffective personal choices.

To go into depth on the operations of choice theory is outside the scope of this paper. However, it is important to provide an introduction to choice theory in action. The main tenets of Glasser’s (1989) control theory are:

1. Basic Needs: All human beings have five basic needs (survival, love, freedom, power, and fun).

2. Quality World Picture Album: All persons automatically create their own individual pictures, which are representations of what they want, from moment to moment. These pictures are what a person believes will meet a particular need(s). These pictures are unique to the person. For example, my son Tommy meets my need for love. Another father may have a picture of his son in his wallet, and through it I could see it meets his need for love. However, even if I like the child from previous experience, this child would never be able to replace Tommy. These pictures are not motivated or controlled in the context of right or wrong; they are created for the purpose of meeting a particular need. For example, individuals may need to eat, and see food in a store. This desire may motivate them to steal, as they may not see any other option at the time to meet their need to satisfy hunger. Glasser (1989) believes that although this kind of behavior is the best attempt to satisfy a need, it does not excuse the behavior.

3. Comparing Places: All human beings are able to assess three things very quickly: what they like, dislike, and are neutral on. Human beings are, at every moment, comparing what they want with that they have. This determines, moment to moment, whether the information they receive from the outside world will be perceived as painful or pleasurable. Especially in cases where people are not meeting a need, they will feel a brief moment of pain, and experience a state of discomfort, which is how Glasser defines painful. This pain will motivate behavior. Glasser (2000) argues that humans have no choice except to behave.

4. Organized Behaviors: Glasser postulates that all of us have a set of learned behaviors at our disposal. We also have the ability to create new ones as well. Howatt (1999) reports this part of choice theory is paramount to clients’ awareness, if they are to begin the process of learning and generating new, healthy, effective behaviors.
5. Total Behavior: All human behavior is connected. Glasser uses the analogy of a front-wheel drive car. On the front wheels are action behaviors and thinking behaviors, and on the back wheels are feeling behaviors and physiology behaviors. Glasser (1984) explains that we have total control over our actions, and some direct control over our thinking. For example, if people are feeling down, and their bodies are feeling some physical discomfort, that is directly related to what they are presently thinking about and what they are doing.

Using this car metaphor, Glasser postulates that if such individuals change their scenery, either by going outside for a walk or doing something else they enjoy, they will start to feel better. Often without even realizing it, we change our feelings and physiology this way. This is the premise for control/choice theory; the idea that a person’s actions are always within the person’s control, or within certain parameters of control. The external situation may be outside of one’s control; however, how they perceive it and what they choose to do about it is always in their control. Glasser (1998) explains that much of mental illness is due to the fact people look to the outside to feel better. If they want to take charge of their well being, they need to first learn that they are in control of their behavior, and that they can learn new ways to cope with their present circumstances.

Glasser’s control theory teaches that people are able to learn that they always have control of their actions once they understand that they are truly internally motivated. Glasser (1984) believes that with this insight, people are then able to make the necessary changes. When individuals are able to take charge, what they are really doing, according to Glasser, is driving their car in the direction they want to go.

**Overview of Evolution of Choice Theory**

Glasser started out with the belief that mental health treatments were not effective. From this premise he started writing reality therapy. As Glasser became more mainstream, he saw for himself that in order to gain the acceptance of other professionals, he would have to explain why reality therapy worked, and how (Howatt, 1997).

After reading the work of William Powers, Glasser created, in 1972, what would in 1984 be known as control theory. He believed that control theory was a good beginning, in that it provided a frame of reference for the application of reality theory. After 14 years of teaching this idea, he changed its name to choice theory. His rationale for the name change was to have a title more congruent with the guiding principle with which he began in 1964: the belief that people have choice.

**Conclusion**

William Glasser started out with a therapy before he had a theory for explaining human behavior. The purpose of this paper was to provide a brief overview of the evolution from reality therapy to choice theory. This paper does show an historical time line of his work, and how he has arrived at his present thinking. Because he is still alive, it is fascinating to imagine where else his thinking may lead, and promising for the lives of the people he continues to help.
The Method of Levels: 
Offering a different approach to peer counseling programs

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, a counseling procedure called the Method of Levels (MOL) is introduced as a strategy to include in peer counseling programs. Some peer counseling programs are hampered by problems such as peer counselors taking on the responsibility of giving advice. The MOL is a way of assisting another person to resolve internal conflict that does not rely on the facilitator advising, challenging, or judging in any way the person with the conflict. As such, the procedure may greatly enhance peer counseling programs that are experiencing problems due to an inappropriate counseling technique.

Peer counseling programs have been adopted in some schools to assist students in resolving problems. Generally, peer counselors undergo some form of training and then, once they are trained, assist other students with problems. These programs can be a tremendous asset to a school population (Myrick, Highland, & Sabella, 1995). The benefits of programs in which peers help to resolve conflict include reduction in school violence, improvements to the school climate, enhanced interpersonal skills for participants, and fewer disciplinary referrals to administrators (Day-Vines, Day-Hairson, Carruthers, Wall, & Lupton-Smith, 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Tanaka & Reid, 1997).

Sometimes, however, problems can be encountered with these programs. Problems in the adequacy of training and supervision have been mentioned in the literature as well as problems with the definition of the peer counselor role (Latham, 1997; Lewis & Lewis, 1996). Also, the style of counseling that the student adopts can be problematic. While this issue can be related to training and supervision, it may also have to do with the type of program being implemented. Programs where the peer counselor's role involves giving advice and suggestions may be particularly problematic (Morey, Miller, Rosen, & Fulton, 1993).

In this paper, I will address the problem of counseling style in terms of the tendency for peer counselors to advise and suggest. Specifically, I will outline a counseling procedure that may be taught to peer counselors to enable them to assist others without advising or suggesting. I have assumed throughout this article that the school counselor is the most appropriate person to train, supervise, and monitor peer counselors.

The Method of Levels (Carey, 1999; Carey, in press; Powers, 1992) is a little known approach to counseling that I propose will be a very useful procedure to include in a program of peer counseling. In this article, I will explain the basic approach of MOL and will suggest how it might be taught to students in a peer counseling program. MOL is a particular way of listening to and talking with other people that provides them with a context for resolving internal conflicts. Since MOL does not involve giving advice or suggestions, adopting this approach may assist school counselors who are facilitating peer counseling programs to eliminate the kinds of problems that can occur when students adopt the role of an advisor.

Background to MOL

MOL is based on the principles of Perceptual Control Theory (PCT; Powers, 1973, 1998). The interested reader is encouraged to seek other sources to learn more about PCT (e.g., Bourbon, 1995; Ford, 1993; Marken, 1992; Powers, 1973, 1998; Robertson & Powers, 1990). In PCT, Powers (1973, 1998) asserts that all individuals control their own inner worlds of perceptual experiences. During the process of control, individuals act on their environments to create and maintain the perceptual experiences they desire.

In order to create and maintain desired perceptual experiences, Powers (1973) asserts that an individual's neuronal organization is arranged in a multitude of control systems. Furthermore, Powers (1973) proposes that these control systems are organized hierarchically. According to this arrangement, a control system at one level creates and maintains the experiences it desires through lower level systems. Some students, for example, might wish to create and maintain the experience of "being a good student." Due to the multifaceted nature of an experience such as being a good student, this experience would be considered to be at a high level in the PCT hierarchy. Students will be able to create this perception by controlling less complex, lower level experiences. Students might create perceptions of punctuality, respectfulness, diligence, and participation so that they will "know" that they are being good students. Similarly, students might create a perception of respectfulness by controlling even less complex and still lower level experiences. In order to create an experience of respectfulness, students might control the amount of eye contact they maintain with teachers, their tone of voice, their facial expressions. In this example, being a good student would be considered to be a higher level perceptual experience than respectfulness while tone of voice would be considered to be a perceptual experience at a level lower than respectfulness. The importance of the concept of hierarchical levels will become clearer as the MOL procedure is explained.

Problems occur for people when they attempt to create two incompatible experiences at the same time. The situation where two control systems are attempting to create incompatible experiences simultaneously is called conflict in PCT (Powers, 1998). Sometimes, these conflicts can be trivial and fleeting. Will I buy the salad or the hot dog for lunch? At other times, however, the conflict can be more serious. Will I try drugs with my friends or not? Conflict in this situation can become chronic and have dramatic consequences for the
person concerned. Essentially, when a person intends to perceive two incompatible experiences, both control systems become incapable of functioning as they should.

A good case can be made for the proposal that all ongoing problems of a psychological nature experienced by individuals are the direct result of internal conflict (Carey, 1999). When people are in conflict they can experience things like confusion, despair, anxiety, ambivalence, irritation, and frustration. These experiences will persist for as long as the control systems are in conflict.

Many situations with students in school could fit the criteria of internal conflict. When a student is in the position of wanting to follow the rules and also wanting to maintain peer status, these two “wants” could easily result in the experience of internal conflict. Wanting to get good grades and also wanting to socialize with friends could also lead to conflict.

Even instances of interpersonal conflict may really be internal conflict when examined more closely. A student who is the victim of bullying, for example, may want to be treated respectfully by peers and may also not want to involve adults in the problem. This could result in the bullying continuing indefinitely. While I do not condone bullying in any way, it may be the case that the situation is being perpetuated, at least in part, by the student’s reluctance to report what is happening. If the student did not want an absence of adult involvement, then the matter might be resolved more easily.

In schools, therefore, it may well be the case that students who seek help for problems are doing so to resolve a state of internal conflict. If this is the case, it may not be satisfactory to simply give advice or suggestions to the student. The problem is not that the student doesn’t know what to do. The problem is that the student wants to do this and that at the same time. The premise of MOL is that when the student is able to explore the conflict created by this and that, the conflict will be resolved through a process of reorganization. Basically, this means that the student’s own internal mechanisms will change the parameters of the control systems such that a new situation will be created which eliminates the conflicted situation that previously existed (Carey, 1999; Powers, 1998).

The MOL Technique

The task of MOL then, is to assist people to resolve internal conflicts. Earlier, the idea of a hierarchy of control systems was introduced. In PCT, it is posited that when conflict occurs there are generally at least three hierarchical levels involved (Powers, 1998). One level is the level of incompatible goals. Below this level is the level where the conflict may be experienced by such states as confusion or anxiety. Above the level of incompatible goals is the level where the situation that makes the conflict possible occurs. The student who is being bullied is perhaps only experiencing that situation because of a control system that specifies having friends. A desire to have friends might be responsible for wanting to see friends acting respectfully and also wanting to not involve adults in disputes with peers.

Often during the experience of an internal conflict, such as the one described above, students will be aware of the lowest level or the middle level. They will know, for example, that they are on edge or confused or irritable or unhappy. Similarly, they may know that they want to be treated nicely by their friends or that they want to sort things out for themselves. Unfortunately, being aware of these two levels will not help resolve the conflict because it is actually being created above these levels.

To resolve internal conflict, students need to shift awareness to a level above where the conflict is occurring. Essentially, they need to be in a place where they are thinking “about” the conflicted goals rather than being “in” the experience of the conflict. Fortunately, awareness seems to be very mobile. At any time, awareness seems able to scan a multitude of experiences like a spotlight panning the countryside.

In addition to the feature of mobility, another characteristic of awareness is necessary for MOL. Powers (1998) noted that whenever a person describes a particular incident or event, there seems to be two levels of consciousness occurring. The first level is the level that occupies most of the person’s attention. This level is typically the current topic of discussion. Additionally, however, there are also thoughts constantly occurring in the “background” of the person’s awareness. These thoughts are often thoughts “about” what is being discussed (Powers, 1998).

It is these background thoughts that Powers (1998) suggests are indicators of a higher perceptual level. Often, as people are talking, they will interrupt their own flow of dialogue. They might pause and look away, chuckle, grin wryly, or shake their head. Or they can sometimes make a comment about what they have just been describing such as “I don’t know if this is making much sense.” These verbal or nonverbal “interruptions” could indicate that a background thought has momentarily come into awareness. When people focus their attention away from the “foreground” thought and become more aware of the background thought, it is assumed that they have shifted their attention to a higher level of perception. Since this kind of shift is necessary for the resolution of internal conflict (Powers, 1998), facilitating this shift is the central activity in MOL.

The Procedure of MOL

MOL involves two people talking together. Generally one person has a conflict he or she would like resolved. The other person uses MOL to assist in the conflict resolution. The tasks of the person using MOL are first to notice events which might indicate background thoughts and then to ask the other person about them. By discussing these thoughts, it is assumed that the person will be bringing the background thought into the foreground. When he or she does this, another background thought might occur and so the person would then be asked about that. This procedure continues until the person describing his or her experiences indicates he or she has reached the end of that particular “thread”. In the following paragraphs, the procedure of one person using MOL to help another person resolve a conflict will be referred to as an MOL “session”. People can experience significant assistance through just one session of MOL. If, however, a student requests more sessions, then it may be the case that this particular student has problems that are beyond the expertise of the peer counselor. If this occurs, the matter
thoughts were. The activity and identifying what the participants’ background of course I’m me.” It is then useful to spend time discussing to think the thought “I am not (insert own name).” Generally the idea of background thoughts is learned quickly. People seem to have little trouble identifying background thoughts in their own field of awareness. During an MOL workshop, Powers (1999) demonstrated that a useful activity to introduce the idea of background thoughts is to ask people to explain what they are currently experiencing. It is the job of the asker to query the describer about the things he or she is presenting and, when a background thought appears, it is the asker’s job to ask the describer to explain that thought in more detail.

The describer begins by explaining whatever is on his or her mind. When a conflict is expressed, the asker asks the describer to outline both sides of the conflict. The describer discusses both sides of the conflict until some indication of a background thought occurs. The asker then asks the describer to provide more details about this thought. The conversation proceeds through a number of the hierarchical levels until the describer reaches a point that seems like “the end.” This point will be different for everyone. People who participate in this process, however, seem to have a common experience of “knowing” when they have reached a finishing place. At this point, the MOL session concludes with perhaps a brief recap on what the experience was like for both participants.

On occasion, it may be the case that, for whatever reason, there may not be many background thoughts expressed, or the describer may be reluctant to redirect his or her attention away from what is currently being discussed. When these situations occur, it is best to conclude the situation and resume at a later time. MOL is not an activity that can be contrived. It is simply an experience that unfolds.

Teaching MOL to Students
MOL is an experiential approach to counseling and, as such, when students are learning it, they should experience the process as much as possible. While MOL is particularly useful for resolving conflicts, it can also be used as a way of gaining greater awareness about one’s own individual make-up. In this instance, exactly the same procedure of bringing background thoughts into the foreground applies. The only difference this time is that there are not two incompatible goals.

Introducing Students to Background Thoughts
The first task in presenting this as a technique for peer counseling is to teach students about background thoughts. Generally the idea of background thoughts is learned quickly. People seem to have little trouble identifying background thoughts in their own field of awareness. During an MOL workshop, Powers (1999) demonstrated that a useful activity to introduce the idea of background thoughts is to ask people to think the thought “I am not ______ (insert own name).” As people repeat this thought to themselves, it is common to experience a variety of background thoughts. People’s thoughts include “This is silly” or “I can’t do this” or “Well of course I’m me.” It is then useful to spend time discussing the activity and identifying what the participants’ background thoughts were.

When teaching clients about background thoughts in my own counseling work, I have often asked them to describe the back of their hand in great detail. As they do this, they frequently have thoughts like “I wonder if I’m doing this properly?” or “How long do I have to keep doing this?” Discussions then unfold about the background thoughts they were able to identify. Activities such as the two already described would be useful procedures for school counselors to conduct with potential peer counselors in order to increase their awareness of background thoughts.

As another way of learning about background thoughts, students could watch a television program and identify comments made by the actors that might indicate background thoughts. Also, watching athletes being interviewed either prior to or immediately after a competition can provide clear examples of brief comments, facial expressions, or gestures that might indicate background thoughts. In a variety of ways then, students can experience the phenomenon of identifying indicators of background thoughts.

Teaching MOL Questioning Skills
The asker in MOL adopts a role that is somewhat different to other helping approaches. It is not the asker’s role to suggest, advise, judge, challenge, confront, or even sympathize. In the role of asker, peer counselors are only interested in asking for more information on the current topic of conversation until they get an indication of a background thought and then they ask about that thought. Essentially, the asker is interested in having the describer explain what his or her experience is right now.

If the describer talks about memories or things that happened prior to “right now,” the asker might ask something like “What is it like for you as you remember those things?” or “What happens for you when those memories go through your mind?” If the describer reports that he or she can’t find the words to describe what it’s like, then the asker would just ask: “Does it bother you to not be able to find the right words?” “What is it like to be sitting there and not know what to say?” “Does this kind of experience happen to you at other times?” and “Are you trying to find the answer that you think I want to hear?”

In order to conduct an MOL session then, a peer counselor needs to learn to ask questions about the processes that the other student is experiencing as this student participates in the MOL session. When conflict is expressed, the asker would ask about both sides of the conflict as it is currently experienced. “Tell me about this goal”; “Tell me about that goal”; “When you say X, does that have anything to do with Y or Z?” Then when a background thought is expressed, the asker leaves the current topic of conversation and inquires about that: “What went through your mind just now when you grinned to yourself?” or “How do those words sound to you as you hear yourself saying them?”

Students need many experiences in asking these kinds of questions. Simply working in pairs and asking each other about their immediate experiences would be useful. Having a third person observe the demonstration and then provide feedback may also be helpful. Additionally, watching an experienced school counselor using this approach with another person would provide students with a standard they
might wish to work towards creating in their own work. Finally, experiencing the activity by taking on the role of describer with a skilled school counselor in the role of asker may also help students learn about different kinds of questioning. By participating in this activity and discussing it afterwards with the school counselor, students may learn valuable skills which they can use when they are in the role of asker.

Practice, Practice, Practice

Once students have learned about background thoughts and have learned to ask about "right now" experiences, they need to practice these techniques. While practicing, supervision from an appropriately qualified supervisor is essential (Latham, 1997; Thompson, 1996). Supervision opportunities, therefore, will need to be offered for peer counselors to access. The ability to provide information sensitively and accurately and also to encourage peer counselors to evaluate their own skills and set goals for improvement is crucial to good supervision. School counselors are experienced in these areas and, consequently, they will play a pivotal role as supervisors of peer counselors.

It is important to stress at this point that it will be ultimately more useful if the students engage in demonstrations rather than role plays when they are practicing these techniques. That is, when they are in the role of describer they should be describing what is actually occurring for them during the time they are engaged in the activity. It will not be very helpful if they discuss a make believe problem. This would be providing an experience of pretending, not an experience of shifting awareness to background thoughts.

Literally anything can be used for material in MOL. If the student says that nothing is on his or her mind right now, the asker can ask “What’s it like to have nothing on your mind?”; “Can you describe what ‘nothing on your mind’ is like?”; “Do you often have the sensation of having nothing on your mind?” Similarly, if the describer says that there is something on his or her mind but he or she doesn’t feel comfortable talking about it, the asker could ask the describer to explain that experience. It is important for students to learn that when they adopt the role of asker they are not trying to second guess the describer nor solve the describer’s problems. It is not up to them to come up with great strategies or clever procedures. The asker’s only task is to provide the describer with an opportunity to shift his or her attention to the background thoughts that he or she has indicated are there.

Conclusion:

MOL is an approach to working with others that is respectful and nonintrusive. At all times, the describer is able to determine the content of the process with the asker only responsible for guiding the direction. The direction is constantly going back to background thoughts and bringing them forward into awareness. When a person shifts his or her awareness in this way, he or she will be able to consider situations from a higher perceptual level than what these situations were previously considered. From this higher perceptual level, it is proposed that reorganization will be able to alter the parameters of the control system responsible for creating the conflict that is currently experienced.

I have suggested in this paper that it is counterproductive in MOL to advise and suggest. For this reason, MOL may be especially suited as a helping technique for school peer counseling programs since problems have been identified when peer counselors offer advice to the students they are working with. This article then, could become a resource for school counselors who are interested in improving current peer counseling programs. With the introduction of MOL, school counselors may find the training and supervision of peer counselors a more rewarding activity as these students learn to efficiently help their peers to resolve internal conflict. Students with difficulties will experience benefits through the awareness shifting exercise and the consequences of this approach may resound through the entire school community.

References

Lead Management Mentoring: Continuing the Vision

Andrea R. van der Laan

The author is the principal of Huntington Woods School in Wyoming, Michigan.

Huntington Woods was founded in the fall of 1992. Kaye Mentley, the project coordinator and first principal of Huntington Woods, wanted to open this school under Glasser’s Quality School Philosophy and wanted us to team teach, have multiage classrooms and a year round/extended year calendar. She had a vision, and at the end of our third year, in May of 1995, Huntington Woods became the First Glasser Quality School in the Nation. In 1998, Kaye had a new opportunity to open a Charter School in Traverse City and announced she would be leaving. We had to find a new leader for our school.

In the fall of 1998, Kaye Mentley, principal of Huntington Woods, announced that she had an opportunity to build, organize and operate a new school in Traverse City. This would be her last year as principal of Huntington Woods. She asked the staff to think about what they would look for in a new principal. Would we like to look at resumes and hire from outside, or would we like to recruit a member of our staff to take the principaship? The staff believed that the next principal should have a good foundation of Choice Theory. We wanted someone to continue our Quality School philosophy and hold us accountable to the vision that was set. After much discussion, it was recommended that I would take over the role as principal. Kaye began to use lead management techniques to help us through the transition.

We did not wait until the end of the year before making the transition. Kaye and I began working together as co-principals of Huntington Woods. Throughout the course of the next year, Kaye would model Choice Theory and share her perceptions when we walked through the building together; she would ask lots of self-evaluation questions to help me set goals; she would listen to me as I struggled with vision. Today when you ask, I can tell you we have done a ton as a staff, I was better able to answer Kaye’s question on “What’s your vision for the school? Where do you see Huntington in five years?” These questions left me baffled. I remember telling her I didn’t know. If she had been asking me about the classroom, I would be able to tell her very clearly what I wanted, but when looking at a whole building I was very unsure. She asked me this question over and over. We began to have discussions about “getting the picture in my head.” It wasn’t until the end of the year that I began to visualize. When looking back I realize it was because I was beginning to learn about the different systems of Huntington: Choice Theory and how it was in everything we do, self-evaluating so that I knew what I needed to learn, focusing on teacher understandings, our family council and how it is organized, central office and how to make our philosophy fit with their parameters, etc. Once I gained a deeper understanding and began to figure out where we were as a staff, I was better able to answer Kaye’s question on vision. Today when you ask, I can tell you we have done a ton of teacher training in how children learn and are now focusing on how to put it into action. During the 2001-2002 school year, I see us as a building that is once again “breaking out of the box” and putting everything we know back into action. You will be able to see more student demonstrations, more culminating events, deeper learning/more projects, and more individualization of student learning. We have a school improvement plan that has helped us organize our year and that will help us collect data so we can evaluate how far we have gotten. In five years, we will be a building that is once again meeting all of the Quality School criteria and doing it very well. We will be a building others will once again notice. At one time, Kaye shared with me that I scared her when I

During our “walk-throughs,” we looked together at the physical condition of the building. When walking around outside, what did we see? What needed cleaned? What sidewalks needed swept? Walking through the building, were the bathrooms clean? What about the backs of the toilets and the sinks? Were the walls around the sinks free of handprints? When walking through the halls, what student work was displayed? Is it old? Frayed? Hanging crooked? What would be a parents first perception of Huntington Woods? When walking into the building, what did the lobby look like? Was it dusted? Was the furniture clean? What was in the showcase? Question after question was asked. Kaye proceeded to walk through the building with me many times during the year so that it became part of my routine. It has also become part of my routine to have our custodian walk with me. Together we share our perceptions and decide what area of the building to tackle. We decide where the students can help, what work orders need to be written, and when the tasks should be completed. We then walk through again a week or two later to see if we missed anything and to begin a new list.

Visioning was an area I had difficulty with during this transition. After being a co-principal for a little over a month, Kaye asked, “What’s your vision for the school? Where do you see Huntington in five years?” These questions left me baffled. I remember telling her I didn’t know. If she had been asking me about the classroom, I would be able to tell her very clearly what I wanted, but when looking at a whole building I was very unsure. She asked me this question over and over. We began to have discussions about “getting the picture in my head.” It wasn’t until the end of the year that I began to visualize. When looking back I realize it was because I was beginning to learn about the different systems of Huntington: Choice Theory and how it was in everything we do, self-evaluating so that I knew what I needed to learn, focusing on teacher understandings, our family council and how it is organized, central office and how to make our philosophy fit with their parameters, etc. Once I gained a deeper understanding and began to figure out where we were as a staff, I was better able to answer Kaye’s question on vision. Today when you ask, I can tell you we have done a ton of teacher training in how children learn and are now focusing on how to put it into action. During the 2001-2002 school year, I see us as a building that is once again “breaking out of the box” and putting everything we know back into action. You will be able to see more student demonstrations, more culminating events, deeper learning/more projects, and more individualization of student learning. We have a school improvement plan that has helped us organize our year and that will help us collect data so we can evaluate how far we have gotten. In five years, we will be a building that is once again meeting all of the Quality School criteria and doing it very well. We will be a building others will once again notice. At one time, Kaye shared with me that I scared her when I
very successful. I ended up telling the teacher I would find a way to clean the cage. As soon as the teacher left, Kaye asked if we could work it out. I attempted RT questions but was not that was not her job! I tried to calm her down by telling her had taken time to clean up the construction crew's mess, and that was not her job! My job is to help keep the guinea pig cage clean. Was that my job? No! My job is to help keep the

What about staff communication? How was that organized? "Use a Dictaphone!" These were Kaye's words as I struggled to keep up with the daily "stuff" teachers had to know. Around Christmas time of my first year, we all became very busy and staff notes began to pile up. I felt overwhelmed and decided to take the Dictaphone home. I put all of the messages into memos to be typed later by the secretary. What a relief! In the midst of learning, however, I did not compile the messages into one memo but instead had a new memo for every message! The teachers ended up with 21 memos the following day! One of our teachers used a sense of humor to point this out by asking if recipes could be printed on the bottoms of the memos so paper wasn't wasted. I joked about my new learning on how to use the Dictaphone at a staff meeting. Future memos were sent out, but several messages were on one page! I was never completely comfortable with the Dictaphone and was thrilled when our computers were updated. E-mail has been a gift!

Relationships took an a new meaning as I had many friends among the staff. Now I was shifting positions and had new perceptions as I learned the principal's role. The very first day of being a co-principal, we had an upset teacher stalk into the office. She had come to school early to clean the guinea pig cage only to find our construction crew had been there in the evening and had left the room a mess. She wanted someone to come and clean her guinea pig's cage because she had taken time to clean up the construction crew's mess, and that was not her job! I tried to calm her down by telling her we could work it out. I attempted RT questions but was not very successful. I ended up telling the teacher I would find a way to clean the cage. As soon as the teacher left, Kaye asked me to self-evaluate. Would a student ever be allowed to talk to a teacher in that manner? How did I want to relate to the staff? How did I want conversations to go? Did I have a solid relationship with the teacher and if so, what might I do now to help this situation? Was I really going to go down and clean that cage? Was that my job? What was her Quality World picture of how I wanted to relate to staff? How was my relationship with this teacher? I began working on this relationship by meeting with this teacher for breakfast, walking through the classroom and asking questions about learning, and using the Choice Theory chart as a means to solve issues so that the issues did not become personal. When a former student was having difficulty, this teacher was asked to help. What worked for her when she was in her room? Slowly my relationship with this teacher changed. We now have professional conversations about learning. We level with one another and have agreed that it is okay to disagree. I began to see this teacher in a new light. When I first became principal, I thought maybe this teacher did not really believe in CT/RT and the Quality School philosophy. I thought she might have to leave. As the relationship solidified, I came to realize that this was a passionate teacher who wanted "what was best for her students." Sometimes she doesn't have the answers, and she becomes frustrated. She wants to be a good teacher. Today this teacher and I are friends. When tough issues arise, this teacher and I have a "professional discussion!" This means we have different perspectives and something needs to be worked out. I knew I had made gains when this teacher agreed, "We can really get into a tough issue, discuss it, and the next day walk in and be friends." The lessons that I learned my first day as a co-principal were to have those tough discussions in private, to build relationships with those who are your team, and to stick to the issues. Was cleaning the guinea pig cage my job? No! My job is to help keep the focus of the building.

Other staff issues came up throughout the year. Teacher evaluations are tough. We have very talented teachers who are at very different levels with Choice Theory. One particular teacher had been complaining and blaming others for issues in the building. Staff had been confronting her and not getting anywhere. In one day, more than five staff members had come to me for advice on how to work with this teacher in order to solve their differences. How do you help a teacher self-evaluate on relationships when the district teacher evaluation is focused on teaching? Shouldn't being a part of a team count? Kaye and I had several conversations on how to handle this situation. We agreed that I needed to stick to Choice Theory Language so that she could not make excuses. I went out to dinner with this teacher so we could discuss her evaluation together. I started to formulate questions in my head but then decided I should really listen to what she was saying instead. I told her I noticed she seemed more relaxed and asked what was different. She said she was almost finished with her master's paper, and she had started exercising again. She said she had realized when she didn't exercise, she was grumpy and things didn't go so well. I really never had the discussion I had planned to have; however, I think I ended up with a better answer than I would have ever gotten had I gone the "planned" route with my questioning. Somewhere in the course of dinner we discussed HW and what we stand for. We shared new learning we had both done. This was a very formative discussion. At one point I asked, "Where do you see HW in three years?" Her answer was, "If you had asked me that three weeks ago, I would have told you I didn't care because I would not be here after this
year.” I asked her what was different now. Her reply? “I didn’t believe in our developmental program, and you were sticking to your guns. I have watched progress in kids I didn’t think would learn through our developmental program. I am now a believer! I support our development program and you and what you are working toward. I still may not be here in three years, but that’s because I am looking at a special education degree, not to go into special education, but to learn more ways to help children. The only time I can take classes are in the summer.” Somehow the ever-important question was asked about where she saw us in three years. What a ton of information I got! It certainly explained her behavior and her change in behavior. There certainly could’ve been better ways to ask those tough questions, but part of me wanted to bond wondering if that might have been part of our problem. “Will this move you closer together or further apart” was always running through my mind. This was tough but worth it, and we walked away smiling with better understandings. Today she is leading other teachers and teaching them how to integrate curriculum. She loves what she does and is excited about “breaking out of that box” again. She and I have shared the HW vision, and she is definitely moving in the right direction in order for us to meet our goals.

Kaye continued to help me focus on the learning of the building. Over the course of several months Kaye had saved notes from our staff and collaborative meetings. She and I met and laid them out together. What was the common theme running through the minutes? Our staff had been focusing on student behavior instead of learning! This was a problem. We had gotten ourselves into the Seven Deadly Habits of complaining, blaming, criticizing, nagging, influencing with rewards, etc. We began blaming the children instead of looking at our system. Through the process of self-evaluation, we realized we needed to change our total behaviors. We began focusing on our next steps as a school and realized that when we focused on learning, student behavior incidences decreased. This was because we were meeting and talking about how best to help our students learn! Over the past two years, we have continued this focus and have turned our school improvement plan into a very focused plan for teacher/student learning! Our collaborative/staff meeting are all tied to our Board Goals, the Criteria for Quality Schools and our School Improvement Plan.

Dealing with parents was a whole other issue. For instance, we had a child named Sam who thought wrestling was great fun! He wrestled other children on the playground and sometimes tried wrestling with others in class. This became a safety issue for us. When talking with Sam we realized that he watched a lot of wrestling on T.V., had a wrestling role model, and a dad who liked to wrestle. Wrestling was modeled for Sam on a daily basis but was something we could not allow at school. Sam’s freedom was restricted; he needed an escort when he was outside just so we could keep him from wrestling others to the ground. The parents were not sure why this was happening and called to ask if we could talk. This was the first parent meeting that Kaye and I had together. Kaye modeled RT questions to get a clear picture of the parents’ perceptions. Other questions were asked and a plan was designed for Sam so that he could be safe and regain his freedom. Parents were asked to monitor his T.V. viewing of wrestling, and Sam was asked to self-evaluate on a daily basis. The plan worked well and eventually Sam was able to play with others without the escort. Kaye did a wonderful job of modeling and later when I was on my own, Kaye would ask the purpose of meetings I had scheduled with others. She would then follow up with evaluation questions to see how the meetings went. Future meetings began to go well.

One of the things I love most about HW is the philosophy. We have a focus and if we stick to the focus, our issues resolve themselves. It took me most of the first year just to learn the different systems and to have someone to help resolve tough issues. It took me the next two years to fully understand the systems, see where the problems were and begin to work towards improvement. It was at the end of my third year that everything fell into place. When I became the leader of Huntington Woods, I decided I needed more CT/RT training and began to take measures to become an Advanced Practicum Supervisor. It was during one of my mentoring sessions with Jeanette McDaniel that I finally understood Lead Management. I thought that I was an effective lead manager until I saw a demonstration on the Six L’s of Lead Management with Jeanette and then again with Brad Greene. The first of the six L’s is that of Love. I realized how I had struggled with relationships in the building because I was so close to many of the staff members. Once I became the leader of the building, I realized that I wanted the relationships, but I also had to know when to say no. This was difficult and led to the second and third parts of lead management: leveling and listening. As my perceptions kept changing with new understandings, staff began to question what I was doing. We began to have conversations about how I was constantly learning and the more I learned, the more my perceptions kept changing. I began to ask the staff questions about what they were doing. A couple of our staff members thought I was questioning their teaching when in fact they were using strategies with students that I didn’t know. I was learning from them. As we had these discussions, we began learning from one another: the fourth section of lead management: leveling and listening. As my perceptions kept changing with new understandings, staff began to question what I was doing. We began to have conversations about how I was constantly learning and the more I learned, the more my perceptions kept changing. I began to ask the staff questions about what they were doing. A couple of our staff members thought I was questioning their teaching when in fact they were using strategies with students that I didn’t know. I was learning from them. As we had these discussions, we began learning from one another: the fourth section of lead management: leveling and listening. As my perceptions kept changing with new understandings, staff began to question what I was doing. 

We are now in the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year. Our staff has just seen the new school improvement plan. We have integrated the Board Goals and Quality School Criteria into every goal and have baseline data from which to work. My new “mantra” when the staff begins to complain is “What are you doing?” They know that they can use this with me as well. We are focused this year, and we are working together for the improvement of our school. Staff is once again helping one another. It has taken three full years to make the transition and to understand the different systems we have in place. We are proud of how far we have come. Huntington Woods continues to be a Quality School with a Quality Staff. I am proud to be the leader.
Using Self Evaluation in the Manager-Employee Evaluation Process

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ABSTRACT

A report on using the self-evaluation process with employees.

In order to use self evaluation by employees in the evaluation process, background work must be done that teaches the employees what self-evaluation is and its value to them. Also, the manager must have a style of management that complements this procedure. For example, autocratic managers wouldn’t even think of using this, but if they did, they may listen to what the employees have to say about how they feel they are doing in a specific area, and the manager could come down hard on employees, saying they are completely the opposite. Trust must be part of the process. Managers would be well advised to have studied lead management and employee motivation.

For this exercise, I will use part of one page of a two page performance report that is currently being used in my District. I do not make any judgment on the form itself, I only use it for the sake of realism. This exercise was used for a presentation at a certification week in Corning, New York in August, 2001.

Tear off the back sheet of this packet. As you can see, the form allows you to check a box next to the area of performance, outstanding, doing just fine, needs improvement, unacceptable, and not applicable. I will play the part of the manager, and you will be the employee. You would have received this form a minimum of one week in advance and given a chance to self-evaluate. An appointment is made and we sit down to talk about the areas of performance. From my experience, the staff tends to be harder on themselves than I am.

After the role play is over, I will be asking the group questions about the process and what choice theory and lead management techniques were used.

Sam That’s good, I feel that it is important that you spend some time self-evaluating your performance, as the poet Robert Burns once said, “wad some power the gift he gee us to see ourselves as others see us.” What he meant was, wouldn’t it be a great power to have if we knew what other people thought about us. As you can well imagine, it could be a lot different than how we think of ourselves. This process will give us a chance to talk about how you think you are doing, and how I think you are doing. We can discuss where we differ and why. Let’s begin. The first category is accountability. How do you think you are doing here?

Ann I think I am doing just fine.

Sam Be more specific, what do you do that would lead me to believe you accept the consequences of your actions?

Ann Do you remember when I forgot to tell you that the Superintendent wanted to speak to you right away, and you were busy talking on the phone, and it slipped my mind after you got off the phone?

Sam I sure do.

Ann When the Superintendent called back ten minutes later, I told him I forgot to give you the message and apologized to him. I took the responsibility for telling him I forgot.

Sam Yes, you did, Ann, and he was okay with that as I recall.

Ann Yes, he let me off easy.

Sam Can you give me another example of why you think you are accountable for your actions?

Ann The time I made the mistake on the Agenda. I put too many 00’s on the number and instead of $10,000, I typed $10,000,000 and the Board caught it during public session. The next morning you brought it to my attention and I looked at my notes and sure enough, my fingers were just typing away that day and I typed too many 00’s.

Sam You were very apologetic and promised to look more closely at any numbers you type in the future. I agree with you, Ann, you are doing just fine in this area. For the reasons you gave, and others I can think of, you accept the consequences of your actions, you do not try to blame mistakes on others and you endeavor to improve upon the quality of your work.

The next area is adaptability, the ability to perform other jobs, learn new methods, work well under pressure, be flexible, etc. How do you think you are doing here?
Ann: I think I need to improve in this area.

Sam: Why is that?

Ann: I sometimes get really frustrated around Board agenda time, everything has to be done by Friday noon so the agenda can be sent out to the board members, sometimes we don’t get the information until Friday morning. I have to scramble to get the typing done in order for the packets to go out on time. The Superintendent’s secretary calls me looking for the agenda and I have to appease her by telling her it is on the way. This really gets me going sometimes, I feel the pressure. Also, when Alice is out, I have to do her job in addition to mine since we don’t hire substitutes when someone is out for the day.

Sam: I am surprised to think you need improving in this area, I think you are outstanding. You always get the agendas done on time; you look cool as a cucumber. I know I can rely on you to get the job done on time every time. I really rely on you to make me look good, and I really appreciate it. As for not hiring substitutes, do you recall the department meeting where we agreed that hiring someone for the day required as much training of the person that we might as well do the job ourselves? We have difficulty finding people who know what we do and how we do it. That’s why we spend so much time cross training with each other so that we can still perform when we are down in strength.

Ann: You are right, Sam, I know it is for the best, I just get frustrated with the amount of work sometimes.

Sam: We all do, Ann, when it happens next time, come and see me, we’ll talk about how we can minimize your frustrations. What about the next category, Analyzes, identifies, and solves needs and problems?

Ann: I think I am doing just fine here. When a call comes in and you are not here, I have worked with you long enough to know how you would respond and I give an appropriate answer most of the time. When problems arise with the tax software, I know enough to dig deeper to discover what is causing the glitch and know who to call and explain what is going on and help in getting the problem solved.

Sam: Again, you are not only doing fine, you are doing outstanding in my opinion. You are a very bright lady, you have been here as long as I have, you know the ropes. You know me better than I know myself. I think because I involved you from the start with decisions I make, you have the confidence and ability to make decisions in my absence. I like this quality in you, I think you are a better employee because of it. It is important to have job satisfaction, I give you the training and the space to make decisions on your own, you know enough to speak with me if you can’t figure something out.

Sam: The next area is appearance, what do you think about your appearance as it relates to a work environment?

Ann: I think I am outstanding. I always thought my biggest asset was my looks. My husband thinks I am beautiful, he tells me so every day. In fact, the guys at the water cooler always make remarks about me when I walk by them.

Sam: Are the things the guys are talking about helping us accomplish our mission? Are the clothes you wear appropriate for the workplace, or are they more suited for the club? When you wear short skirts, what do you think the effect is on the people around you?

Ann: I don’t dress for other people, I dress for myself. I like the way I look, I am proud of my figure and I don’t see any reason to change.

Sam: I think it’s good that you have a positive image of yourself, but look at it from a manager’s point of view, how do I maintain office decorum if the guys are always talking about you? What do you think the other women in the office say about the way you dress?

Ann: I don’t really know, I never thought about it.

Sam: I need you to think about it. Some of them have expressed their concerns to me that it is inappropriate for the workplace and I have to agree with them. What can you do that will help me change my opinion that you need to improve in this area?

Ann: I guess I could wear my skirts a little longer.

Sam: You guess, or you will wear you skirts longer?

Ann: I will.

Sam: How much longer?

Ann: I will wear them 5 inches above the knee.

Sam: Where are they now?

Ann: Six inches above the knee.

Sam: Can we agree on 3 inches?

Ann: I guess so.

Sam: You guess, or you will?

Ann: I will.

Sam: Thanks Ann, I am glad we could come to an agreement on this.

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP

1. Do you think I have a good idea of what is in Ann’s quality world?

2. Do you think Ann’s perceived world about her appearance is the same as what others think about her appearance?

3. Describe why Ann is frustrated in terms of the comparing place.

4. How does the poem from Robert Burns I referred to relate to choice theory?

5. Analyze Ann’s reaction to my evaluation of her ability to adapt to different situations in terms of total behavior.
Building An Ecology for Non-violence in Schools
James Malley, Mitchell Beck and Delia Adorno

All three authors are at Central Connecticut State University.

ABSTRACT
This article describes a framework for building an ecology for non-violence in schools. Dramatic demographic changes in society demand new roles for educational institutions. Whereas industrial-era school systems have focused primarily on the production of useful citizens in a continually expanding economy, post-modern ecological systems must now focus on promoting a sense of community and belonging to preserve a healthy and productive citizenry.

The one characteristic common to the students involved in school shootings around the country has been that they all felt detached, alienated, and rejected by mainstream society. They didn't feel like they belonged. This lack of a sense of belonging is at the root of much of the teenage violence that we are witnessing in modern day American society. It is a systemic disturbance that exists at the level of the soul or psyche of America. Teen-age violence is symptomatic of society's failure to provide the essential ecological conditions for the full fruition of each of its members. Chief among these conditions is the critical need for each individual to feel a sense of belonging.

Public education has failed to adapt successfully to the profound demographic changes that have taken place in American society. Modern day pedagogy has been based on an industrial paradigm, one that has concerned itself with the mass production of useful citizens to meet the needs of a growing economy. But, with a rapidly growing population, the breakdown of the nuclear family, and major changes in child rearing practices, a new "ecological" paradigm for education is needed to ensure a healthy, sustainable human community. The impersonality of large, bureaucratic schools; the emphasis on compliance, control, and orderliness; and, the preoccupation with grades, competition, and individual success, have all created a social milieu in which all too many children feel alienated, isolated, and rejected. To eliminate school violence, we must change the social milieu. In the ecological paradigm, promoting a sense of community and belonging become sine qua non of the educational process. The essential differences between the industrial-era and the ecological-era paradigm are depicted in figure 1.

FIGURE 1.
A comparison of the industrial-era and the ecological-era paradigms.

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LACK OF BELONGING: AN ANTECEDENT TO VIOLENCE
More than a half century of psychological research, from Harlow and Harlow's (1969) early work on maternal deprivation with primates and studies on maternal attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978), has underscored the preeminent importance of positive and enduring relationships in promoting healthy human development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that the breakdown of adult-child relationships threatened the very survival of society: "we are experiencing a breakdown in the progress of making human beings human" (p. 445). Indeed, postmodern society has been characterized by a breakdown of human relationships, proving Toffler's (1970) predictions that transcendence in human relationships would be one symptom of future shock. Garbarino (1999) who examined the antecedents of school violence in his book Lost Boys, cited the breakdown of human relationships, and paternal abandonment in particular, as the primary reason that so many children are ending up emotionally retarded, "with damaged souls, unable to connect with love to the world around them" (p. 38).

Widespread drug and alcohol abuse, epidemic depression and suicide, gang membership, and school violence are all symptoms of an endemic sense of a lack of belonging among our children. The greatest fear that a child can have is not to belong. When children reach their teenage years and begin to wean away from the family, the need to belong and to be accepted becomes a powerful emotional need. Being accepted is so critical that it preoccupies the lives of even the most well balanced teen-agers. Consequently, when teenagers feel marginalized or rejected by the dominant group, they "internalize the rejection and learn to hate themselves or externalize the rejection and learn to hate others" (Beck & Malley, 1998, p. 133). The renowned psychiatrist R.D. Laing (1969) said that when people are rejected by others, they lose their human spirit. When they feel objectified by others they, in turn, see others as objects and their capacity to empathize with those others is significantly diminished.

The same dynamic applies to adolescents who feel alienated or disenfranchised from the mainstream school community. Their lack of capacity to empathize with their fellow students combined with poor executive reasoning puts them at increased risk for doing harm to others. If they are bullied or tormented by other students, they find it easier to retaliate because they feel no emotional connection to their victims. It is this state of severe disconnectedness that is at the epicenter of most acts of school violence.

Children who feel that they belong to a community will have an increased capacity for empathizing with members of that community. Where there is empathy, there is a reduced likelihood of violence. Grossman et al. (1997) demonstrated that the Second Step program, a violence prevention program that emphasized the teaching of empathy skills, led to a reduction in aggressive behavior as well as an increase in prosocial behavior among elementary school students.
When they do not feel part of the school community, students also do not do well academically. Goodenow (1991) cited studies suggesting that students from grade school through college who do not feel personally valued and welcomed in their schools have difficulty committing themselves to academic endeavors. Goodenow (1993) found that the quality of psychological membership in school substantially correlated with self-reported school motivation. She concluded that while a sense of belonging was important for all students, it may be the single most important factor in preventing at-risk students from dropping out of school (Goodenow, 1992).

Baker (1998) concluded that schools failed to promote intentional communities in which students experienced a sense of belonging. She asserted that school violence occurred when schools fail to meet the emotional needs of "at-risk" students who are predisposed to conduct problems by virtue of disturbed developmental patterns:

...children with tendencies toward violence have different developmental trajectories. They arrive at the school door ill equipped to negotiate the complexities of school life and to engage in a meaningful way with the community of the school (p.32).

While bright kids from relatively intact families usually manage to survive in the traditional school paradigm that emphasizes an academic curriculum, an increasing minority of "at-risk" kids meet their psychological needs for belonging and identity outside of the mainstream school community in ways that are frequently self-destructive and sometimes destructive to others. Baker (1998) argued that schools erroneously presume that children come to school already equipped with self-management skills and an intrinsic desire to learn. But, the reality is that children's capacity to benefit from the educational experience is more firmly rooted in their internal psychological environment where the need to belong, to feel worthy, and to feel capable predominate.

Glasser (1993) said that everyone seeks a "quality world" that is made up of those people, places, and experiences that makes them feel like they belong. According to Basic, Balaz, Uzelac, and Jugovac (1997), schools are an important part of the student's quality world during the first four grades, but the significance of the school gradually weakens the students' quality world as they reach the teenage years. Similarly, Israelashvili (1997) found that elementary students reported a higher sense of belonging than all other grade levels. Furthermore, he found that students who felt that they were accepted and respected by their peers had more positive expectations about what would happen to them later on in life.

The need to belong becomes especially prominent when children reach their teen-age years and begin to wean away from their parents. But, Eccles et al. (1993) pointed to the irony that, just when kids have an increased need for positive relationships with their peers and teachers,

1. Schools emphasize whole-class, lecture-style instruction with scant opportunities for small group participation;
2. Teachers tend to tighten classroom controls and tend to be less available and less supportive, and
3. There is an increased emphasis on competition, grading, and student comparisons.

THE OLD "INDUSTRIAL-ERA" PARADIGM

Modern day education has followed the industrial-era paradigm. The "industrial-era" paradigm (Harman, 1976) was an outgrowth of the scientific-revolution and a Cartesian epistemology that saw the world as matter and motion. The goal of the "industrial-era" paradigm has been the domination of nature and management of the world primarily through technology and science. Industrial-era education has been concerned with the mass production of useful citizens to meet the needs of a growing economy. Consequently, assembly line education is the predominant method in the industrial-era. Prosperity and consumerism drives the economy. The "industrial-era" paradigm was intensified when the Russians launched Sputnik and frightened America into thinking that it was losing the space race. The National Defense Education Act was passed to improve our educational system to promote the best and the brightest instead of simply bringing the best out of all students. As a result, non-college bound students tended to be neglected (Coy, Cole, Huey, & Sears, 1991).

Lee (1995) made a distinction between two sociological models of schools as formal organizations: the rational-bureaucratic and the personal communal. In the former, emphasis is placed on formal functions, specialized tasks, and an organized system of rules; in the latter, schools are viewed as small societies that give primacy to strong and enduring social relationships. In the former, emphasis is on controlling student behavior, in the latter teaching students how to make appropriate choices and accept the consequences becomes a priority. This places the responsibility for behavior squarely on the shoulders of each student.

In the industrial-era educational model, little attention is paid to meeting the fundamental emotional needs of students. Schools have become larger and more depersonalized and, more than ever, American pedagogy emphasizes economy, efficiency, technology and performance assessment over human relationships. And so, at a time that we boast of the great technological achievements of the 20th century, we are also witnessing a sense of alienation and apathy among our youth that is unprecedented in American history.

THE NEW ECOLOGICAL PARADIGM

A new ecological era paradigm is now needed as we cross the threshold into the 21st century, a paradigm that emphasizes belonging communities. Ecology is the science of studying the relationships of organisms to their environments. According to Capra (1996), an ecological paradigm is a systemic perspective in which "the concept of the human spirit is understood as the mode of consciousness in which the individual feels a sense of belonging, of connectedness..." (pg. 7). The ecological model pays particular attention to the contextual aspects of the school environment to ensure that the emotional needs of all its students are being met.

Berman (1997) called for a pedagogical model that emphasizes the importance of classroom practices and a proper school climate for developing within the individual "...a sense of self and one's morality, the sense of connectedness with others, and the sense of meaning that one derives from contributing to something larger than oneself" (p. 5).
Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized an ecological understanding of human development noting that people are shaped by environmental forces and the contextual frameworks in which they live and interact. To Bronfenbrenner, human relationships are the crucible of human development and learning. He alluded to the decline of human relationships due to the breakdown of the nuclear and extended family, increases in working hours of parents, and the increased transience and mobilization of society.

Glasser’s (cited in Crawford, Bodine & Hoglund, 1993) international Quality School movement represents an attempt to imbue schools with the ecological conditions that will allow all students to flourish. Glasser described the following conditions that are essential for the making of a quality school:

- a sense of belonging in a safe and emotionally supportive environment,
- opportunities for students to do work that is both useful and meaningful,
- an expectation for quality work,
- the opportunity for students to evaluate and continually improve their work,
- respect for school property and the environment.

SCHOOL SIZE: COMMUNITY OR ASSEMBLY LINE?

Large and impersonal schools have been associated with school violence (Alexander & Curtis, 1995; Eccles, et al., 1993; Meier, 1995; Newmann, 1981; Olweus, 1991, 1993; Oser & Althof, 1993). Violence is much less likely to occur in a school where there is a strong sense of community.

The number of students is one obvious contextual factor that determines whether the school is a community or an institution. Small schools promote a shared sense of identity because everyone knows everyone else and there is ample opportunity for student-teacher contact (Cawelti, 1995; Meier, 1996). Cotton (1996) reviewed the research on the impact that small schools have on the affective and social realms of student development. The research overwhelmingly affirmed the superiority of small schools when it came to student’s sense of belonging, social bonding between teachers and students, and the personal and academic self-concepts of students. Drop-out rates are lower and attendance is higher in small schools. Hamilton (1983) found that in smaller schools there were higher levels of participation and a greater sense of satisfaction among students in smaller schools. The positive effects of small schools were strongest for marginal students who felt more isolated and alienated in a larger school environment. Size also has a positive effect on learning. In a 4 year, large scale, randomized study, Nye and Konstantopoulos (2000) found that small classes in early grades lead to higher academic achievement.

STUDENTS ASSUME SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Berman (1997) observed that current teaching methods and school governance procedures undermine rather than promote social responsibility. Berman’s vision for the 21st century is one in which the teaching curriculum would help young people understand how their lives are connected to others and to the world around them, and how their actions and decisions can help to create a better world.

McNamara (1996) stressed the importance of not just improving teaching methods, but of creating contexts for students to assume social responsibility and to encourage bonding to the social institution. She described a 20-week small group experience in which members participated in service tasks designed to create a sense of belonging, increase responsibility and skill training. Based on the belief that bonding occurs when individuals make meaningful contributions or service to a group, the qualitative research project combined “at risk” youth with well-adjusted students in a series of service projects. For example, one project involved teaching a social skill to younger children. The author reported encouraging progress in which the majority of participants seemed to benefit from the experience and displayed more positive attitudes toward the school.

Gorrell and Keel (1986) examined a cross-age tutoring arrangement in which eighth-graders tutored first graders. They found that the children developed emotional attachments to each other. Bonding was established as the students had fun, played games together, and shared in decision making with each other. The older students gained the additional benefit of developing an increased awareness of the needs of others, and a heightened sensitivity to the younger children’s needs and concerns. Clearly, programs like service learning, cross age tutoring and mentoring, team learning, all teach students how to work within a community setting. They also facilitate the developmental process by teaching children to be concerned for others.

COOPERATION (VERSUS COMPETITION) BECOMES THE CORNERSTONE OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

“A group possessed by a spirit of competitiveness is by definition not a community” (M. Scott Peck, 1987, p. 74)

In the “industrial-era” paradigm, emphasis is on the means of education such as test scores and grades as opposed to the ends of education. Academics are the exclusive focus. In the “ecological” paradigm, the emphasis is on building an intentional community where each student is valued for his or her own sake. The focus is on the development of the whole individual and the mastering of competencies that include academic, interpersonal, and career skills.

In the industrial era paradigm, norm referencing is used so that a significant percentage of students are always cast as failures. In the ecological paradigm, everyone’s unique abilities and learning styles are valued. Teamwork and cooperation are encouraged. Citizenship, personal accomplishments, and contributions to the school community are valued more than tested aptitudes. The modern day competitive grading system is anachronistic and irrelevant to the American and global marketplace. The marketplace of the new millennium is looking for good team players that can work collaboratively, deal with ambiguity, and adapt to change.
EMPHASIS IS ON TOTAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The ecological paradigm does not sacrifice individualism in favor of communitarianism. Rather, the goal of ecology is to achieve a harmonious relationship between the organism and the environment so that the parts and the whole are simultaneously nurtured. In the ecological paradigm, each child is regarded as an end in itself or herself and will feel valued as an important part of the school community. When students feel part of the community, they want to contribute to it. Berman (1997) said that the best way to ensure prosocial and moral behavior with children is to provide “nurturant, cooperative, inclusive environments where relationships are valued” (p. 91). This was demonstrated by Solomon et al. (1992) who found that, when they were in classrooms that had a shared sense of community, students were more likely to help each other.

The ecological paradigm also centers on creating a climate that focuses on the development of the total individual. The focus of the curriculum is not exclusively on the acquisition of facts or information, but on an understanding of self in relationship to the complex world. Teachers become teacher-counselors and respond to the emotional as well as the educational needs of their students. Teachers trained in counseling and human development will be able to assist their students to understand not just the external-objective world, but the subjective “me-as-a-part-of-the-world.”

CONCLUSION

Historical movements blend rather than begin and end abruptly. The industrial age did not cease with the mass production of computers over 25 years ago; it meshed, however rapidly, with the technological era. In education, the paradigm shift from the industrial model to a post modern, ecological model is also blending within our midst. But it is not moving quickly enough to satisfy societal needs. Although some elements of post-modern trends can be found in many schools, e.g., experiences with cooperative learning, mentoring, peer tutoring, changing counselor roles, the transition is not happening fast enough. The systemic shocks that batter the psyche of the developing child are wreaking havoc on American society. With the breakdown of marriage and the weakening of the family, the psychological well being of children and youth has markedly declined in the past several decades. Children are coming to school with increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness about the future.

At the same time certain elements of the industrial age, in particular the emphasis on tests, grades and the predominance of large bureaucratic systems, reinforce the competitive versus cooperative model. In the transition from the industrial to the post modern age, these factors hold us in abeyance, and perpetuate emphasis on individual achievement rather than on community mindedness.

Schools must reward progress in the area of character development as often as we reward academic progress. Moreover, in the post-modern, ecological system, the process of arriving at order is more significant than the process of imposing control. Students must have input in policy-making that promotes order within the educational system. All school community members, not only guidance counselors and social workers, will listen to students. Caring teacher-counselors emphasize the relationship as the crucible of student learning with respect and responsibility as the cornerstones of the school community.

Schools that employ the ecological model will create intentional communities in which all students are valued and become involved in the school community. In summary, survival from school violence in the 21st century may hinge on a more rapid movement toward small, personalized, caring schools. The shift to the ecological paradigm must include:

- emphasizing the primacy of human relationships as the medium for learning
- cultivating contexts that bring out the best of human qualities
- creating communities that emphasize the development of the whole student
- emphasizing cooperation over competition
- valuing individual differences

By transforming schools into caring communities in which all children feel they belong, cared for, and loved, schools will not only eliminate violence in the schools but also pave the way for the full fruition of human potential.

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ABSTRACT

This article is about a study skills class taught at a college with the stated mission of providing education that prepares students with skills to meet the job market needs of Indiana. This paper describes experiences related to diversity issues, a subject that effects both the classroom and the work world of today. The argument is made for the use of Quality School concepts as a basis for an adult learning paradigm that can be applied in practical ways to prepare the student to excel in and out of the classroom.

Experiences in the adult classroom

I helped to design and currently teach the study skills class at a two-year college, Ivy Tech State College, Fort Wayne, Indiana, using Quality School principles in the classroom. Following are experiences that occurred during the segment on diversity issues, which illustrate the primary focus of this paper, the expectation for quality interaction and work within the adult classroom in preparation for quality performance outside the classroom.

Through employing quality school principles, I have found that when you create a needs-fulfilling classroom that focuses on the development and expectation of quality work and student self-assessment skills, it is a joyful and stimulating place in which to both learn and teach. Student interaction is of major importance in the college and life success class, just as communication and interactions skills are basic to excellence within the work world of today. Therefore, any focus on quality work and self-assessment skills development must include strong attention to interaction skills. Students work in small groups during part of most classes. Problem-solving and creative development are a regular part of classroom learning, and are often done within small group settings. Group and individual presentations are also an important aspect of class work, and class discussion is a major focus of my teaching strategy. To show the benefit of implementing Quality School concepts in this class, I will share interactions that focused on diversity issues. This topic was addressed during the second half of the semester, when quality interaction skills had already been developed and practiced.

I remember the class where Michael, in his 40’s, Afro-American, with a history of alcohol abuse problems that left him looking considerably older than his years, shared his experiences from childhood, growing up in Alabama during the first integration years of the public school system. He talked about his confusion as a child, not really understanding what all the fuss was about, but sensing that he was somehow “wrong” with his white teachers, before he even started to talk, “I’d get in trouble for asking questions, for not understanding, but the white kids, seemed like they could ask all the questions they wanted.” We were talking in a large circle in the classroom, and across from him, Nancy, a young, white, fresh-faced woman, just out of high school shared her experience. “I went to a Catholic middle school, you know the little pleated skirts, white shirts, the whole bit. One day, I was walking home and these big high school boys, skinheads, started throwing rocks at me. I was scared and crying and I had no idea why they were doing that. Later, my Dad told me it was because I was Catholic. That was the first time I experienced prejudice.” The rest of the students looked shocked with what these two students had shared, asked questions, and shared their own experiences. Conversations are pretty lively on a regular basis and they also are conducted with respect and tolerance, because that is an emphasis of quality interaction that we focus on developing.

Another group conversation on Diversity Issues included the comments of a beautiful young woman who shared that her father was black, her mother white. Her parents divorced, and she spoke of how painful it was when her mother talked about people. “Mom always points out if the person is black, but otherwise the assumption is that you know they are white. It is as if there are people and then there are black people.” Another class discussion was directed by the students, all female, some Afro-American, some white, some Hispanic. “Whites know how to party,” one black woman stated. “It seems like you get blacks together, and the drinking starts, and it all ends up a mess.” A white woman, decorated with multiple tattoos, laughed and said, “Just depends on the people, honey. I’ve been to plenty of parties where the drinking started and it all ended up a mess.” When the classroom experience embraces a learning environment that honors the basic human needs, this kind of interaction becomes possible. When students learn to recognize and value the similarities and differences of a diverse society (as within the work world of today), they are better prepared to work successfully beside these same people.

In another group discussion, one Hispanic student talked about the difficulty families from Mexico have finding employment that meets family needs. This student shared that he coached long-distance running in his community. “We call it Little Mexico.” He reported seeking out families who have boys he knows are struggling in school. “I suggest that they go into running as a way of maybe working toward getting a scholarship. I also know that this will help them start feeling good about themselves,” he said. In that same discussion, a middle-aged white woman talked about her shock in realizing her father’s prejudiced attitudes. “I grew up adoring my Dad. He was always making us laugh. He worked in a factory and, as a group leader, did ratings of people on his team. One thing he would do is to take a group of pens from his pocket and say, ‘I use this red pen to rate the Indians. I use this black pen for the niggers.” He would talk so badly about the different ethnic groups, but it seemed funny to me as a kid.
and then suddenly it dawned on me what he was doing. I was so sad I cried. I have never been able to feel quite the same about him since.” As the students learn to engage in quality interactions that respect the basic needs for safety and belonging, which we all have, trust grows, and a deep honesty becomes possible.

In another class, Billy, a cocky, good-looking Afro-American young man, gave a presentation on diversity issues. To make his point, he brought in his pet diamond-backed boa, and did a skit with another student. In the skit, one played a little boy, who, upon seeing the snake, was excited and interested. He was quickly taught to be afraid of the snake by his father because “they bite and kill you.” Billy went on to explain that racism is like that; you pass the fear and hatred on, one generation to another. In another class a young man with a striking resemblance to the comedian, Sinbad, did his final presentation, a comedy routine, talking about the ways different ethnic groups “communicate.” This young man was the class-clown from day one, funny and bright. He didn’t know what to do about giving a presentation, and I asked if he was interested in doing some type of comedy routine that addressed success skills. When he decided to do his “routine” on ethnic ways of interaction, the only stipulation I made was that there was nothing “mean” in it, that he laugh at all cultures represented equally, and that he wrap it up in a way that pointed to the celebration of the value and richness of differences. He did a splendid job, and had all of us laughing.

Another wonderful skit in that class was written and performed by a perpetually tired-looking white single mother who was balancing work, school and parenthood, and Afro-American twins, tall, handsome and charming, just out of high school. The plot, done in two acts, was about a young white woman and a black man, in love. He is proposing to her, and she tells him she is pregnant. They need to tell her father, who, “doesn’t know you are black. He is going to be furious – and outraged about the baby.” Just then the girl’s father, played by the other twin walks in, and there is a terrible argument ending with the father telling his daughter to get out of his life. The next scene was a flash-forward two years later, when reconciliation has happened. The grandfather is thrilled with his new grandson. The family talks about the day two years ago, when they had argued so bitterly, and there is open discussion about their former fears and prejudices. The skit was funny but meaningful, and the class applauded it loudly and long.

These twins shared in a group discussion about the exact time that they first felt prejudice against them. “You know, we were really cute kids. Everybody loved us. Then one day we were in a corner store, and my brother was looking at the comics. I saw the store manager watching him. He had a real suspicious look on his face, and suddenly I realized he was thinking my brother was going to swipe a comic book, something we would never have done. We had gotten a lot taller, and in that one summer we went from being cute kids to threatening black teenagers that store operators had to watch because they just knew we were going to take something.”

These are just a few examples of the quality interactions and presentations in these classes. The students where I teach often have histories of failure and unhappiness from their kindergarten through high school years. Almost without exception, students taking this class are also taking remedial classes so that they can go on and take college level classes, and move into and upward within the workplace. One might suspect that they would be reticent, unwilling to really open up and share in a class setting, particularly about something like diversity issues. I believe that the reason students participate in such quality interactions is because I have embraced Quality School principles, using those as the learning paradigm to guide teaching practices.

The Problem of Retention...

Student success and retention are big issues in adult education throughout the nation. According to the National Assessment of Vocational Education, the drop-out rate for students in the first half of a one year program is approximately 70 percent (Griffeth, 1995, page 4). In an article on retention rates, Seidman reports the 1990 attrition rates for full time students in two year colleges to be approximately 47.9 percent (Seidman, 1996.) Looking at the statistics, instructors at one and two year adult educational facilities must be challenged to find ways of providing classroom education that enhance retention rates, I believe that when instructors use William Glasser’s Quality School precepts as their paradigm for teaching, they will begin to positively effect the student’s classroom experience and ultimately, retention ratings. Data have indicated that often retention rates are more closely related to feelings of identity and community than such things as grades or credit-load (Kuh, et al, 1991: Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), and these are issues that the Quality School directly addresses.

Can Quality School Precepts Make a Difference in Retention?

Data indicate that our study skills class has a positive effect on retention rates.

Students included in study: Fall semester, 1998 students who received a grade for an entry-level reading and/or writing review class were the target of our initial study.

Comparison: Those students who did and did not take and pass the study skills class along with their entry level reading and/or writing class were compared.

Outcome: A total of 174 students enrolled in the writing classes. Of those, 117 took only the writing class without the study skills class, and 54 of them (47%) were retained into the fall semester of 1999. 57 students successfully took the study skills class along with the beginning writing review class, and 40 (70%) were retained into the fall 1999 semester.

A total of 107 students took the beginning remedial reading class. Of those, 83 did not take the study skills, and 35 (42%) were retained one year later. 24 students successfully took the study skills class with the reading class, and 20 of them (83%) were retained into the fall semester of 1999.

Student Performance as Measured by GPA

Another statistic that we wanted to look at was the comparison of Grade Point Averages (GPA on 4. Scale) of the students who took the entry level remedial course, once they were in their college level classes. I wish that I could report...
that the study skills students did wonderfully. However, their average GPA of these college level classes was a 2.03. However, this compares favorable with a GPA of 1.47 for the non study skills students (the difference between sinking and swimming, metaphorically speaking, in college classes). I think it is important to note that these students are the ones that are most at-risk in terms of prognosis for success. The entry level reading class is for students who read at a 7th grade level.

**Study Skills with/without the Quality School Focus**

Through the years, the study skills class material has been compatible with the Quality School focus. However, in 1998 the move was made to even more actively incorporate Quality School principles into some of the study skills classes. As noted in the report of the previous initial study, 40 of the 57 students who successfully completed the study skills class along with their entry level writing class went on to enroll in classes one year later. Of those 57, 22 participated in the classes that were more actively and consciously based in the Quality School principles. Of these 22, 17 (77%) were retained into the following year fall semester. This compares with the 66% retention rate for the “less” Quality School-based study skills class.

We wanted to assess the effectiveness of the Quality School-based study skills class in terms of student performance as measured in grades, not including their study skills grade. We used the GPA 4. Scale. We looked back and compared two day-classes of similar size, taught in the summer of 1999. The average GPA for those students in the non-Quality School-based study skills class was in the 2. range, while the GPA for the students in the Quality School-based class was in the 3. range. In other words, those students engaged in the study skills Quality School-based class did better academically in their concurrent classes than those students in the other class.

These early studies have been highly encouraging, and we have continued to expand and to use Quality School precepts as a learning paradigm for all of our study skills classes. We are continuing to do studies to gauge the effectiveness of our efforts, and will continue to report them.

**Building the Argument for accepting Glasser’s Quality School as an Adult Learning Paradigm**

Glasser directs his Quality School format to education from kindergarten through high school. However, I make the case that Quality School precepts fit very neatly with much of adult learning theory. Glasser lists three key elements of the Quality School; the elimination of coercion, the focus on quality, and the persuasion of students to effectively evaluate their own work, (1990, p. 200). I will discuss these three concepts as related to adult learning theory.

_A Quality School Concept: The classroom must be needs fulfilling for effective learning/teaching. Invite students to learn because what they are learning will add quality to their lives, rather that using coercion as a basis for teaching._

Glasser states that one of the three concepts that the Quality School is based on is the move to eliminate coercion from the classroom (1990, p. 200) He argues for providing a needs-fulfilling environment that invites the student to learn, rather than a power-based, authoritarian classroom where coercion is used as the means to motivate the student to learn.

Cross characterizes adult learning as being self-directed, and focused on skills and knowledge specific to their needs and goals (1981, pp. 186-188), and Darkenwald and Merriam state that facilitating learning experiences, “requires knowledge of the goals and needs of the individuals involved,” (1982, p. 77). Malcolm Knowles believed the adult’s learning orientation is toward the solving of problems at hand, i.e. the meeting of perceived needs (1987). Glasser believes all of us act in order to satisfy our needs, which he lists as being safety needs, the need for love and belonging, the need for power, the need for fun and the need for freedom. According to Glasser, the more clearly that an individual perceives an activity as needs fulfilling, the harder that person will work. Trying to teach without meeting at least some of those needs will most likely be a losing proposition for both student and teacher.

_A Quality School Focus: The classroom should be a friendly, nurturing place that promotes quality work._

Glasser lists the focus on quality work as another key concept of the Quality School (1990, p. 200). Too often, adversarial relationships among students and between student and teacher are found in the classroom. According to Glasser, replacing these with friendly, supportive relationships is “basic to solving our educational problems,” (Glasser, 1990, p. 129). He further states that as teachers, “succeed in shedding the power image and becoming friends with students, more students feel empowered,” and that this empowerment leads to increased effort and more quality work (Glasser, 1990, p. 128). Glasser believes that each of us (child and adult) wishes for quality in his/her life, and that an instructor’s key role is to teach the student how and invite the student to routinely engage in quality work. He writes that a “we care” message from staff to students is “the foundation of quality education,” (Glasser, 1990, p. 133).

In their book on adult education, Darkenwald and Merriam point out that the adult classroom should be an atmosphere of both encouragement and understanding (1982), and Cross writes that the adult classroom should be a “nourishing, encouraging environment” (1981, p. 228) Darkenwald and Merriam write of the adult student, “negative or deprecatory evaluations of oneself as a potential learner are . . . prevalent among disadvantaged and working-class adults. Lack of self-confidence in one’s ability to learn is a commonly voiced reason for nonparticipation, but for most adults it does not reflect a realistic assessment of aptitude, self-discipline, or any other factor likely to affect performance. Closely related to negative perceptions of ability are feelings that any effort to learn will result in failure and humiliation,” (1981, p. 129-140). Creating a nurturing environment where adults regain self-confidence and belief in their own ability to perform quality work sets the stage for actual quality performance.

_A Quality School Concept: Self-Assessment._

The third focus for Quality Schools is the need to persuade students to evaluate their own work. Glasser urges us to teach...
our students, "this important lesson: The success or the failure of our lives is greatly dependent on our willingness to judge the quality of what we do and then to improve it if we find it wanting," (1990, p. 159). The Quality School teacher helps students learn how to look at what they are doing and determine it is quality work, and then bring whatever is not quality up to quality. Rather than students working to receive a grade from the teacher, they are working to perform and routinely engage in quality activity and output. Too often, laments Glasser, teachers do not even think about the production of quality work by their students (1990, p. 94). However, for Glasser, the push for quality work through building the ability to assess one's efforts is a crucial skill that teachers must impart if they are not to fail their students. Thus, critique of work done in the classroom is not a matter of the teacher slapping a grade on a paper, but an active, often intense and vital activity that involves both the student and the instructor in meaningful discussion. The quality school instructor will help the student identify areas of his or her work which can be improved, and then encourages the student to bring that work up to quality standards. It is a lot more work for everyone involved - but it results in the ability to recognize and perform quality work on the part of the student - a worthy outcome indeed!

Self-assessment is also a key part of adult learning. One outcome of self-assessment for the adult student is, "adult student empowerment through experience in the management of students' own learning," (Dauzat et al, 1991, p. 5). Aiding the adult student in meaningful self-assessment implies that the student goes beyond being a "recipient" of education, to being "an active participant," (Agee, 1991, p. 10). The focus of Quality School is toward A and B work, not C work, as the accepted norm. As adults, we don't want "C" nurses caring for us in the hospital, nor "C" doctors operating on us. We don't want "C" electricians and "C" plumbers working in our homes. We don't want "C" teachers instructing our children. The pursuit of excellence must be an integral part of the classroom, and must continue through all levels of education.

Using Quality School as an adult learning paradigm can create more effective instructors.

There are theory-oriented people and there are people who start yawning when theory becomes a topic of discussion. The words "adult learning paradigm" may bring on the yawns for you. Actually, that is why I started this paper with some in-class accounts. A dear friend, said, "Shelley, when you write, put your good stuff first, and leave the boring theory stuff for later." If theory talk is "boring for you," let me make the case for why I think it is relevant. Many times, college instructors never have taken a class on adult education, though they may be experts in their field of study. We may know our "subject" really well, but do we know our students? Do we know how to reach them, to make our classroom as effective as possible? Using those three basic precepts of Glasser's Quality School can help us create a needs-fulfilling classroom where our students will learn and routinely engage in quality work. It is a joy to both teach and to learn in that kind of environment. Giving up coercion, teaching self-evaluation, and believing that your students can and want to engage in quality work are fundamental to quality school education. I presented some theoretical arguments for why they are key steps to take in the adult classroom.

Using those three precepts as my paradigm helped in making decisions about what to do in the classroom, and I feel confident in the decisions that I am making. I work hard at developing a classroom that is needs-fulfilling, nurturing for each student, and I do my best to be sure that each student feels a part of the classroom. I use methods that are non-coercive and that invite students to learn because it will bring richness to their lives, help them to meet their goals, and find success outside of the classroom. I use Rubrics and other self-assessment techniques that help my students identify quality work, and thus engage in it. I do activities in the classroom that help students get in touch with their own quality worlds, and help them see themselves as a part of that quality world.

Examples of class-room activities:

From the first day in class, I have my students focus on building a quality classroom experience, wherein all interactions are respectful and caring. I ask them to think back on a positive learning experience, and to identify what made it great. Then we make a list of what we want our classroom experience to be like, and what we want our standards for the class to be. We use this class-generated list as a guideline throughout the semester. Examples of the kinds of things that students list are that they want the class to be exciting, interesting, and fun. They want the class to feel like a safe place, where it is okay to express ideas, and where each person is treated with respect. These listed ideals help each of us in the classroom to choose behaviors that will bring about the reality of our created list.

Within the first week, I ask students to do and share a pictorial presentation that is intended to help them get in touch with their own quality world, as well as a way of getting them to know and value each other as a part of the classroom team. Testing is often done in the cooperative learning method, where students work in groups to address a problem or situation that formed the topic of study. I also encourage my students to identify what they brought to the group in terms of information, processing of information, and team skills. I spend a lot of time guiding my students in this skill of self-assessment, helping them to identify specific criteria toward excellence in assigned activities. I ask them to keep working on both individual and group assignments until we agree that they are done at a quality level. I have them give presentations on something they are really good at, and another, on a life success skill. After students give these presentations, I have them identify what they did that was quality, and also identify different things they might like to try at another time. We discuss how this kind of experience can be used as they perform within the workplace, making presentations and taking leadership roles in cooperative efforts.

For me, the key to successful guidance in self-assessment is first, to build a friendly, supportive relationship with the student, and then to provide opportunity for improvement of work toward true quality performance. Learning to engage in quality work is a skill, not simply a work ethic. Helping adult students to believe in themselves and their ability to engage in quality work by successfully guiding them through that process is a primary goal for the Quality School instructor.
In Conclusion:

I believe that these kinds of activities based on the precepts of the Quality School lead to the kind of sharing that I wrote about at the beginning of this article. When students learn that they can, and are expected to, perform quality work and relate to each other in quality ways, they do so. When the classroom is safe and nurturing, students become creative and take the risk of reaching out to each other in meaningful ways that further enhance classroom learning. They also learn to value commonalities and differences of people that hold the possibly of synergistic cooperation beyond the classroom and into the work place.

As a teacher, I like knowing what I am doing and why I am doing it. I love creating a classroom environment that leads to quality student performance; quality human interaction. Giving up coercion as a way of controlling the classroom is a scary step. Teaching self-evaluation is a tough step. Believing that your students can and want to engage in quality work and interaction is a crucial step. Using these Quality School precepts forms a framework for the art of truly quality adult teaching and learning.

References

Quality Instruments for Self Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

This article describes two criterion referenced instruments which were designed to provide a paper and pencil method for self assessment. The choice learning styles inventory (CLSI) and basic needs assessment (BNSA) were developed as instruments of self evaluation. This article provides a cursory review of the quality classroom, learning styles, and two instruments for self evaluation in the move to quality.

QUALITY CLASSROOM

Quality is the best you can do, it takes time and lots of effort, it’s what we want when we spend our money, and it’s usually expensive (Glasser, 1998). According to Farmer and Napieralski (1997, p. 602), “The ultimate meaning of quality lies in the nature of the effect an academic program has on the growth and development of students as learners.” Quality is present when students have both the teacher (facilitator) and the learning (teaching) in their quality world. The quality world is where we place the pictures that will satisfy our basic needs. According to Glasser (1998, p. 45), “What these pictures portray falls into three categories: (1) the people we most want to be with, (2) the things we most want to own or experience, and (3) the ideas or systems of belief that govern much of our behavior.” The quality classroom is a need fulfilling environment. It is the place where the learner obtains a sense of wholeness. Wholeness in the classroom, from the perspective of the authors, includes learning styles and basic needs. Wholeness is a systems concept. Its processes are structure, function and evolution. A change in one part of the system brings about concomitant changes in all parts.

The classroom structure, its physical arrangement of components in space at any given point in time, always attempts to move toward homeostasis. The quality classroom’s structure is fluid, as are learners and facilitators. It takes the shape of the interrelationship between learners and facilitators. The structure of the classroom also deals with its perceptual interrelationship. There is a bonding, a commonality among the class members. Bonding aids in developing stronger membership identification, which encourages members to exchange thoughts and ideas and to cement the foundation for an interrelated, interdependent network. Involvement is essential to a quality classroom. This involvement is the foundation upon which any successful intervention (learning) strategy must rest.

The functions of the class as a system, and the classroom is a system, consist of the relationship among components in time. This refers to orderliness, a stepwise progression from one point to the next. With the classroom the objective is successful quality learning. That is, from the systems perspective, change can occur functionally, at any component point at any time. Though it may also be posited that orderliness leads to greater predictability, it does not follow that this leads to a more successful, quality classroom, (although it can). The quality classroom moves toward self determination as a result of self evaluation.

Evolution relates to the history of the learning environment as a system. It changes through time. This component of classrooms is reflected through changes in the perception of the learning environment from a physical entity to a physical/psychological process. Learners reach this state at different points, according to their own maturation. Maturation along with time and readiness indicates the level of quality development. As the class develops, its members will reform and (re)define their perceptions with extensions into and among its membership sharing common concerns and aspirations. Quality classrooms have a sense of interdependence. The facilitators join with the learners to create connectiveness. Joining results in an internally defined quality classroom. As internally defined, a quality classroom is composed of many relations. Interdependence, connectiveness, joining and relations combine to form the maximal learning system.

LEARNING STYLES

The effective facilitator provides the learner an opportunity for self assessment of basic needs in the classroom. Teachers, when aware of the dominant learning style, can structure their teaching to manage learning. It allows the facilitator to teach to the strengths of the classroom and thus maximize resources. They can also use this knowledge to focus on areas that require strengthening. This knowledge helps to determine the portion of teaching and learning, which should be lecture, active involvement, group, individual etc. Basic needs influences structure of class. According to Kolb (1985, p. 2), “The Learning-Style Inventory (CLSI) evaluates the way you learn and how you deal with ideas and day-to-day situations in your life. We all have a sense that people learn in different ways, but this inventory will help you appreciate what “learning style” can mean to you. It will help you better understand: how you make career choices; how you solve problems; how you set goals; how you manage others, and how you deal with new situations.” Correlating learning styles with the basic needs permits the teacher to provide a student driven rationale for the chosen learning/teaching methodologies.

The way students learn is a significant contributor to the successful outcome of knowledge acquisition. In the teaching learning paradigm, it is important to acquire information that contributes to assisting both the facilitator and learner in an effort to maximize the time spent in the pursuit of knowledge.
Thus, it is imperative that learning styles are assessed and addressed. According to Wigle and Manges, (1995, p. 12), “If students are to invest significant effort in school learning, they need to perceive that how they will learn has as much meaning, relevance, and value as what and why they are asked to learn.”

Learning styles are indicants of the methods which are most comparable with ways of learning. The ways of learning are related to what we also commonly term the ways of knowing (Mickel, 1995). There are a number of learning styles and instruments used to assess them. The learning styles inventory comprises four behaviors which can be correlated with total behaviors. These behaviors are thinking, feeling, doing (acting) and watching (physiology components of watching, listening). For the authors, Kolb’s learning styles were found to correlate with choice theory’s total behaviors. According to Raschick, Maypole and Day (1998, p. 32), “David Kolb’s learning theory is based on preferred learning styles and stages. Kolb also developed a widely used and simply administered 12-question questionnaire to measure individuals’ learning styles.” The learning styles are in four categories. The model posits that one learns through experience, examining, explaining and applying.

SELF EVALUATION

Evaluation always impacts our total behavior as we seek to meet our basic needs. It is the feedback mechanism which confirms or denies whether our behaviors are meeting our needs or moving us in the direction we want to go. Our behaviors reflect our perceptions. These behaviors provide the baseline from which to measure our attempt to meet our basic needs. Our total behavior comprises thinking, feeling, physiology and action (Glasser, 1998). Self evaluation is a method which supports quality for those who teach, based on choice theory. According to Glasser (1998, p. 102), “As self-evaluation is a requisite for moving to quality, all students would be taught to evaluate their own work, and based on that evaluation, to improve it and to repeat this process until they began to do some of what they and their teacher would call quality work.”

In an effort to meet our needs we behave. For our purposes, we have included spirituality as an essential component of the BNSA (Mickel, 1991, 1994, 1995, Mickel and Liddie, 1998 and Mickel and Adegoke, 2000). Total behaviors are always present in any attempt to meet our basic needs. All behaviors are total behaviors, thus behavior is our best attempt to meet standards we have set for ourselves. Standards are reflected through the measurable indicant we have placed in the quality world. These indicants are the pictures that we behave to match. A matched picture balances our scales and we feel good. As we evaluate total behavior, the most efficient area to use for measuring change is acting behaviors. Acting behaviors include internal as well as external manipulations of our environment. According to Napan (1996, p. 41), “Students learn better as whole human beings, when their total behavior is involved in the process of learning.”

In order to create a need fulfilling environment, it is necessary to understand the learning styles of individuals in interaction as groups as well as their perception of the strength of their basic needs. The assessment of basic needs used as its creative foundation the Glasserian approach which assesses level of need (strength - self assessment).

The first step in the process of self evaluation is to develop a picture of your relationship to the learning environment. In essence, this means to look at how you learn and whether your learning is congruent with this environment. You must concurrently assess your needs and determine whether the environment is need fulfilling. This occurs in the assessment phase. According to Farmer and Napieralski, p. 598), “Academic program assessment has gradually changed from an externally driven, summative evaluation process relying on quantitative methods to an internally driven formative evaluation process relying on qualitative information. This transition represents a change in focus from judging the worth of programs to providing feedback to program personnel for the purpose of improving programs.”

In the assessment phase, we ask what the client wants, and identify the basic need(s) that are being addressed. Within this first step, we also determine with the class what objectives are to be achieved through teaching. Quality learning requires compatible basic needs and learning styles. The facilitator is responsible for ensuring instruction and outcomes are congruent. This step occurs in the planning process. It posits that the paper and pencil method is one method to self evaluate.

INSTRUMENTATION

The next step is to select the specific instrumentation used in the evaluation process. The components of the instrument are indicative of the respondents’ perception in reference to quality. The instrument is criterion referenced. The criterion referenced measure does not predict; it merely reveals the strength of the relationship. These criterion referenced instruments were developed from a review of the reality therapy, choice theory self evaluation literature (Diallesi, 1999; Hallock-Bannigan, 1994; Hallock-Bannigan and McConnell, 1993; Harvey and Retter, 1995, Howatt, 1999, and Wigle and Manges, 1993) as well as selected literature related to learning styles (Kolb, 1985; Ellis, 1996; learningstyles.net; carnegiefoundation.org).

The CLSI (Choice Learning Styles Inventory) is based upon the David A. Kolb instrument utilized by Ellis (1996). Specifically, the instruments are two self administered questionnaires. The first instrument is composed of items that were selected on the basis of the review of the literature and relevance for inclusion in the instrument. The second instrument consisted of statements of behavior which could be correlated with total behavior. The Choice Learning Styles Inventory, which was developed from the twelve items inventory of learning styles developed by Ellis (1996), is comprised of four (4) units. Each unit contained four (4) questions related to the learning styles of feelings, thinking, doing and watching/listening. The respondents prioritize their learning style from one (1), as their most preferred style to four (4) as their least preferred learning style.
CHOICE LEARNING STYLES INVENTORY

CHOOSE THE UNIT OF ANSWERS THAT MOST REPRESENT HOW YOU LEARN, IN ORDER OF THEIR IMPORTANCE (PLACE ONE BY THE MOST IMPORTANT AND FOUR BY THE LEAST).

UNIT ________
1. I like to deal with my feelings.
2. I learn by feeling.
3. I am an intuitive person.
4. I get involved.

UNIT ________
1. I like to think about ideas.
2. I tend to reason things out.
3. I learn by thinking.
4. I evaluate things.

UNIT ________
1. I like to be doing things.
2. I learn by doing.
3. I learn best from rational theories.
4. I like to be active.

UNIT ________
1. I like to watch and listen.
2. I learn by watching.
3. I am quiet and reserved.
4. I like to observe.

Comments:

Adapted from Ellis (1996) Becoming a master student.

The basic needs self assessment (BNSA) has been, in our experience, an effective instrument to determine students' levels of perceived need. It is a paper and pencil instrument that correlates with oral interviews with clients/students. These instruments were found to be useful in the teaching learning paradigm.

The Basic Needs Self Assessment (BNSA) instrument comprises items that were organized into a six (6) item survey with five (5) choices under each item. The choices under each item ranged from (1) very weak to (5) very strong. When taking the BNSA, respondents selected one choice under each item. Instructions emphasize that the instrument is not a test, rather it is intended to assist in providing additional information to both the facilitator and student.

BASIC NEED SELF ASSESSMENT

How strong is your need? There are no right or wrong answers, only your answer. Choose your level of strength for each need. Choose only one number under each need.

SURVIVAL
1. very weak
2. below average
3. average
4. above average
5. very strong

LOVE AND BELONGING
1. very weak
2. below average
3. average
4. above average
5. very strong

POWER
1. very weak
2. below average
3. average
4. above average
5. very strong

FUN
1. very weak
2. below average
3. average
4. above average
5. very strong

FREEDOM
1. very weak
2. below average
3. average
4. above average
5. very strong

SPIRITUALITY
1. very weak
2. below average
3. average
4. above average
5. very strong

CONCLUSION

This article describes two instruments which are used as paper and pencil measures of self assessment. Briefly, the procedure of self evaluation begins with a focus on learning styles/total behavior (feelings, physiology, thinking and doing) and strength of basic needs. The process moves to assisting the learners to understand that total behaviors are chosen. The facilitator assists the student to self evaluate the current behavior to obtain perceptions of whether or not this behavior is working or taking them in the direction they wish to go. Based upon the perceived strength of need, facilitator and learner develop a plan to move to success oriented planned educational change. This model allows for the possibility that you as facilitator are not needed to focus upon changing behaviors. You may assist the learner system by helping them continue present total behavior. Again, the perception of behavior as interpreted through learning styles as well as perceptions of strengths of needs are key to the quality classroom.

The two instruments provide a framework to self evaluate. The method explicated through these instruments is a useful process which can be used in assessing quality education, clinical knowledge, skills, and values. The focus of this paper was to present instruments for measuring learning styles and basic needs to aid learning as the facilitator and learner worked to create a need fulfilling environment.
These instruments are based on the theoretical foundation for quality and learning. The two major theorists providing its theoretical underpinnings are William Glasser and David Kolb. The instruments final iteration is the result of the perception of the authors and their interpretation of their review of the literature as well as selected research on both quality and teaching/learning. The instruments like self evaluation are works in process. The next level is to operationalize these instruments into empirical research.

References


The Why and How of Self-Evaluation

Robert E. Wubbolding
John Brickell
Irene Loi
Basheer Al-Rashidi

ABSTRACT

Self-Evaluation is a tool for helping people choose more effectively. Change for the better is built on the inner judgment that there is a better available life path. Choice theory allows for many kinds of self-evaluation which are outlined in this article. Self-evaluation is a thinking behavior in which the mind looks at the entire control system and evaluates choices, wants, and perceptions. Self-Evaluation promotes more meaningful lives and enhances personal and professional relationship skills.

INTRODUCTION

Self-evaluation in the practice of reality therapy serves as the cornerstone (Glasser, 1990) of the building or keystone in the arch (Wubbolding, 2000, 2001). People change behavior only after conducting a meaningful, internal, and searching assessment of the current effectiveness of their choice system or control system or at least one component of it.

Self-evaluation inquires the behavioral system, and is more than just a comparison between a “want and a have” (comparing place). It is a thinking, cognitive behavior in which the human mind reflects upon itself, ascertaining, weighing, and judiciously deliberating about behavior, quality world, and perception.

A skill, developed through trial and error, interaction with the external world, and input from the environment, self-evaluation is difficult for many clients, students, and employees.

Children raised in dysfunctional families often experience lives of ambiguity. In a chemically dependent family, a child’s behavior often results in praise one day and criticism or even condemnation the next day for the same choice. Inconsistency, lack of dependable routines and structures, or continual turmoil creates in the child’s quality world a confused picture album, i.e., unclear and contrary wants as the often-destructive information received from the media, well as a deficit in the skill of self-evaluation.

With the increase of divorce and the preceding family turbulence, the increase in substance abusing families, and the often-destructive information received from the media, children, and adults recurrently demonstrate an insufficiency in this important skill.

Consequently, more than ever, the educator, therapist, parent, and manager need to be adept and savvy in asking questions which touch upon, teach, and elicit the skill of self-evaluation in students, clients, employees, and children.

TYPES OF SELF-EVALUATION: SAMPLE QUESTIONS

This component of the reality therapy/lead management delivery system has, of course, been developed far beyond the original “Is it helping” question of early reality therapy. Thus, shunning a rigid and mechanical barrage of questioning, the skillful reality therapist works in a fluid and flexible manner and generates a wide variety of pertinent questions geared to each situation. Wubbolding (2000) has identified 22 types of self-evaluation based on choice theory. Each category of self-evaluation relates to a component of the human control system. Below is a summary of each type with sample questions.

1. Overall behavioral direction and purpose. “Is the overall direction of your life taking you closer or farther away from your goal?” “Is your overall direction getting you more involved or less involved with people you care about?”

2. Choices. “Whose choices can you control? Your own? Your children’s, etc.?”

3. Specific behaviors: effective or ineffective. “Is your present specific behavior helping or hurting you?” “What are you doing that is keeping you from being worse off than you are?”

4. Specific actions related to rules. “Are your current actions against a rule or a law?” “Will your current actions keep you free of trouble?”

5. Specific actions: acceptable or unacceptable. “Does what you’re doing seem reasonable to the people around you?”

6. Thinking behaviors: ineffective or effective self-talk. “How do such statements as, ‘I can’t change’ or ‘They won’t let me’ or ‘I’m going to keep doing what is harmful to me’ impact your effort to change your behavior?”

7. Belief system. “Does your belief about family roles impede or enhance the harmony in your family relationships?”

8. Feeling behaviors: helpful or harmful emotions. “Do your positive and negative feelings draw people toward you or push them away?” “What effect does your anger have on your physiology/health?”

9. Clients’ best interests: Specific actions and thoughts that enhance or diminish their long-range interest. “How does the short term gain of your choice strengthen or diminish the long term gain for you?”

10. High-quality or low-quality behavior: Quality is the standard. “What effect does your behavior have on the quality
of your work?” “How does your contribution add to the quality of the organization?”

11. Life enhancement: Life is improved whether or not the behavior or want initially appears to be personally satisfying. “Does your current life goal and behavioral choices enhance your overall life or impair it?”

12. Behavior as measured by goals of the organization. “Is your behavior congruent with the goals of the entire organization?”

13. Wants: Realistic or attainable: “Is there a reasonable possibility of getting what you want in the near or distant future?”

14. Wants: Beneficial or harmful to self, others, or the organization. “Are your wants truly in your best interest?”

15. Wants: Precise and clearly enough defined to cause consistent action. “If you had a clear idea of what you want, what would you be doing differently from what you’re doing now?”

16. Wants as nonnegotiable, highly desirable, or mere wishes. “Which of your wants is most important and which is the least important for you?”

17. Perceptions: Viewpoint, plus or minus. “When you compare your inner sense of limitations with the external ways in which others present themselves, are you being fair to yourself?”

18. Perceptions: Locus of control. “Given your circumstances, what do you have control over and what do you not have control over?” “How much of your trouble are you causing yourself?”

19. Values and behavior: Congruence or lack of it. “How are you helped or hurt when you violate a principle that you say is important to you?”

20. Level of commitment: High enough to get desired results. “Is your present level of commitment the highest you are willing to make?”

21. Evaluation of the plan of action. “If you follow through on your plans, how will your life be better?” “How do you think your life will be if you don’t follow through: better, or worse, or the same?”

22. Professional self-evaluation. Practitioners of reality therapy use self-evaluation in their own professional lives. Questions include, “How am I facilitating my own personal growth?” “Is the quality of my service to the public the highest it can be?” “How can I/we increase the quality of my/our service?”

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

• Have you ever driven on a trip for several hours or even minutes and suddenly decided that you were going in the wrong direction? Someone might ask, “Why didn’t you turn around sooner?” You answer, “I didn’t know I was lost. When I finally judged that my current behavior was not effective, I made another choice.”

• A universal experience is misplacing car keys, important papers, etc. Have you ever looked in the same place over and over and over again? Why? The reason is that human beings often subscribe to the misguided belief that if a behavior is not working, continue it, even intensify it. But the self-talk statement, “If it is not working do it again” is as flawed as the unproductive searching. Only when the searcher decides that the current behavior is fruitless, will change occur.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, self-evaluation can lead to more effective travels and happier foraging. All the more is self-evaluation useful for clients and students who seek the unattainable, choose the harmful, perceive that they are powerless, or think that half-hearted efforts will achieve a grandiose result. The authors have met dozens, even hundreds, of people who have made dramatic changes in their lives not merely because of satisfying relationships, but also because of their willingness to look inward and gallantly examine their own lives and available choices.

References


African Centered Family Mediation: Building on Family Strengths

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Christine Boone

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an African centered paradigm which provides a framework for family mediation. This model uses choice theory with an African centered theoretical foundation for understanding human behavior. The writers will share a model which can be used to integrate practice skills with family strengths, through the use of the inherent integrity and stability of the Black family. These writers take the position that intervention efforts must integrate constructs that exist in the communities we are attempting to serve.

The clue to community can be found in the inner creative activity of living substances. Howard Thurman

The purpose of African centered family mediation is to enable the family therapist to integrate traditional knowledge, values and skills into their understanding of family behaviors, and prepare for practice building on Black family integrity and stability. It is based on an understanding of the total Black family as the loci for intervention. Understanding the total family requires including the continuum of experiences of the African American family. These experiences are African centered and based on the Black experience.

African centered family mediation is taught within the framework of the Black experience. In order to effectively practice African centered family mediation, the therapist must obtain knowledge, values, and skills related to empowerment and the Black experience. This perspective is inclusive and gives priority to families who have historically viewed themselves as oppressed. The very act of sanctioning the Black experience and empowerment raises to the conscious level the perception that the struggle to end oppression is therapeutically viable.

Therapists must also be able to evaluate and apply relevant theories. Mediation is a significant part, educational. The mediator, like the teacher, stands between not knowing and knowledge. To obtain quality, one must be trained. The theoretical and practice parameter of one’s training plays a significant role in one’s perceptions. These parameters provide a frame of reference within which subsequent learning occurs. The educator influences learning which structures the trainee perception leading to the formation of internal attitudes (Knowles, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1978). Our external acts result from these internal attitudes. This process is essential to effectively integrating specific theory with the practice of mediation.

Many practitioners have not viewed family mediation as an interdependent process. Family mediation has generally utilized the traditional model for understanding family (Benjamin and Irving, 1995). The traditional paradigm shift is merely the mixing of an old paradigm with “new” materials to achieve an “old” outcome. It is a process similar to placing old wine in a new wineskin. Many of the traditional approaches ignore the rich heritage of diverse cultures. According to West (1993): The basic features of early modern European culture were the increasing acceptance of the authority of science, the appearance of a new kind of pagan neoclassicism, and the subjectivist turn in philosophy. The intellectual defense and institutional support of the practices of scientists became more and more persuasive to the literate population. These practices were guided by an adherence to a new paradigm of knowledge, an experimental method that attempted to test hypotheses and yield objective conclusions by appealing to evidence and observation (p. 27).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The African centered paradigm explicates interdependence as the essential principle which must be correlated with the basic needs. Effective intervention requires the development of a need fulfilling environment. The need fulfilling environment provides the loci where mental restructuring of intervention occurs. This paradigm guides our understanding of an African worldview which is essential when working from an African centered paradigm. Specifically, African Centered Family Mediation can be explicated under each level, although this paper uses the concepts of teachability, fun, Kuumba, polarity and gender as explainers.

Figure One
AFRICAN CENTERED PARADIGM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Basic Needs</th>
<th>Nguzo Saba</th>
<th>Herprinc</th>
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<tr>
<td>Esentiality of</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Umoja</td>
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<td>Moral Social</td>
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<td>Practice</td>
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<td>Freewill</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Kujichagulia</td>
<td>Cause/Effect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perfectibility</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Ujima/Nia/</td>
<td>Vibration</td>
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<td>Ujamaa</td>
<td>Rhythm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachability</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Kuumba</td>
<td>Polarity Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Image</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Imani</td>
<td>Mentalism</td>
</tr>
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The principle of polarity posits that all behavior exist on a continuum. This principle provides another strong rationale for intervention in the family system. If one understands the presenting problem, the solution is also near. All problems as well as solutions exist along the same continuum, therefore every problem has a solution and this solution is inherent to the problem.

A second principle of duality is Gender which is a principle which describes creation. It occurs at all levels and
is manifested through the union of opposites. Each issue has two poles.

The teachability of humans posits that people are teachable and capable of moral cultivation which leads to their high self. The goal of teaching is wisdom based upon morality. Morality is defined by the family and community within which one is living. Teachability recognizes the value of information and knowledge as a key process in choosing behavior (which, after all, is based upon perception).

Kuumba (creativity) is the essential component in restoration, healing and repairing of oppressed people. They, creatively, fashion a way of coping within a rejecting society. It is through this process that we restructure our world. We use the African centered process to challenge misinformation and develop a new history. Interdependence is a part of our story.

The creative component is the organization or the reorganizational aspects of problem solving. When families are confronted by barriers to continued homeostasis, they then must attempt to use whatever resources they have to alter their behavior. If resources are unavailable to solve to resolve the problems, families use their creativity to develop some. Creativity culminates in the celebration of harmony as it presents life as an opportunity and challenge. According to Thurman (1986):

“Thus living things do not merely have in common their origin and the fact that each is conscious, but they also seem to have levels of communication that tend to make for a harmonious relationship (p. 57).”

Life is worth living. Families struggle for liberation, victory, love for each other, vision, values and the right to make their own decisions. Fun in essence is the (re)creational aspect of our basic needs. In order to live in an environment that we perceive as need fulfilling there must be a time and place for recreation (fun).

Each of these principles reflects the concept of a dual perspective. The Black Family lives in two worlds. It has a double consciousness. Effective intervention requires an understanding of duality as a foundation for using the process of African Centered Family Mediation. According to DuBois (1989),

“It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the type of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. 3).”

PARADIGM SHIFT

To truly shift the paradigm requires a change in the way of doing as well as the way of thinking. What is presented herein is a method of family mediation that is outside of the traditional “box.” African Centered Family mediation provides a structure that reaffirms what many practitioners would do both historically as well as intuitively. The problem is that history and intuition have been ignored in the quest for a scientific model. According to Wilhelmsus (1998), “[M]ediation has a rich historical tradition, with current mediation practice drawing from ancient Chinese, Japanese, and African cultures, among others (p. 122).” African center family mediation includes knowledge, values and skills which enhance the well being of people and assist in ameliorating environmental conditions that adversely affect people. This paradigm includes theory and knowledge about the family which is significant to a holistic understanding between social, psychological and cultural systems.

African centered family mediation is a culturally competent approach (Barnes, 1994; Barsky, Este, and Collins, 1996; McKnight, 1997, and Wilhelmsus, 1998). The African centered world view (Mickel, 1991,1994,1995) approaches human behavior as an interdependent relationship between the mind, body and spirit. It is a holistic approach which recognizes and supports interdependence in the family. The primary objective of African centered family mediation is to liberate the individual from the limits of the constraining environment. According to Thurman (1986), “In the human society, the experience of community, in realized potential, is rooted in life itself because the intuitive human urge for community reflects a characteristic of all life (p. 5).” African centered family mediation expands the parameters within which families are able to increase perceptual choices, while at the same time maintaining harmonious relationships with their perceptual world.

The logic of mediation from an African centered perspective involves the union of opposites. This logic posits that all sets are interrelated through human and spiritual networks and the highest value is in interpersonal spiritual relationships.

Relationships are based on natural laws which include justice, truth and reciprocity. The goal of mediation is to promote reconciliation, settlement, compromise, or understanding. African centered family mediation must include reciprocity. According to Armah (1973), “Reciprocity. Not merely taking, not merely offering. Giving, but only to those from whom we receive in equal measure. Receiving, but only from those to whom we give in reciprocal measure (p. 17).”

Reciprocity is especially significant in African centered family mediation. According to Karenga (1990) “The law of reciprocity insures that what is done to others will be done to you; thus, the robber will end up being robbed and the conspirator entrapped by his/her own means (p. 91).” The establishment of interdependent interpersonal relationship requires that one seek harmony, truth as well as social and economic justice. It is best expressed in the historic search for Maat. Karenga (1990), states, “Maat above all is truth, justice, righteousness. Justice, then, starts at the heart of what it means to follow Maat and create a Maatian moral community. And justice begins with respecting the human person and giving her (him) her (his) due. In African ethics, shared social wealth is essential (p. 93).” An ethical foundation is required in order to promote reconciliation of opposing parties.

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Mediation is a change process involving three change agent systems. The first system is comprised of the parties; the second system is the mediator, and the third is the mediation environment where the change (learning) occurs. The parties and the mediator bring their cultural, and ethnic uniqueness to the mediating environment. For example, those who would work in the African American community need to recognize the dual perspective. This perspective posits that the Africans in America are both African and "American." The African centered mediation environment is a non-coercive need fulfilling arena where each party is assisted to responsibly meet his or her needs. It is within this environment that issues of culture and diversity are addressed. The reality to be addressed is that culturally shaped behaviors exist. The culture is comprised of the factors that shape values, knowledge and skills. According to Thurman (1986), "There is a spirit in man and in the world working always against the thing that destroys and lays waste. Always he must know that the limitations of life are not final or ultimate, he must distinguish between failure and a many-sided-awareness so that he will not mistake conformity for harmony, uniformity for synthesis (p. 16)." These factors must be evaluated, and culturally competent mediation training and practice developed to address them.

The myopic practitioner fails to recognize that diversity and difference are an important part of the process that underlies the practice (Gallavan, 1998). Practitioners will reflect their learning environment. The African Centered Family mediator's behavior, when it is holistic, reflects service to the whole family. The family is always present, even when one works with the individual. African centered family mediation is concerned with developing the physical, spiritual and mental environment. It is a holistic approach to need fulfillment. According to McMahon (1990), "Professionals and paraprofessionals in human services are growing in the use of a holistic conceptualization of the persons receiving services. The client/patient/consumer is seen holistically when focus is on the whole person – body, spirit, and mind – and on the interdependence of each of the major dimensions of person (p. 4)." It is during the process that one reinforces the necessity for wholeness. Education prepares the student(s) to work with those who are similar as well as different from themselves. Mediators are trained to perceive differences as acceptable and not aberrant.

Family mediation proceeds developmentally through three stages – introductory, engagement and closure. In the introductory stage, one forms the relationships with the parties. The parties are allowed to ventilate, fill in the big picture, explain their position or wants. The mediator validates the parties, stresses their preliminary areas of agreement and summarizes, stressing interest or needs. Mickel (1993, p. 36), discussing the parameters of involvement, relates, "It is an approach which focuses upon the relationship system, works to modify or change those processes which detract from the strength need fulfilling quality processes." Within this mediation environment, persons learn best through need fulfilling involvement. Need fulfillment is a level playing field in terms of power. It is also a noncoercive, safe situation provided in both joint and individual session.

In the engagement stage, the parties are encouraged to move to a focus on the future and not the past. The past is used as a foundation for the development of strength building behaviors. In this stage we complete the big picture. Parties are assisted in distinguishing wants from needs. Those needs are legitimized. All families have the same basic needs. It is the role of the mediator to reframe our wants into our common needs. The mediator supports both parties while working to alleviate major imbalances of power. Support is provided to assist the parties in their move from perception of powerlessness to one of empowerment. When addressing empowerment, mediators must also address the role of a hostile society. According to Mickel (1993, p. 36), "The process begins by asking the client what (s)he wants. Empowered persons are aware of the direction they wish to go. Once the worker understands what the client wants, then it becomes necessary (for the worker’s planning) to translate that want into a basic need." There are a set of common needs. When "wants" are translated into needs each party can experience reasonableness of want.

In the closure stage, the issues move to future problem solving. Here we test the written agreement for the final time, to ensure the final language is clear and concise. African centered family mediators encourage belief in future success. According to Thurman (1986), "It is not an overstatement that the purpose of all of the arrangements and conversations that make up the formal and informal agreements under which men live in society is to nourish one another with one another (p. 3)." Finally, it is necessary to clarify post mediation tasks. The focus is on the presenting problem, and life task and goals. Planning requires addressing the here and now as well as how to engage in preventive work.

The mediation process reflects the environment that is perceived as the real world. Any issue that may be addressed outside of the session must be prepared for within the session. African Centered Family Mediation presents a realistic view of the history of the family, focusing on the strengths of the historic family, especially noting the central role of spirituality. The session occurs in a socially constructed environment. The parties must be aware that the results are all developed for the real world in which the family chooses to problem solve.

The art of mediation is essentially the management of the parties and their environment. According to Severson and Bankston (1995), "The mediator guides the process rather than the content of the negotiations, facilitates communication defining and resolving issues . . . (p. 684)." The critical function of the mediator, therefore, is to create a need fulfilling environment where the parties can learn to guide their interaction to and reach a win-win agreement (Karrass and Glasser, 1980). This agreement is the ultimate objective resulting from proper management of the need fulfilling process. The final agreement results when parties work in the socially constructed environment to get their basic needs met.

CONCLUSION

African centered family mediation incorporates choice theory with the process of family mediation. The foundation of this perspective is the knowledge and value system which is essential for making a shift to an African centered
paradigm. This shift is required as one should not attempt to put new wine in old wine skins. We must develop a paradigm for understanding how some of the people we work with construct reality. This paradigm is especially useful for those who would work with African American families. In developing paradigms, we must transform our perception of both the form and function of the family system. That transformation begins with a review of our epistemology and axiology models. Future oriented thinkers must establish an African centered practice philosophy to govern what happens to families once they become embroiled within the external system. When one works with the African American family, (s)he must use a paradigm that appreciates the struggle to overcome oppression. It must further be recognized that what is good for the Black family will be good for all families. The African centered paradigm provides a foundation for restructuring intervention as we move to interdependence from a holistic perspective.

"Know this again. The way is not the rule of men. The way is never women ruling men. The way is reciprocity. The way is not barrenness. Nor is the way this heedless fecundity. The way is not blind productivity. The way is creation knowing its purpose, wise in the withholding of itself from snares, from destroyers (p. 17)."  


References


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