

Leadership and Defensive Communication: a Grounded
Theory Study of Leadership Reaction to Defensive
Communication.

by

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ABSTRACT

A demonstrated link between effective leadership and the reduction of defensive communication has been established in research. Leaders who are effective in reducing defensiveness create group climates which foster trust. In these climates people are more productive, content and resourceful. Understanding how leaders effectively manage defensive communication is critical to effective leadership. The purpose of this study was to explore how leaders react to group defensive communication climates. Leaders' reaction to critical defensive group experiences was analyzed through grounded theory, what emerged is a process used by experienced leaders to manage their internal emotional reactions to the defensive climate. This process, outlined in five main stages, is linked directly to the successful outcome of the defensive situation.

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CHAPTER I - THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Jack Gibb, the originator of trust-level theory, conducted extensive research in the 60s and 70s in the area of defensive communication in order to construct a model of supportive and defensive climates. Since then only isolated research has been conducted in this field. Additional exploration is necessary in order to apply what Gibb (1978) posited in his original research. Although his work has been useful in describing defensive and supportive climates, it is more difficult to apply them, to his observations since they do not include practical methods of application. The present study sought to explore the experience of defensive communication from a leader's experience of a critical incident in the hope that this provides an effective method of applying his ideas.

In the area of leadership and defensive communication there has been some scattered research, but none explores how a leader directly applies Gibb's theory during a defensive encounter. The establishment of trust is the core objective of his ideas about reducing defensive communication. He expresses this best in the following passage: *when trust is high, relative to fear, people and people systems function well* (Gibb, 1978). The business community as a means of transforming the work place has with an increasing momentum, embraced Gibb's ideas. The strongest example of this is found in Stephen Covey (1996), whose leadership model is based on the establishment of trust relationships in the workplace through coherent leadership. He suggests, like Gibb, that when trust is not present "seventy percent of communication is spent on defensive communication" (Covey, 1996). It is surprising that, despite the wide spread acceptance of his ideas in business and psychology so little research has been done to extend Gibb's original work. Given the prevalence of Gibb's theory in business and the impact it has on the field of

group psychotherapy leadership a study of how leaders react to defensive communication could have significant impact on the training of leaders.

Defensive communication behaviours are part of our culture and frequently our method of coping with change. It is sometimes difficult to recognize these behaviours as problematic. Defensive communication behaviour is an outward manifestation of the resistance that occurs when an individual is asked or chooses to make the unconscious conscious; it is a defensive action that opposes or "resists" a force that threatens the psyche. In a business environment or a group therapy setting, defensive communication helps an individual resist the perceived dangers that come from others. This perception is often the natural reaction to a defensive posture taken by the originator of the communication. The listener, unable to determine whether or not the communication poses a threat, adopts a defensive communication posture to ensure psychic safety. The difficulty, however, is that the defensive posture in itself sends out a wrong message to the listener. It can, for example, appear to the listener as judgmental communication behaviour conveying a sense of superiority to or lack of interest in the listener. This style of communication impairs the communication process and creates a spiraling effect that can eventually shut down the communication process. This spiraling effect, which I will call the "defensive spiral," occurs as a result of each defensive exchange increasing the caution of the listener, and thus each response becomes more and more defensive. In a communication exchange of this nature, there is an increasing sense of uneasiness and danger causing both participants to focus more and more on trust and safety issues rather than on content and meaning.

Defensive communication, although present at all stages of a group's process, is critically important to the transition stage of group formation so that the group can move into a productive working stage. Its presence has a significant impact on productivity and personal development. If a leader fails to address this style of

communication, it will intensify especially at the transitional stage of group development and work against the best intentions of all members of the group. This type of communication makes it difficult to convey ideas and establish mutual goals. It creates a dependency so that the leader spends more and more time clarifying and reframing interpersonal group communication to ensure that the intentions of the communicator are clearly understood. When this defensive spiral is present, it distracts everyone including the leader from the task at hand, and the group becomes consumed with the deciphering of the messages behind the defensive masks of its members. In its extreme, defensive communication makes it impossible for real communication to take place. Therefore, it is crucial for all leaders to effectively manage defensive communication.

Carl Rogers also feels that the cultural norm is to perceive most individuals from a defensive posture to such a degree that society's institutions have been designed to be managed on this premise. He feels, like Covey and other business change agents (Covey, 1996), that we should shift away from these unnatural defensive modes that have been created by our social constructs.

The paradigm of Western culture is that the essence of persons is dangerous; thus, they must be taught, guided and controlled by those with superior authority.

Yet our experience, and that of an increasing number of humanistic psychologists, has shown that another paradigm is far more effective and constructive for the individual and society. It is that, given a suitable psychological climate, human kind is trustworthy, creative, self-motivated powerful, and constructive -- capable of releasing undreamed-of potential.

The first paradigm of controlling the evil in human nature has brought civilization to the brink of disaster. Can society come to see the effectiveness of

the second paradigm? It appears to be the only hope for survival. (Rogers, 1980.)

Rogers suggests the presence of defensive communication is cultural, embodied in our institutions and, therefore, etched in our behaviours as acceptable group norms. It is, in his view, possible to release ourselves from the detrimental effects of this mode of communication. His view is not dissimilar to that of Erikson as he describes their intricate function in our highly institutionalized society.

Social organization assigns with the power of government certain privileges of leadership and certain obligations of conduct; while it imposes on the ruled certain obligations of compliance and certain privileges of remaining autonomous self-determining. Where the whole matter becomes blurred, however, the matter of individual autonomy becomes an issue of mental health, as well as one of economic orientation. Where large numbers of people have been prepared in childhood to expect from life a high degree of personal autonomy, pride and opportunity, and then in later life find themselves ruled by superhuman organizations and machinery too intricate to understand, the result may be deep chronic disappointment not conducive to healthy personalities willing to grant each other a measure of autonomy. (Erikson, 1959)

In short if we are to regain our autonomy and grant others this same autonomy, we need to change our social structures. Addressing defensive communication is key to facilitating such a change.

Statement of the Problem Rationale for the Study

An understanding of how leaders react to defensive communication is crucial to knowing how to inform us of the most effective ways to change these structures. Such an understanding might lead to significant changes in how we train leaders to manage defensive communication, which in turn would alter the behaviour that

they model and in turn transform the norms that both Rogers and Erikson describe in the previous passages. Therefore this study is constructed to answer the question "How do leaders react to defensive communication?"

Definitions

What follows are a review of the terms and some illustrations of the context of the terms, used by Gibbs. These terms will be found in the literature review that follows in the next chapter.

Defensive Communication

Defensive communication is a construct that arose from Gibb's research. His construct described an interpersonal communication phenomenon that eroded trust both within individuals and groups. It was also used to describe an effective or ineffective leader who creates or destroys climates of trust within a group setting. The denotative meaning of defensive communication arises out of the juxtaposition of the two words: defensive, which is defined as "serving, used, done for defense, protective, not aggressive" (Sykes, 1976); and communication which is defined as "act of imparting news; ...paper read to learned society; social dealings, access; science or practice of transmitting information" (Sykes, 1976). The connotative meaning therefore of the juxtaposition of these two terms is likely to be a protective or defensive means of transmitting information that is not overtly aggressive.

Gibb's focus on defensive communication centred around behaviour and, therefore, he defines defensive communication as "communication behaviours which stimulates one to perceive or anticipate a threat, causing the individual to expend energy to defend him/herself (Gibb, 1961)." Figure 1: Categories of Behaviour Characteristics illustrates Gibb's categories of behavioral characteristics that he felt were either defensive or supportive:

Behavior Characteristics of Supportive and Defensive Climates in Smaller Groups <small>Adapted by author from Gibb 1978, Gibb 1960</small>					
Diagnostic Signs		Defensive	Supportive	Diagnostic Signs	
■ + defensiveness	Advice giving	1. Evaluation	1. Description	Shared-	■ - defensiveness
■ + responding behaviour	Censoring	2. Control	2. Problem Orientation	problem-solving	■ + initiating behaviour
■ - growth	Defense	3. Strategy	3. Spontaneity	Attitude	■ + growth
■ - perceptiveness	Persuasion	4. Neutrality	4. Empathy	Acceptance	■ + catharsis
■ - empathy	Controlling	5. Superiority	5. Equality	Empathy	■ + acceptance and empathy
	Punishing	6. Certainty	6. Professionalism	Listening	

Figure 1: Categories of Behaviour Characteristics

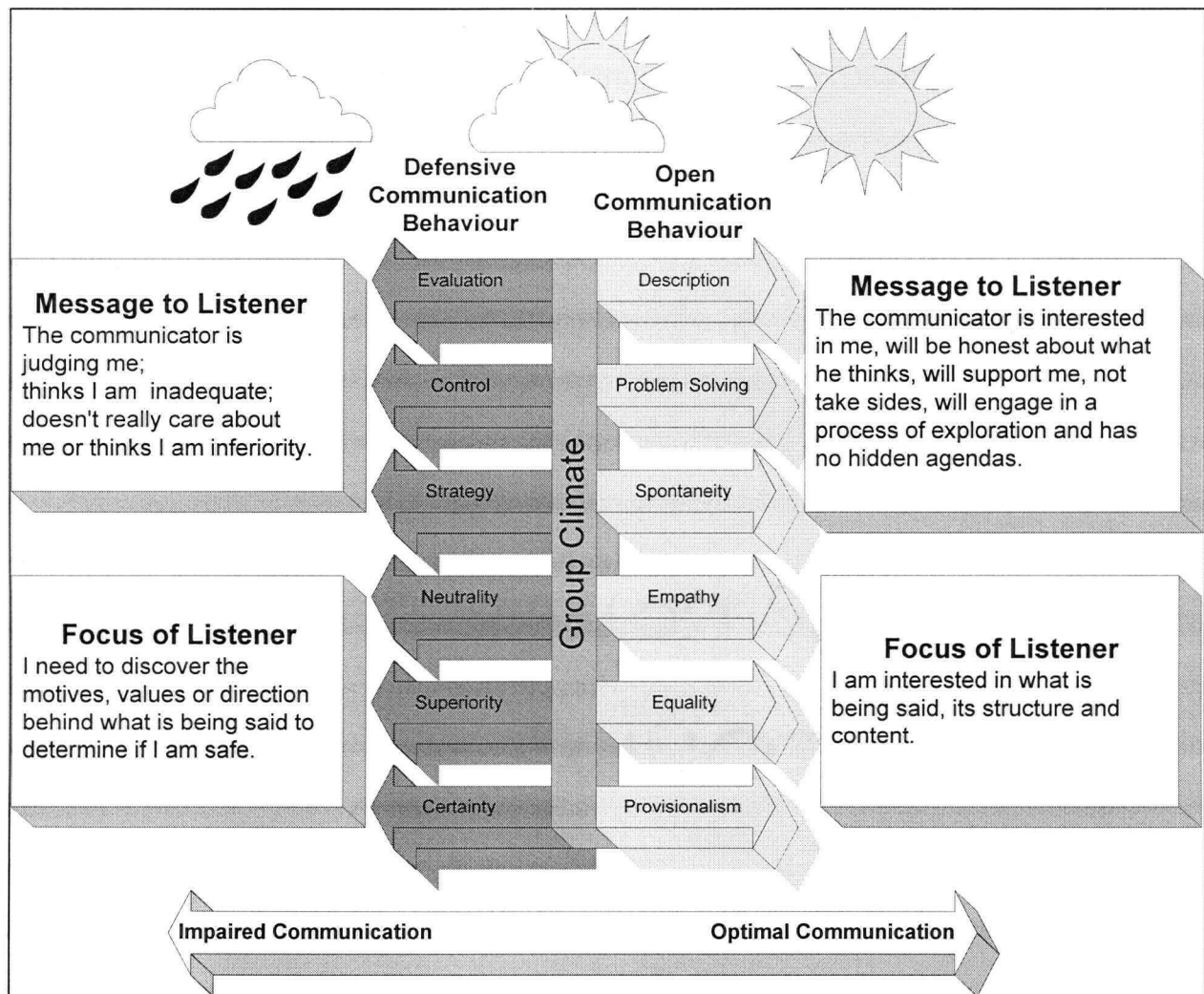


Figure 2: Defensive and Supportive Climates

Defensive and Supportive Climate

Gibb's developed a taxonomy to describe defensive and supportive group climates that is illustrated in Figure 2, which this researcher has adapted from Gibb's TORI tables (1978). In looking at what might be the most reliable determiner of group climate Gibb (1961), suggested that the key determiner would be the "willingness to share in a problem that the group holds in common." The level to which the group appears to be willing to share provides an insight into the existing climate of the group. The behaviours attributed to creating either climate are important to all group leaders and to a lesser degree significant for all participants, given that the group can only progress as fast as its weakest member (Yalom, 1995).

Group Climate

Group climate is an overall assessment of where a given group might be on the "Defensive/ Trusting Continuum" as illustrated in Figure 3.

Defensive Spiral

In Gibb's work on defensive communication he discovers a phenomena which he describes as the spiraling effect of defensive communication:

Such inner feelings and outward acts tend to create similarly defensive postures in others; and , if unchecked, the ensuing circular response becomes increasingly destructive. Defensive behaviour, in short, engenders defensive listening, and this in turn produces postural, facial and verbal cues which raise the defense level of the original communicator. (Gibb, 1961)

Figure 3 illustrates on its left hand axis a description of where this style of communication takes both the individual and therefore the group.

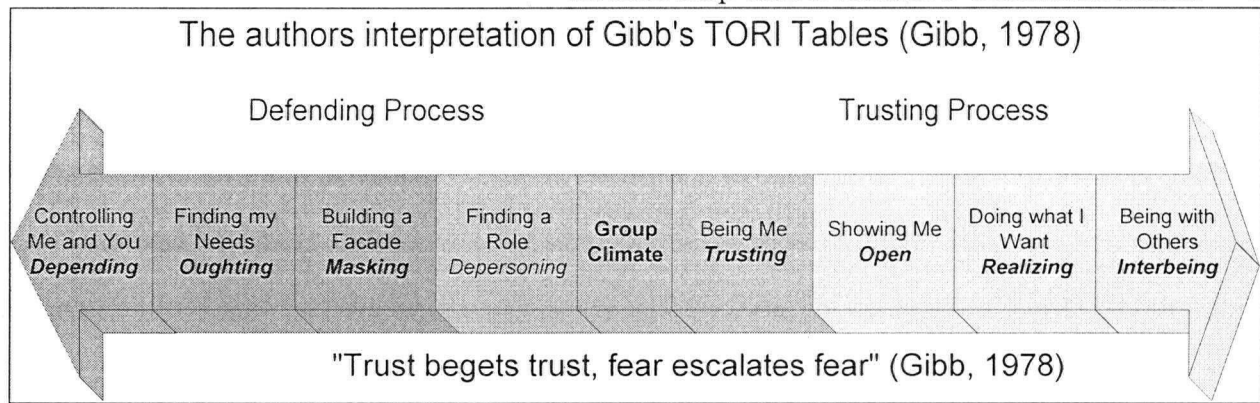


Figure 3: The Defending/Trusting Continuum

Role Repertoire

Role repertoire refers to the range and adequacy of the role behaviors of an individual or a small group and is a major determinant of the influence of a member (Gibb 1961).

Role Rigidity

Role rigidity is the degree to which an individual restricts or limits the roles they assume and/or how flexible they are within these roles. Role rigidity not only limits the ability of a leader to respond to group needs but also negatively affects group dynamics.

Chapter II - Literature Review

In this Chapter Gibbs' original research in the area of defensive communications is outlined and the subsequent applications of this and other supporting research are discussed. An effective leader will use supportive interpersonal communication behaviours to overcome defensive communication.

Defensive Communications, Gibb (1961)

In 1961 Gibb wrote an article, entitled *Defensive Communications*. He argued that we needed to make fundamental changes in our interpersonal relationships by reducing our defensiveness. One of the constructs that emerged from this argument was the coining of the term "defensive communication." In this article he proposes that when defensive communication occurs, it is difficult to communicate ideas clearly or to resolve problems effectively. In his article he proposed six categories of behavioural characteristics that promoted defensive communication and six that promoted supportive communications illustrated earlier in Figure 2: Defensive and Supportive Climates. The author established these characteristics using six years of research based on recorded discussions in a variety of group settings. This article is central to the concept of "Defensive Communication" in psychological literature (Gibb, 1978). The concepts put forward in this paper are illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Applications of Gibb's Concept of Defensive Communication in Subsequent Research

Although there has been limited research based on the original research, for the most part it has been incomplete and not directly related to the current problem being considered for study.

Defensive communication in disciplinary situations.

Some studies have extended the research in the area of family social work by examining the supportive and defensive communication within the context of

families engaged in disciplinary behaviour with their children. DeSalvo and Zurcher (1984) in their observations used Gibb's descriptions of defensive communication to describe how women tended to be more experienced in disciplinary activities, and more likely to use a task oriented approach (which he describe in terms of supportive communication) whereas men were more likely to exhibit identity-oriented behaviours (which he describe in terms of defensive communication). The study also found that the use of video taping could significantly predict defensive communication.

Two observations come out of reviewing this research: the first is that studying defensive communication through the use of video taping, in some cases, could create a biased sample, and second is that these studies do not inform us of how to apply Gibb's ideas to reduce defensive communication.

Alexander used Gibb's model of defensive and supportive communication in an attempt to identify families in which juvenile delinquency might be prevalent. In the preliminary studies a Defensive and Supportive Communication (DSC), Interaction Coding System was developed based on Gibb. He found that this scale was useful in evaluating the interactive behaviour of these families (Alexander, 1973). This line of inquiry was extended by Waldron et al. (1993) but still only provided the groundwork for the establishment of an instrument for the measurement of supportive and defensive climates. The research, however, does not provide any connection between the identified interactions and psychopathology, nor does it help us understand the behaviour associated with creating these two climates or the behaviour a leader might exhibit to reduce defensive communication.

In other research Gibb's model was used to examine defensive behaviours such as the work of Civikly et al. (1977) who observed patterns of verbal and nonverbal behaviour in interviews between social service agents and their low

income clients. In this study he discovered two things that are relevant to the current study: first, that behaviour repertoire may be a more important identifier of climate than individual behaviours, a conclusion also made by Gibb (1961), and second, that Gibb's sub categories needed to be weighted. This study provides an additional rationale for using grounded theory in order to look at the validity and prevalence of Gibb's categories of group climate to determine if they are accurate and comprehensive descriptors.

Defensive Climate Reactions: Hostility, Constriction or Dilation (Beck, 1988)

Beck presents a model of the experiential learning process in his 1988 study, which he has based on Kelly's (1955) personal construct theories. Beck's model suggests that group participants enter groups with expectations and constructs about themselves, members of the group and their relationships with other people. These constructs are either validated or not validated during their interactions with the group. Invalidation of constructs causes anxiety or guilt as it threatens the self-image. One reaction to these threats is a defensive reaction, which Beck suggests can manifest itself in two ways. The first is called "hostility" in which the individual actively distorts data and as a result bullies people into behaviour that validates his or her constructs. The second defensive reaction he described as "constriction" in which the individual narrows his or her perceptual fields to reduce the conflicts. Beck also suggests that an individual might also take a non-defensive approach, which he describes as "dilation", the opposite of constriction. Here the individual broadens his or her perceptual field in order to reorganize his or her construct at a new level. These terms are taken from Kelly (1955).

This result offers some confirmation that dilation is dependent upon participants' feelings of being accepted by other group members, and shows the importance of group support in helping participants learn from the training

experience. It seems then that feelings of acceptance might be the key that enables the participants to widen understanding of what is going on, rather than retreating defensively into an interior "castle" (Harrison, 1965a) to lick the wounds inflicted by invalidation. (Beck, 1988)

Defensive Climate Reactions

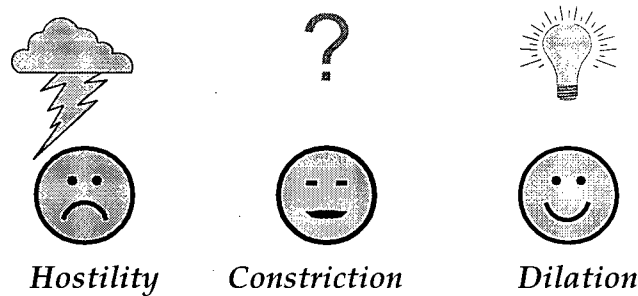


Figure 4: Defensive Climate Reactions

The research described in the article makes the following findings:

- A significant amount of guilt and anxiety is present in a defensive group, which is not present in non-defensive groups.
- Hostile groups, where defensiveness is present, show significant levels of fear and guilt.
- Indications that acceptance might be a key to preventing a defensive reaction in individuals.
- Hostile participants do not show a tendency toward "monolithic constructions" but rather show low levels of structure in their construct systems; Beck describes these constructs as segmented.
- Indications that groups with low defensiveness appear to see all members of the group as helpful, whereas members of defensive groups relied on those who were similar to themselves.

This study confirms Gibb's approach to defensive communication but indicates that "dilation" and "segmented constructs" might contain elements

overlooked by Gibb's taxonomy. This research sets out some of Gibb's findings within a different construct but in so doing confirms the need to further explore defensive communication.

Defensive Effects of Personal Perceptions; a History (Assor, 1987)

In a research summary paper Assor (1987, p 120), outlined a brief history of the conceptualization of the defensive effects of a person's perceptions in an effort to understand defensiveness. He describes a number of stages of thinking that he and his cohorts considered through their years of research. In his model "...a defensive process is understood to originate with the perception of motive-threatening features of the stimulus that increase the perceiver's autonomic arousal to an unpleasant level." (Assor, 1987, p 121) The result is that the perceiver moves into a defensive posture by constructing a more benign image. This is done through "...denying, misinterpreting or giving less weight to the threatening aspects of the stimulus." (Assor, 1987, p 122) In this manner the receiver is less aroused by the experience.

The research in this area pointed out that arousal did not necessarily result in a defensive response but some times resulted in realistic processing. This is similar to Beck's conclusion on dilation and leads to another revision of his model to include realistic and defensive process. In Assor's model realistic processing can be the outcome of considerable emotional arousal if the individuals causing the emotions can cause significant losses or gains. In these situations the model suggests that realistic process will continue until the threat passes or the hope that realistic process will help is lost. At this point it may have either displaced or delayed the defensive processing and it is in this direction that the article indicates further research is necessary.

In terms of defensive communication even though the perceiver may be using realistic processing to diminish the perceived threat, this approach is based on the

perceiver's evaluation of the other's power and their ability to control the perceiver. This study is then not an examination of a trust situation but rather an examination of a defensive climate. Although this research is useful in clarifying defensive climates, it does not provide information about supportive climates or the role of trust.

Assor's study does, however, discuss the potency of negative feelings, which seems to support the position put forward by Gibb in his paper on "Defensive Communication."

Potency of Present Negative Feelings Produced by the Stimulus. Research in personality and person perception (particularly the New Look tradition) has emphasized that the tendency toward defensive processing increases when perceivers experience strong negative feelings Assor et al., 1981, 1986; Eriksen, 1963; Eriksen and Peirce, 1968; Lubosky, Blinder and Mackworth, 1963; Luborsky, Blinder and Schimek, 1965; McGinnes, 1949). It is reasonable to assume that the tendency toward defensive processing will be particularly strong when perceivers experience a very high level of emotional arousal. High arousal has often been shown to have a disorganizing impact on thought and behavior (cf. Sarason, 1961, 1980; Spence and Spence, 1966), and therefore is likely to interfere with realistic problem-oriented processing. As a result, perceivers are likely to lose hope regarding the effectiveness of such processing and lean toward a defensive, simplistic and stereotypic mode of processing (cf. Spence and Spence, 1966; Ray, Katahn and Synder, 1971). (Assor, 1987)

To this extent the research cited by Assor does provide corroboration of Gibb's general findings, that defensive communications usually result in even greater defensive communication and an impairment of an individual's ability to process. Assor seems to indicate like Gibb that trust is a more effective method of facilitating the group process. Therefore the work of Assor, which focused primarily

on the effects of defensive communication, further demonstrates the need to understand how leaders effectively reduce defensive communication. The use of grounded theory would not only explore how to reduce defensive communication but also serve to confirm the accuracy of the model, which are also present in Assor's and Beck's work.

The Application of Gibb to Leadership Research

Gibb, in his 1961 article for Petrullo and Bass's book on *Leadership and interpersonal behavior*, outlines the relationship between his theories on defensive communication and leadership. In this article he suggests that the influence potential of a group member, or their leadership potential, affect the degree of defensiveness present in a group.

One of the ways a leader can evoke a defensive reaction is through role boundary violations. When a leader violates a role boundary other members of the group react defensively by actively ignoring the violation, subtle fighting, open rebellion or in short whatever behaviour the group norms permit (Gibb, 1961). Groups establish role boundaries over time as a reaction to a leader's role consonance. When the leader or leaders' behaviours are within the group's boundaries "...members are less defensive and more productive in problem solving..." (Gibb, 1961, p 69). These boundaries begin to become more flexible over time if a group is able to create greater role distribution resulting in boundary rigidity being reduced (Gibb, 1961, p 70).

Another way a leader can create a defensive reaction is by fostering role ambiguity, which may cause a group to attribute abilities to the leader that the leader does not possess. This may result in groups failing to assume roles that are required for the progress of the group (Gibb, 1961). The dynamics of this false role assumption is well described by Bion (1961).

Defensive climates can be cultivated by a leader in other ways as Gibb goes on to describe in his 1961 study:

Defensiveness was increased by induced polarization (Gibb and Borman, 1954); instructional sets; increasing the size of the group (Gibb, 1951); violating role expectations; and by giving distorted interpersonal feedback (Gibb, 1956; Lott, Shopler, and Gibb, 1955). Defensiveness was decreased by feeling - oriented feedback (Lott, Shopler, and Gibb 1955); sharing of negative self-perceptions in a training group (Gibb, 1956); informality of group atmosphere (Gibb, 1951); discussion of role expectations (Smith, 1957); and sustained permissive leadership. When high defensive levels were induced role boundaries became more rigid; boundaries were less accurately perceived (Gibb and Gorman, 1954); and boundaries were more difficult to change with training (Gibb, 1959). Specific role actions were less influential when defense levels were raised. (Gibb, 1961, p 72).

A leader's ability to influence a group is directly affected by the degree of defensiveness present in the group climate. This is illustrated in Figure 5, which summarizes Gibb's description of leader's influence and the resulting group climate. Gibb's research indicates that there is a relationship between a leader's level of influence, an ability to deal with defensiveness, role rigidity and boundary perceptions. Discovering how a leader reacts to defensive communication could clarify these relationships in a practical context. This supports the need to relate Gibb's original research to the reaction of leaders to defensive encounters. This linkage may provide some clarity to the phenomena Gibb himself was unable to explain in this model (Gibb, 1961).

Effects on Influence Levels adapted by author from Gibb 1961		
Influence Climate	↓ Group member influence Increased Defensiveness	↑ Group member influence Decreased Defensiveness
Boundary Climate	Rigid boundaries less accurately perceived and not as easily changed	Broader boundaries more accurately perceived and easier to change.
Climate Descriptors	Introduction of polarization Violate role expectations Distorted interpersonal feedback Persuasive speech Expressions of powerlessness during unpredictability of events Polarization Unproductive conflict Interpersonal attacks Punishment Low - integration of roles	Sharing of negative self perceptions Informal atmosphere Discussion of role expectation Permissive leadership. Expressions of control Feelings of relative comfort with decisions Productive group locomotion High interpersonal support High integration of roles High acceptance of deviance Less role rigidity

Figure 5: Effects on Influence Levels

Related Leadership Research

The literature search on defensive communication and leadership has primarily uncovered non-research literature that described effective leadership styles and individual leader's concepts of why they thought these styles were effective. A number of these articles such as Sinetar's article *Building Trust into Corporate Relationships* (1988) deal very directly with the issue of building trust. None however seek to examine the manner in which leaders deal with defensive communication.

Some of the research focuses, as Gibb did, on interpersonal communication both from a relational and content-oriented perspective (Penley & Hawkins, 1985) but does not look at the nature of the interpersonal exchange. Other research focuses on leadership types such as transformation (Paul, 1982; Podsakoff et al, 1996) or leader's social styles such as those outline by Daring (1991): analytical, driver, amiable and expressive. In this approach leaders are placed in specific categories and the weakness and strengths of these categories are examined. None of this research in the area of leadership appears to be related to the area under

consideration in this study. These results demonstrate the need for an exploratory study from a leader oriented perspective.

Summary

The lack of research, in the area of study under consideration, indicates that there is an inadequate foundation on which to base a quantitative study. A qualitative study, therefore, would be the most appropriate tool for exploring the proposed problem. It was hoped that some insights would be gained that will provide fertile ground for further studies. Although Gibb has done extensive work in the area of defensive communication and its effect on leadership his theories tend to describe principles rather than techniques. Therefore an exploration of leaders' reactions to group defensive communication climates might help to describe techniques that leaders can use to create a climate of trust. These techniques, linked with the principles outlined by Gibb could provide us with significant insights into how to deal effectively with defensive communication and how to more effectively apply Gibb's ideas.

CHAPTER III - METHOD

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research question as well as detailed information on the methods used to gather and analyse the data to answer the question raised in Chapter I, "How do leaders react to defensive communication?" First, the rationale for using grounded theory to analyse the data as well as the rationalization for the use of the critical incident technique to structure the interviewing process will be outlined. This will be followed by a detailed description of grounded theory method and critical incident method. Finally the proposed method of participant selection, process for interviews and the method of analysis is described.

Research Question

Effective leaders recognize behaviours that help or hinder their approach in critical defensive situations, as they see these behaviours as important in developing groups or working teams. Critical defensive situations are also easier to recall due to the intensity of the experience and therefore easier to describe. These descriptions should identify specific leadership behaviours that both hinder and facilitate a group's communication climate.

Therefore, a grounded study analysis will provide a significant insight into how a leader creates a supportive climate through an analysis of leader's reactions to defensive communication. It should be noted that critical incident technique was used to inform and structure the interview process.

Methodology Rationale

The literature review established that the exploration of a leader reaction to defensive communication is an area in which there is little research; this study is then an initial exploration of this area. According to McLeod (1994) the use of grounded theory is appropriate to exploratory studies, as it is a means to explore

and clarify a new domain for further research. This, according to Woolsey (1986), is also true of critical incident technique; in addition the required skills for both these methods are consistent with the normal skill set of counselling practitioners. Thus, the technique appears to be appropriate to the type of study under consideration as well as the skill set of the researcher. Given that Flanagan (1954) suggests critical incident method is an extremely effective method ensuring detailed factual data on successes and failures that can be systematically analyzed, this researcher has chosen this method to structure the interviews to extract data for the grounded theory analysis.

Grounded Theory Method

Grounded theory methodology is a method that seeks to build theory using analysed information that has been grounded in systematically gathered data (Strauss & Corbin 1990). In order to ensure that the data was not only gathered systematically but also is of the most reliable nature; critical incident methodology was used to structure the interview process, as outlined in the previous section. Through this process, a comprehensive set of critical incidents from competent individuals who have experiences in the area under study was gathered. During the interviews and after the data was gathered, a grounded theory methodology was used to analyse the data; this is common to both critical incident method and grounded theory (McLeod, 1994).

Analysing the Data Using Grounded Theory

In this method of gathering data through a structured interview, theory is progressively developed through the interplay between analysis and data collection; this is referred to as "the method of constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This interdependency between collection and conceptualization forces the researcher to focus on the theory that is emerging from the data rather than assimilating new information into a preexisting theory. This does not mean that

pre-existing theory is held in abeyance. As Glaser & Strauss (1971) indicates the "theoretical sensitivity" contributes to denser description of the data being researched as well as a "provisional test" of these pre-existing views. This is outlined in the following paraphrasing of Corbin and Strauss method.

Procedures and Canons of the Methods

The "Procedures and Canons" of the grounded theory method are outlined in the following steps taken from Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (1990).

1. Data collection and analysis are interrelated processes. In grounded theory, the analysis begins as soon as the first bit of data is collected. All seemingly relevant issues must be incorporated into the next interviews and observations. During the first few interviews in this study, patterns emerged within specific areas of the interview process primarily those around what the researcher called the internal process. The interview structure was modified to ensure this process was clarified, and this modification was applied to the remaining interviews. Initially this occurred in the pilot stage when the detailed internal actions emerged, the interview process was modified to ensure this detail was captured in subsequent interviews. This, then, illustrates how the data collection and analysis were interrelated in this study.
2. Concepts are the basic unit of analysis. A theorist works with conceptualizations of data, not the actual data *per se*. In this study the participant's descriptions of the incident were used to provide conceptual labels. These labels were then used to describe the remaining incidents; in this process they were refined and modified becoming more accurate.
3. Categories must be developed and related. Concepts that pertain to the same phenomena may be grouped into categories. Not all concepts become categories. Categories are higher in level and more abstract than the

concepts they represent. They are generated through the same analytic process of making comparisons to highlight similarities and differences that are used to produce lower level concepts. Categories are the “cornerstones” of a developing theory. They provide the means by which a theory can be integrated. In this study three terms are used. First, planes of data divide the data into four discreet sections. Second, categories that describe general themes found in each of the planes. Finally, subcategories, which describe relationships, found within the categories.

4. Sampling in grounded theory is conducted by drawing samples from specific groups of individuals or units of time, but in terms of concepts, their properties and variations. Data collection consistency is maintained by watching important concepts in every observation, carrying these concepts forward from previous analyses to the analysis of new data and then comparing the condition under which both these concepts were observed, the action/interactional form they took. In this study this constant comparison provided a consistency to the concepts that emerged by demonstrating their relationship to the phenomena under investigation in all the incidents in the study.
5. The analysis of similarities and differences is used to guard against bias, achieve greater precision and develop consistency. In this study this constant challenging of concepts with fresh data resulted in the development of a number of sub-categories and interrelated categories such as successful and unsuccessful anchoring or the relationship of the first three internal action categories to the outcome plane.
6. Patterns of regularity and variations are used to find patterns that give order to the data. Examples of this have been given in the last two steps.

7. In this method the breaking a phenomenon down into staged phases or into actions or interactions of the process is used to built theory. In this study the internal actions were organized into stages that were not necessarily progressive but were flexible depending on the circumstances.
8. Writing theoretical memos is an integral part of grounded theory methodology. Since the analyst cannot readily keep track of all the categories, properties, hypotheses, and generative questions that evolve from the analytical process, there must be a system for doing so. The use of memos constitutes such a system. Memos are not simply "ideas." They involve the formulation and revision of theory during the research process. The writing of memos was extremely important to this study and was done in the form of tables, which posited a theoretic memo in graphic form about the existing analysis. These tables were then added to and modified during the ongoing analysis. In this way the researcher was able to retain a great deal more of the conceptual detail that would have been normally lost or left undeveloped. The tables found in the next two chapters should give the reader a concrete idea of how this memo method was used by this researcher. It should be noted that the non-linear nature of this technique appears to be highly compatible with the canons of this method.
9. Hypotheses about relationships among categories should be developed and verified as much as possible during the research process. In this study the hypotheses about the relationships among categories was developed using axial coding and refined until it held true and verified against all the data.
10. A grounded theorist needs to test concepts and their relationships with colleagues who have experience in the same substantive area and not

work alone. In this study the researcher consulted with a number of individuals during the analysis stage in order to guard against personal bias. During this consultation gender and names of individuals in the study had been removed from the data to ensure confidentiality.

11. Broader structural conditions must be analyzed so that the analysis is not restricted to the conditions that bear immediately on the phenomenon of central interest. Broader conditions affecting the phenomenon such as economic condition, cultural values, political trends, social movements, and information of that nature may be included. In this study this was done in considering the generalizability of the study.

Coding is the fundamental analytic process used by the researcher. In grounded theory research, there are three basic types of coding: open, axial and selective.

1. Open Coding: Open coding is the analytical deconstruction of narrative data into conceptual labels that group similar actions, events or interactions into categories and sub-categories. Through the use of this coding the researcher gained new insights by breaking through standard approaches of thinking about or interpreting the phenomena. Through this conceptual reflection on the data, the researcher was able to become aware of the distinctions between the categories and was then able to spell out their properties and dimensions. In this way the researcher was able to reduce the affect of bias, isolate errors in coding and refine the coding until it was constant with all the data.
2. Axial Coding: When using axial coding, categories are related to their subcategories and the relationships tested against data as previously described in this section. In this study this constant comparison was used to posit relationships that were then compared to the data. In this way

relationships were verified against the data which allowed a hypothesis to be systematically developed to encompass the full range of variation found in the data under analysis.

3. Selective coding: Selective coding is the process by which all categories are unified around "core" categories. Those categories that need further explication are filled-in with descriptive detail. This type of coding occurs primarily in the final stages of data analysis. In this study the core categories representing the central phenomenon of the study were identified by asking the questions: What is the main analytic idea presented in this research? The main phenomenon that emerged through this coding was the identification of the internal process that effective leaders use to address defensive group climates as the main finding of the research.

Summary of Grounded Theory Analysis

Grounded theory analysis related the data gathered in the interview process to abstract components that emerge while the researcher was immersed in the data. These components that emerged were then further organized into abstract concepts that describe patterns emerging during the analysis of the data. Finally the concepts were reviewed and related to each other and a theory was developed to explain the phenomena (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993).

Reliability and Validity

Grounded theory and critical incident technique have been used extensively over the last few decades to improve the field of education and sociology. Reliability is established when the interviewer reaches a saturation point and patterns of the findings begin repeating. This process is detailed in the previous section that outlines grounded theory process. In this study saturation was reached well within the incidents being reported. Further reliability is established when independent

researchers find an acceptable level of category reliability as was done in this study. In order to ensure that this was the case the validity and reliability of this process of categorization was examined by Andersson and Nilsson (1964). Their study demonstrated that this method had a reliability of 95% and that the categories and incidents gathered through this critical incident interviewing technique had a high degree of validity when compared to related studies.

Setting, Sampling Procedures and Participants

The interviews themselves were conducted in a quiet office and averaged an hour in length. They were recorded on audio tape and conducted by first providing the participant with a context statement and then asking probing questions as outlined in Appendix C - Interview Context, Questions and Probes page 69.

Sampling requirements for the grounded theory, because of its descriptive and exploratory nature, requires less stringent methods in the selection of participants. The participants should be individuals who are likely to provide an accurate recollection of the incidents being studied and individuals who have been identified as proficient group leaders. Therefore, the individuals were selected by requesting a list of competent leaders in the area of counselling psychology from university graduate level instructors of group leaders in counselling psychology. Only group leaders known to be experienced and effective were selected for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

The interviews began by reviewing the context of the study and clarifying any misunderstandings that arose out of the review. During this stage of the interview, the researcher established his interest in the incidents, demonstrated respect for the participants, used a non-judgmental perspective and established a confidential environment (Schmuacher and Mcmillan, 1993). It would appear from the nature and detail of the incidents being reported that the researcher was able to

successfully established an appropriate environment. At this point the various incidents that could be used in the interview were drawn out of the participant and discussed for their appropriateness to the objectives of the study. In addition, the participants were encouraged to use the most critical incident to ensure that those incident gathered would be rich in detail and therefore more accurate (Flanagan, 1978).

Once the incidents were selected, the tape recorder was turned on. The participants were then asked to reflect on the incident and describe how he or she reacted to the incident. Once their descriptions were completed, the participants were to reflect on what they were thinking or feelings at the time. Once the participant had finished this description, the description was summarized by the researcher or clarified if necessary. The participant was then asked what he or she did next. This cycle continued until both the interviewer and the participant agreed that the end of a discreet incident had been reached. At this point the participant was then asked to summarize and categorize the incidents on the Incident continuum form found in Appendix D. The process described on this sheet was then summarized by the researcher to ensure that what was written on the sheet was also linked to the process described in the incident. The participant, during this process, was prompted if necessary using the researcher's notes of key phase used by the participant during their descriptions of the incident. The interviews varied in length from 30 minutes to two hours depending on the number of incidents being reported by the participants.

Validity Check

In order to guard against researcher bias, a potential problem in qualitative studies according to Schmuacher and Mcmillan (1993), a number of measures were taken. First during the interview process, an on-going validity check was conducted when this researcher asked if my paraphrasing or summarization was correct. If

this researcher had been inaccurate, the participant would clarify the inaccuracy and this researcher would then repeat the summarization or paraphrasing process. Second, once the incident was completed this researcher again summarized the whole incident; using key phrases this researcher had noted in writing during the interview and used these phrases to frame my summary. Again the participants were asked if my summary was correct. Finally this researcher asked, for each incident that a continuum form be filled out. On this sheet of paper, the participants wrote their summary of key internal and external actions of the incidents. In this process additional clarification occurred in a number of incidents. Once this sheet was completed, it was then summarized briefly by the researcher and the participant was asked if this summary was accurate.

Given these precautions it seems reasonable to suggest that the data collected was valid and reasonably unbiased. Given the constant validity checks, it is also reasonable to assume that my understanding of the incidents related to me and their meaning was accurate and complete.

Data Analysis Procedures

In this study, categories and subcategories emerged from the data, as outlined in ground theory research (Schmuacher and Mcmillan, 1993). The process began in the data collection stage when a reoccurring and consistent pattern emerged in the participant's descriptions of his or her internal actions. This data analysis continued as the critical narrative descriptions were extracted from the audiotapes and then compared and related to the incident continuum sheet. Through this process the interviews were categorized into major and minor categories and identify consistent subcategories within these categories.

Extraction from the Narrative and Coding

Once the interviews had concluded, the researcher began extracting the critical narrative passages into four planes of data: first a general description of the

incident which included the participant's feelings and actions; second, a summary of the key internal actions taken by the participant, supported by key phrases from the general description; third, a summary of the key external actions taken by the participant, supported by key phrases from the general description; and finally, summary of the outcome of the incident that included the participant's feelings of how much resolution occurred.

Using these planes of data, the researcher focused on the internal action plane in which a strong pattern had emerged during the interviewing process. These patterns were then coded or labeled and compared for their similarities and differences. In this way the narratives could be grouped into categories and subcategories. Once these had been arranged into categories and subcategories, axial coding began. In this process the categories and subcategories were then checked against the original data. Through this process additional subcategories emerged, and the interrelationship between the categories, and subcategories began to emerge. Finally the central phenomena of the study began to emerge through the selective coding process in which the five main internal actions were described.

Reliability Check

Once the final process of coding was completed, the narrative and coding structure was reviewed by another researcher to verify that the categories, subcategories and coding were consistent with the data collected in the various plans. This was done by reviewing the narrative planes and then relating and comparing them to the categories and subcategories. This researcher found that the subcategories and categories were in keeping with their analysis of the data. Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that the subcategories and categories are not idiosyncratic or incomprehensible to another sorter.

In addition a group of leaders in training were asked to reflect back on their experience in leading groups and review their internal process within a highly

defensive group climates. Once they had reflected on their own process the main analytical idea in this research, the five stages of the internal process, was outlined. In those case where the individuals had been able to recall such a group incident, not all the individuals were able to do this, they found that the process outlined in the research accurately reflected their own process. A number of individuals remarked that it was a very good description of what they experienced and a useful summary. This process also helped to conclude that these subcategories and categories were not idiosyncratic or incomprehensible to group leaders in general.

Summary

This chapter summarized the methodology for constructing the interview process and the method used to analyse the data. It went on to expand the theoretical details of both of these processes and then to describe the process of data collection and analysis. In the next chapter, Chapter IV, the results of the study will be outlined.

CHAPTER IV - RESULTS

This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study through the use of a ground theory method. Five major categories emerged in the internal action plane of analysis. These are Awareness, Anxiety Reduction/Shifting Focus, Theory Anchoring, Model Matching/Creating and Decision to Take Action. No emerging categories resulted from the analysis of the external action plane, although this plane does reflect a broad range of effective interventions typical of what would be expected from effective leaders. The plane that described the incidents and the plane that described the outcomes served to support the internal action plane during the coding process, and therefore no major categories have been reported as coming from these planes.

Description of the Basic Categories

The basic categories in this study are derived from the four planes of analysis. The first plane is the general types of incident described by the participants during this study; the second is the internal actions taken by each participant in each incident; the third is the external actions taken by each participant in each incident; and the fourth is the incident outcome plane. The incidents reported were all incidents in which the participant was the group leader or co-leader, and they ranged from situations in which member to member conflicts occurred to situations in which member to leader conflicts created the incident.

Internal actions refer to internal decisions taken by the individuals which they reported as part of the their process of resolving the critical incident. Examples of internal actions include deciding to immerse one's self into empathy, engaging in positive self-talk to reflecting on a group member's body language. External actions refer to interventions or behaviours reported by the individuals used to create a shift in the group's process or reduce the defensive climate of the group. Examples of external actions would include actions that the participants took toward

resolving the critical incident that the members of the group could experience; they ranged from eye contact or a confident posture, to emotionally charged interventions.

What follows will be first a presentation of the categories of incidents describing their range followed by an in-depth discussion of the categories of internal actions in which the range of outcomes is discussion. Given that significant categories emerged in the internal action, the chapter concludes with only a brief discussion of external action.

Categories of Incidents

The incidents analysed in this study are all recollections of critical events that took place within a group setting lead by a competent leader. In all of these incidents the participant faced a critical challenge to his or her role as group leader. These challenges ranged from direct and aggressive attacks on the leadership to more subtle forms of group challenges such as member to member conflicts and subversion of group norms. This range is illustrated in Figure 6: Range of Leadership Challenges. In the 12 incidents, there appear to be two primary subcategories: direct and indirect leadership challenges. The incidents within which indirect challenges occurred can be broken down into two sub-categories: member to member actions and member to leader conflicts. The author recognizes that the range of incidents reported is varied and represents a broad range of leadership challenges.

The incidents themselves appear to cover a wide variety of critical incidents in various types of groups, a variety of settings and various stages of group development. These groups are outlined in Figure 7: Range of Critical Incidents in Study. Within all of these incidents the participants reported a challenge to their leadership, a struggle with their ability to facilitate a positive group outcome and a process through which they struggle toward this aim.

1.1 Member Challenges Leader	1.2 Member Questions Leader's Competence	1.3 Validating Member at Detriment of Other Member	1.4 Inappropriate Focus on Individual
2.2 Member Reacts to Leader's Block	2.3 Member Attacks Group Member	3.1 Member Diminishes Leader	3.2 Isolated Sub-Group
4.1 Leader Challenges Group	5.1 Member Calls Leader Poor Communicator	5.2 Member Attacks Leader's Language	6.1 Member Violation of Norms

Figure 6: Range of Leadership Challenges

1.1 Therapeutic Group Institutional Setting Late/Mature Stage	1.2 Therapeutic Group Institutional Setting Early Stage	1.3 Therapeutic Group Institutional Setting Early Stage	2.1 Therapeutic Group Institutional Setting Early Stage
2.2 Therapeutic Group Private Practice Setting Middle Stage	2.3 Therapeutic Group Private Practice Setting Late/Mature Stage	3.1 Psychoeducation Group Corporate Setting Early Stage	3.2 Psychoeducation Group Corporate Setting Early Stage
4.1 Psychoeducational Group Institutional Setting Middle Stage	5.1 Psychoeducational Group Corporate Setting Middle Stage	5.2 Psychoeducational Group Institutional Setting Middle Stage	6.1 Therapeutic Group Institutional Setting Middle Stage

Figure 7: Range of Critical Incidents in Study

Categories of Internal Actions

Five major categories emerged from this study, as illustrated in Figure 8, and together these categories cover a somewhat linear and staged internal process that is common to all individuals in this study. These five categories then create a process through which leaders address the critical incident.

The process of creating an internal shift in the leader's approach to the group's critical incident begins with the awareness that the current course of external action is detrimental to group process. This awareness comes out of a self-monitoring process in which the leader becomes aware that he or she is feeling defensive as a result of a reaction to the incident. This first internal action, awareness, is most critical, for it lays the foundation through which the leader begins to move in an effort to address the critical incident. The second major category to emerge is the "Reducing Anxiety /Shifting Focus Actions" category in which the leader recognizes the need to deal with the anxiety created by his or her defensive reaction to the incident, often described as an impaired ability to be analyse the situation. In order to overcome this impairment, the initial anxiety must be reduced so that the leader is able to process the incident. The more experienced leaders tended to move through this category or stage quickly and

integrate it with the process of the remaining stages. The anxiety reduction stage is followed by a theory-anchoring stage in which the leaders begin to analyse what is transpiring within their theoretical framework or personal theoretical belief system. They are engaged in naming or identifying within this theoretic framework what they are experiencing. The process of naming provides a link to the next stage, which examines a series of models previously used, or seen used, that effectively dealt with this particular theoretic problem. Once a model that best fits the situation is selected, the leader then acts on the model. The data in this study indicates that when none of the selected models seems to match, the theoretical-anchoring appears to allow the leader to construct a new model from elements of various models that were considered but did not match exactly.

1	2	3	4	5
Awareness	Anxiety Reduction / Focus Shifting			
		Theory Anchoring	Model Matching/Creating	Decision to take Action
Leader becomes aware of his or her own internal defensive reaction.	Leader attempts to reduce his or her anxiety level so that they can process what is going on.	Leader attempts to understand incident in terms of his or her own theoretical belief system.	Leader reviews his or her "rolodex" of models and experiences to find suitable action.	Leader makes a decision on what action to pursue and whether to act.

Figure 8: Major Categories in Internal Actions

The decision to act or not to act on the selected or constructed model is the final stage of the internal process.

Category one: awareness

Leaders who are aware that they are in the midst of a critical incident attribute this awareness to an internal monitoring process. This then is the first stage of this process that emerged from the analysis of data in the internal plane. This awareness is usually identified by the leader as a defensive reaction to the incident; this predominately negative reaction is usually characterized by an inability to process the incident and is often described as being "stuck," "internally

confused" or "frozen." Negative self-talk or a questioning of his or her abilities to contain the incident often follows this reaction. A period of self-focus is also associated with this category, described by the leader as an experience charged with various degrees of anxiety. The self-focus stage, in most cases, is dominated by reflections on the potential loss of credibility or fear associated with being lost. The participants tended to describe this self-focus in three ways: being stuck, being confused or negative self-talk or self-doubt.

Once the participant becomes aware of his or her reaction then he or she is engaged in the struggle described in the next stage of the process. It is a stage in which the leader attempts to step down his or her anxiety and move the focus away from self toward the group. In all the incidents the participants reported awareness of the effect of the incident on their own feelings was key to being able to effectively manage the incident. This awareness initiated the process of constructing an appropriate intervention to manage the critical incident.

This stage could be characterized as the "Smoke Detector Stage" because the leader's self-awareness detects the defensive climate in the group before it becomes so inflammatory that the group can not recover. It is through this awareness that the leader identifies critical challenges to this climate and sets a course towards its resolution. Some illustrations of these reactions are illustrated in Figure 9:

Illustrations of Awareness Reactions.

2.1	"I knew we were in a critical incident and if it weren't handled properly by me that the safety of the container would be jeopardized."
3.1	"I recognized that the next move was critical. It was absolutely critical that I recognize that this was a critical incident. So the internal recognition that this was a critical incident was actually a positive thing in terms of resolving the defensiveness."
5.1	"I am feeling defensive but also sense the group, I don't know if they are reacting to my defensiveness or the tone of his comment, that was authority challenging." I was thinking that I was lost. I was thinking whether or not I was maintaining my credibility, then my attention became divided between self maintenance and group maintenance and then also maintenance of this guy. So there were three directions my energy was going in. I was watching how I was feeling, I was challenged so I had to divert attention to my self."
6.1	If I hadn't recognized it then [leader's defensive reaction to situation], I don't know where I would have ended up and I don't think I would want to know."

Figure 9: Illustrations of Awareness Reactions

Category two: reducing anxiety /shifting focus

In all incidents, the leaders report some degree of anxiety or fear as a direct result of the awareness that occurred in the first stage of the process. This anxiety, as reported in the previous category created a state in which the leader was momentarily unable to act, suspended within an inward focus. The leaders struggled with their anxiety and fear. This self-focus, created during the awareness stage, does not begin to shift until the leader is able overcome this internal focus. Once it is overcome, leaders report a reduction in their anxiety levels. This anxiety-reducing process allows the leader to shift focus and move into the next stage. The duration of this stage tended to vary widely. However the more experienced leaders reported a much shorter duration than those reported by less experienced leaders. An explanation for these phenomena was put forward by one of the participants as follows: "I have developed over the years a movement away from taking it as a narcissistic wound. So, it has now happened so often and I am so steeped in practice and theory that I see it as a structural thing rather than a personal thing." This observation indicates that experience and the ability to depersonalize the incident are related to the time the individual spends at this stage.

The complete range of actions used by the participants are summarized in the quotes presented in Figure 10: Range of Anxiety Reduction / Focus Shifting

Actions. Some examples of these actions are further illustrated in Figure 11:

Illustrations of Anxiety Reduction / Focus Shifting Actions.

Immersion into empathy	Self Focus on Positive Self Talk	Shift from self focus to group focus
Shifting to the here and now and dropping plans	Shifting focus from self to member focus. Checking with Beacon.	Self Focus Theoretical Foundations while hyper group Focused
Some self focused external action mixed with a surveying of non-verbal group indicators.	Self-Focus on Positive Self Talk while seeking external confirmation of support	Self-focus positive self talk
Self Focus on Positive Self talk moving to Group focus	Self-focused moving to group focus searching for theoretically recognizable pattern	Self-focus on worst possible outcome allowing move to group focus

Figure 10: Range of Anxiety Reduction / Focus Shifting Actions

The shading in this table indicates the incidents in which the participant does not report a successful immersion into this stage. In the case of Figure 10, the participants in grey reported attempting to calm down, but the descriptions of their feelings and descriptions of the remainder of the incident indicated that they had not been completely successful in reducing their anxiety. It is likely that these individuals did not fully understand their own reactions and, therefore, were unable to completely overcome the internal focus. There is, then, a direct link between self-awareness, shifting focus and theoretic anchoring, and this link is critical to ensuring a positive outcome.

"I do think an important part of it was engaging or immersing myself empathetically with the other person because it took my mind off being anxious and gave me a little space to reflect and make a decision."	"[So this is going on in your mind (challenge to leadership) so in order to combat that feeling you reflected on the process you were going through and previous experiences. You said you had a lot of experiences (positive self talk) and there are lots of things (positive) going on in this group.] Yes."	"It was a shift from being involved in your own self esteem and self interest and self confidence as a leader to getting more empathetic with the group and I think that when you are attending to the group needs then you are not defensive because you cannot do those two things at once."
It was a matter of going through them [participant's feelings], I don't want to say that I denied them because I did feel very uncomfortable and anxious, so I didn't move into denial I moved into my feelings. [that is what you meant by felt this through]. Yeah right. [In that very quick moment	"Then I felt a lot of relief because I felt he had been sitting there snipping in the weeds for five sessions doing passive aggressive stuff. I felt him standing up and yelling like that relieved me in some strange way."	"I felt like a computer sifting through every chip in the machinery looking for one that would come up for us. I was hyper alive and noticing every thing sifting through stuff."

you dropped the agenda in your mind, you still were feeling anxious but the moment you said you have to be in the here and now there was clarity for you]. Yeah then I knew what I had to do.”		
“What I did was actually locked eyes with a couple of supporters in the group. Checking non-verbals of the group, looking for eye contact and support. ...[then you were able to go to the next stage and develop a strategy]. Yeah.”	“I looked at my co-facilitator and I was confident that I had support. One thought that went through my mind is that I was well prepared, I have a sound structure.”	“My first statement to myself was get a hold of yourself, make sure you are perceiving this situation accurately.” “The step down is don’t hold on relax, breath, don’t speak because I am not sure what I want to speak.” What I am doing is lowering my temperature so I can react effectively. I can do this over a few seconds. This is very key because if it doesn’t happen nothing will happen.”
“This is something you are going to have to pay attention too, you can not taking this for granted. You are going to have to work a bit here to sort out what is going on.” “Once I got some balance I could focus on the group as opposed to myself.”	“Well it was certainly going on in recognizing the panic [leader in process of centering] probably I was doing that back and forth thing is it them or is it me, trying to identify what was going on [looking around for something you recognized]. Searching for a description, for a label.”	“Between knowing something needs to be done and doing something I don’t know the period of time, but during that period of time I was looking at the consequences of not doing something, what happens if I jump in too soon and what happens if.”

Figure 11: Illustrations of Anxiety Reduction / Focus Shifting Actions

Figure 10 indicates that leaders use various methods to reduce their anxiety. Their choice seemed to vary according to the severity of their reactions to the incident, the type of incident reported and personal preference. In some cases the participants used the same approach in different incidents; in others, the approach varies widely. The variety of approaches did not seem to be linked to the leader's degree of experience.

The anxiety-reduction process for the leader continues through the remaining categories with the completion of each step, at which point participants reported a positive outcome. The anxiety, however, appears to be more prevalent in those incidents with less successful outcomes. In the more successful incidents, the anxiety continues to be reduced as the leaders successfully move through the process. This successful passage appears to both further decrease anxiety and

increases the leader's ability to act effectively. This observation is supported by the clarity by which the participants of successful incidents were able to describe their anxiety reduction process. Those participants who reported a successful passage through the theory-anchoring stage, as outlined in the next section, also reported a further decrease in anxiety in their description of the incident.

The anxiety-reduction process, therefore, continues through the remaining stages. As the leader experiences success in each of the remaining stages of the process, a further reduction in the anxiety level is experienced. However, once the anxiety is addressed either successfully or unsuccessfully, the individual then moves into the theory-anchoring stage.

Stage three: theory-anchoring

In the theory-anchoring category the leader usually has reduced his or her anxiety to a degree sufficient to allow focus on naming what he or she is experiencing, by fitting it into a personal framework of theoretical beliefs. In this category the leader is engaged in answering the question "What am I seeing?" Theoretical Anchoring therefore, is a process of relating the defensive situation in the group directly to the leader's system of theoretical beliefs.

In the incidents in which the leaders could not anchor an experience to their own theoretical beliefs, they reported either being unable to take action or the outcome of their actions appeared to be unresolved. In these cases the outcome was usually reported as neutral, negative or unresolved. It would appear that the ability to anchor is key to freeing the leader to focus on an appropriate model for action.

The participants who reported successful anchoring also reported a further reduction in anxiety or fear. This would seem to indicate that the reduction in negative internal emotions experienced in the previous category is also present in those who successfully move through this category.

Tried to understand event from theory perspective but jumped right to model Remembered model Clarified	Identified theoretical aspect inclusion did not look for model took no immediate action.	Identified theoretical aspect inclusion did not look for model took no immediate action.
Recognized theoretically the issue I was dealing with	Recognized structure I felt a relief because I knew because I knew what I had to do.	I began to look for a way forward, a link, a familiar process I recognized a disagreement between views and stated group views
Leader seemed to have jumped immediately to model	My reaction was oh I am now living this, I have now arrived at something that I have read about (leader recognized theoretical moment but did not seem to anchor)	It is based in role theory and that is what a leader should be doing at this stage and what would you expect the members to be doing at this stage.
Well I recall nothing about theory	I was searching for a description, searching for a label, was unable to anchor	Looking at group norms

Figure 12: Range of Theoretical Anchoring

Category four: model matching or creating

In this fourth category leaders appear to be engaged in answering the questions: "What have I experienced or observed that would work in this situation and do I need to modify this model for this experience?" This is done through a process in which they ask themselves: "What have I done? What have I seen others do? What have I sometimes concluded I should have done?" Figure 13 illustrates the leader's individual process as he or she searches for an appropriate model. The grey areas illustrated those incidents in which the leaders did not appear to successfully complete this stage of the process. Although more individuals reported being successful in this stage than in the theory-anchoring stage, the outcomes of the greyed areas were not successful. Those leaders who reported success in this category but not in the previous category also did not have successful outcomes.

Having the model fresh in my mind made it easier for me to respond	Used Validation in appropriately	No model selected decided to finish current process
Referred to experience and models	Considered my options or models	I linked and constructed a new model of repair
I wanted to have some options here I remember sliding into norms instinctively	I came up with a fall back position that is an internal thing, that allowed me to strategize. The strategizing allowed me to take action and move forward.	If I am doing something clearly at a wrong stage I need to go back to my rolodex and say I have to do this, this and this and then I am congruent.
Model matching did not occur	I made an emergency decision to do damage control	What have I felt, I have seen others do, what have I done, and sometimes afterwards talking to others what do I wish I had done.

Figure 13: Range of Model Matching/Creating

Category five: deciding on action

In the final category of internal actions there were two incidents in which no immediate action occurred; the outcomes of the incidents were unresolved and, therefore, in both of these incidents there could be no linkage to a model. In those incidents in which no action was taken, the remaining ten, there was a direct relationship between the successful outcomes and those models anchored in theory. This direct relationship is explained in the next section.

Outcomes

The outcomes reported by the participants did not negative outcomes; however, half of the incidents were reported in a fashion that indicated that the incident was successfully resolved and that the group appeared to move forward. The remaining incidents reported either a neutral state or a state in which the group did not appear to progress and the issues around the incident resurfaced in later stages of the group. The successful resolutions were best summarized by one participant who described the outcome as having not only released the leader from their negative emotions but also moved the group to a deeper level of development. Neither of these descriptions could be said to apply in the unresolved incidents highlighted in grey in Figure 14. This table also provides an illustration of the range of outcomes described by the participants.

Resolved at later point in time	Resolved at later point in time	Resolved at a later point in time
Felt an enormous sense of relief that was also expressed from the group	The defensiveness had gone by the next group[’s meeting].	The last hour we were in a kind of communion, it took the group to a very deep level
Some resolution	At this point the incident was resolved although some of this issue came up later	I was then feeling much better it is no longer a crisis we are getting to the work, we are meeting the needs of the group.
Unresolved Outcome	Unresolved outcome	In doing so knowing that I have trust what my gut is saying and go with it.

Figure 14: Range of Outcomes

Categories of External Actions

The description of this plane of data, as indicated earlier, is brief as no major categories emerged from the researches reviewing this plane. It was noticed, however, that the actions reflected in this category were typical of a broad range of interventions that one would expect from competent leaders.

In the incidents reported by the participants they were asked to summarize the external actions on the clarification sheet. A summary of these external actions is found in Figure 15: Range of External Actions.

Clarified Feelings and re-framed	Took no direct external actions linked to incident	Took no direct external actions linked to incident
Immediacy, stated group goals and linked	Blocked, mirrored, stated group goals	Limited by stating boundaries (group norms), group goals, positive reframe, mirrored
Humour, clarification, re-framing and group norms	Linking for inclusion, re-framing, group norms	Blocking, reduced power differential through disclosure, clarification, modeling, and consolidation of consensus
Perception checking, Re-framing, Summarization, group goals	Immediacy through apology and blocking	Validation, blocking, linking, group norms and normalization of behaviour.

Figure 15: Range of External Actions

There did not, however, appear to be a relationship between the external actions and the outcome. The range of interventions was typical of those that might have been selected by competent and experienced leaders indicated that the selection

process for the study had identified appropriate participants for the question under consideration.

Conclusion

The results of this study focus on the categories that emerged within the internal action plane of data. These categories outline a clear process, as illustrated in Figure 8, a process that describes how leaders successfully or unsuccessfully attempt to resolve a defensive group situation. We have known for a long time that to train leaders effectively we must first steep them in theory, however the process uncovered in this research places this theoretical training into a new context, leaving us with some additional considerations for leadership training. In the following chapter these considerations and the implications of the results of this study for the training of group leaders linking the findings to relevant literature will be discussed.

CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the results of the study in light of the relevant literature and research. It also outlines the implications on practice, model development and future research as well as its limitations. The internal plane of data and the categories that emerged from this plane in the previous chapter are best described as a process in which there are five stages. Therefore in this chapter the process and the five stages will be discussed as they will make a significant contribution to how we train leaders and set about managing defensive climates in groups.

Statement of Results

The findings of this study support the principle that a reduction in defensive communication through effective leadership interventions is important to group development as demonstrated in the previously cited research. In this research this researcher also found that leaders who effectively reduced defensive group climates also reported climates in which the group became more productive. The significant finding of this study, therefore, is the link between the reduction in the defensive climate and increased productivity for those leaders who successfully moved through the internal action categories or process outlined in the previous chapter. This process illustrates how effective leaders manage their internal process or internal actions within a critically defensive group climate. A direct relationship, therefore, was found between successful movement through this process and the ability of a leader to manage a defensive situation so as to transform it into an opportunity for group growth. The process and its stages are illustrated in the model present in tables Figure 8 and Figure 16. A direct relationship between the external actions of the leaders and a reduction in the defensive climate did not emerge. Competent leaders were chosen for this study, and the interventions used by these leaders were in keeping with those outlined in Gibb's earlier research;

however, appropriate interventions did not necessarily reduce the group's defensive climate in the same manner. This lack of direct relationship, therefore, supports the conclusions of this study.

This study reveals that the outcome of an incident is not only dependent on the intervention used, as previously indicated in the research, but also dependent on how a leader manages his or her own internal processes or internal actions. In other words what occurs prior to an intervention is more critical to the success of the intervention than the intervention itself. If a leader fails to manage his or her internal process or internal actions, even the best interventions can arrest the progress of a group and fail to deal effectively with the defensive climate.

The process, illustrated in Figure 16, is a highly consistent pattern of internal actions that precede the external behaviours of a leader. The individuals in this study who successfully passed through this five-stage process reported successful group outcomes in which the defensive climate of the group was reduced and the process of the group was advanced. Those who did not successfully pass through this process reported, in most cases, a stabilization of the group's defensive climate or a plateau in the group's development. There appear to be two variations that emerged in this study; one that leads to a significant reduction of defensive communications in which leaders report group development and another that leads to a leveling off of the defensive climate and minimal group growth.

The literature in the area of defensive communication tends to focus on external actions and not on the internal actions of the leader. Therefore, this study uncovers a new perspective on how to effectively manage critical defensive climates. Of the four planes of data, the internal action plane was the only one where a significant pattern emerged and, therefore, this chapter will focus on primarily this plane of data. The remaining planes of data will be used to support the findings in this plane where there is a significant direct relationship.

Successful Anchoring and Unsuccessful Anchoring

The terms successful-anchoring and unsuccessful-anchoring attempt to describe the two ways in which a leader can pass through the stages of the internal action process illustrated in Figure 16. In the incidents reported in this study that correlated with successful outcomes there was also a direct relationship within the first three stages. All the leaders who successfully moved through the first three stages of the internal actions report successful outcomes.

This study indicates that leaders who are able to connect to their personal theoretical belief system are more successful than those who do not. This is discussed in Stage three: theory-anchoring on page 39. It is through this successful theoretical-anchoring that the leader is able to select and successfully apply an intervention. An apt metaphor to describe this stage is the anchoring a boat in harbour: a firm anchoring allows for the flexibility needed to weather the wind, currents and tides of the harbour. In this way those leaders who have successfully completed the anchoring stage appear to be better able to overcome the unpredictability of the defensive climate of the group, and provide a safer mooring for the group. Those who have not successfully anchored run the risk of allowing the group's defensive climate to drag their anchor; in this way the tides and currents of the defensive situation can potentially drive the boat or group toward the rocky shore of the harbour. Rocks that should be providing a safe mooring now become a potential danger to the group. A leader who does not successfully anchor, therefore, uses an intervention that is viewed by the group as less safe than those used by the leader who has successfully anchored; thus, group growth is inhibited.

Resonance and Felt Congruence

This researcher would like to therefore describe these two variations in this stage as successful-anchoring and unsuccessful-anchoring. In the case of the leaders who reported successful anchoring, this researcher is suggesting that their choices

of models have more resonance or felt congruence between the group's climate and the leader's theoretical beliefs. In these cases the participants report greater group development and a reduction of the defensive climate. Those who do not successfully anchor may choose a model that does not have this resonance or congruence with the group. Therefore, those leader's who report unsuccessful anchoring appear not to have accurately linked the model to their theoretical belief system; hence there is an incongruent or lack of resonance.

The Critical First Three Stages

The first three stages of the process, as illustrated in Figure 16, are shaded grey to illustrate their critical nature. In those incidents in which successful anchoring is achieved, the leaders appear to effectively manage their anxiety or the process in stage two. There is a direct relationship between their ability to manage their anxiety and their ability to theoretically anchor a successful outcome.

1	2	3	4	5
Awareness	Anxiety Reduction / Focus Shifting			
		Theory Anchoring	Model Matching/Creating	Decision to take Action
Leader becomes aware of his or her own internal defensive reaction.	Leader attempts to reduce his or her anxiety level so that they can process what is going on.	Leader attempts to understand incident in terms of his or her own theoretical belief system.	Leader reviews his or her "rolodex" of models and experiences to find suitable action.	Leader makes a decision on what action to pursue and whether to act.

Figure 16: Major Stages in Internal Actions

A comparison of the non-greyed areas of Figure 11, Figure 12 and Figure 14 illustrates that there is a direct relationship between these stages in the internal action process and the successful outcome of an incident. The incidents in which leaders successfully reduce their anxiety are the same incidents in which the leaders are successful in theoretical-anchoring and the same incidents that have a successful outcome. This direct relationship is not present in the model-matching

stage of the process as illustrated in Figure 13. This study also reveals the process that leaders use to effectively anchor their theoretical belief system. This process fosters a congruent response that positively affects the outcome of the intervention.

Summary

In summary this study contributes a number of key findings to our understanding of how leaders effectively manage defensive group climates:

1. First, the leader's ability to manage his or her internal process appears more important to group growth than choosing an appropriate intervention.
2. Second, there is a coherent process that can describe how all-competent leaders internally manage a defensive situation.
3. Third, within this process the first three stages, awareness, reducing anxiety /shifting focus and theory anchoring are critical to a leader's success in reducing a defensive climate.
4. Fourth, successful passage through these three stages can not only reduce the defensive climate but also promote group development or growth.
5. Finally, knowing the theory or having a number of models does not seem sufficient to ensure effective leadership.

This chapter goes on to illustrate more fully these important findings.

Analysis of Individual Stages

In this section this researcher will explore in detail the implications of each stage within the internal action category and illustrate how they relate to each other and contribute to the study's understanding of the leader's successful and unsuccessful response to defensive situations.

Awareness

The first stage of the internal process is "Awareness." In this stage the leader becomes aware of the defensive climate through a monitoring of his or her internal reactions. The leader uses self-awareness as a method of monitoring the defensive

climate of the group; like a smoke detector this awareness sounds an internal alarm warning the leader that a defensive situation is about to critically challenge the group's climate. This smoke detector stage sets the leader on a course of action to resolve the defensive situation. Initially the leader becomes internally focused. This sudden introspection at first prevents the leader from taking any external actions and increases the leader's state of anxiety thus reducing the leader's ability to manage the situation. Once the leader begins to move toward addressing this anxiety, he or she moves into the second stage of the process.

Anxiety Reduction / Focus Shifting

The awareness stage raises the presence of negative emotions in the leader and, therefore, a tendency towards the presence of what Csikszentmihalyi (1997) would call psychic entropy. The presence of entropic energy keeps the leader focused on restoring his or her internal state to its previous external focus, thus reducing the psychic energy available to deal with external tasks. The process of anxiety reduction through refocusing helps the leader return to a more negentropy psychic state, a state in which the psychic energy is freer to focus on the task at hand. In his own words, Csikszentmihalyi express these two states as follows:

Emotions refer to the internal states of consciousness. Negative emotions like sadness, fear, anxiety or boredom produce "psychic entropy" in the mind, that is, a state in which we cannot use attention effectively to deal with external tasks, because we need it to restore an inner subjective order. Positive emotions like happiness, strength, or alertness are states of "psychic negentropy" because we don't need attention to ruminate and feel sorry for ourselves, a psychic energy can flow freely into whatever thought or task we choose to invest it in (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 22).

The entropic state is similar in its effect to Gibbs' concept of defensive climate in which the individuals involved in the climate have a reduced capacity. He

describes this phenomenon as a defensive spiral. In a defensive climate both the leader and members of the group are likely to be in entropic states of mind. The leader's struggle to move towards a more negentropic psychic state is the process that is described in the second stage, anxiety reduction/focus.

In the second stage the focus is on the leader's struggle with the entropic state of his or her emotions which occurred as a result of his or her awareness of his or her reactions to the defensive situation in the group. To further extend what is put forward by Csikszentmihalyi, both Campos and Barrett (1984, p 232) report that this struggle with emotions affects the registration, storage and retrieval of information from memory. The leader's struggle to stabilize his or her internal psychic state is paradoxical as the emotional reaction is both the first step toward resolving the defensive climate and also the causes the entropic state. It is the leader's struggle with this paradox that determines the outcome.

Leaders report moving through the issues in this stage at various rates of speed, and as leaders successfully move through the remaining issues in the subsequence stages, a further reduction in anxiety and change of focus is reported. This stage is present not only in the background of the remaining internal actions but also the external actions. Once leaders have successfully reduced their anxiety or regained a more negentropy psychic state, he or she is able to move into the next stage.

Stage Three: Theory Anchoring

The reduction in psychic entropy results in an increased alertness or more psychic negentropy allowing the leader to manage the issues outlined in the theory anchoring stage. In this stage the leader begins to build bridges between his or her internal theoretical belief system and what is occurring externally in the group. It is therefore, the stage where the leader begins to move from an internal focus to an external focus. The degree to which the leader successfully anchors his or her

internal world to the external world affects how well his or her external intervention works, as described earlier in this chapter. In addition, those participants who reported successful anchoring also reported a further reduction in his or her anxiety or fear and a more successful shift of focus from internal to external.

As the leader successfully moves through the issues in this stage, he or she not only experiences a further reduction in negative internal emotions but also a greater ability to shift between an internal and external focus. Once the leader has successfully anchored, the psychic entropy is reduced (Campos and Barrett, 1984, p. 232). This reduction creates a more negentropic state in which the leader's ability to register, storage and retrieval information is enhanced; the leader is now more able to link readily his or her theoretical understanding of the defensive group incident to an appropriate intervention.

Stage Four: Model Matching or Creating

In the model matching or creating stage leaders review their theoretical understanding of the group's state against models he or she used in similar situations or experience others use or begin to select elements of various models in an effort to construct an appropriate intervention. Leaders describe this process as reviewing a kind of "Rolodex" of models for all the experiences that might be appropriate to the situation under consideration. Frequently a number of models result from this search through the model "Rolodex." Once this selection process is completed, a process of feeling the best fit or constructing a new model from the various models is under way. This is not necessarily a linear process. Leaders report moving back and forth between the models and the model "Rolodex."

The importance of a model "Rolodex"

The presence of this stage in the internal action process indicates the importance of an experienced leader being able to draw directly on his or her own

group experience and the experience of watching other leaders. It is not enough to have a theoretical understanding of a model of action; one must also have experience from which to draw intervention models. Leaders with extensive experience reported the need to be able to draw from a series of experiences in order to build an appropriate intervention model. It is likely then that leaders who lack experience in or exposure to intervention models would find themselves unable to link their theoretical understanding of the situation to a plausible intervention. In addition, leaders reported that the ability to recall specific experiences also had an anxiety reducing effect on the leader which bolstered his or her abilities to move through the next stage and implement an intervention. This bolstering effect must also be present in a situation in which a leader lacked experience or exposure to models.

Visual nature of the recall

The leaders in almost all the incidents described their models visually. This indicates that they drew more on their experience rather than on something they had read. Those who did not describe them in this manner tended to be the more experienced leaders and they referred to groups of models thematically. In either case it was apparent that their ability to recall their actual experiences as a leader or observer was key to being able to select or design an appropriate intervention.

More individuals reported successful model matching than did those who reported successful outcomes. This indicates that there is no direct relationship between successful model matching and successful outcomes, thus supporting the previous finding that the first three stages in the internal process is vital to an appropriate outcome.

Summary

Once the leader successfully selects an appropriate outcome he or she moves into the main issue of the next stage, where he or she decides on an intervention strategy on which to act.

Stage Five: Deciding on Action

The final stage deciding on action is simply a decision of whether or to take action. In those incidents in which leaders took no action unsuccessful outcomes were reported. These were also the leaders who were unsuccessfully in moving through the process outlined in the first three stages. This direct relationship points toward the need for action when confronted with a defensive climate. In some group situations external interventions are not necessarily warranted; however, the results of this study indicate that critically defensive situations need to be addressed with an appropriate external action.

Summary

A five stage internal process for effectively reducing defensive climates in groups emerges from the stages in this study is illustrated in Figure 16: Major Stages in Internal Actions. These stages indicate that successful reduction of defensive communication is dependent on the successful movement through the first three stages. The most critical indicator of success is whether or not the leader effectively moves through the third stage of anchoring. Success in these stages appears to be linked: first to the leader's internal awareness of his or her own emotional reaction to the defensive climate of the group; second, to the leader's ability to see these reactions as contextual clues to the nature of the climate; and finally to the leader's ability to link these clues to his or her theoretical belief system.

This seems to confirm some of the points established by Campos and Barrett (1984) in their studies of emotions:

... emotions are useful as organizational constructs, lending clarity to the relationship between various aspects of situations and various aspects of an organism's responses to those situations. Emotions function as both intrapersonal regulators, as when they impact cognitive or perceptual processes, and as interpersonal regulators, as when emotional expressions or coping reactions of one person influence the behaviour of another. (Campos and Barrett, 1984, p. 256)

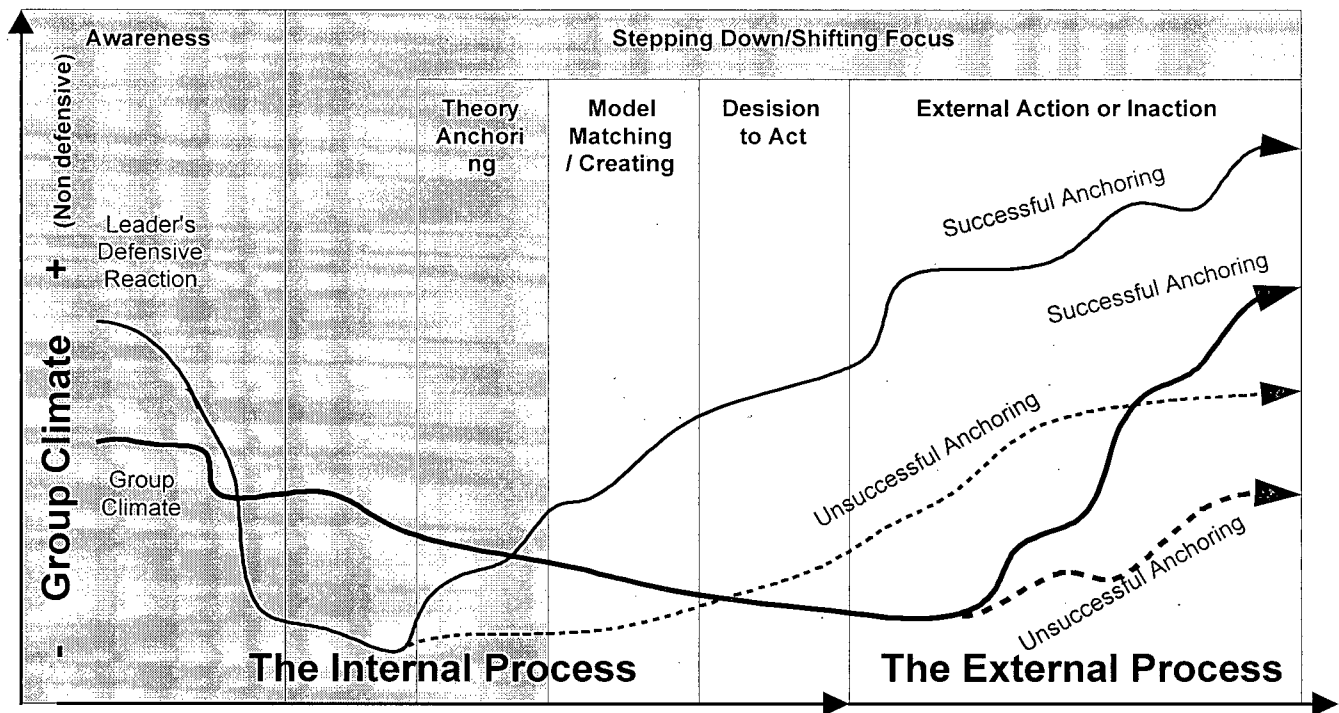


Figure 17: Effects on Group Climate the five Stages

Emotions are useful organizational constructs that can assist leaders in using their emotional reaction to group events to further the group's process. When leaders use these emotions in a process that results in successful anchoring congruency or resonance between the group climate and the leader's belief system occurs. Once this happens, the group's non-defensive state and the leader's defensive state improves immensely as illustrated in Figure 17 and Figure 18. When leaders

describe an unsuccessful anchoring, they also describe an outcome where the group's process plateaus.

Implications for Training of Leaders and Practice

This study has important implications for training and developing effective leaders. Competent leaders will need to be able to move successfully through the process described in the various stages of internal actions described in Figure 16, Figure 17 and Figure 18. In order to move through this process they will need a high degree of emotional self-awareness, an ability to reduce their own anxiety levels, a coherent theoretical belief systems and sufficient personal experience and exposure to leadership models.

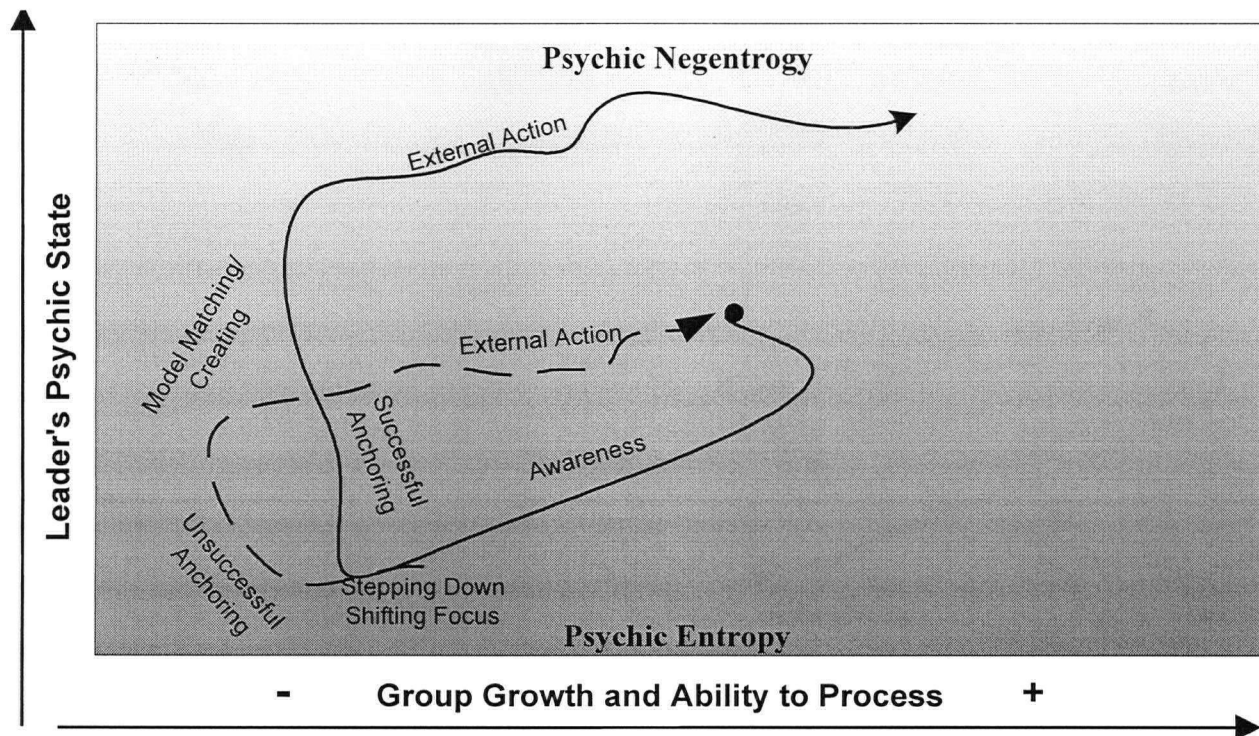


Figure 18: Leader's Psychic State and Groups Ability to Process

Leaders Need to Understand Themselves

The leaders in this study used their own emotional reaction to the defensive group climate to begin a process of analysis. Through this process they attempted to

select an appropriate external action to resolve the negative group climate. Their awareness of their own reaction to the defensive climate and their understanding of the meaning of this reaction initiated the process for climate resolution. Leaders, therefore, need to be highly aware of their own emotional landscape. It has been suggested in dyadic therapeutic encounters that a counsellor's emotional state is much like the surface of a lake on which a client creates ripples. It is these ripples that provide the counsellor with a direction for the next intervention. This metaphor describes how group leaders use their own emotions to direct their group interventions. To complete the metaphor, a counsellor needs to be aware of his or her own lake of emotions and be able to calm these waters before he or she will be able to see the ripples created by the group. Once the counsellor is able to do this he or she will need to be able to relate these ripples to his or her own emotional experience to understand its meaning.

Leadership training, therefore, should be designed to heighten self-awareness as effective leaders will need to know how others perceive them as leader's and how their interpersonal behaviour is likely to be interpreted. This is best illustrated in the research on the development of one's Johari window (Luft, 1984). Expansion of the Johari window is an interpersonal process and one that is most effectively approached within a group setting. The impact of member to member learning with in these settings will not only enhance self-awareness but also provide prospective leaders with a non-leader's perspective of the group experience. Finally, a group lead by an experienced leader will also provide each member with effective models to integrate into their own personal "Rolodex" of models.

The composition of these group experiences, like any group experience, should be carefully screened to ensure a safe environment in which the members can learn and take risks. Ideally the group would be composed of group leaders in training.

Anxiety Reduction Techniques

A clear understanding of self will also help to reduce a leader's level of anxiety. It is also important for leaders to develop a series of techniques that can be used to help reduce one's level of anxiety. Teaching these techniques to leaders are of secondary value because a well-trained leader, who is self-aware, will likely have developed these techniques as a result of the self-awareness. However, teaching techniques would provide leaders with tools to overcome areas where the training has not yet been completed or was weak.

During the group setting outlined within the previous recommendation, a sharing of anxiety reduction techniques between members would help each prospective leader to build a repertoire of techniques. In addition role-plays or enactment's of anxiety provoking situations should be used provide a safe context for building experience, developing and honing models and integrating these techniques into their personal practice.

A Strong Coherent Theoretical Belief System

Group leadership training has always included extensive theory training and this study supports this practice (Corey, 1991; Yalom, 1995). The participants in this study report using their theoretical belief system to select an appropriate intervention. It would seem apparent then that leaders who have been exposed to extensive theoretical training are more likely to have developed a theoretical foundation, which is integrated with their personal belief system, as Corey (1991) described as an integrative perspective.

In order to ensure that this theoretical background is complete the five stages of internal action should be included in the material used to train leaders. This will provide them with a theoretical structure to examine and develop their own internal process for dealing with critical group incidents.

Exposure to Models and Experience

In this study the importance of being able to draw on both personal experience in leading groups and experience in observing effective group leaders becomes apparent. All leaders drew heavily on these two kinds of experience in order to select or construct their intervention model. Leaders must be exposed to a sufficient amount of experience and practice in order to have a sufficient level of experience from which they can select intervention models. This is in keeping with such recommendations as the American Group Psychotherapy Association's recommendation that a minimum of 180 hours of supervision for group leaders is necessary; this is to ensure that good models are developed and inappropriate models are extinguished (Yalom, 1995). This is also in keeping with Trotzer who suggests that new group leaders should co-lead groups under supervision (1989). The need to be exposed to the use of effective models by experienced leaders is not outlined in the general literature on training leader's as indicated in Trotzer's book.

The need for experience is also supported by Gibb's (1961) original research on the influence potential of leaders. This research points out the direct correlation between a leader's influence potential in a group situation and his or her role diversity. Role diversity is directly related to the leader's level of experience. In short the more experience a leader has, the greater degree of influence they will have within a group setting. This influence is the direct result of their ability to play a wider array of roles that might be demanded by a group. The findings in this research supports Gibb's original findings that a positive correlation exists between experience and group influence.

The experience of co-leading a group with a competent co-leader will help integrate the skills needed to move through the five stages of the internal process while as previous mentioned; ensuring appropriate models are developed. However this kind of training should be preceded by the group experience, as outlined in the

previous recommendations. This experience should include a series of enactments that force the prospective leaders to take on a wide variety of roles. In this way leaders will be given a greater opportunity to expand their role repertoire, prior to the process of integration that occurs during the co-leadership training.

These two approaches should result in leaders that have a more diverse role repertoire and therefore greater group influence, than those trained only through experience of co-leadership.

Summary of Implications

Leaders to successfully move through the internal process, described in this research, will need a high degree of emotional self-awareness, an ability to reduce their own anxiety levels, a coherent theoretical belief systems and sufficient personal experience and exposure to leadership models. This study demonstrates existing leadership-training programs in the field of counselling psychology, education and business need to be modified in the following ways:

1. In order to build a better understanding of self, leaderships training should include group experiences that allow members to expand their Johari window. These group experiences should be conducted by experience and effective group leaders in order to expose members to effective models of addressing defensive climates and other group phenomena
2. Group experiences should be used to explore various anxiety reduction techniques and integrate them into each leaders personal models of leadership.
3. The group theory used to train leaders should include five-stage internal action model, identified in this research.
4. The use of enactments in training groups composed of prospective leaders needs to precede and be integrated with the traditional co-leading training.

Limitations of the Study

The first potential limitation of this study is that the participants selected for the study were all individuals with backgrounds in the field of counselling psychology. However, the graduate programs that train these individuals tend to attract a wide variety of academic disciplines and professions, which would counteract this limitation.

The incidents in the study were not all set in a therapeutic setting; they included business and educational settings. It is likely, then, that the findings are applicable to group leadership situations in therapeutic, corporate and educational settings. In addition this researcher has conducted informal face validity tests of the internal action process in various settings and these informal tests seem to indicate that the model is not unique to the field of counselling psychology. The model does appear to have validity in a broad range of leadership situations, which would include education and business.

The final limitation to the study is that only 12 incidents were used in this study. It is important to note that the internal stages saturation was reached before all 12 incidents were all analyzed. The strength of this saturation would appear to provide sufficient evidence that a larger sample was not necessary to establish the stages outlined in this study.

Direction for Future Research

Given the emergence of a stage process or model that has a significant impact on the outcome of groups, one direction for future research is testing the model in the field. Studies that looked at the difference in the effectiveness of leaders that have had additional training based on this model would provide significant insight into the implications of basing leadership training on the elements of this model.

This research should take place across a number of disciplines. The impact on business, counselling psychology, education, and other fields would be significant for the potential of our society.

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APPENDIX A - CONTEXT STATEMENT

We are studying how leaders respond to defensive situations? During the interview I will be asking you to recall specific critical incidents which have occurred while you were in a leadership role in a group situation. By sharing your experience to date you will be helping me identify both negative and positive reactions that you may have had when faced with this situation. As a group leader you are the expert since you have experienced these situations yourself. Your experience can provide us with an insight into not only what helps but what hinders in these situations.

I am going to ask you to think back to specific incidents where you experienced a defensive group climate where you were the leader. I am interested in how you reacted to this climate and whether your behaviour helped or hindered you. I am also interested in concrete events, your feelings about them, and their meaning to you. Please take the time over the next seven days to recall the critical situations that have occurred to you in a group situation where you felt defensive. Please make whatever brief notes you may need to recall these events.

APPENDIX C - INTERVIEW CONTEXT, QUESTIONS AND PROBES

As you know we are studying how leaders respond to defensive situations? During this interview I will be asking you to recall situations which have occurred while you were in a leadership role in a group situation. By sharing your experience to date you will be helping me identify both negative and positive reactions that leaders have when faced with this situation. You are the expert since you have experienced these situations yourself.

I am going to ask you to think back to specific incidents of defensiveness and recall how your reactions either helped or hindered you. I am interested in concrete events, your feelings about them, and their meaning to you. It is better to mention something rather than not mention if you are unsure.

As you talk about each event I am going to ask you to write a phrase describing the event on a time line in chronological order. This will allow you to go back and forth as you recollect events.

Do you have any questions at this point?

Opening interview Question:

Context

"I'd like you to think back to an event in a group where a critical defensive situation developed, can you describe what lead up to that situation?"

How did you react?

What was the outcome or result of this action?

Probe

What were you feeling, experiencing or thinking?

Did your feelings change if so please elaborate?

What were your sensations at the time?

What were you doing at the time?

Summarize

Summarizing and empathetic response to reduce retransmission resulting from review incident.)

Exactly what did you say or do that was especially effective or ineffective?

Why was this action effective, or what more effective action could you have taken?



Linking Situations

Can you tell me what was different in this situation that was more helpful/hindering?

Can you tell me how and what way you experience this situation differently?

APPENDIX D - INCIDENT CONTINUUM FORM

Clarification Sheet

 Check the appropriate Degree of Negative Impact				Check the appropriate Degree of Positive impact 		
Very Negative <input type="radio"/>	Negative <input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Negative <input type="radio"/>	Leader's Action	Somewhat Positive <input type="radio"/>	Positive <input type="radio"/>	Very Positive <input type="radio"/> +
Very Negative <input type="radio"/>	Negative <input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Negative <input type="radio"/>	Leader's Action	Somewhat Positive <input type="radio"/>	Positive <input type="radio"/>	Very Positive <input type="radio"/> +
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Very Negative <input type="radio"/>	Negative <input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Negative <input type="radio"/>	Leader's Action	Somewhat Positive <input type="radio"/>	Positive <input type="radio"/>	Very Positive <input type="radio"/> +
Very Negative <input type="radio"/>	Negative <input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Negative <input type="radio"/>	Leader's Action	Somewhat Positive <input type="radio"/>	Positive <input type="radio"/>	Very Positive <input type="radio"/> +
Very Negative <input type="radio"/>	Negative <input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Negative <input type="radio"/>	Leader's Action	Somewhat Positive <input type="radio"/>	Positive <input type="radio"/>	Very Positive <input type="radio"/> +
Very Negative <input type="radio"/>	Negative <input type="radio"/>	Somewhat Negative <input type="radio"/>	Leader's Action	Somewhat Positive <input type="radio"/>	Positive <input type="radio"/>	Very Positive <input type="radio"/> +

Group Stage: Early ☐ Middle ☐ Late/Mature ☐