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Basic Assumptions Concerning
Human Behavior and the Training
Of Community Development Workers₁

by

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These papers are preliminary draft documents containing tentative results, thoughts, concepts, etc. They are intended for circulation among administrators and working scientists in the region to keep them informed of the Center's work and to stimulate discussion and meaningful exchange, one purpose of which is to assist the authors in developing a more finished manuscript for formal publication in an appropriate journal at some future date.

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Basic Assumptions Concerning Human Behavior

And the Training of Community Development Workers

This paper presents and discusses a series of basic assumptions concerning human behavior which have been found useful in the training of community development personnel. The assumptions are relevant and complementary to contemporary social science theoretical frameworks encompassing a number of different disciplines related to several of the philosophical foundations which underlie certain community development approaches, and are inclusive enough to assist in the interpretation of a wide range of behavior. It has been found that these assumptions can be understood by persons with little or no previous formal training in the social sciences and in community development.

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Getting people to work together and to accept and to utilize help in solving their common individual or group problems is an exceedingly complicated task. One of the major complications arises from the tendency of outside community workers to oversimplify the process of getting people to change their established patterns of behavior and work toward some set of objectives from which they may all benefit. In order to prevent such oversimplifications, a wide variety of training programs have been established with the expressed purpose of making community development personnel aware of the complexities they face in the position of change agents. Such training programs usually include information on group dynamics, processes of community development, interpersonal behavior, analysis of community structure and principles of organization, and the role of the change agent. It is often found that, despite very intensive training, individual community workers have very different conceptualizations of their tasks and interpret the behavior of the people with whom they work in a variety of ways. To some unknown and perhaps unknowable degree, this variability stems from the fact that different people have different basic assumptions concerning the nature of human behavior and therefore different ways of interpreting behavior. These assumptions may be explicit or implicit and may be verbalizable or non-verbalizable. Nonetheless, we all base our behavior upon such assumptions, and our behavior influences the people with whom we interact, both within and outside development situations.

We believe that an understanding of the assumptions which underlie community development philosophy and many of the theoretical frameworks of contemporary social science is important to the successful training of

community development personnel. Furthermore, it is believed that such an understanding will make workers aware of some of their own prejudices, values, and tastes and the prejudices, values, and tastes of the populations with whom they work. In order to create such an awareness, it is necessary to develop a framework with which such phenomena can be interpreted. Such a framework may also serve as a base of reference for future training, for communication between program administrators and community workers, and for communication between program staffs and research staffs.

We conceive of such a framework as a tool to be used. Under no circumstances do we wish to imply that all workers in any program should all think in the same way. Instead, they should share a certain interpretative and communicative competence which facilitates the achievement of the objectives of the people with whom they work and the community development program. In any case, community development workers and humans in general are so diverse and unique that they can never all think or feel in the same way, and any such expectation violates something basic about our collective humaneness. Rather than presenting "god's truth", we are simply suggesting that we share a rather sophisticated alternative way of viewing human behavior.

The framework or set of assumptions concerning human behavior must have the following characteristics in order to be useful in the training of community development personnel: (1) the assumptions must be relevant and complementary to contemporary social science theoretical frameworks encompassing a number of different disciplines; (2) the assumptions must be related to the philosophy of the community development approach being used; (3) the assumptions must be inclusive enough to assist in the interpretation of a wide

range of behavior; and (4) the assumptions must be simple enough to be understood by persons with little or no formal training in the social sciences and in community development.

We believe the set of assumptions presented in this paper has all four of the requisite characteristics. The assumptions were developed by Simpkins and used in the training of public health educators, both at the University of North Carolina and in a program dealing with health problems of diverse Native American groups in New Mexico. Later, both Simpkins and Moles used the assumptions in the training of community development workers for Action for Appalachian Youth, a community action program in southern West Virginia, and for CAUSE II, a training program for state employment service employees in five eastern states. In every case, we found that the assumptions contributed a great deal to the training program and enabled the trainees to interpret other training sessions in a meaningful and sophisticated manner.

Basic Assumptions Concerning Human Behavior

1. <u>Human behavior occurs in situations which can be analyzed in terms of relationships between a person or persons, seen as the focus of the situation, and the ecological, social, and cultural aspects of the surrounding situation, seen as the social field.</u> It is becoming painfully apparent to a number of social scientists that simple investigations of social positions, e.g., status and role, and the linkages between persons do not provide an understanding of the complexity of human behavior. Keesing specifically pinpointed the problem when he noted that there is no adequate conceptual approach available at the present time to assist

in the interpretation of social contexts and situations [9]. Actors not only respond to each other, but also to a wide variety of stimuli which exists in their past and present environments. Because of the wide variety and complexity of available information in every social situation, actors must select a limited number of indicators or cues on which to base their behavior, and it is possible for community workers to become aware of some of these indicators that they and the people with whom they interact use in planning a specific course of action.

2. <u>Human behavior is directed toward maintaining or increasing control of the situation in which the behavior occurs</u>:

    a. <u>Individual behavior can be said to be directed toward maintaining or enhancing the individual's self-concept.</u>

    b. <u>The behavior of groups can be said to be directed toward maintaining or increasing control of the group's situation.</u>

By maintaining control over situations in which behavior occurs, we refer to the actions of persons to create and maintain a predictable world. By maintaining or enhancing the individual's self-concept, we refer to the ability of the individual to be in control of himself and his behavior when interacting with his world and other persons. A great deal of the social science literature is concerned with the maintenance of social order [3]. People fear a non-predictable world, they fear chaos, and they are continually attempting to construct a "reality" and social relationships which they can interpret and anticipate [10, 4]. Novak put it quite well when he wrote:

> Experience rushed in upon us in such floods that we must break
> it down, select from it, abstract, shape and relate...A culture
> is constituted by the meaning it imposes on human experience...
> even the most solid and powerful social institutions, though they
> may imprison us, impoverish us, or kill us, are fundamentally
> mythical structures designed to hold chaos and formlessness at
> bay...culture begins and ends in the void [11].

Furthermore, the predictability of which we speak relates to the accessibility

of goods and services considered necessary by any individual or group. If

community development is to function adequately, it is imperative that the

control individuals and groups have over their life situation is not

diminished. The development literature is filled with examples of persons re-

fusing to accept higher quality seeds, agricultural chemicals, and new economic

opportunities because they cannot predict their returns resulting from

changes in their activities. On the other hand, they can predict the returns

produced through the use of established behaviors. People strive to reduce

risk and sometimes do so at a very high cost to themselves. The development

of demonstration plots is an attempt to make people aware of the nature and

predictability of new alternatives. Once the community development worker is

aware of this assumption, she or he is in a better position to recommend changes

and interpret the refusals to change.

　　3. <u>Before an individual or groups can act in a given situation, its</u>

<u>structure, meaning, and probable effect have to be determined.</u> This assumption

is directly related to the social use of information and cultural knowledge.

There is very little aimlessness in human behavior, and people have reasons,

both implicit and explicit, which guide their behavior. Much of our training

in the social sciences warns of the dangers of teleological interpretations

and explanations of behavior; nonetheless, human beings are purposeful living systems. It is a truism that humans assess their circumstances and then make decisions which lead to actions. It is likewise true that human beings make teleological assumptions as a part of their decision-making. Instead of hiding behind a philosophical prescription, the social scientist and the community worker alike must attempt to understand the purposefulness of behavior. Moreover, a number of these philosophical problems have been resolved with the application of systems approaches to behavior [1]. In any case, the philosophical refinements are not of monumental concern to those persons involved in community development activities.

4. <u>Actions</u> <u>of</u> <u>an</u> <u>individual</u> <u>or</u> <u>group</u> <u>in</u> <u>any</u> <u>situation</u> <u>normally</u> <u>tend</u> <u>to fall into the following pattern</u>:

    a. <u>Perceptions</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>situation</u> <u>as</u> <u>focalized</u> <u>patterns</u> <u>of</u> <u>items</u> <u>and</u> <u>relationships</u> <u>that</u> <u>must</u> <u>be</u> <u>dealt</u> <u>with</u>.

In order to gain some insight into the processes through which we get to know our world, it is necessary to review briefly the way in which we learn about our environment. Experience is our teacher, and everything we experience is experienced through our senses. We feel our world, we see our world, we hear our world, we smell our world, and we taste our world. There is no other way to get to know our world [13]. However, we cannot take each experience as unique, we cannot develop a new way of dealing with each individual experience, and we cannot remember every sensation about every experience in the past. In short, we simply cannot know everything in our world, know everything we experience, and therefore, we learn to "economize" in our knowing of our world.

We "economize" in knowing our world through learning to focus on or pay attention to certain indicators or aspects of our environment [6]. When we drive down the freeway, we pay attention to the relative speed of our car vis-à-vis other cars, the lanes of the highway demarked by white and yellow lines, signs over and beside the road, etc., etc.; however, we do not usually pay attention to whether or not other cars have whiteside wall tires, radios, fog lights, etc. These latter things do not represent information which is important to us in the safe operation of our vehicle. In fact, if we pay attention to these items, we may reduce the degree of control we have over the car. We have learned over a period of time which things along the freeway are important to us for our survival. We call these sensual cues our percepts. From the time we are old enough to communicate, our elders are pointing out cues, and, through our experiences in interacting with the world, we are selecting other cues which we have found to be important to us. In this manner, we create the world in which we live.

Learning to recognize things in our environment is not the only way we "economize" in learning about our world. Through the development of percepts, the number of stimuli we must pay attention to is reduced; however, as previously noted, we cannot treat each individual experience as unique. Therefore, we must learn to organize our percepts into classes of percepts. We create abstractions about the world, we talk about classes of plants called trees, classes of people called adults, classes of adults called women, and classes of women called elderly women, aunts, sisters, wives, etc. These abstract classes of things representing or standing in place of direct experience with the world are our concepts. We learn that we treat sisters in

ways different from aunts and wives, elderly women in ways different from young women, etc.

We find that some of our concepts need to be shared with other people, in short, we need to talk to our fellow humans about some of our concerns, about some of the things we know. Therefore, some concepts have verbal labels. We frequently find it useful to speak about cars, planes, trees, men, women, and sisters in order to cooperate and effectively deal with our environment. On the other hand, we have concepts which we do not talk about, concepts which do not have verbal labels, yet we are aware of these concepts in our everyday behavior. We have a concept of how to ride a bicycle, yet find it impossible to verbally explain to another person how it feels to balance ourselves as we pedal along on a two-wheeler. There are still other concepts we have that we do not talk about and that we are not aware of in a conscious manner. As we travel about from day to day, we see people we recognize and people we do not recognize, but for the life of us, we cannot explain how we discriminate between the two classes of persons. It is just something we do and cannot explain. Sometimes we feel anxious or nervous and do not know why, and sometimes we do things and cannot explain how or why we do them. Bateson noted that humans do not have the necessary neurological circuitry to continually and consciously monitor all of their behavior and, as a result, achieve a kind of cognitive economy through the formation of habits which are governed by unconscious processes [2]. As a consequence, we can only talk about a limited number of the things we know, and likewise, we are only aware of a limited number of the things we know.

Further cognitive economy is achieved through the linkage of con-
cepts creating propositions about the world. We have a proposition
about the world which suggests that the faculty of Marshall University is
less gregarious than is the faculty at the University of California, Davis.
We are not certain that this is true in general, but from our limited ex-
perience, this generalization seems to have some validity.

We all have some propositions that we are not sure of; we cannot vouch
for their validity or truth value. On the other hand, we have a number
of other propositions which we believe are true. The propositions about the
world we accept as being true are our beliefs. We believe that it rains more
in West Virginia than in California. We believe that when we give a vendor
15¢, he will give us a newspaper. We just know he is going to give us a news-
paper. If he fails to give us a newspaper, we know that he does not have the
newspaper we want and that he will return the 15¢. If we give him $1, he
might short change us, he may claim we only gave him 50¢, but we are sure
we will get the newspaper nonetheless. We all have beliefs we know are
true. We need beliefs in order to make our world predictable. We need to
know what we can eat without becoming ill, where we can acquire food, and whom
we can ask for assistance when we need something.

    b. <u>Definition of the situation or ascription of meaning to</u>

        <u>the situational pattern</u>.

We use our percepts, concepts, propositions, and beliefs to assign meanings
to the particular circumstance in which we find ourselves.

    c. <u>A decision of what action is to be taken in solving the</u>

        <u>situation, i.e., choice of roles and resources, so that</u>

        <u>control will be increased or loss of control kept to a</u>

> control will be increased or loss of control kept to a
> minimum.

We do not develop specific solutions in response to every situation. Instead, we achieve another kind of cognitive economy through the development of recipes to meet our daily needs. As Goodenough has noted:

> The constraints on behavior, whether imposed by nature and circumstances or by beliefs, skills, habits, and rules, complicate the improvisation of activity, making it difficult. For most recurring purposes, therefore, people develop recipes or formulas. These reduce the amount of improvisation needed but at the same time add even more constraints, further structuring the syntactic organization of human activity.
> Every recipe, indeed, is a statement of a set of conditions that must be fulfilled if an objective is to be met. There are requirements as to raw materials, tools, skills, time, space, and personnel: and there are requirements as to how these are to be organized or effectively related to one another [8].

Once the community development worker is aware of the complexity of social situations and how information is derived from them by actors, he or she may start to develop an awareness of the use of recipes by persons to solve their problems. When the worker is aware of the way problems are currently being solved, it becomes easier to suggest modifications in recipes and the addition of new recipes to solve old and emerging problems.

     d. Action.

Once the individual or groups have selected an appropriate recipe or created a new recipe, they are ready to take some action to meet an objective.

It must be added that it is highly unlikely that people are actually aware of going through these processes in their daily lives. We have simply presented an analytical framework as to the nature of human problem solving. If any group of persons were to describe how they go about solving problems,

they would not use the framework presented here, but, instead, one that had
meaning for them in the particular circumstances in which they found them-
selves. Even then, as Garfinkel has demonstrated, it is not possible to
describe completely one's own behavior [5]. Keesing commented, "...there
is no reason to assume that cognitively crucial units of cultural structure
are labeled, conscious, or verbalizable." [9]. When the community development
workers in West Virginia told us that people did not make decisions following
the patterns spelled out here, we reminded them that the framework only had
meaning in the analysis of behavior and did not constitute a specific "reality"
for any individual or group.

5. Action of an individual or group in a familial or routine situation
is based upon successful actions taken in previously encountered situations
of similar pattern or structure. Human behavior is highly repetitive; we
tend to do the same things over and over again as long as our actions pro-
duce the desired results. Some recipes prove to be more successful in pro-
ducing the desired results than are others. In most situations, there are
a number of possible recipes, and each actor perhaps knows of more than one.
The actor may select a single recipe which seems to be the most adequate
for reaching his particular objective. As the recipe is used time and time
again, the actor gains skill in its application and routinizes its execution
[8]. The development of routines may remain idiosyncratic; however, in
situations requiring the cooperation of several people, a single recipe
may be adopted and used extensively. It is often the case that leaders
can be detected through the determination of whose particular recipe or plan
is used to reach certain collective objectives. As is the case with individual

behavior, the adoption and continual use of a particular recipe eventually
leads to the routinization of the behavior of a number of actors. Routini-
zation increases the predictability of the particular situation, and each
actor knows what to expect from others and what is expected from her or him.

6. <u>Actions of an individual or groups in a new or unfamiliar situation,
i.e., a problem situation, are determined by the way in which the implications
of the situation are perceived</u>. When a new set of circumstances is encountered,
people tend to refer to past experiences to serve as guidelines for action.
In short, they try to match up the new situation with something they have
experienced in the past. While we were working in West Virginia, it was
discovered that the community workers were seen as "threats," and their pre-
sence raised a great deal of suspicion. The "outsiders" which normally
visited the areas were law enforcement officials, welfare workers, salesmen,
and employees of the school system and were there to "check up" on the resi-
dents or sell them something. The people classified the workers as belonging
to this group of outside visitors. The classification seemed appropriate
because of the residents' contacts with other "outsiders." Sensitive
workers can often anticipate how people will respond to new opportunities
and situations based upon an understanding of how they respond to situations
which occur as a normal part of their daily lives.

7. <u>Action of an individual or groups in a crisis situation, i.e., one
which has significance yet cannot be defined adequately, becomes confused,
inconsistent, aimless, or defensive in nature</u>. When people cannot interpret
a social situation through the use of their percepts, concepts, propositions,
and beliefs, it is difficult to make a decision or select a course of action.

Furthermore, if a routinized recipe fails to produce the expected results, a similar response may be detected. As a consequence, the situation becomes unpredictable. As was noted earlier, people fear a non-predictable world, and their behavior often becomes erratic when they are unable to anticipate the consequence of their own behavior and the behavior of other persons. As a result, the community worker must make her or his objectives clear to the community insofar as possible so the people can plan their behavior in a manner which has meaning to them. The last thing any worker wants to do is to create a crisis situation.

8. <u>Actions in situations are accompanied by emotional reactions, the kind of emotion being related to the particular goal sought, and the intensity of the emotion being related to the perceived significance of the goal.</u> The social sciences have struggled long and hard to develop an understanding of emotions and the relationship between emotions and behavior. Some disciplines have simply ignored the emotional aspects of behavior, while others have attempted to tackle the problem head-on. Even though emotions have been of primary concern to many theorists and researchers, the fact remains that there is little that can be added to many folk interpretations of anger, frustration, happiness, contentment, etc. Emotions are simply difficult to deal with, given the tools of contemporary social science. Bateson has suggested that our knowing and understanding of emotions is of a different order than our knowing of the world in which we live [2]. "The heart has its reasons which the reason does not at all perceive." Therefore, it is impossible to describe our own emotions effectively and likewise impossible to describe the emotions of others. Emotions are encoded in ways which are significantly different from

the way other information and knowledge is encoded and, therefore, is inaccessible to individual actors and scientists. Despite these difficulties, community development workers will be aware of the emotions of others and must learn to relate emotions to certain types of behavior. Furthermore, they must be aware of their own emotions and feelings.

9. The culture of the society, the character of the groups, and the personalities of the individuals involved influence what is perceived, how it is defined, and the choice action taken in a given situation. While we are all unique in our own particular ways, we do share percepts, concepts, propositions, and beliefs with other people. Community workers must be made aware of the nature of variability in behavior. Culture as an ideational system is not a monolith, but rather something that is constantly created by individuals and groups attempting to succeed in a particular environment [10]. We have discovered that there are many social and cultural realities in any single community. If we ever hope to understand the complexity of human behavior and of larger social processes, it is necessary to place a great deal of effort in the attempt to understand variability in behavior [12]. The community worker must always remain aware of cultural, group, and individual differences as he goes about his daily tasks. To ignore any one of these types of variability makes the interpretation of the community development process difficult.

10. Individuals and groups change their established ways of acting for either or both of two reasons:

    a. To gain increased control over the situation.

    b. To avoid a decrease in control.

Given the discussion that has preceded, this assumption requires no further elaboration.

11. <u>Individuals differ as to their ability to maintain and enhance their self-concept, and groups differ in their ability to control the social situations in which they are acting. Likewise, situations differ as to the ease in which an individual can maintain and enhance his or her self-concept and in which groups can control the situation.</u> Social and cultural change occurs at a highly variable pace and is not highly predictable, first, because of differences in the skills and capacities of individuals and groups, and second, because we just do not know all that much about the nature of change. Community workers must be aware that some persons will understand their mission more rapidly than will others, some people learn at a faster pace than do others, and some persons exhibit a higher degree of control over their lives than do other persons. Moreover, some people find themselves in circumstances where it is difficult to exert any meaningful control over their lives, while others need only expend a minimum effort to maintain or enhance their control. This is in part dependent upon the resources which people have at their disposal and in part upon the difficulty of the tasks at hand.

12. <u>The expected increase or decrease in control may be illusory from the point of view of either an outsider or the people themselves.</u> Some people may choose to believe they live in a highly predictable world and exert a great deal of control over that world, when in fact they do not seem to do so. To some degree, belief in our ability to control our environment protects us from feelings of anxiety and incompetency. Such beliefs also

enable us to rationalize away any need to attempt to bring about changes. On the other hand, people who seemingly have a great deal of control over their lives behave as though they have little or no control. We usually refer to such people as insecure. They frequently go to great pains to increase the predictability of their environment, when in fact there is little they can do to improve their circumstances.

13. An individual or groups can bring about a change in the behavior of another individual or group by bringing about an increase or a decrease in control of given situations by the individual or group concerned. In brief, this is the objective of the community development process as we envision it. We have stated it here as an assumption on which the philosophy of community development is based.

14. Individuals or groups in positions of power or authority are customarily seen as using reductive means by the individuals or groups under them. As a person or group gains control over another person or group, the latter tend to lose control over their lives. In essence, we are talking about power. In order to effectively utilize power, there is a strong tendency for persons in superordinate positions to control or minimize the alternatives and the ability to respond of persons in subordinate positions. While the minimization of power of persons in subordinate positions makes the world more predictable for individuals in positions of power, such actions may well limit the freedom of other people and create paternalistic and dependent relationships. The community development worker should attempt to avoid positions of power at all costs and not enter into any relationships which will create dependencies upon his or her services.

The fourteen basic assumptions concerning human behavior were presented in all of the above mentioned training programs with illustrative examples drawn from the social sciences, community development literature, and experiences in ordinary life situations which the trainees could relate to in a meaningful manner.

DISCUSSION

We believe that if the assumptions as set forth here are to prove useful in training and community development, it is necessary to use them as building blocks on which to base additional training and as guides for the interpretation of the responses of persons to community development programs. Therefore, the overall goal of development was phrased in terms of the assumptions. As a consequence, the objective of community development is to assist people and groups in increasing their control over their own life situations by working with them in solving their own problems as an organized and viable community. This involves the induction of changes in the community in which the methods used are just as important as the changes which are brought about. However, before any changes may occur, the members of the community must have or must acquire sufficient motivation to be willing to modify or change their accustomed ways of living and acting. Fortunately for community workers, no community possesses complete, ready-made solutions to all of the problems with which they are faced. These circumstances afford the worker the opportunity to assist in developing solutions to problems. If the worker can assist people in realizing that they have the capacity of solving problems, then the use of enhancement methods becomes feasible.

It must be pointed out that the use of enhancement methods is often tremendously difficult. What the worker may define as enhancement may very well be interpreted by the people of the community as a reductive method which threatens their control over their life situations and thereby reduces the predictability of their world. It must never be forgotten that the viewpoint of the people within any community is based upon percepts, concepts, beliefs, attitudes, and habits which have developed through long experience and tradition. Furthermore, people's ways of viewing and interpreting their environment are deep-rooted, may be heavily charged with emotions, and may be greatly influenced by latent and unconscious factors inaccessible to both the people and the worker. Too often in the past, the usual procedure has been to resort to such reductive methods as reliance on power or authority in bringing about the desired changes of behavior. Coupled with the use of such reductive procedures has often been a tendency to approach the community in terms of "outside" definitions of what the people of the community ought to do. To some degree, we all believe that if other people just knew what we knew, they would understand what we understand and, as a result, the world would somehow be a better place in which to live. Therefore, if other people would listen to us for a short time, we could tell them and they would "see." If they would only "see," then we could help them; we could really let them know. However, such an approach to other people assumes that they know little or nothing of value and our way of living and approaching the world is the "correct" way. The danger of such attitudes and approaches has been well documented, both in history and in the social sciences, in far too many instances. The fallacy here is that people normally do not like to be told how to solve their own problems or, in many cases, even to have the problems de-

fined for them. This is true even when people are unable to do things for themselves. The definition of a problem suggests that the people should do something for themselves, and when they realize that they do not have the power or resources to do so, they tend to feel frustrated and inadequate. This applies particularly when the advice or suggestions come from strangers or "outsiders."

When community workers define problems on their own and tell people how to solve these problems, difficulties invariably arise. Under such conditions, any analysis or proposed solution that the worker might offer, no matter how "correct" or "rational" it might seem, usually meets with resistance. The people of the community tend to feel that they are being asked to abandon the only solution which is at all satisfactory, i.e., the one resulting from their own perception of their circumstances. Furthermore, such suggestions may be seen as implying that the residents are inferior, inadequate, and unable to successfully deal with their own lives. From the viewpoint of the people living in the community, any analysis made by "outsiders" may well be seen as a threat to their control of the situation rather than as an opportunity which will lead to increased control over community problems. Because most people, including both laymen and professionals, do not behave in a "logical," "scientific," and completely understandable manner, the most important factors are the subjective interpretations of the person's world and his or her goals of creating and maintaining a predictable environment. Hence, a "logical" or "scientific" analysis introduced improperly at the wrong time will have the effect of threatening reduction of control rather than increasing it for many people in a community.

The community worker must attempt to create a situation in which the people of the community have the opportunity to learn, rather than one in which they are taught, because "teaching" situations are usually structured in an authoritarian manner and tend to reduce the control over the situation for everyone except those doing the instruction. Conditions must be such that the community members can acquire their own insights and discover for themselves why their past actions have been inadequate for a solution of their problems. Moreover, they must discover their own solutions and make their own choices of action in adjusting to their community situation.

There is a very important reason why people must discover their own solutions and make their own choices of actions. As noted earlier, all learning results from experience, and if community residents do not have the opportunity to experience the creation of solutions to their problems, then they will be unable to create solutions to emerging problems. We cannot replicate what we have not experienced. The simple act of receiving information as a student in a classroom setting does not imply that the student can replicate the process being described. Take mathematics for an example. All of us have shared the experience of sitting in a class and being in awe of an instructor with great mastery over the subject. As the class progressed, we knew we understood. However, when we attempted to do the homework, we found that we did not fully understand. After some effort, we got the message, "Aha, now I see, now I understand." We had to experience the solution through our own efforts. No instructor can give a complete set of instructions, no community worker can describe exactly how a solution to a problem should be created, no coach can tell us how to play tennis, just as we cannot tell you how to ride a bicycle. We must couple experience with the information

we receive from others, and then we can understand and replicate these experiences as new approaches to new problems.

At the point when people in a community demonstrate that they desire the assistance of a community worker, he or she must explore with them their own interpretation of the particular circumstances. The worker must attempt to view, or at least to appreciate, the view of the problem from the standpoint of the residents of a community. She or he must attempt to understand the people's interpretation of their needs or objectives, the obstacles standing in the way of achieving the objectives, and possible steps to reach the objectives. The hopes, fears, preconceptions, prejudices, and uncertainties of both the worker and the people must be taken into account. At the same time, the worker must make clear to the community his or her own definitions and limitations, objectives, and the resources available for use by the community. No attempt must be made to mastermind the community, but rather, knowledge and skill should be offered in a mutual exploration of a problem situation.

We have shared with you a set of basic assumptions concerning human behavior which seems to underlie some of the basic philosophical foundations of community development. Furthermore, we believe that these assumptions are also the basis of much of what we call social science. There is one additional assumption or belief which we have not discussed, but which was also important in the development of the ideas presented in this paper. We have a deep belief in the dignity, worth, and capacities of our fellow human beings. Many years ago, Thomas Jefferson said that we should give people a light and let them find their own way. In our opinion, that is what community development is all about.

From our past experiences, we have found that the presentation of the basic assumptions concerning human behavior has produced important results in the training of community development personnel. The workers are given a framework directly related to their own behavior and the behavior of other people. This framework is intended to be used as a tool as they go about their activities. As a consequence, we have found that workers become more analytical in their interpretation of the community development process; in short, they become more able to "think on their feet" because they have a clear and concise set of notions concerning the objectives of the community development process. The workers we trained developed a facility to explain their experiences to the people of the community, their fellow workers, and administrators in an insightful and sophisticated manner. Such reporting was invaluable in our attempts to modify our approaches and create new approaches to the solutions of community problems. Finally, it was discovered that the workers were more able to successfully use the community development and social science literature because they had a framework which tied together the many diverse resources. We hope that this sharing of our ideas and experiences will prove useful to other people who are involved in community development training.

NOTE

[1] Similar approaches to community development have been developed. Several years after Simpkins developed the assumptions concerning human behavior, Ward H. Goodenough presented a number of similar ideas [7]. However, we feel that the assumptions spelled out here are more concise, more inclusive, and easier to present to a wide variety of people from diverse backgrounds than is the Goodenough approach. We have borrowed some of his ideas and wish to acknowledge his contribution to our understanding of human behavior and community development.

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