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COMMUNITY SKILL AND CHAIN REACTION – ELEMENTS OF GROUP DYNAMICS, THAT ACCELERATE THE HELPING PROCESS

Abstract: The possibilities for optimizing the assisting process are an important social research work. The possibilities for optimizing the assisting process are an important social research work. They enjoy continuous research interest but continue to pose challenges with their unresolved issues. One of the poorly researched elements of group dynamics is the chain reaction, a characteristic of the small group. One of the poorly researched elements of group dynamics is the chain reaction, a characteristic of the small group.

Keywords: small groups; chain reaction; group dynamic.

Introduction

In 1932, Kurt Lewin addressed many questions about individuals seeking support by directing attention toward small groups. By contextualizing individual behavior within group dynamics, he explored mechanisms for dynamic development that facilitated both collective and individual progress. As a German immigrant to the United States, Lewin became the founder of group dynamics. Early in the 20th century, he revealed the potential of small groups in the helping process.

For Lewin, the "field" created by the small group was as significant as the structure of the helping process itself, which included various stages, group roles, leadership, and more. Within this field, collective group goals could be achieved. He observed that small groups improved not only the group as a whole but also the state of the individual members within it.[1]

Lewin identified the key advantage of groups over individuals: their interdependence. He described the group as a "dynamic whole," where changes in the state of one member affect the entire group. The level of interdependence among members could range from a loose collection of individuals to a highly cohesive unit.[2]

Lewin described the ability of a small group to engage even the more passive participants in the helping process as a **"chain reaction"**, referring to it as a **"phenomenon."** He drew an analogy to the physical chain reaction observed at the subatomic level. However, this analogy was used solely to

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[1] **Lewin, K.** Frontiers in group dynamics. *Human Relations*, vol. 1 (2), 1947, pp. 143–153.
[2] **Lewin, K.** *Principles of Topological Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936, pp. 29–30.

conceptualize and demonstrate the advantages of working in small groups. At the time, Lewin did not provide a detailed explanation of how this physical phenomenon might translate into interpersonal relationships within the framework of a small group.[3]

Around the same time, but with entirely different objectives, Danish physicist Niels Bohr discovered that after electrons and protons interact, these subatomic particles retain a form of "knowledge" about one another. [4]They exert instantaneous mutual influence, regardless of the distance separating them. Remarkably, this occurs without the exchange of what physicists traditionally consider the basis of all interactions–force or energy. When particles are **entangled**, the state of one, such as its magnetic orientation, will always affect the state of the other, no matter how far apart they are.

Erwin Schrödinger, another physicist, identified the discovery of nonlocality as a defining moment in science, describing it as a key property and prerequisite for further breakthroughs. He likened the activity of entangled particles to the behavior of twins separated at birth, who, despite being apart, retain similar interests and connections throughout their lives.[5]

Albert Einstein, however, dismissed the concept of nonlocality, referring to it as **Spukhafte Fernwirkungen** ("spooky action at a distance"). [6]He argued that such instantaneous communication would require information to travel faster than the speed of light, which would violate his theory of relativity. According to Einstein, the speed of light (300,000 kilometers per second) represents the absolute limit at which one object can influence another.

Despite Einstein's skepticism, modern physicists, such as Alain Aspect and his colleagues in Paris, demonstrated that the speed of light is not the ultimate limit in the subatomic world. Aspect's experiment, which involved isolating two protons from a single atom, showed that measurements of one proton immediately affected the state of the other. This phenomenon, termed **"reverse destiny"** by computational physicist Charles N. Bennett, revealed that two protons remain interconnected: whatever happens to one simultaneously affects the other.[7]

Nevertheless, modern physicists such as Alain Aspect and his colleagues in Paris convincingly demonstrated that the speed of light is not the ultimate limit in the subatomic world. Aspect's experiment, which involved isolating two protons from a single atom, showed that measurements of one proton immediately affected the state of the other. This phenomenon, referred to by computational physicist Charles N. Bennett as "reverse destiny," demonstrated that two protons remain interconnected: whatever happens to one also happens to the other, or the opposite.

By the 21st century, even the most conservative physicists accepted nonlocality as a "strange property of subatomic reality." Irish physicist John Bell developed tools to study the behavior of subatomic (later termed **quantum**) particles and conducted experiments to test their behavior. Bell initially expected disparities in measurements of two entangled particles, which would demonstrate their "inequality." Instead, his findings revealed no such differences. An invisible connection between the particles caused them to mirror each other. The **violation of Bell's inequality** indicated that the particles were entangled.[8]

The violation of Bell's inequality prompted a rethinking of established scientific postulates across disciplines. The acceptance of nonlocality as a theory suggested that influence does not occur across time and space in the conventional sense. Instead, particles–and by extension, all things composed of them–do not exist independently of one another.

The mechanism of "influence," as explored by Aspect and others, has become a key concept in fields that study human relationships. In group dynamics, sociology, and sociometry, influence is a fun-

[3] **Lewin, K.** Frontiers in group dynamics. *Human Relations*, 1947, pp. 156–159.

[4] **Bohr, N.** *Quantum theory and its interpretation*. University Press, 1930, pp. 45–47.

[5] **Schrödinger, E.** Discussion of probability relations between separated systems. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*, 1935, pp. 89–95.

[6] **Einstein, A., Podolsky, B., Rosen, N.** Can quantum-mechanical description of physical reality be considered complete? *Physical Review*, vol. 47 (10), 1935, pp. 777–780.

[7] **Bennett, C. N.** Computational concepts in quantum mechanics. *Journal of Physics and Computation*, 2000, pp. 271–274.

[8] **McTaggart, L.** *The Field*. 2001, p. 112

damental principle that determines the outcomes of work using these scientific methods. This connection explains the relevance of the above literature review, which relates to disciplines often referred to as "exact sciences."[9]

The type of influence observed can also be defined as *intention*. According to the dictionary, "intention" is described as "a deliberate plan to carry out an action that will lead to a desired result." This differs from desire, which merely focuses on the result without a planned course of action. Marilyn Schlitz, Vice President for Research and Education at the Institute of Noetic Sciences and a pioneer in studying remote influence, defines intention as "a directed and effective projection of consciousness toward a specific object or outcome."[10]

According to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, one reason elementary particles are difficult to study is that their energy is constantly shifting. They are more like clusters of vibrating waves than static objects. All elementary particles interact with one another by exchanging energy through temporary or virtual quantum particles. These particles appear out of nowhere, combine, and cancel each other random energy fluctuations without an obvious cause. Virtual particles or states of negative energy do not take physical form and cannot be observed. Even "real" particles are merely small bundles of energy that briefly appear and then disappear into the energy field.

These facts shed significant light on the "phenomenon" of chain reactions[11], which makes small groups a preferred choice in many helping processes. Chain reactions make even the most resistant participants in the helping process susceptible to influence. Due to the mutual interaction described above, processes are catalyzed that would be more difficult to achieve.

Although research has been conducted and continues to be conducted on the functioning of small groups to clarify their processes and effectiveness, there remain underexplored mechanisms that could prove significant for the helping process. The focus of research has included group roles and their formation, leadership and the status of individual participants, the stages through which small groups progress, group norms, group relationships and the possibility of influencing them, processes related to influence within the group, group decision-making, and more.

Communication as a Key Mechanism

Each of the aforementioned elements of group dynamics is realized, to some extent, through communication. Therefore, understanding the specifics of the communication process is crucial for uncovering the unique characteristics of small groups.

Currently, communication remains the primary means through which helping professionals understand their clients' needs, with a heavy reliance on verbal communication. The question of whether communication between clients and social workers could one day be replaced by a software product offering similar functions remains hypothetical—and highly unlikely. Despite the growing integration of technology into the profession, social workers, not machines, continue to visit clients in person. I would even venture to say—without substantiation—that this is for the better.

That said, I do not dismiss the expanding role of communication through online chat platforms.

The communication process can be broadly described as the transmission and reception of information between the client and the helping professional (in this case, a social worker). The roles of the sender and receiver of information can switch, and the process continues in this dynamic flow. According to studies on communication, verbal communication accounts for only 30% of the overall process, with the remaining 70% relying on non-verbal communication. This has led to numerous theories and hypotheses regarding the display, reception, and analysis of non-verbal communication. Unlike many earlier works, this study will not delve into the nuances of non-verbal communication but will instead address it within the context of the helping process, which is grounded in the ethical principle *"Acceptance does not mean agreement."*

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[9] **McTaggart, L.** *The Field*. 2001, pp. 57-59

[10] **McTaggart, L.** *The Field*. 2001, pp. 111-113.

[11] **McTaggart, L.** *The Field*. 2001, pp. 128-131.

Verbal and non-verbal communication are the primary means we currently have to understand clients' needs. According to communication theory, it is crucial that these two elements remain consistent, providing aligned rather than contradictory information to ensure smooth communication. This is especially important when considering potential errors in interpreting information during online chats. In the absence of video, non-verbal cues are often underestimated or overlooked.

For the communication and helping process to be effective, both verbal and non-verbal communication must be considered. Telepathic communication remains experimental and is not included here. It is believed that assuming another's thoughts and feelings can lead to significant interpretative errors, primarily due to a lack of empathy–specifically, the tendency to interpret others through the lens of one's own expectations, preferences, and needs. This can result in communication errors that undermine the effectiveness of the helping process and, in some cases, even harm the client.

To adapt communication theory to practical applications, a set of skills known as *basic social skills* has been identified. The use of these skills is believed to maximize the effectiveness of the helping process, particularly in the "conversation mode" of information gathering. As such, training for social workers emphasizes these skills as a professional foundation, much like a "multiplication table." These skills also improve the empathetic reception of information.

This "database" functions as an algorithm for quality communication, where "quality" refers to information that is free from the professional's own frame of reference and instead promotes continued communication throughout the helping process.

It should be noted that if the communication process pursues goals unrelated to social work, different rules and skills apply. Below are the **ten basic social skills**, listed with the awareness that we are at a transformative stage in the communication process, and this "multiplication table" may soon evolve or yield different results due to the incorporation of skills for online communication. The dynamic nature of communication processes compels me to include this disclaimer. Perception/Interpretation, Listening, Summarizing, Clarifying, Asking Questions, Understanding the Client's Feelings, Providing/Receiving Feedback, Giving Opinions, Assertiveness, Providing Feedback. These skills are organized into pairs to reflect their interdependence.

Perception and Interpretation

Perception, we assume, is generally consistent unless there are sensory or psychological impairments (e.g., hearing, vision, smell, mental health issues). Interpretations, however, are as individual as the individuals themselves. They are unlimited, yet rooted in perception; predictable, yet surprising. There are no "wrong" interpretations, but errors can arise based on those interpretations. Such errors occur when perspectives are misaligned. The helping professional works with the client's perspective–their interpretation–not their own or the socially accepted one. Otherwise, the helping process addresses issues that do not belong to the client.

To illustrate this, I reference Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's drawing in *The Little Prince*. The child draws something, and the adult interprets it as a hat. The child, however, reveals their own interpretation: the belly of a snake that has swallowed an elephant. The adult "does not hear" the interpretation because it does not align with their own. This example clearly illustrates the principle of interpretative error.

Interpretation Errors Based on the Failure to Hear the Other's Perspective

Most interpretational errors arise from the failure to understand the perspective of the other person. This refers to situations where auditory perception is intact, but the principle of "acceptance does not mean agreement" is not understood. Preventing interpretation errors is crucial for an effective communication process. Meeting a person with whom we communicate easily reflects the basic social skills in action.

Communication errors can stem from obstacles to both direct and indirect communication. These obstacles generally lead to two types of interpretational errors: **1. Errors Related to Direct Communication. 2. Direct Question, Indirect Message**

We distinguish between direct and indirect communication in the communication process schema. In conversation, these forms often overlap and don't appear separately, though clearer forms are also

possible. If we consider the communication process as a whole, represented by 100%, we might ask what proportion of direct and indirect communication would be needed to ensure 100% success in the helping process. While there is no guarantee, the likelihood of success increases when we avoid errors. Professions in which the human factor plays a critical role do not guarantee success, likely due to insufficient in-depth research into the "human factor."

Defining Direct and Indirect Communication

The communication process develops on two levels, rarely existing in isolation: the **form level** and the first level. We accept the words without seeking deeper meaning or context. On the second level, when we seek the meaning behind the words, we consider not only the form but also the Here's your revised text with improvements in clarity, structure, and flow. The content of the conversation operates on a more complex, indirect level when we seek the deeper meaning beyond the literal interpretation. For example, indirect communication may occur in the following phrase: *"My son is 4 years old and can't speak."* The literal interpretation would simply acknowledge the child's age. However, if we interpret it on a relational or emotional level, we might recognize a concern rooted in the parent's anxiety about the child's speech development. If we only focus on the literal information, we risk overlooking the broader concern, resulting in an interpretational error. Interpretational errors related to indirect communication often arise when we only interpret the conversation at the surface level, missing the deeper context.

Social Attitudes and Their Impact on Interpretation

Interpretational errors tied to indirect communication are often linked to social attitudes—norms and values that are deeply ingrained and slow to change, sometimes taking centuries to shift. The mobility of these categories is directly related to the size of the community. In smaller, more isolated communities (such as villages, small towns, or close-knit tribes), social attitudes tend to change very slowly due to limited external influences. In contrast, larger, more densely populated areas are more dynamic, with faster shifts in societal values. When considering social attitudes as obstacles to direct communication, we refer to the potential ambivalence of the client. In social work, this ambivalence takes on a specific meaning: the client's internal conflict between conflicting value systems, which the helping professional may fail to recognize, leading to an interpretational error typical of direct communication.[12]

In Bulgaria, for instance, exists an inherent conflict between traditional communal values of mutual assistance, passed down through generations, and more individualistic models introduced from the West after the 1990s. These two conflicting value systems—one emphasizing community support and the other self-reliance—clash within the national consciousness, leading to ambivalence about whether to adhere to the national model or embrace the foreign one. This internal conflict can manifest as a client seeking help but then inconsistently refusing it. According to the interaction model, if the negotiation phase is not completed with mutual agreement, the helping professional may prematurely close the case. However, if the professional recognizes this ambivalence and adapts the communication towards the national model of help-seeking, they might still be able to engage the client effectively.

Interpretational Errors from Impulsive Client Behavior

Another type of interpretational error related to direct communication occurs when the client's impulsive behavior–often expressed through verbal aggression, rapid emotional shifts, or dramatic demonstrations of feelings–leads to misinterpretation. The client's issues might manifest as problematic behavior, distant from a calm and rational conversation. Such behavior may be misinterpreted by the helping professional as a personal attack, leading to a breakdown in communication. To avoid this, professionals must recognize and validate the client's emotional expression, offering direct communication in response, rather than allowing the behavior to hinder the interaction.

Obstacles to Indirect Communication Leading to Interpretation Errors

Indirect communication involves interpreting information at the level of relationships, seeking the subtext rather than staying on the surface. However, finding the subtext is not about guessing the client's

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[12] **Mehrabian, A.** Silent Messages: Implicit Communication of Emotions and Attitudes. In: *Silent Messages*, 1971, pp. 40–45.

thoughts. To avoid mistaken assumptions, professionals should ask clarifying questions to seek feedback on their interpretations. If the assumption is correct, the conversation continues along that line; if not, the professional can return to the client's original interpretation. Common obstacles to indirect communication that can lead to interpretational errors include:

Taboo Topics

Taboo topics are those considered unacceptable or inappropriate for discussion in a conversation. Different societies, with their distinct cultural values, have different taboos. It is generally deemed unacceptable to address a topic that causes discomfort to the information sender. In Western societies, taboo topics may include money, the loss of a loved one, and other sensitive issues. Raising such topics can provoke various reactions, such as uncomfortable silence, aggression, or a noticeable shift in mood.

Sometimes, for the sake of the helping process, it may be necessary to address such topics. However, it is important to understand the potential consequences to avoid misinterpreting the situation and making an interpretational error. There are two variations of this obstacle:

1. When we are unfamiliar with another culture and react based on our own cultural norms: To avoid misunderstandings, it is helpful to familiarize ourselves with the customs and practices of the culture we are engaging with. For example, a close physical greeting might be acceptable in Eastern European cultures, but it may be seen as inappropriate in Western European cultures.

2. Taboo topics arising from both verbal and non-verbal communication: For instance, a warm welcome from an Arab sheikh or a Slavic-style hug for him and his wife might lead to an interpretational error, depending on the cultural context.

The Impact of Taboo Topics in Verbal Communication

When a taboo topic is introduced verbally, the reactions of the receiver are not always helpful to the conversation. The most problematic reaction is often silence from the client. Aggression, on the other hand, is easier to recognize, as it visibly shows dissatisfaction and signals a communication barrier. Silence, however, can be interpreted in many different ways, not always correctly, and may lead to assumptions that steer the conversation in the wrong direction. It is not advisable to make unconfirmed assumptions about the reason for the "silence in the conversation," as inaccuracies can lead to an interpretational error and, consequently, the failure of the helping process. According to research by Shulman on social workers, the ability to understand the silence of a client is considered one of the greatest challenges in the profession. Even aggression is preferable in such situations because it clearly shows the reasons behind the client's behavior and is unlikely to be misinterpreted. Silence can stem from a variety of causes, and interpreting the unknown is complex and often incorrect. Conversely, attempting to move into clarification mode through indirect questions can be successful, but it can also fail. The professional's routine is not helpful in this case, as it involves interpreting the situation based on their own expectations, not those of the client. Another obstacle to indirect communication is the mismatch between verbal and non-verbal behavior and its means of expression. For instance, the phrase "joy through tears" may sound like part of an intriguing novel, but in practical communication, it can be quite confusing. Specific questions can be used to avoid this obstacle and ensure a smoother communication process. Hyperbole is another potential barrier to indirect communication. Hyperbole in grammar refers to exaggeration. In the helping process, it is tied to the client's ability to express themselves symbolically, particularly based on the emotions they are experiencing. Interpreting symbolic messages from the sender opens up a wide field for interpretative errors. However, correcting the client's expression is unacceptable, as it contradicts the skill of expressing and accepting emotions—one of the key aspects of conversation. It would also be intolerant to ask specific clarifying questions about these symbolic expressions. Instead, we rely on our social experience, or more precisely, our emotional social experience. Even if we haven't been in the exact same situation as the client, we have likely experienced similar emotions, even if in a different context. The use of empathy is crucial here. While our emotional experiences are not identical to the client's, they can serve as a foundation for understanding. Misunderstandings can arise if we try to adopt the client's tone or use symbolic expressions in the same way. Although well-intentioned, this approach can lead to misinterpretations. Therefore, the client chooses their means of expression, and the helping professional provides feedback, interpreting the indirect message and responding directly. While

the parameters of indirect messages are immeasurable, the boundaries of emotional social experience are infinite.

Direct and indirect messages in a conversation serve as key sources of information. The channels through which this information flows can be compared to the "two SIM cards in a phone" used to communicate with the client. Understanding the complexity of the communication process allows us to navigate it effectively without difficulty.

Many theories examine the impact of interpretative errors on the communication process, but they all agree that their significance should not be underestimated. Interpretative errors are often classified based on their sources–either external or internal.

External Sources of Interpretative Errors

External sources of communication errors come from the surrounding environment, such as noise, extreme temperatures, or other circumstances that could affect the quality of the conversation. It is the responsibility of the helping professional to assess these external factors, considering the specifics of the communication situation. While not every external discomfort necessarily affects the client, it is better to be aware of and account for these factors rather than ignore them.[13]

Internal Sources of Interpretative Errors

Internal sources of interpretative errors are more varied and can similarly disrupt the flow of the conversation. One common issue is the creation of a "vicious circle" in the conversation, where there is no natural transition between topics, causing the conversation to stall. In such cases, the conversation loses its purpose and informational value. [14]This stagnation should be avoided, though it's not always easy to break free from. A "vicious circle" can be interrupted through **interpunctuation**.

Breaking the Vicious Circle

Prolonging a conversation that has devolved into a vicious circle weakens its value and creates emotional tension. These emotions, while present, do not serve to advance the conversation or help either party. As emotions escalate, they can become uncontrollable, ultimately reaching a point where the only solution is **interpunctuation**–a deliberate shift in topic by the receiver. This is not an interruption; rather, its purpose is constructive. Changing the topic helps alleviate the emotional tension, allowing the conversation to regain its momentum. Once the emotional charge diminishes, the original topic can be revisited. The initiative for interpunctuation typically comes from the helping professional, who is trained to recognize when this shift is necessary. The client, being caught in the vicious circle, will not be able to initiate this change themselves. Another common interpretative error is **generalization**. Generalization occurs when a single instance of behavior is accepted as representative of a broader pattern. This leads to false conclusions when isolated occurrences are incorrectly viewed as systemic traits. It is considered an internal interpretative error, as it stems from the exchange of information within the conversation itself. Another internal interpretative error is the **halo effect**. This occurs when we attribute greater significance to information coming from an authoritative or respected figure. This bias is why celebrities are often used in advertising campaigns–they attract attention and lend credibility to the products they endorse. While this effect can sometimes amplify messages that would otherwise be dismissed, it can also be strategically leveraged. For example, social marketing campaigns aimed at disease prevention, crisis resolution, or substance abuse often harness the halo effect to increase message acceptance.

Not Listening: An Internal Interpretative Error

A subtle yet significant internal error is **not listening**, which can manifest in various forms. In such cases, the person may be physically present but mentally disengaged. While they might hear parts of the conversation, they do not delve into the content or connect emotionally. This can occur when our mind wanders, we become preoccupied with personal problems, or we think we already understand the issue and have a ready solution.

Interestingly, psychological analysis suggests that women, in particular, tend to multitask during conversations, believing they can juggle multiple thoughts while staying on topic. However, when a

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[13] **Rogers, C.** Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory. In: *Client-Centered Therapy*, 1951, pp. 485–487.

[14] **Devito, J. A.** *The Interpersonal Communication Book* (14th ed.). Pearson, 2013.

helping professional is preoccupied with personal issues, they might neglect their own emotional needs, sacrificing attention to the client in the name of professionalism. While this may seem noble, it often leads to a lack of focus. Personal issues, even when suppressed, inevitably influence the interaction and can undermine the client's sense of being heard.

The Consequences of Not Listening

Clients are highly sensitive to any perceived lack of attention, and this can negatively impact trust in the helping process. Experienced professionals, particularly those who may fall into a routine, might generalize the needs of clients based on past experiences, leading to interpretative errors. While it might be convenient to categorize cases and apply pre-defined solutions, this approach misinterprets the client's unique needs. Every client should be approached with the central question: "Whom am I helping?" This question serves as a guide, ensuring that the helping process remains client-centered and avoids interpretative mistakes.

Transcultural Communication Challenges

A significant source of interpretative errors arises in **transcultural relationships**, where individuals from different cultural, linguistic, or social backgrounds interact. The modern world, with its interconnected and increasingly fluid boundaries, brings different cultures into closer contact. However, the success of this integration depends on the participants' ability to navigate cultural differences. Immigrants, refugees, tourists, or others exposed to new social environments often face communication challenges, particularly when confronted with unfamiliar social or behavioral norms.

Eastern and Western cultures, with their distinct historical legacies and social structures, create very different communication patterns. These cultural divides are often marked by divergent norms, values, and expectations, leading to misunderstandings. In such cases, communication issues add another layer of complexity to socio-economic problems.

How to Overcome Transcultural Communication Challenges

How can these challenges be addressed? Are there rules that allow for seamless communication across cultures? While establishing universal communication rules is desirable, the "human factor" complicates the issue. The rules governing transcultural communication are not static but dynamic, requiring flexibility and adaptation. Classical communication theory, which relies on a transmitter, receiver, observer, and observed, offers a useful framework.

To avoid misunderstandings in transcultural communication, it is essential to be mindful of the "host" culture–the one we are interacting with. By learning and adapting to foreign communication norms, we can foster smoother interactions. However, this is not always guaranteed due to the inherent unpredictability of human behavior. As René Descartes suggested, the mind and brain are separate from matter and static in nature, but human behavior is more fluid and dynamic, which is why there are no fixed rules in communication.

Despite the challenges, transcultural communication models have proven to be effective when used with sensitivity and awareness. The key is to approach each client and situation with specific intentions, aiming to move the conversation from a place of tension or risk to one of understanding and resolution.

Universal Communication Models

Despite the challenges, the general communication model used by helping professionals is universal across different ethnic societies and cultures. It takes into account the fact that all ethnic groups share fundamental communication needs. By recognizing and addressing the specific cultural and contextual nuances, helping professionals can enhance their effectiveness in transcultural settings.

Different cultures operate with unique **reference frames**–the frameworks through which people perceive reality, interpret experiences, and determine what matters. These reference frames are often shaped by a person's environment, history, and values. The social worker, coming from a different cultural or social context, cannot simply transfer into the client's value system. To effectively understand the client's perspective, the social worker must first clarify their own reference frame, outlining their tasks and the approach they believe is right for the situation.

To achieve this, the social worker uses specific questions and summaries, always mindful of the client's personal boundaries. According to the general conversation model, the interaction unfolds in four phases:

1. Initial phase: Establishing contact with the client.

2. Problem formulation phase: Understanding how the client perceives their issue.

3. Problem specification phase: Defining and specifying the problem.

4. Discussion phase: Analyzing and reflecting on the behavior throughout the conversation.

Emotionally Intelligent Communication

While the four-phase model is a useful framework for structuring the conversation, the addition of **emotionally intelligent communication** can greatly enhance the helping process. Emotional intelligence (EI), a key aspect of social intelligence, involves the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions in both oneself and others. In the helping professions, emotional intelligence can aid in observing and responding to emotional cues, allowing the social worker to engage more deeply with the client's feelings and needs.[15]

Social intelligence, which encompasses the accumulated knowledge of society and the ability to navigate social interactions effectively, is an essential tool for social workers. By observing and understanding the emotional dynamics at play, social workers can better adapt their responses and improve the quality of the interaction. The integration of emotional intelligence with the established conversation model can be of immense value, enhancing communication and ensuring that the client's needs are fully understood and addressed.

Here's a refined version of your text, with enhanced clarity and flow:

Emotional Intelligence and Its Role in Communication

Emotional intelligence (EI) is universally accessible because it is grounded in social intelligence—the knowledge and skills we gain through our interaction in society. While some aspects of intelligence have hereditary influences, emotional intelligence is not determined by genetics. Instead, it develops over time, beginning as we start socializing and interacting with others. Certain factors, such as family values, empathetic parenting, and early experiences, can foster the optimal development of EI. However, these influences are not as deterministic as the genetic factors that affect general intelligence. Studies have shown that individuals who actively work on developing their emotional intelligence tend to have better outcomes than those who rely solely on innate empathy.

Mayer and Salovey's 16-step model outlines the development of emotional intelligence from childhood to adulthood, divided into four key areas: **Perceiving Emotions**: The ability to accurately recognize emotions in oneself and others. **Using Emotions to Facilitate Thinking**: Leveraging emotions to help focus attention and aid problem-solving. **Understanding Emotions**: The capacity to comprehend emotional language and the meanings behind emotional signals. **Managing Emotions**: The ability to regulate emotions to achieve desired outcomes.

The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Helping Professions

Focusing on emotional intelligence enhances the quality of the helping process significantly. At its core, emotional intelligence involves observation—of oneself, others, and the reactions that arise in different situations. In helping professions, observation is fundamental because the communication process would be meaningless without it. As such, developing emotional intelligence in a helping professional is not just about personal growth but also about improving their professional capabilities.

Interpretative Errors in the Helping Process

Attention and Trust in the Helping Process

A key element of effective communication is ensuring that the client feels heard and valued. A lack of attention from the helping professional can seriously impact the client's trust in the process. This issue is often seen in social workers with extensive experience or those who have become accustomed to the routine. While the details of each case may vary, similarities can lead to generalized assumptions, which may overlook the client's unique needs. It may be tempting to apply pre-existing solutions to cases that

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[15] **Goldmen, D.** Emotional Intelligence. In: *Emotional Intelligence*, 2009, pp. 56–58.

appear similar, but doing so is a form of misinterpretation. The client's needs should always be the starting point. Asking the question, "Whom am I helping?" helps refocus the helping process on the client's individuality and needs, avoiding interpretative errors.

Transcultural Communication and Its Challenges

A significant source of interpretative errors is **transcultural communication**. The modern world increasingly brings different cultures, languages, and customs into contact, particularly through migration. For refugees, immigrants, or even tourists, encountering unfamiliar social and behavioral norms can create stress and misunderstanding. Even when individuals speak the same language, the clash of cultures can make communication difficult. This is especially true when East and West, with their distinct historical and cultural backgrounds, meet in global contexts.

Avoiding Transcultural Communication Problems

Is it possible to establish smooth communication across cultures? The answer is complex. Classical communication theory suggests that communication involves a sender and a receiver, and each party interprets the messages in their own way. One approach to reducing transcultural communication issues is to understand and respect the "host" culture. By learning and adopting the communication rules of the culture we are interacting with, we can enhance understanding and minimize misunderstandings. However, this approach is not foolproof, as the "human factor" introduces variability. René Descartes[16], a 17th-century philosopher, argued that consciousness and the brain are separate from the body, which suggests that rules governing human behavior could be static. However, when it comes to communication, these rules are not fixed. They are dynamic and must be adapted to the context of each interaction.

The General Conversation Model in Cross-Cultural Contexts

The general conversation model traditionally used by helping professionals is designed to be universal, regardless of cultural or ethnic background. It acknowledges that people from different cultures often have different reference frames—how they perceive reality, what they value, and what they consider important. A social worker cannot simply adopt the client's value system but must first clarify their own reference frame. This involves outlining their goals and determining the most appropriate approach to the situation. Social workers can then use specific questions and strategies that respect the client's personal boundaries while also establishing common ground.

The model follows four phases: **Initial Phase**: Establishing contact and ensuring the client feels understood. **Problem Formulation**: Understanding how the client perceives their issue. **Problem Specification**: Further clarifying and defining the problem. **Discussion**: Reflecting on the conversation and examining behavior.

By following these phases and focusing on emotional intelligence, the helping professional can foster better communication, navigate the challenges of transcultural interactions, and minimize interpretative errors. This holistic approach ensures that the client's individuality is respected while also addressing their unique needs and circumstances.

Here is an enhanced and more coherent version of the text, maintaining the original ideas while improving clarity:

Emotional Intelligence and Its Role in Group Dynamics

The emotional intelligence model by Mayer and Salovey provides valuable guidelines for developing emotional intelligence.[17] However, upon closer examination, some aspects of the model may be subject to ambiguity. For instance, the phrase "the ability to accurately understand emotions" raises a fundamental question: how can we truly define our emotions, especially if we choose to define them at all? At best, through deep self-reflection, we might gain some understanding of what triggers our emotions, but the process rarely yields a level of precision comparable to a mathematical formula.

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[16] **Descartes, R.** *Méditations sur la première philosophie*. 1641.

[17] **Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P.** Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications. In: *Basic Books*, 1997, pp. 123–139.

In practice, people often use general terms to describe their emotions, accompanied by subjective assessments like, "I feel good," or "I feel bad." These broad definitions can sometimes be unnecessary, particularly when offering feedback to ourselves. The most common scenario, however, involves a lack of emotional clarity. Statements like "I don't know what's wrong with me," "I don't know how I feel," or even the paradoxical "I feel so-so" are frequent examples.

As a result of this imprecision, the third component of Mayer and Salovey's model–"the ability to understand emotions, emotional language, and the signals conveyed by emotions"–also lacks clear guidance. The model does not offer specific instructions on how to interpret emotions, leaving room for individual interpretation. This gap means that even psychology, as a field, offers more general guidelines than precise rules when it comes to understanding emotions.

When emotional intelligence is combined with communication skills, it becomes a powerful tool in facilitating a chain reaction within a small group. Practice shows that while these elements are crucial for group dynamics, they do not necessarily constitute the complete set of requirements for speeding up group processes. In other words, while emotional intelligence and communication skills are key ingredients, they do not act as a guaranteed catalyst for accelerated group performance[18].

Conclusion

Working with people rarely benefits from the simplicity and precision that the exact sciences provide. However, efforts to refine the concept of a "chain reaction" in group processes are certainly worth pursuing. Understanding how emotional intelligence interacts with communication in a group setting can help improve dynamics and foster more effective collaboration, but it's unlikely that we'll ever be able to create a fixed formula for optimizing these processes.

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[18] **Shannon, C. E., Weaver, W.** The Mathematical Theory of Communication. In: *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, 1949, pp. 23–38.