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Community Building in the College Classroom: Understanding the Facilitator's Role in Encouraging Community Formation

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COMMUNITY BUILDING IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM:

UNDERSTANDING THE FACILITATOR'S ROLE IN

ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY FORMATION

A Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Designation

University Honors with Distinction

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[Communities] have not been the rule in traditional schooling practices because of the emphasis on the teacher as an information dispenser and students as information receptacles. This approach has also commonly emphasized individual accomplishments, and de-emphasized cooperative endeavors. The result has been a highly competitive system which emphasizes individual rather than group attainment. (Stanford and Roarke, 1974, page 48)

Building strong, cohesive classroom community is increasingly recognized as the foundation of successful classrooms. All students must feel safe, respected, and valued in order to learn new skills. Fear, discomfort, and anxiety are fundamentally incompatible with the learning process, and make teaching and learning difficult. Successful classrooms are those in which students feel supported in their learning, willing to take risks, challenged to become fully human with one another, and open to new possibilities. (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, page xi)

Introduction

For more than thirty years, educators have been pushing for the development of

community within schools. In 1974, Gene Stanford and Albert E. Roarke wrote about the

destructive potential of the then current attitudes about education. Teachers and students had

specific roles to fill, and education was seen as competition between peers. Stanford and Roarke

suggested that the best educational practice should rely on collaboration among students and

teachers. Twenty-five years later, Mara Sapon-Shevin reiterated the view that classrooms must

support cooperation and eliminate discomfort and fear from the classroom environment to

maximize student learning. Today, teachers and administrators speak of building healthy

classroom and school communities, to ensure that all who participate in the classroom and school

have access to an environment that is both physically and emotionally safe. A healthy classroom

community is the foundation of a supportive learning environment where all students can be

encouraged to develop to their full potential. The teacher is charged with creating a suitable

learning environment for all students. A healthy classroom community provides a solid base for

a learning environment. Within the classroom, it is logical for the teacher to help foster the

development of a healthy classroom community by engaging students in a variety of activities designed to help them learn each other's names and about each other's lives.

Characteristics of Communities

In *Because We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide to Building Cooperative, Inclusive Classroom Communities*, Mara Sapon-Shevin discusses what she views as the characteristics of community and shares ideas of how to begin to build this kind of caring community in an elementary classroom through activities, songs, and children's literature. Sapon-Shevin acknowledges five main features of a caring classroom community. Those features are: security, open communication, mutual liking, shared goals or objectives, and connectedness and trust (Sapon-Shevin, 1999, 16-17). Each of these characteristics contributes to a classroom atmosphere where all members are valued and are encouraged to make valuable contributions to the community. These five features are present in every healthy community, although the degree to which each feature is present may vary depending on the particular community since each community is unique.

| Sapon-Shevin's Five Features of Community	
Security	Community members support each other in their personal growth and exploration. They support each other's weaknesses and celebrate each other's strengths.
Open Communication	Community members use a variety of forms of communication to address any concerns that are felt by group members. Individual differences and needs are openly addressed.
Mutual Liking	Community members are given chances to cooperate on tasks, and to see and appreciate each other. They are equipped with strategies for noticing the strengths and accomplishments of others, and offering genuine praise.
Shared Goals or Objectives	Community members work together to reach a common goal. They work with each other instead of against each other. Comparative evaluation is avoided.
Connectedness and Trust	Community members know that they are needed and valued elements of the community. They tell each other the truth and share good things as well as bad.

Four Stages of Community Building

Along with an understanding of the characteristics of community, it is also important to understand the process which a group goes through in order to evolve into a healthy community. M. Scott Peck, author of several books and articles and founder of the Foundation for Community Encouragement, has been intrigued with the idea of community for most of his life. In *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace*, Peck warns against using the term 'community' carelessly. Peck insists that although 'community' has come to stand for almost any collection of geographically close individuals, this is not an appropriate use of the term since these individuals have almost certainly not learned to communicate honestly with each other (Peck, 1987, page 25). Instead, Peck suggests the following: "If we are going to use the word meaningfully, we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to 'rejoice together, mourn together,' and to 'delight in each other, make others' conditions our own'" (Peck, 1987, page 59). Peck's definition reflects all of Sapon-Shevin's five characteristics of community.

Through his research and experience, Peck has identified four stages that take place in the formation of a healthy community. The four stages are: pseudocommunity, chaos, emptiness, and true community. Although the stages are presented in order, community building is not a linear process. It is common for a group to take steps backward as often as it moves forward.

Pseudocommunity. In the first stage, pseudocommunity, members of the group are simply feigning community (Peck, 1987, page 86). They pretend they are all alike because they do not want to offend others by their differences. Group members try to avoid any source of conflict and may exchange only surface-level pleasantries. Some group members may try to

simulate community by divulging extremely personal information quickly after the group has formed. This is the group's attempt to reach true community without investing any time or genuine emotion.
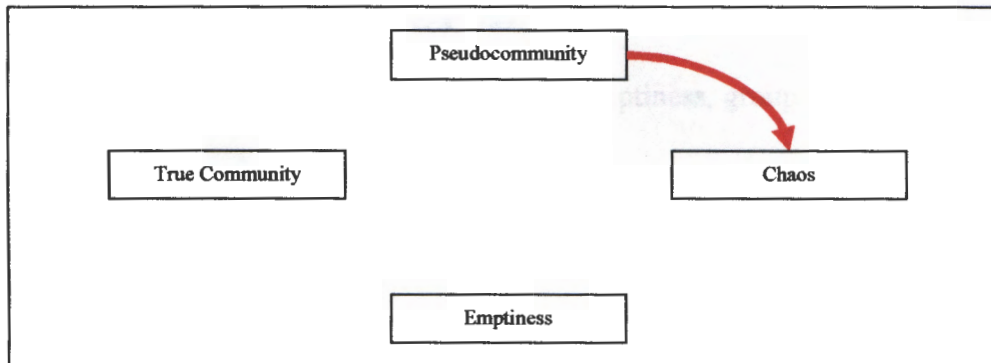
*Moving from Pseudocommunity into Chaos.

Chaos. The second stage, chaos, finds group members struggling to obliterate the differences that have become apparent within the group. They want the others in the group to be like themselves and do all they can to make sure that happens. The struggle that happens during chaos can be noisy and unconstructive. Members see the variations in the group and view them as obstacles to achieving true community. Often during this stage, one or more group members will make an effort to lead the group out of chaos by attempting to organize the group. However, this system of organization can only lead the group back to the pseudocommunity stage because it prevents them from being honest with each other and becoming a self-led group.
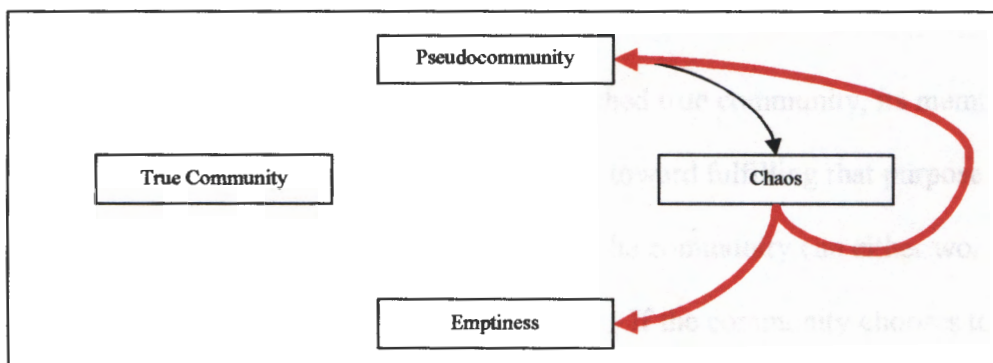
*Moving from Chaos into Emptiness, or back into Pseudocommunity.

Emptiness. The third stage, emptiness, is an alternative route out of chaos. Emptiness is the most critical stage of community building because no group can form a true community unless it first empties itself of all barriers to communication. These barriers include: expectations and preconceptions; prejudices; ideology, theology, and solutions; the need to heal, convert, fix or solve; and the need to control. During emptiness, group members are asked not to give up their individuality, but to give up what stands in the way of accepting the individuality of other group members. While emptiness is the most critical stage, it is also the most difficult for the group to work through.
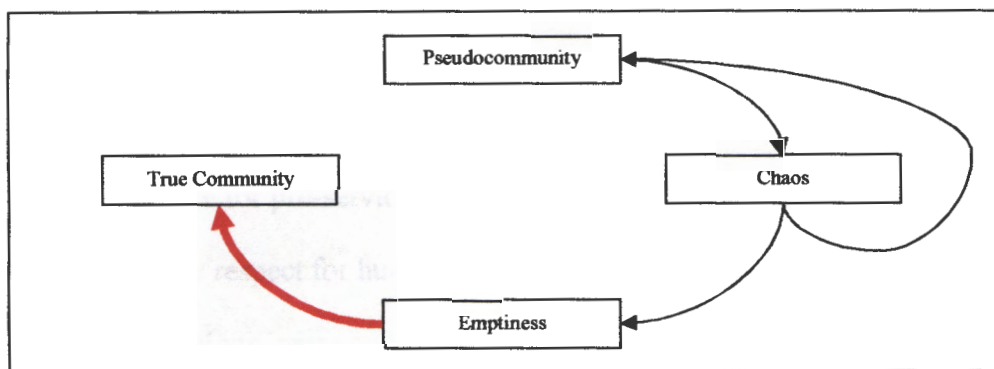
*Moving from Emptiness into True Community.

True community. The final stage of the community-building process is true community. Group members have successfully rid themselves of all the barriers to communication. They are now able to share with each other and appreciate the contributions made by their peers. Silence is a valued characteristic of true community. There is no longer a need to fill time with meaningless polite conversation. When a group has reached true community, its members are finally able to define their purpose for existing and work toward fulfilling that purpose. After a group has reached true community, it has two choices. The community can either work to maintain itself, or it can slip back into pseudocommunity. If the community chooses to maintain itself, it will periodically return to the chaos stage. However, the group members have learned

how to work through the chaos, and will be able to continue through emptiness and back to true community.
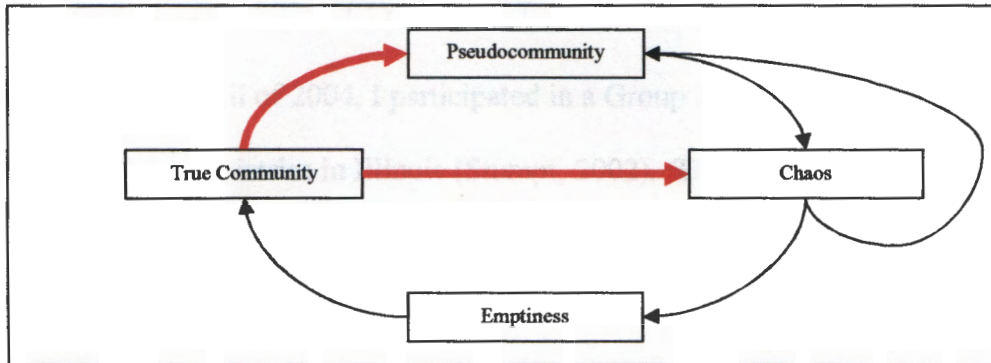
*Maintaining True Community and working productively through Chaos, or returning to Pseudocommunity.

My Background

I was first exposed to Peck's community building process in the fall of 2004 when I took a Human Relations course for pre-service teachers. The course focused on learning to relate to various groups and foster respect for human diversity. The course also emphasized self-awareness in human relations issues and developing relationships and rapport with others. This course, taught by Dr. Christine Canning, faculty member of The University of Northern Iowa's Department of Teaching, began with a seven-week community-building experience. By midterm of that semester, I was experiencing something that I had not felt in a classroom since elementary school. I knew the names of all twenty-six students in the class. I had talked with all of my fellow classmates as a part of the community-building exercises. I felt comfortable enough to share my opinions on controversial topics, and I knew that my opinions would be respected.

I wanted to know more about the experience I had been through. I wanted a better understanding of the process, but I also wanted a different perspective on what was happening. I realized that I wanted to be able to foster this kind of caring environment in every classroom that

I was responsible for. In order to gain insight into the process of community building, I needed to develop a deeper understanding of the facilitator's role in the community building tasks.

Prior to my experience in the Human Relations class, I had gained some experience with facilitating skills. In April of 2004, I participated in a Group Initiative Course facilitator training at Walcamp Outdoor Ministries in Illinois (Stumpf, 2002). This training was required for a summer job that I held at Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca in Solon, Iowa. Having been trained as a Group Initiative Course facilitator, I already had a basic understanding of the facilitator's role as it relates to short-term team-building experiences. Through this training, I had the opportunity to learn and practice facilitating skills that would help me to lead team-building exercises with various groups. The skills emphasized in this kind of activity focused on planning team-building activities, observing the group members as they worked through the activities, and asking questions to help the group members process the team-building activities. However, my facilitating experience was limited to working with groups for three-hour Saturday afternoon leadership retreats. I had never before been responsible for overseeing a more long-term group, such as the kind of group found in a classroom.

In the Classroom

To study the community-building process, and the facilitator's role within that process, I chose to work with a college classroom. This is an environment that I have become very familiar with over the past four years that I have spent studying at the University of Northern Iowa. Since one of my career goals includes teaching at the college level, I thought it would be beneficial to gain teaching experience at the college level while I was still an undergraduate. I approached Dr. Canning and asked how I might gain a deeper understanding of the facilitator's

role in encouraging community development. Following several conversations with Dr. Canning, she invited me to co-facilitate one of the Human Relations classes that would take place the following semester. The curriculum that is used in the Human Relations course is based on a program for training high school students to become peer counselors (Varenhorst, 1980). Pat Conn and Troyce Fisher adapted this training program to create a program for training facilitators, adding the community-building ideas of M. Scott Peck to the curriculum. Christine Canning and Diane Porter converted this facilitator training program into a series of lesson plans to fit the needs of the Human Relations course. The curriculum was originally designed to be completed over a three-day period with student teachers. For the purposes of the spring 2005 semester, the curriculum was adapted to fit into seven 75-minute class periods over the course of four weeks. An overview of the first seven weeks of the semester, including the four weeks of community-building activities, is provided in the following chart.

	Tuesday	Thursday
Week One	January 11 Introductions Name Learning Energizer	January 13 Making name cards Personal Introduction Letter Sharing
Week Two	January 18 Learning Style Assessment	January 20 Small group meetings
Week Three	January 25 Name Learning Energizer	January 27 BaFa BaFa Simulation
Week Four	February 1: Community-Building Curriculum Birthday Lineup Energizer Ground Rules Talking to Get Acquainted	February 3: Community-Building Curriculum Group Decision Making Energizer Asking Questions Farm Animal Sounds Energizer Listening for the Heart of the Message
Week Five	February 8: Community-Building Curriculum "Move if.." Energizer Dysfunctional Systems Partner Massage Energizer Head-Heart: Observing Nonverbal signals Assignment of co-facilitating tasks*	February 10: Community-Building Curriculum (*Participant-led, 2 small groups*) Score as Much as Possible
Week Six	February 15: Community-Building Curriculum (*Participant-led, 2 small groups*) Using I Messages	February 17: Community-Building Curriculum (*Participant-led, 2 small groups*) Bridge Building Name Quiz
Week Seven	February 22: Community-Building Curriculum (*Participant-led, 2 small groups*) Giving Validations	

*During the fifth week, group members divided into two smaller groups. For the following four sessions, the community-building activities took place in two separate groups and were led by groups of two, three or four group members. Dividing the class into two groups allowed all the group members a chance to co-facilitate an activity.

In order to prepare for the time I was going to spend co-facilitating the Human Relations class, I reviewed the current literature on facilitation and community building. I read examples of how these principles had been applied in a variety of settings. I also reflected on my experience with facilitation, looking for skills I had already acquired that would be useful in the coming weeks.

Eight Facilitator Skills

Throughout the thirteen class periods that I spent with this Human Relations class, I was monitoring myself to become aware of the facilitating skills I was using. I was looking for skills that I had already learned, as well as skills that I needed to acquire in order to become a more competent facilitator. I was able to identify eight different skills that are essential to facilitators. Those eight skills are: being consistent; giving validations; observing; responding to observations; asking questions; planning and preparation; creating disequilibrium; and letting go.

Being Consistent. I found that as a facilitator, it is important to be consistent with both words and actions. In order to develop trust within the group, the facilitator must first demonstrate that he or she is trustworthy. The facilitator can do this by following the ground rules that have been established by the group. Creating ground rules allows the group members a chance to set the tone for how they will conduct themselves throughout the community-building experience. Group members work cooperatively to write the ground rules. As a member of the group, the facilitator is bound to follow these rules just as the group members are. A facilitator who is consistent with words and actions will provide a model for group members who also need to learn to be consistent with their words and actions. Consistency builds

trustworthiness, and this trustworthiness forms the solid base on which the safe environment of the community is formed.

During my time as co-facilitator of the Human Relations class, I always tried to follow the ground rules. Although all the ground rules are important, I especially supported the 'right to pass' rule. This rule maintains that no group member will be forced to participate in any activity or exercise that he or she does not want to. Group members are often invited to step outside their comfort zones during the community-building experience, but are never forced to do so. During one session, one of the group members exercised the 'right to pass' rule. I posed a question to the group about a comment that had been made by a group member during the activity and asked everyone to share their initial reactions to the comment. About halfway around the circle, one group member simply said, "Pass." Even though I wanted everyone to answer the question, I recognized and respected that this group member had the right to pass. I was aware of the established ground rules, so it was not my place to force this group member to answer the question if he chose not to. I simply acknowledged the response with a nod and made visual contact with the next group member. By doing this, I set an example that it was completely acceptable to pass, and that there would be no negative consequences for exercising that right.

Giving Validations. Throughout the community-building process, group members need to receive feedback about how their words and actions are positively affecting the other members of the group. Group members need to know that others value their contributions. Facilitators can do this by giving validations to individuals within the group. Validations are genuine expressions of appreciation for something that an individual has done or said within the group. A validation can be either written or spoken. A skilled facilitator will observe something that a group member has done to enhance the sense of community within the group and respond to this

observation by giving a validation to that group member. Validations can also be given from one group member to another. However, since validations given by group members are usually based on a personal interaction between two group members, it is difficult to give validations until the group members have been allowed sufficient time for interaction with one another.

I had a chance to practice giving validations on the last day of the community-building experience when all the group members were involved in writing validations to one another. After starting the class period with an energizer, the co-facilitators for this activity gave several examples of validations and then allowed the members of the group time to write one validation for each member of the group with which they had completed the community-building activities. I found that I had some difficulty completing this community-building exercise. Overall, I had spent less time observing this set of group members. I had only spent one class period observing this group during the participant-led activities. The group members that I was writing validations for also had several absences during the community-building activities, which meant that I had not had an opportunity to observe several of the group members for more than two weeks. I found that it was difficult to write a validation for someone that I had not had an opportunity to observe. In addition, I had focused on observing myself more than observing the group members during the participant-led activities since I was conducting a study about the facilitator's role in the classroom. Looking back, I should have found a way to balance my self-study with my observation of the group so that I could be better prepared for the task of giving validations.

Validations are important to the community-building process and should not simply be done after the community has formed. The facilitator should find opportunities to share validations with group members throughout the community building process. During the time I

was co-facilitating the Human Relations class, I should have taken advantage of more opportunities to validate the work of the group members. The only validations I gave were verbal validations to co-facilitators once they had completed their facilitating task and the written validations I shared during the final community-building activity.

Observing. Community formation depends almost solely on what the participants say and do during the community-building process. The facilitator must be acutely aware of what is happening both within and outside of the group in order to be able to support the group members in their quest for community. It is important that the facilitator is sensitive to all the clues left by participants. Sometimes, the clues are as obvious as a statement that one of the group members makes during a community-building task. However, many clues are more subtle and require a much more attentive examination to detect. What are the general group dynamics? Who volunteers often, and who holds back? Has there been any change in the tone, attitude, or body language of any of the participants? The facilitator must also be aware of the nonverbal signals that do not relate to what is happening within the group. A participant will not be able to contribute to the task of building community if he is distracted by something that is happening in his life outside the group. Concerns for situations that are happening outside the group are just as critical for group members to address as concerns for situations that are happening within the group.

Responding to Observations. Once a facilitator has made an observation about something that a group member has said or done, he or she must decide how to appropriately respond. Responses come in a variety of forms. The facilitator may need to take immediate action if he or she observes something that is putting group members in immediate physical or emotional danger. More often, the facilitator might make a mental note of the observation and

wait to see how the situation plays out. Group members often make the same observations as the facilitator, and they find ways to address the concern on their own. The best time for the facilitator to respond to observations may be during the debriefing time following community-building activities. At this time, the facilitator is helping the group members reflect on what has occurred within the group. During the debriefing, the facilitator can share an observation that was made during the activity and ask group members to analyze their reaction to that observation.

I was constantly making observations and deciding how to react appropriately to them. One event during the Score as Much as Possible activity provides an excellent example of how I was able to make and respond to an observation. During the activity, the group members were given an opportunity to converse with each other about what their next move in the game would be. Near the end of the time allotted for discussion, one of the group members remarked in a joking manner, "We are all saying we are going to go along with this plan, but do we all really trust each other?" When I heard that comment, I immediately knew I wanted to bring it up for discussion during the debriefing. Since trust is a key component of community, this group member had made an excellent point about how trust was evolving within the group. I recorded this observation in my notes and put a star by it to remind myself to return to this comment during the debriefing. I also noticed that following this comment, the group member that made the comment was the only one that did not go along with the plan the group had made. During the rest of the activity, the participants seemed to be much more suspicious of each other. I was able to address this comment with the group following the completion of the activity. I repeated the comment and then asked the group members to share their reaction. I wanted the group members to consider how one comment had the potential to change what they thought about the

people they were working with. My question initiated a lively discussion among the group members about how they suddenly become much less trusting of each other once one person had gone against his word.

Asking Questions. I found that it is very important for the facilitator to be skilled as asking questions at appropriate times during the community-building process. The questions must be worded carefully so they do not threaten group members, but instead prompt them to reflect honestly about their thoughts and feelings. During the questioning process, the facilitator must use a very gentle style of questioning so group members do not feel as if the facilitator is trying to force answers out of them. Forcing participants to answer questions that they are not willing to answer is damaging to the community-building process. Along with carefully worded questions, the facilitator must also give the group members an adequate amount of time to process the question and formulate an answer.

I was able to exercise my questioning skills every day while I was processing and debriefing activities. My first experience with questioning in this group came on the second day of the community-building curriculum. The group members had practiced using their questioning skills to maintain a conversation. The group members were working in partners. One partner was responsible for doing most of the talking, and the other group member was only allowed to ask questions. After a short period of time, the partners switched roles. Following the activity, I asked questions to the large group to help them process what had happened during the activity. The community-building curriculum for the class included a list of questions for the facilitator to use when processing an activity. While I was processing, I kept the list of questions in front of me, but I decided not to use many of them. The questions that were provided did not seem to follow the direction that the group members were taking the discussion with the answers

they provided to the first two questions. Instead, I listened to the responses that the group members gave to the first two questions and then began to form my own questions. I thought that many of the questions were inappropriate to ask to this group and would not support the community that was beginning to form. I also noticed that the group members were using their responses to suggest the direction they wanted to take with the conversation, and the questions that were provided would not sustain the direction they were choosing. After completing this activity, Dr. Canning mentioned to me that she noticed I had a very gentle style of questioning that helped to effectively process the activity.

Planning and Preparation. I found that a facilitator should always plan ahead so that he or she has prepared the activities, materials and environment for the community-building tasks. While it is necessary for the facilitator to be flexible with plans that have been laid out before the community-building activities take place, there is still a need for the facilitator to have thought through the sequence of activities and prepared a suitable environment in which to complete the activities.

During my time as co-facilitator of the Human Relations class, I was not as involved in the planning as I should have been. I did collaborate with Dr. Canning to prepare the daily activities. We met every week to discuss which activities we were going to do with the group members during each class period. When I was responsible for leading or processing an activity, which happened almost every class period, I made sure to review the directions and questions that were included with the community-building curriculum. However, I was not usually involved with preparing the materials or environment throughout the seven weeks. I found that I usually let Dr. Canning arrive early to the classroom and arrange the tables and chairs and set out

materials for the day. As co-facilitator, it would have been more beneficial if I had an equal part in the environmental preparations.

Creating Disequilibrium. The facilitator's job is to set up situations that create disequilibrium for the group members. Participants will not learn and grow if they are continually handed easy scenarios. The facilitator should not give away the answers to the problem. Often, an inexperienced facilitator will give away too much information to the group, thinking that he is helping the group build community by alleviating some of their confusion. In reality, this only hurts the group. Without that chaos, the group will never have the chance to grow as a result of the experience. It is always important for the facilitator to respond to questions posed by the group members about the directions for an activity, but the facilitator should never over-simplify the directions.

During one of the activities that I led during the first day of the community-building curriculum, I gave away too much information. The group members had the task of forming a line by their birth month and day. The challenge in the task was that none of the participants were allowed to use their voices to communicate with each other. However, I gave the group members too much information when I told them where the front of the line was supposed to be. Automatically, group members started to migrate to where they knew their birthday fell along the imaginary line that I had dictated. My overly-detailed instructions lessened the challenge, and the group members were able to complete the task in very little time. If I had not told the group members where to begin their line, they would have had the added challenge of forming a line without any reference point.

After my initial experience with making an activity too easy to cause much disequilibrium, I found that I became more skilled at creating disequilibrium within the class.

Some of my best moments for creating disequilibrium within the class came when I had the task

of processing an activity with a group. Silence was a very difficult thing for some of the group

members to deal with, and I always left plenty of silent wait time after I had asked a question in a

debriefing session. I always made sure to wait long enough so that the group members had an

opportunity to think about and respond to the questions which I posed, but I also made sure to

wait after a group member had offered a response to allow them a chance to respond to the

comments of their peers. Especially at the beginning of the community-building activities, group

members would respond quickly to a question that I asked, and then stare uncomfortably at the

floor while they waited for me to ask another question. During one particular debriefing session,

I posed a question to the group about how the activity made the group members feel. The

activity consisted of group members working in pairs. One of the group members was

responsible for talking about him or herself, and the other group member was only allowed to

ask questions to continue the conversation. In response to the question that I posed, the group

members were especially quiet. This activity was on the second day of community-building

activities, and they had not yet grown comfortable enough with each other to openly discuss their

feelings in depth. I knew that the group would have a difficult time responding to the question,

but I posed it in order to give them an opportunity to experience a little more chaos because of

the activity.

Letting Go. For a true community to form, the group must eventually become self-

leading instead of relying on one or two leaders. A self-leading group will not develop unless

the original leaders are willing and able to let go of their power. Facilitators must recognize the

value of not interfering in the process that the group is going through. Although this may be

difficult for the facilitator to do, it is important for the facilitator to think about what is best for

the group. At times during the community-building process, it is also necessary for the facilitator to step outside his or her personal comfort zone for the benefit of the group.

This was the most difficult facilitating skill for me to develop. Although I knew it was essential for me to let the group follow whatever path it decided to take, I still had a hard time not interfering with some of the activities. This was especially true during the four class periods when teams of group members were responsible for co-facilitating the activities. On the first day that group members were responsible for co-facilitating the activity, I was very apprehensive about not being in control of what was happening in the classroom. Within the first ten minutes of the class period, I had already attempted to take over the leadership role by offering to help the co-facilitators locate and distribute materials for the group members to use during the activity. However, the co-facilitators had already made arrangements for the distribution of materials. I quickly realized that my offer of assistance was actually hindering the group's ability to become self-led. While it was very uncomfortable for me to step back and let the co-facilitators be in charge of the activities, I realized that it was a necessary step in the community-building process. During the following three community-building activities, I continued to feel a sense of discomfort at not being in control of the group, but I found that my discomfort lessened each day as the groups continued their quest to build a more "true community."

I was usually able to hold myself back and not interfere, but I continually found myself wanting to take over the class in various ways. I found that my placement in the room affected the degree to which I wanted to interfere. It was easier for me to keep myself from interfering if I was far away from the group. In this situation, this means that I need to leave the room while the group is working to complete their tasks.

Applications to My Future Practice

Having completed and reflected on my facilitating experience in the Human Relations class, I can see how these skills and experiences will benefit me as I continue to lead and work with various groups in the future.

The most immediate application I have for these facilitator skills will be this coming summer when I am working on the Program Staff at Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca. As a member of the Program Staff, I will be responsible for collaborating with my colleagues to encourage the development of a healthy sense of community among the entire staff. This sense of community is necessary to help us maintain the kind of healthy and supportive working environment that is vital to the rigors of working in Outdoor Ministry. The process of building community will begin during the two weeks of staff training which occur before the nine weeks which are spent with campers. During staff training, staff members will be involved in community-building tasks that will be mixed with training in camp policies and procedures. As a part of the community-building activities, staff members will engage in a day-long Challenge Course experience which will involve completing team-building activities using the outdoor elements on the camp's Challenge Course. This day will occur the third day of staff training. Scheduling the community-building activities for the third day of staff training will allow staff members time to spend the first two days learning names and becoming familiar with each other. The program staff will be responsible for planning the activities, observing the staff members as they attempt to complete the activities, and then using our observations to help the group members process what happened during the activities. All of the eight facilitator skills I have identified will be fundamental to planning and carrying out a successful series of community-building activities during staff training.

Another situation in which I can apply these eight facilitator skills is when I complete my student teaching experience this coming fall. Since I am doing my student teaching in the fall, I have the opportunity to witness how the students and the teacher in an elementary classroom begin to form a community at the start of the school year. As the student teacher in the classroom, I will also play a part in helping the classroom community develop. While I do not expect to be able to devote the first seven weeks of class solely to community-building tasks, I would like to be able to find ways to incorporate community-building activities into the curriculum. These community-building activities will be especially useful during the first days of class when students are learning each other's names and the ground rules for the classroom are being set. I can take many of the name learning activities that I facilitated and participated in for the Human Relations class and use them to help the students learn each other's names. Many of the other energizer ideas from the Human Relations class will also be helpful tools to assist students in getting to feel more comfortable with each other. By involving elementary students in setting ground rules, they will be much more likely to want to follow them. Planning and preparation skills will be essential for me to use as I collaborate with my supervising teacher to determine the instructional sequence. Consistency will be necessary as I work to manage student learning and behavior. I will be able to use my observation skills to monitor all classroom activities, and then decide how to react to any situations that may arise. As I monitor the students, I will want to make sure to validate the work that they are doing, as well as encourage the students to give validations to each other. Questions are an important part of any classroom, and I anticipate using my questioning skills almost constantly as I am engaging the students in instructional tasks. I will also be responsible for creating disequilibrium which will encourage students to grow both academically and personally.

In an elementary classroom, the facilitator skill of letting go must take a slightly altered form. While it is important for students to take responsibility for their own learning, it is impossible for a class to become completely self-leading. It would not be appropriate for a teacher to leave the room and allow students to continue working without supervision by an adult. Also, the teacher must be responsible for planning instructional tasks that fulfill state and national standards. In an elementary classroom, letting go may take the form of allowing students to be involved in making decisions that will affect the whole class instead of the teacher making an arbitrary decision without consulting with the class. Students can and should be involved in discussing their problems and collaborating with classmates to find appropriate and equitable solutions. Students may also be able to take responsibility for some daily or weekly classroom routines.

Finally, these skills will be useful as I pursue a career in higher education. One of my career goals is to become a university professor and teach teachers how they can encourage the formation of a healthy community in their own classrooms. I would like to pass on my knowledge about community-building so that other teachers can experience the success that comes from teaching in a classroom where everyone is valued and supported in their learning endeavors.

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