

AN INQUIRY INTO GROUP SELF-ASSESSMENT

by

ELIZABETH EMERSON HERSHEY

B.A., Princeton University

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Signature of Author.....

Department of Urban Studies and Planning

Certified by.....

Thesis Supervisor

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
on August 28, 1978 in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of City Planning

ABSTRACT

This thesis explored the processes by which small groups reflect on and evaluate facets of their activity. I began with the assumption that effective group self-assessment is instrumental to effective group activity. I discovered during the course of the research that self-assessment is not the crucial independent variable and that there are other significant factors (eg. interpersonal interaction, leadership, cohesion, etc.) to which intervention should be addressed. The first chapter provides a map of my inquiry, charting the evolution of my ideas and assumptions across four case studies.

A citizen's planning group in Arlington, Massachusetts provided the first group setting; a model program to develop competency-based education in Pennsylvania offered a second; the Board of a non-profit service corporation was analyzed using a descriptive framework of self-assessment; and finally, a marketing project for urban neighborhoods was studied in depth.

The conclusions developed from these case studies were synthesized into a set of postulates:

- Small groups frequently engage in self-assessment.
- Group self-assessment is not a discrete group process, separate from other group activities, but rather is a part of a larger learning process.
- Different types of group self-assessment are initiated for different reasons in different groups.
- Product assessment centers on the identification and application of appropriate evaluation criteria.
- Process assessment centers on the identification and diagnosis of problems in group interaction.
- Goal evolution assessment involves the group in a recurrent discussion of group identity and its relationship with the external environment.
- Good groups conduct good self-assessment.
- Intervention should be geared to develop good groups.

In summary, small groups engage frequently in different types of self-assessment activity, depending on the nature of the group and the level of group development. Barriers to effective group self-assessment are the same barriers that inhibit group interaction and must be addressed before group self-assessment can be improved.

Lawrence Susskind, Chairman of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning

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Chapter I. Evolution of My Inquiry into Group Self-Assessment

A. Background

I became interested in general project evaluation through professional experiences I had previous to being at M.I.T., while working with the Environmental Group in Philadelphia in 1975-6. I had been involved in two educational programs; a community environmental science course at Lincoln University and an environmental conference series sponsored by the Philadelphia Girl Scouts Council. In each project, we were involved primarily as contributors and organizers of the program. At Lincoln, it was on our own initiative that we chose to evaluate the learning that occurred during the course. With the Girl Scouts, we proposed the conference evaluation which we then completed on contract.

Both evaluations were geared to determining the extent to which the program participants had learned from their experience. We chose to measure learning as it was demonstrated in changed knowledge, attitudes and behavior regarding the environment. A traditional pre-post evaluation design was used in both evaluations. Subjective and objective measures were obtained through written questionnaires. Short-term change was measured at Lincoln, while a six month interval was allowed between tests for the Girl Scouts.

These evaluations were in keeping with traditional efforts at program assessment with two exceptions. First, the instruments were based on a more comprehensive definition of learning that included behavioral change. Consequently, standard educational measures were not appropriate. Second,

and most important, the utility of the evaluations was primarily in the information and insight provided to the program recipients and secondarily to the program sponsors. The evaluations themselves were considered as part of the educational experience, serving as a reenforcement to learning and as an impetus for future follow-on activities by the program participants.

In the summer of 1976, after I was accepted into M.I.T., Professor Sussekind suggested that I become involved with Arlington's Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC) as an administrative assistant. Instead, I proposed to evaluate the CIC. In time it was agreed that an evaluation effort could be an adjunct to the annual CIC conference activities. An evaluation component was consequently written into a series of proposals that fall for CIC conference funding.

While awaiting the funding decisions and in face of delays in conference planning, I became more familiar with the CIC through a research effort centered on the field experiences of planning students in the community-based setting of the CIC¹. This study provided me with insight into the workings of the CIC organization, particularly the relations among student staff members and CIC members.

My initial evaluation plan was to evaluate the extent to which the CIC was "working"; to assess how effective the concept of citizen-based planning^{2,3} was in a practical application. If the CIC was doing well, then an evaluation would further the cause and confirm the approach. If there were some difficulties, then the evaluation would serve as a means to refine and improve the organization and perhaps the concept. I was

particularly challenged by the need to develop valid measures of effectiveness for citizen participation efforts.

During the fall of 1976, I began to rethink the value of my proposed "objective" outside evaluation of the CIC, reconsidering its ultimate usefulness. Having already experienced the rewards of providing program recipients with useful assessments, it occurred to me that the "subjects" of the evaluation might further benefit by engaging in the evaluation process from the beginning. Perhaps they might be their own best evaluators. Participating in their own evaluation might prove more valuable to the CIC members than being handed the results of another's assessment. This notion of "group self-assessment" seemed to me very simple, straightforward, but profound.

B. Initial Efforts.

These ideas led me to carry out an independent study course during the spring of 1977. While the original plan to evaluate the CIC conference did not materialize, I was given the opportunity to engage with the CIC Steering Committee in an internal evaluation process. My efforts with them provide the basis for the case study in Chapter II.

At that point in time, I was operating on a relatively simple set of premises about group behavior, evaluation and group intervention. In retrospect, I regard my approach to group self-assessment to have been based on a rational, positivist, problem-solving orientation. I viewed group self-assessment as a process of self-examination that group members would engage in for the express purpose of improving their operations and

achieving their group objectives. I presumed a process of reflection and judgment that required a set of criteria (agreed upon by the group) with which to assess group activities. Comprehensive self-assessment would include examination of group objectives, tasks, ongoing operations, and group processes.

My central premise was that self-evaluation was critical to effective group performance (while I included productivity and member satisfaction in group performance, I was still vague about the meaning of "critical" and "effective"). I felt that if a group could examine itself with a common, articulated set of evaluation criteria, then the resulting assessments would provide the basis (as well as sufficient stimuli) for correcting errors and building on recognized accomplishments. Although not aware of it at the time, I was positing a rational error detection process that would respond to direct feedback with corrections of the identified errors⁴.

I conceived of my intervention role as a neutral facilitator providing the environment conducive to a successful assessment effort. I did not presume consciously that I had the answers or could pass judgment on what would be the group's process. I perceived few constraints and set out to elicit group assessments of all facets of group activity the group chose to address.

I also viewed the process of group self-assessment as a possible model for future evaluations by the group, advocating periodic assessments and the transfer of the process to other groups within the CIC organization.

While I was reading about the intervention approaches of Schein⁵, Kolb et al⁶, Argyris⁷ and Schon⁸, I made little transfer to this process with the CIC that spring. I considered their approaches as applied to the CIC as being too elaborate, unnecessary and costly. I felt confident that a group of dedicated volunteer members, committed to a common set of goals possessed the needed resources to evaluate themselves to the extent necessary. I felt that my role could be performed by any other member of the group, requiring little skill beyond impartiality and accurate record keeping.

C. Thesis Development

Later that spring, I decided to pursue the subject of group self-assessment for my master's thesis. I proposed an empirical study of group self-assessment based on my intervention experiences as well as on group observations. I identified four other small groups that would serve as possible case studies. Three factors were involved in their selection. First, the groups were accessible and the entry problems minimal. Second, the groups presented a variety of settings and research opportunities. Finally, the groups addressed issues of interest to me; all were working with community level concerns, including education, the environment, neighborhoods and appropriate technology. Four groups (including the CIC) were finally selected; two of which I studied as an intervenor; the other two I observed as a non-participant.

As I began to explore these groups, I became progressively more interested in the informal assessment processes taking place in small groups.

I saw that these reflective processes might serve a greater variety of functions, such as confirming current policies, strengthening group identity, spurring refinement of group activities, or instigating broader group change. In response to Bateson's notion of group evolution⁹ and Schon's concept of "dynamic equilibrium"¹⁰, I considered that both stability and change in group development would be affected by the ways in which the group examined itself. It seemed that every group must engage in some form of self-reflection for it to survive and adapt to its external as well as internal environment (borrowing from Homan's terminology¹¹). The way in which a group assessed itself might not only be important to group performance but might also be a factor in group development. Focusing on the self-assessment process in groups might be a good way to diagnose the group's ability to deal with internal and external change.

D. Research

My research was based on my interactions and observations with four groups over a period of a year. My research approach and my involvement with the groups varied with the development of my own understanding of my inquiry into group behavior and intervention. Thus a progression in technique and analysis can be seen in reading the cases as I worked on them.

During the summer of 1977, I visited a set of small volunteer committees that were engaged in Project 81, a community-based educational planning project in Pennsylvania. My observations were made at a time when the committees I visited were engaged in the same series of tasks (that of generating and organizing lists of skills and achievements to be expected

of high school graduates). I was trying to find out if and how these committees assessed themselves in the natural course of their meetings. Chapter III provides a presentation of these mini-cases. I tried to identify how members of these groups sought and agreed on assessments of how they were doing at accomplishing the tasks at hand. Across these different committees I observed assessment efforts geared to seeking approval of the quality of group efforts and determining the value of group efforts to the overall project. It was at this point that I began to consider constraints on group self-assessment, particularly those centering on the role of the group leaders, the extent of group autonomy, and the degree of group consensus on objectives and tasks.

By the fall of 1977, I began to construct a framework for group self-assessment. Up to that point in my research, I tried not to restrict my observations by hypothesis testing or standardized data collection. My research was purely exploratory. But in the fall I began to develop a descriptive framework that included four dimensions of the self-assessment process, including the topic of the assessment, the motivation behind the assessment, the assessment process itself, and the consequences of the assessment. I came to define self-assessment in groups as processes whereby a group assesses its outputs according to certain criteria for quality and value, based on a set of motivations that leads eventually to a new set of inputs for future group activities. The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) case study in Chapter IV is presented according to this orientation. Although I tried to apply it to all the groups I was studying, the NCAT data lent itself most conveniently to this form of analysis. In this case, I observed (through tapes and written records) a board committee

of the NCAT over a period of several months.

I became uncomfortable with this framework and while the analysis led to important discoveries about different types of group self-assessment, I later departed from this approach. Nonetheless, the committee provided me with a lesson in power conflict and political stalemate. It appeared that for groups, such as this committee, that could not agree on their own policies or objectives, the opportunities for group self-assessment were rare. Ironically, it appeared that, while individual members made repeated assessments of the committee in meetings, the group could rarely engage in a consensual process of self-assessment. Again leadership (the lack thereof) played an important role in this committee together with the absence of shared objectives.

This approach did not influence my intervention efforts the previous summer with Boston's Neighborhood Marketing Project team (presented in Chapter V). However, my final analysis of that group over a longer time period was affected to the extent that I came to discard my descriptive framework and consider an approach more akin to the work of Argyris and Schon. Their orientation emphasized organizational learning and the evolution of groups. The reader will find in the analysis of the Neighborhood Marketing Project team a closer examination of interaction among members of the group, concentrated by my focus on one significant group issue.

My intervention efforts with the Boston group were also presented in the context of this selected group issue. I discovered that my intervention strategy had been aimed at the wrong target or rather geared to the cart before the horse. I had isolated self-assessment as the significant group

process and my intervention efforts concentrated solely on facilitating group self-assessment. I discovered that several critical conditions must be developed in order for self-assessment to have a significant impact. In short, I had started with the assumption that good self-assessment made good groups. I found that it was good groups that made good self-assessment.

E. Note Bene

I should underscore the idea that this thesis represents a progression in my understanding of group self-assessment. My presentation of the cases is intentionally designed to demonstrate this evolution. Admittedly my thoughts did not emerge clearly in such a discrete, serial set of experiences. I have taken the liberty of condensing and arranging my various approaches and assumptions around the cases to highlight the evolution of my inquiry. It should be understood that my research of the four cases was somewhat overlapping and my thought processes not nearly so well articulated at the time.

I have tried to review the process of my own inquiry into group self-assessment to better understand the progression of my ideas about group behavior and development and my role as intervenor/researcher. The final chapter of this thesis provides a set of postulates about group self-assessment that has emerged from my inquiry.

Footnotes for Chapter I.

- ¹ Susskind, Lawrence, Emerson, Elizabeth, and Hildebrand, Kate, "Using Community Settings for Professional Planning Experience".
- ² Susskind, Lawrence, "Citizens Involvement in the Local Planning Process, A Handbook for Municipal Officials and Citizen Involvement Groups".
- ³ Wollenberg, Jay et al., "Capacity Building", Ekistics.
- ⁴ Much akin to the purposive system of a machine controlled by a homeostatic device as described by Beer in Cybernetics and Management.
- ⁵ Schein, Edgar H., Process Consultation: Its Role in Organizational Development.
- ⁶ Kolb, David A., Rubin, Irwin M., McIntyre, James M., Organizational Psychology, An Experiential Approach.
- ⁷ Argyris, Chris, Interpersonal Competence and Organizational Effectiveness.
- ⁸ Argyris, Chris and Schon Donald A., Theory in Practice, Increasing Professional Effectiveness.
- ⁹ Bateson, Gregory, Steps to an Ecology of Mind.
- ¹⁰ Schon, Donald A., Beyond the Stable State.
- ¹¹ Homans, George C., The Human Group.

Chapter II. Arlington's Citizens' Involvement Committee

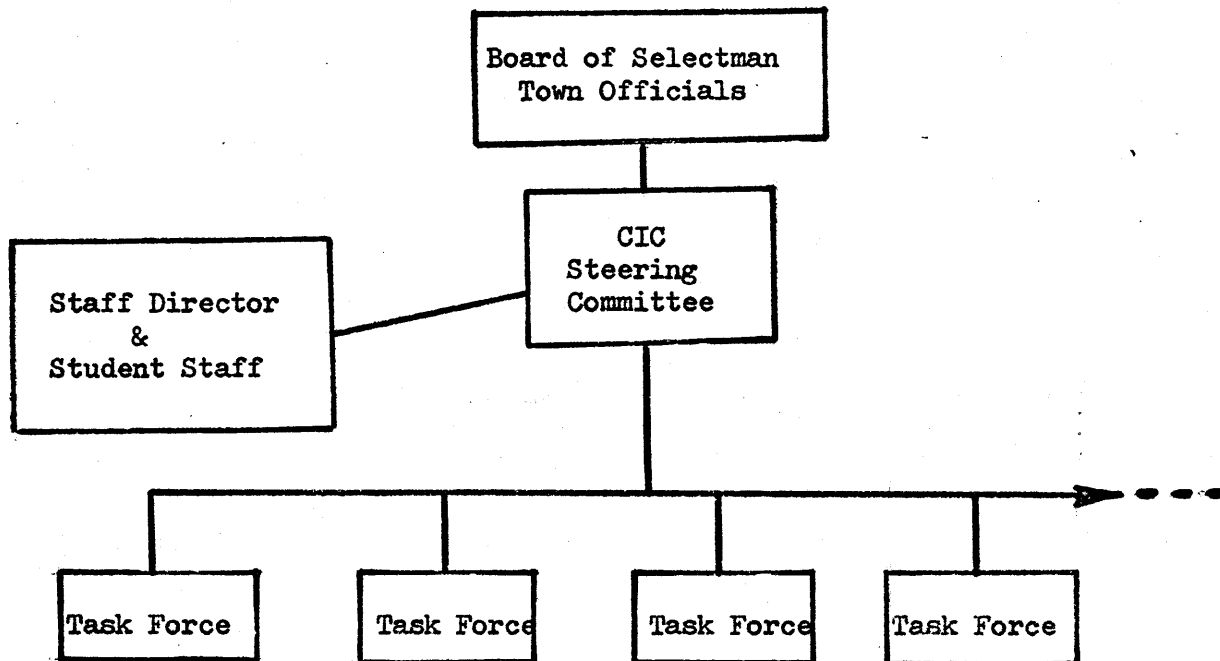
A. Background

The Citizen's Involvement Committee (CIC) of Arlington, Massachusetts was formed in the fall of 1974¹. Seeking to increase public participation in community decision making, Arlington's Board of Selectman supported the development of a citizen-based organization akin to the Rockport model developed by Professor Susskind at al^{2,3}. After a favorable public response to an open meeting on the concept, an Ad Hoc Steering Committee of town meeting members was appointed to set criteria for the selection of a permanent CIC Steering Committee. A representative group of eleven residents was soon appointed after solicitation of candidates through the local newspaper. The CIC thus became a nonpartisan volunteer citizens' organization endorsed by the town meeting but independent from town officials.

The Citizens' Involvement Committee then developed a set of objectives to:

- develop a series of surveys designed to document citizen attitudes and priorities,
- involve all residents in an ongoing examination of town policies and programs, and
- provide a nonpartisan forum within which all points of view on controversial issues could receive a hearing and careful study.

The following organization chart presents the basic structure of the CIC as it operated for the first two and a half years⁴. An appointed Steering Committee provided the direction for the CIC and multiple task forces were developed around selected town issues. Their number varied over time.



M.I.T.'s Department of Urban Studies and Planning provided staff assistance to support the Steering Committee and the CIC task forces and to produce a CIC newsletter and other CIC communications. A staff office was maintained at M.I.T.'s Laboratory of Architecture and Planning (coordinated by Kate Hildebrand, the staff administrator). While independent from the town government, the CIC communicated regularly with the Arlington Board of Selectmen and other town officials.

The Citizens' Involvement Committee proceeded through four relatively distinct phases of activity⁵; town issues selection and survey; task force studies; development and presentation of policy recommendations; and re-organization. The first phase of CIC activity (extending approximately one year) involved the documentation of citizen attitudes and concerns through town surveys. Six topical areas were fleshed out in brainstorming sessions open to the public and aided by M.I.T. staff. The six topics included;

- land use, redevelopment and the physical environment,
- quality and efficiency of public services,
- community identity,
- taxes and town finances,
- need and responsibility for social services, and
- town government and intergovernment relations.

Survey questionnaires were developed for each topic, pretested and distributed to virtually every Arlington household.

The results of the survey were presented in the CIC newsletter, Feedback. A town-wide conference was held by the CIC to further present the results. Over 450 people attended. At the conference, task forces were organized around each topic to follow-up on the survey data and study the issues further. Thus began a second phase of CIC activity in January 1976 with the organization and direction of six on-going task forces.

Another set of task forces developed around critical issues of immediate concern, including a proposed high school renovation controversy and the pending decision on the Red Line subway extension. In addition to this activity, the CIC was editing a newsletter, cooperating with the National

Citizens' Involvement Network, and responding to various local inquiries.

The third phase of CIC activity involved the development of policy recommendations by the six task forces and presentation of these recommendations to the town (through a special issue of Feedback and at a second town-wide conference). The CIC was then confronted with the withdrawal of the full staff support and professional guidance furnished by M.I.T. CIC efforts over the subsequent eight months centered primarily on dealing with this transition along with significant internal changes in leadership and member participation. Thus the fourth phase of CIC activity might be considered one of transition and reorganization.

The CIC interacted with three significant groups over time; town officials, the M.I.T. staff and the Arlington citizenry. From the town, the CIC received some in-kind contributions as well as funds for specific activities (to help support the town survey and publication of the newsletter). The CIC was also supported at the outset and through the first two and a half years by M.I.T. professors, staff and students. Up until spring 1977, M.I.T. handled all of CIC's financial dealings. More important, M.I.T. shared CIC management responsibilities with the Steering Committee. Occasional support also came as in-kind contributions from local businesses and town institutions. The volunteer efforts of the myriad CIC members were the mainstay of the organization.

Thus the CIC was initially quite well endowed for a volunteer citizens' organization, with the full endorsement of the town, an active membership and the ample staff support and professional guidance from M.I.T. In addition, the CIC gained the national distinction of being one of the

twenty citizen groups selected to be part of the Citizens' Involvement Network. Consequently, the CIC began its organizational efforts with relative ease and met with early success including such feats as a significantly high response rate on the town-wide questionnaires, the full house attendance at the first town conference, and the high quality Feedback issues.

Over time these central relationships among the town officials, M.I.T., Arlington residents and the CIC began to change, and it is during this transition period that I worked with and observed the CIC Steering Committee. The CIC Steering Committee was the central force of the organization, providing continuity to the CIC over its three year history. Its members were the most active, dedicated and longest standing CIC participants. In addition to their policy and planning functions on the Steering Committee, committee members were also participating as leaders and members in various CIC task forces.

I observed the CIC Steering Committee informally for over a year, attending meetings, talking with staff. From March through June of 1977, I had the opportunity to work more closely with the CIC Steering Committee, helping them develop an internal evaluation process. I was able to follow up on these efforts in the fall with further visits to the Steering Committee meetings. Personal notes, minutes and tape recordings of meetings during these intervals form the data base for my analysis of this group's formal efforts at self-assessment.

The following documentation presents the story of CIC's formal assessment process and my own intervention efforts. The story is told in

the context of the CIC activities over the period of my observations and participation with the Steering Committee. The chronology of events concentrates on the priorities of the Steering Committee and the issues related to their effort to formally assess themselves through my facilitation. Consequently, this is not a comprehensive history of the CIC but rather a story about one group's efforts at self-assessment as seen through my own intervention. Noticeable gaps and omissions reflect my own orientation at that time to groups, self-assessment and intervention. Several footnotes provide selected comments from a subsequent vantage point.

B. Setting the Stage

Through the winter of 1976-7, the CIC was in the process of refining task force recommendations and planning its second town-wide conference. Originally, the conference had been scheduled for the fall, but delays in funding for a multi-media presentation and in drafting the task force recommendations postponed the conference until the new year.

The refinement of task force recommendations marked the culmination of more than two years' effort to identify significant town issues and develop representative positions for the town's consideration. This period also marked a transition for the CIC into a new organizational phase while;

- efforts were underway in a new By-Laws Committee to further institutionalize the CIC through incorporation,
- a Handbook Subcommittee was set up to document the CIC's history and achievements,

- decisions on a new round of task forces and ways to follow-up on the first set of recommendations were in process, and
- Professor Susskind's assistance and the institutional arrangements with M.I.T. were coming to a close.

The central focus of the Steering Committee during the winter and into early spring remained nonetheless on the preparations for the conference.

A look at a Steering Committee meeting in early March will demonstrate some of the group's concerns and perceptions at that time. The meeting agenda included a discussion of the planned video-documentaries for the conference and a review of the recommendations as they would be presented at the conference. Eleven people were at this meeting, including two M.I.T. staff persons, Susskind and myself, the video director and six Steering Committee members.

Brief video-documentaries about the CIC and its activities were being produced for the conference. At this meeting, the video director presented his plans for these "mini-docs", spurring the committee to consider the images it wanted to reveal to the public. Steering Committee members wanted the video shorts to convey the diversity of the CIC membership, that there was "room for everyone", that the CIC "brought people together to solve problems". At that time, the group was concerned that the CIC might be seen too narrowly, as an exclusive group, rather than as a representative citizen organization.

While members agreed that they wanted to underscore the CIC process,

some members repeatedly expressed the need "to show product"; "what we have done, instead of what we might do". I observed an uneasiness in the group about the CIC's product and how to convey it. The recommendations were just that, recommendations. At one point, someone felt it necessary to remind the video director to "be careful about fact and fancy", that the recommendations were not accepted policy.

The discussion on how to present the recommendations at the conference provided a review and reaffirmation of the substantive concerns of the CIC. It had been decided that the six sets of recommendations would be "too cumbersome" for the conference presentation. Consequently, a new way of grouping them was sought. The staff and Professor Susakind had prepared a breakdown of all the recommendations according to new topics, which were meant to be seen as themes, rather than categories, running throughout the task force recommendations.

It took some time for the committee to "buy in" to this restructuring, but once it was accepted, the members fell into refining the proposed themes with relish. The upshot was an encapsulation of the major thrusts of the organization⁶. The proposed theme of "neighborhood improvements" became "neighborhood action" based on their promotion of a more active citizen stance toward local problem solving. Later this was refined to "neighborhood participation". "Public information" became "citizen information exchange", demonstrating the two-way communication emphasis of the CIC. "Government reforms" was modified to read "responsiveness of town government", the ultimate objective of the citizen organization⁷. It appeared that the Steering Committee did have a strong sense of the issues they

were addressing and the preferred approach to their resolution.

C. First Intervention

The CIC Handbook Subcommittee wanted to document how the CIC worked and what it had accomplished. By the end of March the subcommittee decided that it needed some method of evaluating the progress of the CIC over the last three years. It was at this point that I became more actively involved with the CIC. The staff administrator caught wind of the subcommittee's intention and contacted me, knowing of my interest in group evaluation. Together with the staff person assisting the subcommittee, we designed a brief evaluation process for the Steering Committee to assess CIC goals and activities. The evaluation forms we put together are on the following pages. We assumed that the Steering Committee would complete the forms during the upcoming meeting. We would then analyze the responses and present them at the next session⁸.

Our focus was on CIC goals and activities. Our intentions, however, went well beyond the initial request for an evaluation of CIC efforts. We sought to direct the committee members' perspective beyond their past and current activities toward their future plans, trying to combine evaluation with planning. We also wanted to eliminate the notion of evaluating successes and failures and concentrate on strengths, weaknesses and future improvements. We expected that the committee could deal easily and swiftly with the forms, providing an objective set of responses that would generate instructive discussion about the future.

Activities

Please indicate the degree of effort (in percentages) that the CIC has put into the activities listed on the left:

	before 1976 conference	now	next fall
<u>Steering Committee Functions</u>			
communicating with committee members			
making decisions			
carrying out decisions			
fulfilling administrative functions			
reviewing task force work			
<u>Task Force Management</u>			
setting up task forces			
appointing and training moderators			
communicating with task forces			
assisting task forces with functions			
<u>CIC Activities and Involvement</u>			
increasing and maintaining membership			
collecting and analyzing data			
publishing <u>Feedback</u>			
generating publicity			
directing and working with staff			
fund-raising			
communicating with population groups and town agencies			
participating in town affairs			
participating in CIN			

ASSESSING C I C GOALS

GOAL (Rank on basis of 1 to 6
the importance of each
CIC goal)

Progress Rank:
1 - completely satisfied
2 - mostly satisfied
3 - satisfied
4 - somewhat satisfied
5 - not satisfied

Steps Towards
Goals - list

Rank
Effect-
iveness
of steps
1 to 3

Recommendations for
additional
steps

INFORM PUBLIC

DEVELOP STRUCTURE
FOR CIC ORGANIZATION

DISCOVER COMMUNITY
CONCERNS

TRANSLATE IDEAS
INTO ACTION

SOLICIT REACTIONS
TO INFORMATION

INVOLVE CITIZENS IN
DEFINING DIRECTION
OF TOWN POLICIES

A list of goals and activities had previously been made by Professor Susskind and the cochairmen of the Steering Committee. This list was circulated to the members for review before the upcoming committee meeting. The two staff members and myself revised and restructured this list, while extending the initial plan to simply rate the degree of accomplishment to a more complicated set of questions presented on the two forms⁹.

The evaluation process was planned for the March 22 Steering Committee meeting. It was not, however, the only item on the agenda. The meeting began with a viewing of the video-taped interviews with Arlington citizens and local groups taken by the director of the mini-docs. The plan was for the evaluation process to be video-taped at the end of the meeting.

When we presented our intentions along with the evaluation forms, several objections were quickly raised. Where did these forms come from? What relation did they have to the lists previously circulated? What was my role in this process? The film director wanted good footage and filling out forms did not qualify nor did he have time to wait for the following discussion. Furthermore, the committee wanted to address the issues raised in the video-interviews, several claims had been made against the CIC that needed clarifying.

So in a swift decision by the cochairmen, the camera was turned on and the committee proceeded to promote and defend the CIC. The prospects for any kind of evaluation process that night were nil.

I found this meeting enormously instructive. We had taken much for granted, transforming the committee's evaluation plan into an unfamiliar

set of forms and questions, too cumbersome to deal with in such a brief time frame. Although posing as facilitators, we had put ourselves in the position of evaluators. My presence as an outsider (less familiar than the staff) reenforced that posture and resistance to outside evaluation was apparent. I had not been prepared for the problem of entry and our assertive evaluation design simply compounded the difficulties.

Furthermore, having spent considerable time with the CIC staff and not with the CIC members themselves, I had assumed that the CIC was more of a joint operation between CIC members, Suskind and his staff. I discovered that the CIC was indeed more independent and assertive than I had expected¹⁰.

Finally I recognized that the presence of a camera can cause considerable interference when attempting to engage a group in self-assessment. I had not anticipated that video-taping the evaluation would in itself be a variable with which to contend.

A new approach was in order.

D. An Alternative Strategy

In rethinking the experiences just recounted, I reformulated my thoughts about group self-assessment and developed a new strategy for helping the CIC. It was clear that a partnership would have to be nurtured between the Steering Committee and myself in order for an evaluation to be facilitated. The committee members would have to be involved in the design of their own evaluation. Not simply to ease the entry problems, but more fundamentally, because the significance and utility of the assessment

depended on it.

Furthermore, by designing the evaluation procedures themselves, the Steering Committee members would be better able to engage in future self-assessment. I had realized by then, that a one time evaluation would have limited utility. What was far more important was encouraging the opportunity for some kind of ongoing self-assessment. Thus I began to promote the evaluation process as a model that could be reused and refashioned periodically by the group. My role would be to help them develop the model; get them started. The results of the first evaluation were less important to me than enabling the group to initiate their own self-assessment in the future¹¹.

My approach to self-assessment remained essentially functional, dealing in a straightforward way with the goals and activities of the group, hoping to improve "group performance". I shied away from complex dimensions of group interaction; interpersonal conflict; power struggles and opposing "theories of action" and the like. The basic problem as I saw it was to get the group to articulate criteria with which to assess their progress. Diagnosis and prescription would follow naturally¹².

I had come to feel that almost any group had the ability to examine itself, identify problem areas, capitalize on strengths and improve its performance. I was not interested in demonstrating the need for evaluation consultants. I actually tried to diminish my role in the assessment process attempting to serve as a neutral group facilitator¹³, hoping that in future interactions of self-assessment processes, group leaders would take on my function.

I drafted a short proposal for an evaluation process (see below), telephoned all the committee members and presented my plan at the next committee meeting.

Proposal for CIC Evaluation Process
Kirk Emerson
4-4-77

I suggest the following steps which would engage CIC members in the evaluation design as well as its implementation. Such a self-assessment can provide the CIC with information about its own progress and effectiveness to date and encourage discussion about future improvements. The underlined steps are those which involve CIC members directly.

1. Brief presentation of the process at the next Steering committee meeting.
2. Evaluation Design Process - 45 minute to an hour and a half with CIC members* to determine:
 - a. the dimensions of the evaluation (eg. what do you want to look at - goals, task force functions, town perceptions...)
 - b. the appropriate criteria for assessment (eg. how to measure yourself; based on personal satisfaction, compare with an objective standard, gather direct evidence of work...)
3. Development of specific process and materials needed based on the outcomes of step 2.
4. Evaluation - full Steering Committee meeting with individual and group efforts with lots of room for discussion.
5. Compilation of rest of data not tabulated in the previous session and draft report on the process.
6. Provide report to the Steering Committee.

*This can be done with the full Steering Committee or with the subcommittee on the Handbook if necessary.

Fortunately the pressure for immediate evaluation "results" was off, since the Handbook Subcommittee had decided that it could not produce the hand-

book in time for the upcoming conference. The Steering Committee agreed to this plan and put the first evaluation design process on the next meeting's agenda.

E. Evaluation Design

The evaluation design session was first on the agenda for the April 19th Steering Committee meeting. Ten committee members were present (including one previous member). This was considered a sizeable turnout. I had prepared a set of general, overlapping categories that I hoped would cover most of the committee activities. These included Goals and Goal-Oriented Activities, Ongoing Support Functions, Underlying Processes and the Committee Environment¹⁴. The group came up with a list for each of these categories (as opposed to the previous effort where we provided the list as staff and I had determined it). For each list, the group then considered what criteria they might use to measure their accomplishments.

My introductory comments stressed that the objective of the evaluation was to generate information that would be useful to them in strengthening their group. The aim was not in itself to determine success or failure. I further explained that this was an evaluation design session, not the evaluation, and that we should concentrate on figuring out what to assess and how. The actual assessing would come later.

The results of the group's efforts (with minimal revisions) follow. The group handled the subcategories easily. There was a swift consensus on all the items recorded. Developing the specific criteria was far more

CIC Evaluation Design Process Results

Goals and Goal-Oriented Activities

A. Documenting/defining citizen attitudes and concerns

1. conduct six surveys
2. run policy oriented task forces
3. run issue oriented task forces
4. sponsor conferences

B. Providing a conduit between citizens and town officials on town problems (related to dispersion of critical information)

1. have periodic meetings with agencies and town officials
2. hold both conference
3. generate Feedback and the Gazette
4. distribute special issues and supplements

C. Providing an organizational vehicle for citizen input

1. run task forces
2. hold open meetings
3. run workshops (eg. for moderators)
4. run the January conference

D. Producing specific recommendations for town policy

1. developing task force recommendations
2. holding the April town conference

These were the recommended ways to look at or measure goals and goal-oriented activities.

- How effective was each activity toward reaching goals?
- How important and responsible were the individual activities toward reaching the goal?
- Did each activity do well and prove effective?
- What percent of the committee's time and effort went into accomplishing the basic goals?
- Have our priorities changed over time?
- How can we measure the quality of the recommendations?

CIC Evaluation Design Process Results

Ongoing Support Functions

- A. Providing publicity
 - B. Fund raising
 - C. Information gathering and research
 - D. Using staff support
 - E. Providing outreach; using outside research
 - F. Maintaining/increasing membership
 - G. Analyzing data
 - H. Coordinating/directing task force efforts
 - I. Sharing with the CIN
 - J. Communicating within the committee and with the town
 - K. Educating
-

These are the recommended ways to look at or measure Steering Committee support functions.

- By their relative importance to maintaining the CIC
- Which did we do well? or at all?
- How much time or energy was spent doing each of them?
- How effective the output/results of our efforts were.
- Measure effectiveness against what we feel we "ought" to have done
- Did we do what we wanted the function to do? Should we have expected it?
- Were all the pieces in place? Did we forget anything or was there an imbalance in our efforts?
- We need to further breakdown the functions into subtasks for a good analysis.
- How do we do better?

CIC Evaluation Design Process Results

Underlying Steering Committee Processes

- A. Educate through capacity building/learning and doing
- B. Talk/dialogue/listening
- C. Set agendas/plan
- D. Make decisions (through consensus)
- E. Use time appropriately
- F. Implement ideas
- G. Ask questions
- H. Maintain relationships (personal interactions) between committee , staff, Susskind, task forces
- I. Maintain formal communications between the above parties
- J. Be responsible in responding to those with needs
- K. Encourage commitment to the CIC

These were the recommended ways to address the underlying process of the Steering Committee.

- Relate the processes to goals and ongoing functions
- Make the distinction between personal vs. group goals
- Consider the motivation to be in CIC
- Conduct research on membership
- Did we do enough of certain processes?
- Are we satisfied with our efforts?
- What recommendations do we have to make?

difficult. The following excerpt is from the group's first discussion on goals and related assessment criteria.

Bob. Yeh that's fine, but how do you measure it (How do you ask?), where is the balance?

Jim. There are two ways of measuring. First off, you have to measure how that item we are considering, how much of it was responsible for implementing it, then how well did it do... Say you have six surveys and task forces and so forth. Now each of those things would be responsible for some measure of documenting and defining. So the first question is, how much of documenting and defining was each of those areas responsible for. Then the next question is, did each of those things do the job well? ...

Kirk. So what you are saying, on the one hand, is how important are they all together and then how effective are they (relatively speaking)?...

Bill. I wanted to ask one way of looking at the overall goals is what percentage of our activities in the two and a half years we've been in existence is represented by documenting vs. concern for organizational sense vs. recommendations vs. the interface. I think a different percentage... I would describe importance as also being perhaps what percentage of our time we spent in surveys vs. policy task forces, just a rough estimate of percentage of time. There may be a different sense for all of us, you know, for me maybe the conference...

Ed. Well, actually, you do raise a good question. What are the relative importance of these goals, at least the intended relative importance. And how much time was spent on them, in other words, does the time spent match the importance to each goal...

The group is tackling two issues here. The members are seeking a way to weigh the relative contributions of each activity toward achieving the associated goals; and for each activity separately, a method of assessing how well the activity is being carried out. Bill brings up specific ways of measuring both the importance and performance of these activities, that of estimating personal time spent by the committee on each activity. The group then comes very close to suggesting a cost to benefit (or time to benefit) analysis of their efforts. This discussion also marks the

group's effort to handle the interrelationship among their activities as they contribute in various ways to the CIC objectives.

The next episode is from the discussion on criteria for assessment of support functions. Here the notion of setting standards for comparison emerges as the group considers what they might have achieved and what they did accomplish.

Kirk. What do you want to know about these functions?

Linda. Did they work?

Mary Lou. Which one of those things (the listed functions, see page 34) was important to us. Which one did we do well, which ones did we fail at and how come we failed if we did. (If we ranked them?) No, each one has its place. You can't say one is more important...

Linda. Maybe importance in terms of our output. Some of them took more of our energies than others did...

Ed. You can set specific requirements for each of these supports, like what should the staff have done and how much of it did it do. How much membership do you think is necessary for the organization and how much membership was achieved? It seems to me that, was enough money raised to do the things we needed to do? So we have a more or less objective, rather than subjective, method of measuring effectiveness.

Mary Lou. Define what ought to have been done and look to see whether we have accomplished them...

Kirk. Are you suggesting that everybody come up with what they think ought to have happened and then measure the reality as they see it? Or is there an "ought" that everyone agrees on now?...What is the ought for publicity?...

Bill. One success is sufficient.

Kirk. Should we think about everyone laying out their criteria?...

Jim. Publicity, for example, did you get any free publicity? Sure..

Ed. Yeh, but if it's down at Joe's Deli and what you really wanted was town-wide...

(continued on next page)

Mary Lou. No, the question isn't was there publicity, the question is what kind was there, was it the right kind and was it sufficient

Jim. Right, did you get a response.

Ed. Did it do what we wanted it to do?

Linda. What we wanted it to do was the right thing to do.

Ed. That's using hindsight.

Mary Lou starts off with a long list of general criteria. The discussion turns to a more focussed consideration of adopting specific standards that would be more objective than general statements of importance or success. I make a premature suggestion to articulate the group standards then and there. The group prefers to play the idea out in the example of publicity.

While more specific criteria did emerge from this discussion and in a second review meeting, it was apparent that the group had not previously developed such criteria or standards or had not made them explicit. The group had the most difficulty identifying criteria for assessing process dimensions. Indeed, coming up with the initial list of group processes was challenging for the group. The group could not articulate performance standards for themselves and their group interaction. Yet they could recognize when a process dimension was not working.

While a great deal of ground was covered in this evaluation design session, it was too much in such a short time for the group to fully absorb. But the potential for future exploration was brought out. From the discussions it appeared to me that while the individual members held views about the CIC accomplishments and problems, they had not tried as a group

to develop a perspective on their past efforts¹⁵.

I fashioned the results of the evaluation design session into a set of evaluation questions which I then took back to the committee for review. A couple of significant additions were made at that point. The group decided that the task force recommendations were the most significant CIC outputs in need of specific evaluation and developed three concrete assessment criteria; the feasibility with which they could be implemented; the extent of their potential impact on the town; and the representativeness of citizen support. The committee also developed a way to assess the relative contributions of staff and CIC members to carry out ongoing structural functions of the CIC.

F. The Evaluation Session

The evaluation session was held on May 17th, approximately two weeks after the town-wide conference and almost a month after the evaluation design session. Several events had transpired during this period that affected the response to the evaluation. The long awaited conference took place. The public response had been far less than expected. Only 90 people attended, while over 200 had been planned for. But the selectmen had requested a special presentation of the key recommendations at their next meeting, which the CIC found encouraging. After the conference, the student staff completed its assignments, leaving the CIC members to support its activities on its own. Professor Susskind continued to advise the committee on occasion, but his continued presence could not be expected. The reins had been turned over to the CIC.

In addition to these transitions, the CIC leadership was also changing. The central Steering Committee figure departed (with some degree of controversy), turning the CIC leadership over to the acting chairman. A new set of fledgling task forces were just beginning, while most of the original six task forces had wound up their efforts. Membership was also changing. While many of the task force members had completed their activities, new members were not swiftly filling their places. Thus, the CIC entered a new organizational phase.

The May 17th committee meeting (attended by seven committee members) began with a lengthy planning session for the upcoming presentation to the selectmen. This discussion occupied well over an hour; it was not until 8:30 pm that the evaluation session got underway. The session was planned for a full two hours. The members had to be encouraged to continue with the evaluation that evening as planned. As it turned out, the session ran well past 11:00 that evening.

The momentum generated by the evaluation design session and the review meeting had lagged. It was unfortunate but necessary that the whole assessment process had to straddle the conference and accompanying events¹⁶. By this data the committee had become anxious about the future and did not perceive the potential connection between the evaluation process and their planning needs. The committee was intent on addressing immediate problems and less interested on reflecting about the past or considering the long term future.

So the evaluation session began late with less enthusiasm than hoped for. The members were to answer the evaluation questions for each category

on individual questionnaires. As soon as responses in a given category (such as Goals and Related Goal Activities) were completed, the results were tabulated and presented to the group for discussion. This instant replay procedure enable the the group to discuss individual responses and grouped results as soon as possible. Because of the time constraints, however, not all of the questions received full attention. The results of this session are provided in the appended report (Appendix I). The following summary of the evaluation results is excerpted from that report:

- There was much discussion on the changes that have occurred over time in the CIC activities. The need was expressed to determine the future direction of the CIC, particularly regarding the appropriate emphasis on recommendations and their implementation;
- From the organizational charts, it appeared that a restructuring of the organization of the CIC was needed to clarify roles and responsibilities internally and in relation to the staff. Fund raising, membership and coordination of task forces were considered key functions requiring future committee attention;
- Setting agendas and planning together with decision-making and implementation of ideas were processes in need of improvement.

The evaluation session raised a central issue for the group regarding the evolution of its objectives and priorities over time. The following statement was made by a committee member at the beginning of the group discussion on goals.

As I look at the CIC, it's been three distinct and separate organizations divided into time periods. There was a great long period that you would call survey generation period in which we spent a great deal of time distilling our wisdom. And that was a much different period than the one that followed from the completion of the surveys until I would say the new people which now compose this and have no memory of that came along (then he identifies the old and new members). So I get mixed up when I answer these questions. I would have voted quite differently if I had been able to do it by the three time periods...But this discussion does one very important thing. It brings out the difference and
(continued on next page)

makes us think about them and see what happened to us. If you hadn't asked me those questions, I'd never bother to think about defining this. It's a distinctly different organization now than it was six months ago.

The evolution of group activities is seen as "three distinct and separate organizations divided into time periods". This characterization is a new discovery to the committee. It is noted that the evaluation, while it helped bring these ideas to the surface, had not been geared to consider different phases in the life of the group. "It's a distinctly different organization now than it was six months ago".

The group continues this theme and enters into a major discussion about past group priorities and current challenges of extending and re-orienting the group objectives.

Mary Lou. Because I think that's the product (the recommendations); that's the test of whether we're doing anything or not...We're actually working all the time that we are providing a conduit and providing an organizational vehicle, we are working towards the production of recommendations. And to me the production of the recommendations is the test as to whether we have done a good job. And I see that you can't do the recommendations without being a conduit and providing an organizational vehicle...

Jim. What is your perception of the conduit and organizational vehicle function?

Mary Lou. I don't think you can do anything else without it...You have got to do your basic homework...Documenting and defining, sure it's basic, that's where you start from (then the others are means to the end of recommendations?)...You can't do one without the other and one overlaps the other...And I think that the fourth goal of recommendations is the proof of whether we have done anything or not, of whether all of our talk is anything but talk. That's my feeling.

Jim. One of our original goals of the CIC was to document and define citizen's attitudes and concerns and the survey was the principle device of that and the recommendations were meant to be an outgrowth but the emphasis was not on recommendations but on citizens' concerns and the survey supplied a great deal of information...

Ed. The point is that the surveys themselves represent a goal,,,

Mary Lou. Well I can see his point, but still to me it is just the base on which you stand to do something...

Kirk. So you think that these are really a means to a goal?...

Mac. And another goal is to get the recommendations implemented.

Ed. Yeh, you can make recommendations til you are blue in the face.

Mary Lou. And I think that's a very good point...One of the tests is how many of these things we are proposing for implementation will in fact be implemented and that's another test, but we, there's not time enough yet.

Ed. Well, this is really a basic question of what the CIC should be doing, whether in fact implementing the recommendations is a goal... So it's really a question of whether in fact one of our goals is to get them implemented which turns us into an advocacy group or...

Mary Lou. Sure as long as you don't put too much weight on it. There's nothing wrong with this additional goal (of implementation), the problem is what weight do you give it.

Jim. Well, that comes up because we clearly have to put some time in on it and we haven't gone through that phase with this group before, but this group is basically..a policy making making citizens' group not an advocacy citizens' group.

Mary Lou. Yeh, but don't you remember the first discussion we had the first hour we were in here?...We felt that unless we could carry out these recommendations we were copping out and we were a bunch of pansies and we would not be taken seriously...If we don't (take implementation) seriously, then we are back to saying...it doesn't make any difference what happens, it's the process that's important and if you say that the process is important than my answer is that we have failed because there aren't that many people in the process..

Jim. I agree the recommendations are important...Clearly all are ingredients to our entire endeavor...

Kirk. What you've almost done is come up with a policy statement on where the emphasis should be...

Mary Lou. Except that there are disagreements. I think there are disagreements.

Ed. I think we have raised the question as a policy statement, but I m not sure we've answered it yet...

This discussion demonstrates the group's effort at clarifying the interrelationships among its goals and the appropriate set of priorities for the future. The group recognizes at the end of this exchange that it has not resolved its differences. While a perspective emerges on how the group priorities have developed over time, the group does not share a position on its future direction - is it to repeat the cycle of surveys, task forces and recommendations or is it to assume a stronger advocacy position by lobbying for the implementation of its recommendations? Mary Lou brings up an interesting point regarding assessment criteria. She claims that if the group does not rate the recommendations and implementation goals highly, then the process of being a citizens' policy making body has failed. She sees the numbers of people involved in the process, then, as being a measure of these dimensions of the group's objectives.

At the end of the evaluation session and again six months later, I asked the group to answer some questions about the evaluation process (an assessment of the assessment). The group's responses are presented below. The perceived significance of the self-assessment was positive and remained the same across the six month interval. The diversity of responses to the first few questions suggests a breadth to the evaluation, however, it should be noted that only four committee members responded to the questions in November.

G. Aftermath

I returned to the Steering Committee one month after the evaluation session and presented the assessment report(see Appendix I). At that time

Feedback on the CIC Evaluation Process (Assessment of the Assessment)

Responses in May

Responses in November

The most valuable thing learned through the evaluation:

- a structured self-assessment is more effective than just discussion
- to think about deficiencies and how they might be rectified
- to commit myself
- that I agree with other members of committee. There are a lot of areas for discussion in future meetings
- look at whole evaluation before answering any part having finished the last part, I would now change some of my earlier emphasis. Not wrong answers just reweight some
- my perceptions of the past history of the CIC were not entirely accurate; concrete ideas, agenda planning, sequence is important; action versus talk
- they were all feeling similar things but had not voiced them in meetings
- that the views of the committee members were divergent with regard to objectives and priorities and that these deserved much more discussion than they had received

Most helpful questions addressed by the group through the evaluation:

- problems in process and allocation of time
- relative importance of goals; effectiveness in reaching goals
- the relationship between staff and Steering Committee
- goals
- the review of the final product
- goals and meeting agenda planning
- listing functions and attempting to visualize by diagram, the interrelationships of the committees and its task forces and the staff

Feedback on the CIC Evaluation Process (continued)

Significance of the self-assessment process over six months

May projection N=7

0	0	1	3	2	1
not significant	a little significant	somewhat significant	significant	very significant	critically significant

November reflection N=3

0	0	1	2	0	0
not significant	a little significant	somewhat significant	significant	very significant	critically significant

Comments:

- We have not formally had an assessment (since May), but each week I have held up the current meetings' progress against what I felt we learned from the self-assessment
- I flunked., I missed some and didn't pay enough attention to give honest, meaningful answers.

the committee was confronting their new independence more squarely. In going over the report, the committee confirmed their assessments, acknowledging the need for improving critical support functions, such as agenda-setting, follow-through and clearer structuring of responsibilities. Much

discussion centered on the pros and cons of a strongly structured organization, initially equating structure with rigidity. They later observed that clarity of structure was most important.

An extension of this discussion included the need to engage members more responsibly in the organizational structure, where before they had relied on staff efforts. Membership problems were thus tied directly into the structural difficulties of the CIC. The concentration on functions and processes reflected the committee's concern with sustaining the CIC operations through the difficult transition period.

At the end of the meeting, I was asked to give my recommendations to the group¹⁸. I advocated the importance of working out the shared goals of the group which had appeared in conflict in the previous meetings. There existed a split opinion over whether the CIC should assume responsibility for implementing its policy recommendations or remain a neutral voice. I recommended that the CIC develop a firmer consensus on its mission and then chart the various activities required to pursue its goals. At the close of the meeting, members were saying, "we can't do anything until we identify ourselves, our goals and set ourselves in order" and "by the next meeting we will exist, we will decide on our goals, activities, functions through reviewing the ByLaws and Kirk's stuff".

I did not visit the Steering Committee again until late October, almost six months after the self-assessment process the previous spring. I was interested in learning to what extent the self-assessment had had an impact on the workings of the group. I was looking for changes in the group's activities in areas where improvement was recommended in the spring.

I was also curious to see if the group had carried out any subsequent self-assessment efforts.

I found the group diminished in size to a hard core of four members. Two strong, outspoken members had departed, along with a couple of hard-working support people. The committee had managed to continue meeting twice a month through the summer, despite lack of funds and no staffing support. A few task forces had started up again in the fall. Funds and support had been unsuccessfully sought through the CETA program and at nearby universities. Given this setting the low morale and fatigue were understandable. The committee chairman was soon to be taking a "leave of absence" until the new year to catch up on other personal and professional responsibilities.

I observed that the committee had changed some of its operating procedures. The agenda was more tightly planned and adhered to during the two meetings that I attended. It also appeared that the group had tightened the reins on the organizational structure, but the smaller numbers might have accounted for that development. In general, however, the situational factors tended to consume the group and survival, rather than refinement and growth, was the main concern.

H. Analysis

In this case, it appeared that the results of this facilitated group self-assessment did not become integrated into the group's planning and problem solving activities. While the transitional situation of the group

had appeared to be conducive to such an integration, the lack of funding, decreasing membership, and withdrawal of staff support proved too overwhelming. The group had to concern itself primarily with survival and was not able to fully benefit from the evaluation process.

While I had overcome the problems of entry and had engaged the group in their own evaluation, I did not enable the group to incorporate an ongoing self-assessment process directly into its activities. Had I examined more directly the constraints facing the group and geared the evaluation to the problems at hand, perhaps the self-assessment would have been more rewarding.

It became clear to me that my approach to group self-assessment and to intervention were very much intertwined. I had circumscribed my definition of self-assessment by my role as facilitator, viewing it as a discrete function (and therefore accessible to intervention) addressing all facets of group activity. To me group self-assessment was a formal process that required some facilitation (be it from a group leader or an outside intervenor), a specific activity in which the group intentionally engaged.

I began to consider the nature of group self-assessment in groups without facilitation. Groups must reflect on their activities in some way; yet I knew very little about that. I reasoned that in order to develop an appropriate intervention strategy, I would have to learn how groups assessed themselves in situ. The next case study represents my first efforts at observing group self-assessment as a non-intervenor.

Footnotes for Chapter II.

- ¹ Much of the history in this section is drawn from Susskind, Lawrence, Emerson, Elizabeth, and Hildebrand, Kate, "Using Community Settings for Professional Planning Experience".
- ² Wollenberg, Jay et al., "Capacity Building", Ekistics.
- ³ Citizens of Rockport, An Analysis of Community Needs and Recommendations for Action.
- ⁴ For individual CIC members' interpretations of the CIC organizational structure, see the evaluation report (section B) in Appendix I.
- ⁵ The first three phases have been confirmed by committee members in subsequent evaluation sessions, see page 41.
- ⁶ Later I would view this as an informal self-assessment process. This episode, indeed the whole meeting, represents a review by the committee of its own public image and a confirmation of its basic intentions as a group.
- ⁷ In retrospect, I could comment more fully on the individual interactions of the group, patterns of leadership, interpersonal dynamics. But in keeping with my intention to demonstrate the development of my own orientation to groups and to group self-assessment, I will go no further here. At the time, I did sketch informal sociograms of the group interaction. What struck me at this meeting (and at most of the meetings when Susskind was present) was the tendency for Susskind and the two cochairmen to dominate the discussion. But generally I perceived the group in the aggregate.
- ⁸ This first "quick and dirty" approach to evaluation was to some extent the result of the perceived time pressure imposed by the Handbook Subcommittee deadlines and the committee's preoccupation with the conference planning. Yet, a review of the forms and the intended evaluation process will reveal some other conceptual constraints we were operating under.
- ⁹ It should be noted that we took considerable liberties in designing these forms. It did not occur to us at the time that we were doing anything more than expediting the evaluation that the subcommittee had called for. In fact, we were not facilitating the process, we were engineering it.

- ¹⁰ Later I learned of a previous juncture when the committee requested that Susskind and staff back off for a time so that the CIC could better come to terms with itself as an independent organization. I had overestimated the prerogatives of the staff in the evaluation design.
- ¹¹ I was still focussing on self-assessment as a formal group process.
- ¹² This rationalist approach and the attendant evaluation design is similar in many respects to models for evaluating organization effectiveness, such as that proposed by Van de Ven in "A Process for Organization Assessment". While his model is geared to complex organizations, the emphasis is on articulating goals, developing criteria and nurturing a partnership between the intervenor and the group. Van de Ven also underscores the need for several iterations of evaluation activities leading to the main objective of group learning and increased effectiveness.
- ¹³ Only later did I see just how directive I was as a facilitator.
- ¹⁴ This category was dealt with only briefly and not integrated into the subsequent evaluation process.
- ¹⁵ I link this with their lack of planning and strategizing about the future. The committee had yet to confront or prepare for the June departure Susskind and staff. It was not until July that a rough budget was drawn up. Back in January, the staff administrator had warned of the need to prepare the CIC for this transition. But the conference planning continued to predominate the meetings until late April. The effort to establish bylaws for future incorporation had been stalemated. The Handbook Subcommittee continued to delay its deadlines as well.
- ¹⁶ It was more unfortunate that I did not perceive the complications and adjust my schedule accordingly. I underestimated the importance of (or rather assumed I would have) the committee's attention and interest.
- ¹⁷ It occurred to me later that an alternative process would have been to handle group responses orally, recording the results on poster paper, tallying on the spot and allowing for simultaneous discussion. This would have relieved the test-like atmosphere and proved more efficient as well. In a sense this structure I had developed could be viewed as antithetical to the process I was trying to nurture, that of group self-assessment.
- ¹⁸ Up until that point, I had refrained from giving direct advice or judgments.

Chapter III. Project 81

A. Background

Project 81 was a five year plan for developing model programs of competency-based education¹ in the state of Pennsylvania;

Project 81 will establish a process whereby districts selected to develop model programs will work with the state on redefining the goals of education, revising school programs to reflect the new goals, and exploring alternative requirements for graduating students. Two key elements in the process will be the identification of competencies young people need to succeed as adults and the development of new ways to use community resources in conjunction with those of the school to help students achieve those competencies².

The project grew out of a State Board of Education mandate to provide "relevant", community-oriented education. Ten model districts and two consortia of several school districts participated in Project 81, which formally began in the winter of 1977.

The five year project aspired to develop and put in place competency-based programs in all the model school districts. By 1981, the programs were to have been evaluated and refined as well (hence Project 81). These district programs would then provide the state with sufficient experience and recommendations to form the basis for a state-wide competency-based program. To meet these ambitious goals, the state provided the selected districts with a general set of procedures and deadlines. At the same time, however, the state encouraged each district to proceed in an independent fashion, tailoring the process to local resources and interests. As indicated in a Project 81 brochure:

Project 81 is a process. It is a process which calls for communities and schools to make joint decisions about expectations and means of reaching them. There will be lots of room for districts to reflect their own individual philosophies and ideals³.

The Bucks County consortium was the setting of my research on Project 81. This consortium encompassed five school districts coordinated through a central office at the county's intermediate unit. For each district, a Local Advisory Committee was established that included a series of subcommittees of parents, community representatives, students, teachers, administrators and others. All of these committees and subcommittees together with the consortium level committee of representatives from each district engaged in a series of tasks that culminated in a consortium list of competencies⁴ that was then sent to the state project office to be merged with the other model districts' lists.

In the subcommittees the individual competency statements were generated. These competencies represented members' perceptions of the various skills and attitudes a graduating high school senior should be able to demonstrate. These statements were then pooled at the district level, classified into categories for sorting purposes and trimmed down to eliminate duplication. This process was repeated at the consortium level and in early July a list of 637 competency statements was submitted to the state project office by the Bucks County consortium.

My intention was to examine how these subcommittees evaluated themselves. I was interested in what prompted short term evaluations, what they accomplished and what the impact was. My research approach was open-ended. I sought any evaluative comments or requests for evaluation of the

group's own activities. I attended the meetings as more or less a silent observer, recording the substance of the conversations throughout the meetings, frequently reporting verbatim what I considered at that time to be significant comments. I did not tape the meetings.

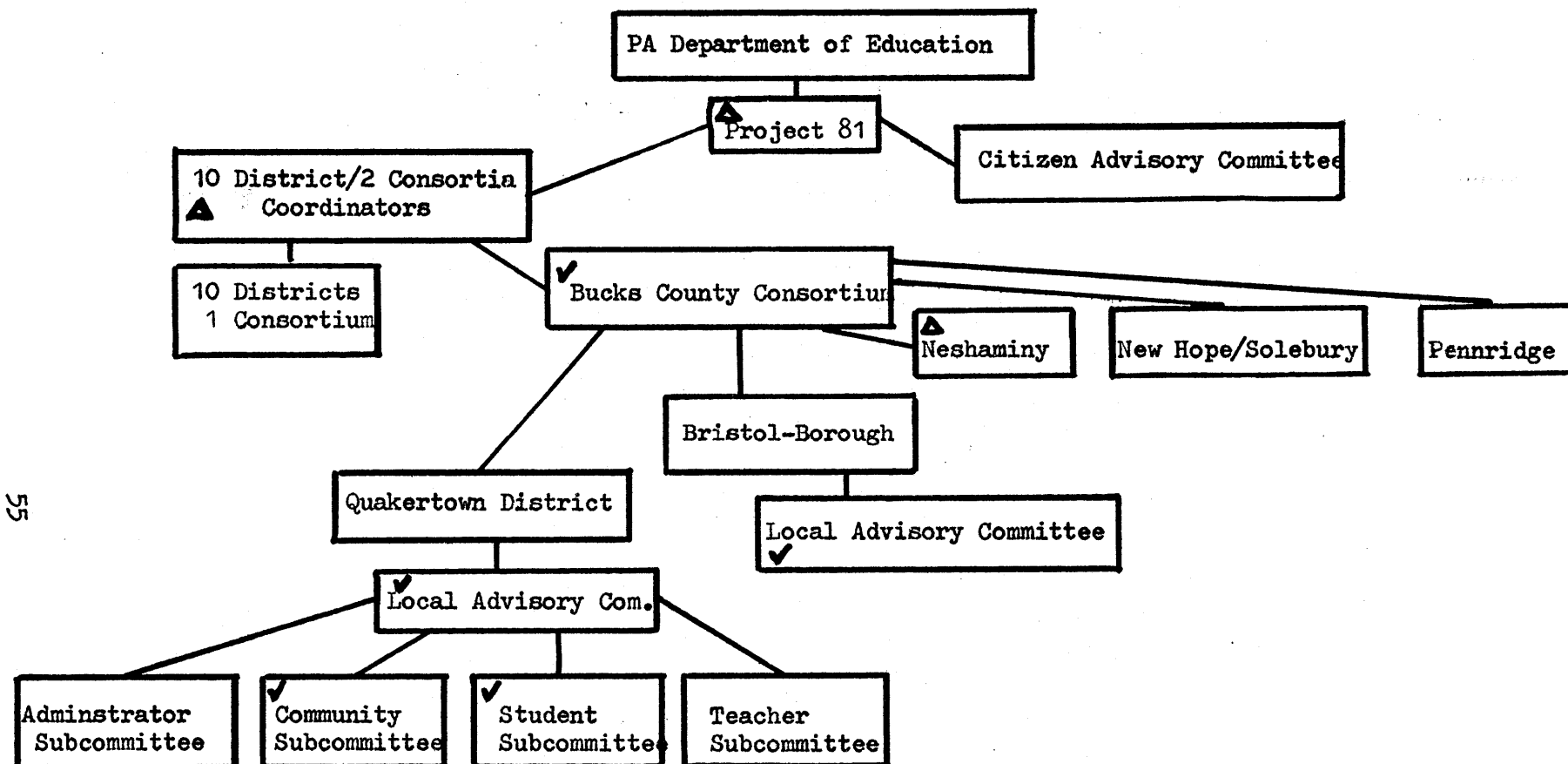
My observations of selected working committees within Project 81 were made through the summer and early fall of 1977. The following diagram indicates the placement of the groups I studied in the overall Project 81 structure.

In addition to the group meetings I attended, I sought background information through interviews with the director of the Project 81, several of the district coordinators, the Bucks County consortium coordinator, and the Quakertown district project administrator.

All of the groups I visited were dealing with the same series of tasks. The Local Advisory Committee at the district level was to generate competency statements. These statements were then organized into a district list. In Quakertown, each subcommittee attempted to subgroup their statements around the recommended list of subject areas. These ordered lists were then pooled at the district committee level. The district list was then merged with the other four participating Bucks County districts' lists at a consortium meeting in July. The final list was then submitted to Harrisburg to be added to the other model district lists. The Project 81 coordinators met in Harrisburg to further organize the list.

B. Quakertown Community Subcommittee

The first group I visited was the community subcommittee of the



✓ meetings of these groups provide basis for analysis

▲ meetings with these groups or individuals provided background data

Quakertown Local Advisory Committee. Members of this subcommittee had been solicited by mail-out questionnaires. The selection criteria, according to the local project administrator, were meant to provide an even geographic spread across the district, a balanced age group with varied backgrounds (education and occupation). A group leader for the subcommittee was appointed at the outset by the local administrator. The group met periodically through the early part of the summer, resuming activities in the fall.

The members of the community group took easily to the basic concepts that Project 81 was promoting, but took less well to the process imposed on them by the project administrators. They had volunteered in hopes of making a meaningful contribution to the local school system, but the simplified nature of their tasks and the ambiguity about the project itself and how it would benefit the Quakertown schools were disappointing. When the group tried to recommend improvements in the project, their suggestions went unheeded. Yet they continued to voice their concerns and criticisms at the Local Advisory Committee meetings. At one point, an administrator described this community group as "a bunch of overachievers" who really did not represent the community at large after all⁵.

The meeting of the community subcommittee that I attended was their third. The purpose of this meeting was to talk with the consortium coordinator about their concerns and to review and refine the competency statements they had already come up with. This effort was in preparation for the upcoming Local Advisory Committee meeting where the statements from all the subcommittees would be pooled and sorted.

The meeting was held at the home of the group leader and lasted almost four hours. The first portion of the meeting centered on discussion with the consortium coordinator, Norm Fairman. The central issue concerned the extent to which the group's input would be accepted and utilized in the Project 81 development. Skepticism about the token community participation was voiced. Fairman responded by assuring the group that he was not going to "love 'em and leave 'em", that he would be "vocal on the need for viable community involvement".

A major impasse (which characterized the entire project) was the inability to lay out exactly how the project was to proceed. Project 81 was being planned in stages. Despite Fairman's efforts to explain this evolutionary program development, the project was perceived by the group as either poorly organized or suspect.

The group continued to express its concern about the value of its contributions, asking where they fit into the Project 81 and how their efforts would be felt locally. Since the group had not been formed by the initiatives of its own members, its identity rested in its relation to the other components of Project 81. The group sought to establish itself by understanding the composition and direction of the larger project.

The meeting moved on to instructing the group on their next task--that of reviewing and judging the individual competency statements developed by the group. Duplication was to be eliminated if possible. The group was to agree on both the form and the substance of each statement making revisions when necessary. Fairman had versed the group leader on the procedures previous to the meeting and he coached her as she repeated

the instructions to the group.

The group had difficulty understanding the task. Despite previous efforts at the earlier two meetings, the definition of a competency and the precise form for writing competency statements were confusing. It was not a course of study nor was it a behavioral objective. But what it was exactly was unclear. The mechanics of generating and sorting specific competencies remained vague.

In the absence of a clear understanding, the group sought Fairman's reactions to their efforts, asking repeatedly, "Norm, are we on the right track?" and "Is this what you want?". Lacking their own criteria for assessing their task, they depended on "the expert's opinion". Through his feedback, Fairman was able to help the group complete their task with increasing confidence.

C. Quakertown Student Subcommittee

The Quakertown student subcommittee was made up of seven selected high school students (juniors and seniors). They were engaged in the same task of reviewing and refining the individual members' competency statements. They benefitted from a recommended sorting device that ordered the statements by subject area (eg. math, communications, personal finance...).

The meeting was held at the high school on an afternoon during exam period in June. The meeting was also long, lasting over three hours. It began with a decision to have each person organize his statements into

piles based on the subject areas recommended for sorting. Once this was accomplished, the group reviewed all the statements for each subject area. They were able to quickly go one step further and put the statements in an order from general to specific.

There were several digressions in the first hour and a half, but when they realized what time it was and how much they had yet to do, they buckled down and finished the task quickly.

This group stood out in contrast to the community subcommittee in two respects; their disinterest in the eventual project outcome and their independent attitude toward the task requirements. The students accepted the project and the task assignments at face value, acknowledging to each other that they did not really understand competency statements or a competency-based system of education. But they accepted the task and the recommended procedures. The students were more interested in the different competencies they came up with (the substance of the project) than in the forms and guidelines that had to be followed.

Although the students had not known each other closely before the project, as students, they already had a strong peer group association. While there was a group leader (selected by the local project administrator) the students appeared to share the responsibility for getting the task accomplished. The students understood that they were representing students on the Local Advisory Committee and when any of them wondered whether they were doing what they should be doing, the group response was that they would do "their own thing", would exercise their own judgment. Two snatches of conversation underscore this independent spirit;

-Do you think I should scratch (my competency statement on) morale?

-Don't scratch anything you think is important.

-I think it's important...

and

-But is it the same thing as Ed wants (the project administrator)?

-Tough. I don't think...

-Well, this is us. It's alright. It just has to fit the statement. We don't have to be dictated to or confined...

The students were not interested in how they were perceived or how they fit into the larger Project 81 scheme. They were openly task-oriented, while demonstrating a forthright independence toward the assigned tasks. The underlying criteria or standard for assessing their efforts was whether they were exercising their own set of priorities and using their own judgments. Only once did they make reference to other subcommittees at the end of the meeting when they were gathering their books together;

-How many do you think we have?

-I don't know but not as many as they do.

This suggests that the number of statements might have been some significant measure of output. However, this exchange appeared to a casual one at the close of the meeting.

D. Quakertown Local Advisory Committee

The Quakertown Local Advisory Committee met in early June (its second meeting). The four subcommittees (of administrators, teachers, students,

and community members) attended; the local project administrator chaired the meeting. The agenda called for further orientation to Project 81 and clarification of the task requirements; status reports from each subcommittee and review of sample competency statements. The meeting itself might be considered an assessment meeting of sorts.

The administrator led off with a presentation on where the committee fit into the overall project. He was prepared for controversy and maintained control throughout the meeting. He tried to steer the group to the appropriate level of expectation about their efforts by assessing the group's progress.

At one and the same time, the administrator tried to rein in the group's energies and still encourage it to move more quickly. In the first instance, he described where the group should not be operating with such statements as;

- We're really was ahead of ourselves when we get into that kind of stuff.
- If we don't stick to baseline, we'll get into more philosophical things.
- We are not a decision-making group, just an advisory body.

In the other instance, seeking to hasten the progress of the subcommittees, he would compare their efforts to those of other districts;

- We're one month later than all the other districts.
- We're in a following posture. I don't like it.
- Neshaminy (another district) came up with 235 statements, paired down from 3500 statements.

The meeting proceeded according to the agenda. Sample competency statements were reviewed and the sorting process discussed. The administrator handled disagreements by "ruling" on the appropriate position. There was little effort to engage the group in consensual decision-making processes.

At the end of the meeting, the issue was raised by the community group regarding the value of the subcommittees' contributions and their relation to Project 81 at the state and local level. The leader again provided conflicting assessments to the group with such statements as;

- Project 81 and our long range planning process are first efforts of their kind. We'll have probably greater participation regarding numbers, depth, degree and quality than ever before.
- (It's a) giant step forward...getting (community) support for programs we're operating.
- I can't get overly excited if Project 81 fails, since we already have something else in our hip pocket.
- Don't think that at the first generation level (of competency statements), we're going to come up with something so startlingly new maybe not, but it may be upsetting to your ego or to my ego but...

This leadership behavior inhibited any form of consensual group self-assessment. Since the committee was not a cohesive group (divided into distinct subcommittees)⁶, facilitation of group assessment was needed. The administrator chose a more authoritarian leadership approach assuming the full responsibility for assessing the group's efforts. He further obstructed group self-assessment by confounding the group with contradictory messages about its performance and its relationship to the overall project. In this context, it is understandable why the group found it

difficult to build on its common efforts (accomplishments as well as frustrations) and work toward a shared commitment to Project 81.

E. Bristol Borough Local Advisory Committee

For comparison purposes I visited another district and sat in on a meeting of subcommittee leaders and their district organizers. The main agenda for this group was to review the status of the subcommittees and discuss the logistics for the upcoming full district meeting of the Local Advisory Committee.

The tenor of this meeting was quite different from that of the Quakertown committee meetings. The group was much smaller (eight as compared to eighteen at the Quakertown district meeting). This group had been hand-picked by the superintendant as strong subcommittee leaders with a variety of ties to each other and to the school system (eg. the leader of the community subcommittee was a substitute teacher, the head of the parent subcommittee worked on the PTO...). This ensured closer cooperation and provided a stronger sense of shared leadership at the district level than was present in Quakertown.

This group also had a common orientation to education. As an urban school district, Bristol Borough shared many of the problems that plagued the Philadelphia schools. The prevalent concern was "Why can't Johnny read?" and "Let's get Back to the Basics". While in rural Quakertown, there were more divergent views among the subcommittees about educational objectives.

I did not observe this group engage in direct group self-assessment; few problems or difficulties were expressed throughout the meeting. I found, however, that the leaders of the subcommittees sought confirmation of their subcommittees' activities and of their own leadership efforts in various ways. Direct feedback was sought from the superintendant with such questions as, "Is this satisfactory?" and "Is that going to meet your approval?". Comparisons between themselves and other districts were brought up; "How are the other groups in the consortium doing?" and "Are they as organized as we are?". The encouraging responses to these questions reinforced the group as a whole. The subcommittee leaders also found their efforts confirmed as they identified with each others' experience. The leaders of the parents and community subcommittees echoed each others' attitudes toward the skepticism they had encountered in their groups. All of the subcommittee leaders expressed reservations about the ultimate success of Project 81, but they agreed to give it their best try with the superintendant's help.

F. Bucks County Consortium

A consortium level meeting was held on June 27 to merge the five district lists of competency statements. All the districts were represented by the local administrators and an additional committee member (all from the community subcommittees, with only one exception). The consortium coordinator, Norm Fairman, brought the meeting together. Other visitors included an administrator from the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, the director of the Project 81 from Harrisburg, and myself.

The group task was to organize the competencies developed by all the districts. The following ground rules were passed out at the onset of the meeting;

- 1) Rotate reading of statements by district,
- 2) District that reads statement, if acceptable, will become the final statement,
- 3) If unacceptable, other districts may offer their statement,
- 4) Disagreement on statement indicates an original and will be treated as such,
- 5) One category will be dealt with until statements are exhausted

The consortium coordinator explained that for each category, the group should consider general competencies first and move to more specific statements later.

It would appear to be a simple, mechanical process handled swiftly. However, the confusion experienced at the district levels concerning both the basic nature of competency statements and the use to which the lists would be put surfaced and immediately at this consortium meeting. For the first two hours of the meeting the process dragged as time and again issues were raised concerning the nature and scope of the statements (how specific or how general should they be? How important was the form of the statement? Should the statements be merged if incomplete?) and the implications of the sorting process (What should the criteria for selection of the lead statements be? Should all similar statements be merged automatically? Should these competencies be considered as minimum graduation requirements or as optimum standards?).

Despite the considerable efforts of the coordinator and the two administrators from the Neshaminy district to facilitate the group task, there were so many unanswered questions about the sorting strategy that the process nearly broke down. A major difficulty appeared in the approach of the group leaders to these problems. In face of the enormity of the task (hundreds of statements to get through in one day in committee), the leaders were understandably task-oriented and persisted in redirecting the group back to the task, rather than deal more fully with the questions being raised. In truth, they did not have the answers. Difficulties were acknowledged by the group leaders, but their reaction to an impasse was to consider it a digression ("There's too much editorializing and dialogue; too much discussion on one point; let's get back on the track."). Their reaction to basic questions was to provide another rule for the sorting process.

Just as these conflicts were coming to a head, the project director from Harrisburg arrived and provided sufficient answers (including information new even to the consortium coordinator) to get the group "back on the track". She explained the next steps in the Project 81 process, how the lists would be computerized and reviewed by all the other model districts as well as by the Citizens' Advisory Committee; how the lead statements would be distributed (as opposed to the whole list) in a state-wide survey; how the matrix would be used by the other model districts and refined in the future. In short, she provided enough information for the group to develop an agreed upon sorting strategy to make the rest of the work much easier. The group in no way challenged her presentation; they were all too glad to have tangible information on the project and how the

competencies would be handled.

After a much needed lunch break, the group was able to go to work again having established a new set of ground rules (eg. they would merge as little as possible to provide as many lead statements as they could; general statements would be taken first followed by subsidiary statements). Once the group understood the utility of their efforts, they could proceed easily with the task that had just that morning proven so difficult. The process became almost automatic. "Now we're perking. Let's not stop" was the tone of the comments from various districts as they neared the finish of the job.

G. Analysis

In the Project 81 committees that I observed, I found two sets of evaluative questions that were raised; those directed to determining the quality of group efforts (How well are we doing? Is this good enough? Are we on target?) and those directed to understanding the value of their contributions to the Project 81 (What's going to happen to our input? How can this add up to anything? Will the computer reject our statements?).

These two concerns reflect two major theories that dominate the field of small group research. The questions addressing the quality of members' efforts might be derived from the individual drive to evaluate opinions and abilities as posited in Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954). One might extrapolate on this theory to the group as a whole and claim that small groups seek to evaluate themselves, to determine the quality of their efforts.

The Social Exchange Theory developed by Homans (1950) is called to mind by the groups' concern over the utility and value of their contributions to Project 81. A major assumption in this theory is that individuals contribute their efforts to a group endeavor in order to reap particular rewards. In these volunteer committees, it appeared that the members sought the reward of meaningful contributions to the improvement of the educational system. Their interest in understanding the value of their efforts reflects this concern.

These two sets of questions suggest that the groups wanted to do well at meaningful tasks, but they did not know how to determine if their effort were of any value or use to the project. They lacked any criteria with which they could assess their efforts and consequently relied on the judgments of the project administrators. The one exception lies with the students who were the most cohesive group I observed and the most independent.

These students were able to assess their efforts without the help of "outside expert opinion", relying on their own criteria for quality and value. It appeared they understood their place in the project as "students" and assessed the quality of their work by the extent to which it represented their student opinions.

The less cohesive the group, it appears that the more prominent and necessary is the leadership function of evaluation and feedback. This may be a significant leadership function that can be both used and abused.

Footnotes for Chapter III.

¹Neill, Shirley Boas, Competency Movement; Problems and Solutions.

²Pennsylvania Department of Education, Project 81.

³Ibid.

⁴A competency is defined as "the application of skills and attitudes to situations one might encounter in adult life". A competency statement is framed by the completion of the following sentence, "When a person receives a high school diploma, he/she should be able to..."

For example,...be able to use basic mathematical computations in order to keep a personal record of all taxes paid on goods purchased; and ...be able to use well developed interpersonal relations skills to conduct and lead a meeting of a group which has a specific task to achieve, ref. Fairman, 1977.

⁵Although they had been selected by the school administrators as representative of the community.

⁶The four subcommittees sat apart from each other in the four corners of the room.

Chapter IV. The National Center for Appropriate Technology

A. Background

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) was a non-profit organization chartered in 1976 to promote "the development and application of technologies appropriate to the needs (and resources of low income communities"¹, particularly those affected by increasing energy costs and shortages. The NCAT is currently funded by the U.S. Community Services Administration under their Emergency Energy Conservation Services Program. In keeping with its community-oriented mission, the NCAT (located in Butte, Montana) is seeking to regionalize its program operations and maintain local outreach through the national network of Community Action Programs (there are approximately 1000 Community Action Agencies and Community Development Corporations in this country).

The NCAT organizational goals include the following:

- develop viable short and long term appropriate technology solutions to energy and energy-related problems experienced by low income communities
- expand, in a comprehensive and systematic way, appropriate technology solutions available to low-income communities which address all aspects of the ecosystem and the political economy
- promote social, economic, and technical self-reliance and self-determination on the part of low-income communities
- encourage the dissemination and transfer of appropriate technologies to low-income communities and to the broader community
- encourage decentralized, community-based generation of small-scale technologies
- generate an awareness and appreciation in the nation of the value and use of alternatives through appropriate technology²

The NCAT strategy has four basic elements: an information and communications effort; provision of technical resources; administration of a small grants program for community experiments and demonstrations; and an outreach component.

The origins of the NCAT stem from the ideas of a notable scientist/advisor to Senator Mansfield in 1974. Agreements were reached with the CSA to fund a planning process to develop guidelines for an organization that would foster an alliance between appropriate technologists and low income people. The organization was to be an agent of the CSA and a subdivision of the Montana Energy Research and Development Institute (MERDI).

The planning committee was made up of various Community Action Program (CAP) representatives, technologists, and government agency staff. This diverse group of people ultimately identified with the mission to such an extent that they developed a proprietary attitude toward the organization itself. Disregarding the anticipated institutional arrangement with MERDI, this planning committee elected a board from its own members and eventually incorporated as an independent, non profit organization.

Since its incorporation, board activity has been dominated by the control of CSA interests. Despite its corporate independence, the NCAT was still dependent on CSA for its funding. Efforts to diversify the funding base were repeatedly thwarted. Because of planning delays, operations began approximately one year after the anticipated start-up date (thus forfeiting their first year's allocation from CSA).

My observations spanned the first year and a half of NCAT operations.

After a second round of elections for board officials, the composition of the standing committees remained basically intact from the beginning. I concentrated my study on the Board's Program Committee because it was composed predominantly of original board members³; represented a fairly good cross section of the Board itself; and was a key board committee.

The Program Committee met about every two months, sometimes more frequently. The original six members were joined in the last year by three new board members; while three committee members (two old, one new) resigned from the Board. The committee was often visited by board officers and staff representatives. Cross-fertilization with other board members also occurred through joint committee assignments.

The Program Committee's primary functions included;

- developing program direction (policy and goals),
- disposition of major funding expenditures,
- general purview of operations, and
- conduit for innovation within the organization.

The chairman of the Program Committee was designated by the first Board Chairman with the approval of the Board. This appointment was based on the neutrality and integrity of the candidate, not on his leadership ability⁴. Other committee members volunteered. The committee originally met as required by the Board when assigned committee tasks. As the Board grew in size and the inability to formulate policy persisted, more responsibility fell to the Program Committee.

My familiarity with the NCAT began at one of the planning committee sessions in 1976. Since then I helped in drafting the initial NCAT proposal to CSA and in developing NCAT policy guidelines. John Hershey is one of the original ten board members, the first board preseedent, and an active member of several committees, including the Program Committee. Through him and with the permission of the Board, I was able to collect notes, minutes and tapes of various board and committee meetings.

My analysis is based on episodes excerpted from three Program Committee meetings in May and November 1977 and February 1978. I draw on background data when necessary but the focu is on analyzing six selected self-assessment episodes through a descriptive framework discussed below.

B. Descriptive Framework

After my observations of the Project 81 committees, I began to consider the various dimensions of self-assessment activity, seeking to classify them in a vein somewhat similar to Bales' efforts at coding his small group observations⁵. I identified four dimensions of self-assessment activity;

Topic under assessment

Motivation behind the assessment

Assessment process

Consequences of the assessment

Topic under assessment. Group self-assessment must be directed toward facets of group activity. This could be goals, policies, products or group process. The topic might be a specific item or occurrence (eg. a newsletter or a hiring practice) or a more comprehensive subject (eg. the relation of a group to its clientele or sponsor). The topic of self-assessment might be a past or current activity.

Motivation behind the assessment. There could be a variety of reasons for engaging in self-assessment. Most important seemed to be how the assessment was instigated. The group could be responding to the concerns of its leadership, feedback from people outside the group, or confusion or disagreement among the group members themselves.

Assessment process. I anticipated that assessment criteria would emerge with which the group would elaborate various topics. There might be a consensus or disagreement over the criteria or the evaluations. The assessment process might include a problem statement, perhaps a diagnosis or prescription as well. It was likely that some assessments may not be completed, left unresolved or deferred.

Consequences of the assessment. If the assessment was completed, some consensus or majority sentiment would have been reached and actions taken or at least planned by the group in response to the assessment. The consequences could mean a change for the group or perhaps a reaffirmation of current positions.

These tentative hypotheses were placed in the form of a checklist that was used to classify the episodes selected from group meeting transcripts.

My basis for selecting the episodes was not fully developed. I was looking for exchanges among three or more members of the group where some facet of group activity was being reviewed or considered. As I accumulated these episodes I expected to be able to better focus my analysis of group self-assessment, possibly observe some patterns emerge that would help me understand when and how different types of self-assessment occurred.

The following episodes from three NCAT Program Committee meetings are presented and analyzed along the lines of the above dimensions. They have been selected from a larger set of episodes and are fairly representative of the kinds of self-assessment activity that the NCAT Program engaged in. A summary analysis is presented at the end of this chapter.

C. May 1977 Program Committee Meeting

The May Program Committee meeting was a two-day session held in Washington at the National Center for Community Action. This was considered a comparatively long meeting for the committee. Members attended different segments of the meeting; non-committee persons also dropped in at various junctures. There were early departures and late arrivals.

The meeting occurred, despite interruptions, in two general stages. The first stage was run according to a 13 item agenda, while the second stage was an open exploratory process. The selected transcripts are of two episodes occurring during the second stage of the meeting when three committee members were present along with the staff director. The first episode presents the group assessing an aspect of board policy, specifically

certain ideological biases that affected the Board's relation with other corporate entities. It is apparent that a conflict had developed in the Board that was limiting opportunities for interaction with a broader spectrum of organizations.

Episode 1.

Cecil. Alright, let's talk about some of our limitations as a board. We have some ideological biases that make it difficult for someone like Sam, David, maybe Harriet and perhaps others to accept, to work easily with people who represent establishment kinds of organizations, based on some Marxist analysis, based on style differences... Those same reservations probably operate on the other side. That's one, that means, as a board, we're gonna have to minimally come to a majority sentiment that this is necessary and I'm sure we can do it.

Bob. You're playing the devil's advocate...Somewhere along the line, the two roads are gonna have to come together. I mean if we got two paths in this country, we're espousing one and the establishment is espousing another, you're not going to get anything done until the point when they intersect. Now what we're offering them is a way to intersect with the least damage to both. It's an interface without abandonment of your own ideals, ok?

Jack. Nobody is giving anything up. Everybody is moving, growing.

Bob. Remember we're the ones who are going to be identifying the problems. You're going to run into opposition, want the Center to do everything.

Cecil. Do you remember the first...Let me tell you the history of this whole thing. We were called together in Butte as a planning group and Jerry Plunkett, sort of the father of the whole concept, was, is the director of something called MERDI. And he and Dick Saul and Sam Love had been volleying this concept between them and there was some sort of agreement. The presumption was that Jerry's organization was going to, that the NCAT was going to be a component in MERDI, ok? People began to wonder what the Board of MERDI looked like.

Jack. Exactly what you would expect, corporations, high rollers and locals.

Cecil. All very establishment types and here they were and some people who get engaged in various kinds of combat with these kinds of organizations, they said, "My God, these are the tormentors."

Jack. They resolved to continue the battle.

Episode 1. (continued)

Cecil. They said, "Look we're not going to entrust something as promising as NCAT to these people who are going to debauch it". So that started a whole dynamic. We established our autonomy the "we're not going to let you or any other group destroy" which led to a whole series of struggles that resulted in the NCAT being an independent, non-profit corporation with a contractual relationship back to MERDI, ok...so that's part of the problem that's still with us. There is a feeling that there is an enemy, you know. We haven't dealt with the whole issue of who the enemy is really...

Bob. But there is the idea that you can have no contact with the enemy without becoming tainted yourself. I've learned that. You don't sit across the negotiating table...

Cecil. That's why I wanted to tell my long story. At one point I started laughing and said, "My God, do you mean those guys are willing to get into bed with us?" My sense was that we were a rough enough group to be able to take them on man for man. We could damage them if they wanted to fight with us.

Jack. We could help them.

Cecil. I guess I'm personally very much in the middle. Until you've had a good fight, you don't know how tough your opposition is. So I'm virginal and I'm ready to go out and try it, if we need to. But some people want to say that we've been raped and we're not willing to take those risks. That is an issue that's a board growth thing that we're going to have to go through. I don't know where we'll come out.

Jack. The Board isn't growing fast enough.

This sequence concerns the chairman's reflections on the major factions in the Board based on "ideological biases". One faction professes a radical, near Marxist approach spurning cooperation with the "establishment" organizations such as MERDI and major corporations. The other faction, representing those in the meeting, is more moderate politically, seeking above all to put NCAT into action and willing to cooperate with a broader spectrum of entities to achieve their ends. Cecil acknowledges the need for some resolution and provides a problem statement to the group. Bob underscores

the importance of bringing the factions together "with the least damage to both". The chairman then provides an historical diagnosis of this split (largely for the benefit of the listening staff director). Jack interjects a few interpretative comments. The problem is further elaborated as one where the more radical faction has a "feeling that there is an enemy" and this defensive attitude has infected the Board. Both Bob and Cecil carry this image further. Cecil then explains where he stands and how he came around to a more moderate position over time.

The topic of the assessment is a dimension of the group process - the identified conflict among group members. Apparently this conflict had hampered previous board relations with MERDI and is likely to hinder future relations with other corporate entities. This assessment is instigated by the committee chairman as part of a discussion on board limitations. There is no explicit assessment criteria as expected, but repeated problem statements are made and a diagnosis follows. While there is an agreement among this group concerning the severity of the conflict and its history, no recommendations or prescriptions are made.

The next episode concerns committee process. At issue is the need for more continuity and focus in the Board and Program Committee activities. The need to differentiate uncertainties from certainties is a major thread that reappears in subsequent meetings.

Episode 2.

Bob. There are two options (yeh). Present them with the options, laying them out as clearly as possible. Clearly delineate them so that we can discuss it and discuss very objective positions.

Episode 2. (continued)

Jack. One of the things that's going to facilitate this process moving along is this; any time that we have a certainty in the system, that is, something that is certain that we know about, we want to articulate that certainty. Good or bad, that doesn't make a difference. The more we nail down in the process the certainties, the more we can isolate the uncertainties, the better focus, if you will, the Board will have...My feeling is that we'll have the propensity to move. We will be able to go some place as we deal with certainties. We can do well when we deal with certainties, whether the certainties are good or bad, it makes no difference. Our talent and skill will be better than anybody else. We have to learn how to handle uncertainties at this point. If you can't solve a problem, at least change the problem into something else that you can deal with.

Bob. Yeh, Jack. You know one of the things - I like the idea. I'm thinking of it in a different sense. One thing that our board has not learned is how to differentiate between what we have decided upon and what we have not. And we constantly go back over things that everybody thought were certain...and they are usually brought in through the back door. They are not even put in the form of a motion...If we could put down a list of things that we have arrived at and build upon that. We're making the step ever higher. Let's not go back, skim off the top and throw away, then try to build up again...This happened today, I have certain things that are very clear in my mind and others...

Cecil. What I'm going to try to do is write this up in a statement that will be clear and concise and take it from here...That's one of the problems we've had as a group. The cabal will form and then hatch something here and then unveil it to some of the other members of the Board who haven't had time to spend...

In this episode, Jack recommends a constructive change in group process. He suggest that nailing down certainties (what has been decided; what is known to the group) will enable the members to deal more directly with the remaining uncetainties (decision points, ambiguities). Bob provides a basis for the recommendation by reviewing the chronic problem of repeating past deliberations and decisions when there is no mechanism for recording or recalling previous actions. "And we constantly go back over things that everybody thought were certain". The chairman agrees to follow-

up on this with a written report of the two-day session in the spirit of their discussion. He also suggests that this forgetfulness is used by some members forming "the cabal", picking up on Bob's statement about "the backdoor" entry into board discussions.

The topic of this brief assessment is again a group process- the problem of group recall and follow-through. Imbedded in Jack's recommendation is the negative assessment that Bob then articulates about the group. While again consensus is evident and Cecil agrees to record committee actions, this produces only a short term effect. The problem persists beyond the session.

D. November Program Committee Meeting

The Program Committee met again in November, one week prior to the full Board meeting in San Francisco. The agenda for the meeting included seven items volunteered by one committee member, a request to deal with old committee business and issues of importance to the visiting board chairman. Some staff members and other observers were also sitting in at the meeting.

Old business was not dealt with since there was no available record of past committee work. The session evolved as a collection of items brought forth by the board chairman and the committee member. Topics ranged widely from moving the center from Montana to details on the staff's writing style in NCAT publications.

The first selected episode followed the handing out of several

examples of staff publications at the beginning of the meeting. The chairman solicited comments and Harriet began. This critical discussion on publications touched on the more general theme of how the NCAT relates to the public. The group held a variety of views on the success of the publications. No shared group assessment was reached.

Episode 3.

Harriet. We're supposed to make practical use of the information especially when people are not given to reading alot or to reading technical publications that it doesn't make it easy for people to do the actual work. Because there aren't enough diagrams to provide clear step by step explications. It doesn't have enough definition of terms... And I think that there was a real lack of graphics.

Jim. I just want to ask Gary if he would also comment since he got a copy and he's into...

Gary. Yeh, I'd like to comment and also to the Board. We're getting into things we shouldn't. As far as the woodburning goes, people who utilize wood thought it was a good document...

Jim. You thought the wood burning document was...

Gary. I thought that was very valuable to me...We went around to all four of our wood stoves and did an analysis on the basis of that...

Cecil. Ok, Tony?

Tony. In attempting to understand the document's insufficiency, was there anything technically wrong with the document?

Sam. I think, yeh, it was like there was a listing of...I don't know furnaces in detail, but I said it just lists these modifications to make to your furnace and I honestly wouldn't know how to find that part of the furnace. I'm not sure...David had his engineer review it and David can give you the comments that his engineer from the Institute of Local Self-Reliance thinks are pertinent and I..don't want to speak for him.

Cecil. Was that critical? Just a point of clarification, was that critical in terms of the delivery and therefore that the information was not presented cogently, adequately so people could pick it up and use it?

Sam. I don't want to try to speak for the engineer. David and I talked about it and he said that part of it had to do with, uh, the,uh,

Episode 3. (continued)

Sam. ...development didn't really make a contribution in that this information was available from a different number of sources in better form and beyond that we talked about it in some detail but I can't talk about the specific details. You'll have to talk to David about that. The woodburning thing. I thought that was much better than the furnace efficiency, much more detail. It was longer. Things were described a little bit better. It was still weak in some of the areas I talked about. I think there are commercially available books on woodburning that provide many of the safety hints that I've seen. There are some, probably, government publications around at this point. I feel that if we're gonna have this operation and we are gonna put all that money and all that time and the support that it's got to be top quality work.

Tony. The reason I asked the question is that I need to be clear whether it was technically accurate or it was simply inaccurate...During our planning process a year ago, we discussed the positions I remember that we would take the reports and translate into common everyday language. And the question I have is, we have a position, a writer or editor, don't we?

Jim. We're hiring, we have one writer. We're hiring another technical writer, we don't have a publications person yet. But it fits into next year's budget.

Tony. But we had one in this year's budget?

Jim. No, we didn't.

Sam. We've always considered it essential...

This episode represents a group assessing a specific product, the documents on furnace modifications and wood burning safety tips. A variety of assessment criteria are offered (personal experience, technical accuracy, style, expert opinion, comparison with other publications). Although Tony, the Board chairman, presses the group to first assess the accuracy of the texts, he does not get a direct response. Other criteria continue to be brought up and the group does not come up with a consensual assessment. Tony recalls the importance of style and delivery for the average person as a key criteria (echoing Sam's concern over the useability

of the document). The discussion then turns to the discovery that a publications writer has yet to be hired on to the staff. There is more discussion (three times the length of this transcription) as more members contribute opinions. Eventually the session turns to several simultaneous sub-group discussions.

In the next episode the general thread of relating NCAT to its public through the grants program is picked up. Tony introduces his concerns to the committee as a mechanism to get the committee to deliberate. Several assessments are made in other areas integral to funding.

Episode 4.

Tony. I equally am dissatisfied with the grants program, in the sense that I've asked the question, "What are we funding and why?" and I have not gotten an accurate answer to that question because I think the staff is still developing direction. But I think that to me is the crucial question. Let me tell you the reason why and I don't see an offshoot at this point in time at least in the near future... I'm equally concerned that the kinds of things we're funding today; on one hand, I hear we're funding lots of CAP agencies. On the other hand, I hear that less than 50% of the grants go to CAP agencies. My concern is that we have a balance. I'm not sure who or where the emphasis for the grants are at this point. I'm not saying that I'm pro-CAP, I'm saying that there needs to be a balance plus I'm concerned about the rest cause we obviously have a need for that...

On the one hand we seem to be expressing our dissatisfaction at this massive task. And maybe the way to handle that is to create a sub-corporation to do it. And we could do it just to manage grants. I think the question to me is what is our goal?...

Cecil. Bob?

Bob. Yeh, I think we've touched on some very basic things that we haven't touched on for awhile. We've gotten our name out, we've given out a lot of little grants and a lot of people know us now... Jerry Plunkett said, "there's no place that smaller members and others... can go to get grants to build a little widget!.. They don't give to one-tenth of one hundred of the people we do."

Episode 4. (continued)

Moses. If they're going to violate the law it's going to be for millions.

Bob. I'd like to see a discretionary fund...with a network out there now, there will be information fed to our outreach workers...

Cecil. Let me just break in by saying that I think I'm detecting consensus on the idea of making a major change in our grant making policy and mechanism and that we're not quite sure on how to do it and in what order. So I think we've come that far and now I think we ought to be concentrating on what it is we want to recommend to the Board...

Moses. I think there may be a consensus of concern about grant making but I detect a wide diversity about how to resolve it. I'm concerned about the technical staff as well as the size of the grants.. evaluation is just a vital part of grant making...I agree we can't get out of the business..

The conversation continues in this vein for three times the length of the above transcription. When Olga speaks, subgrouping occurs and no resolutions are made. This product assessment of the NCAT grants program is initiated by the Board chairman. Stating his dissatisfaction and that of the group's with the grants program ("We seem to be expressing our dissatisfaction at this massive task"), Tony reveals several assessment criteria; a balanced funding policy (regarding both types of projects and sponsoring agencies), proper management, accessibility of grants. Bob makes an equally long commentary (although edited for this transcript) picking up on the chairman's concerns. Moses corrected Cecil's observation that a consensus has been reached and notes "the wide diversity" of opinion regarding the grants program and how it might be transformed. Indeed it appears that the group is not clear on its assessment of the current program (the chairman notes that he needs more information) nor on the dimensions of a new one. Members continue to express their own judgments

without seeking a convergence of opinion; no conclusions are reached in the absence of shared criteria.

E. February Program Committee Meeting

The meeting in February was held the morning before an executive committee hearing on the performance of the NCAT executive director. Several Program Committee members were advocating for the director and wanted the committee to be present for the afternoon hearing. Several staff present that morning were seeking comments on various operational issues that would require board decisions.

The Program Committee meeting agenda had two parts; the staff's report and unfinished committee business. The staff's agenda centered on the use of grant money to be given out in the next year. Decisions had to be made on the scope, frequency and priorities of grants. The unfinished business of the committee was not well defined since the committee chairman was absent and a pro temp chairman had been appointed by the Board chairman (as opposed to the committee chairman). In fact the committee never dealt with unfinished business for it wished to prepare for the upcoming hearing. These preparations were made at the end of the meeting and in executive session and as such were not recorded.

Two self-assessment episodes have been selected from this meeting. The first occurs at the beginning of the session when the committee asks the staff to present its views on possible granting operations for the next year.

Episode 5.

Hiram. So all of these...training, technical assistance and workshops, conferencing, information, etc, economic feasibility, small-scale experiments, innovative fieldwork, planning grants, evaluation research, publications are within the general framework of our RFP...Secondly, special RFPs. We're recommending that we allocate atleast \$100,000 purported for large demonstrations. An example of that would be Sunday or the lower east side of New York. And another \$100,000 be set aside for special impact...

Lina. This Board is infamous for deciding on a flash that they'd like to give some money out like \$10,000 to Seabrook you know for the solar unit, what have you. How does that fit in because you can believe that the Board is going to want to do that every now and then.

Hiram. Well, there haven't been that many Board generated...

Bob. You're looking for guidelines. Yeh, I got a problem with your precise delineation of categories and allocated funds being so precise. You know for example you get one that comes in to anyone of these categories and with the limitation of \$50,000 for every grant...I really foresee that as causing difficulties. Where's the cut off, I mean, who's to check? Ok, so you got one that comes in at \$64,000 send it back and say our limit is \$50,000 for this year, when it can't be done for \$64,000. I mean what was the rationale and the reasoning, the problem that created the need for delineating the appropriations?

Hiram. Well, I started out with the premise that we had a million three to spend.

Bob. I've got no problem with saying we ought to fund this kind of thing and maybe even keeping a log or chart and saying well we've funded on here, well we haven't funded one over here, well we ought to look at that. I ve just got a problem with the \$50,000 for this and \$50,000 for that, I really do. You're also saying that these are practically of equal importance; I think some are of more importance and I don't want the Board to get into the bag of trying to argue...

Hiram. Unfortunately given the amount of funds available none of these categories of \$50,000 are really that large. \$50,000 isn't that much money.

Jim. Could I make an offer of a kind of motion?

Dennis. Yeh, I'd just like to remind us that we're at 12:15 now...I want to push that through and I just want to do it really quickly. Can't we really concentrate our energies on what we've got to do...I guess I'd like to make a motion. Can we readjourn (sic) at some later time.

Proposed group product - the grants program and its guidelines - is being discussed in this episode. The staff has made a presentation on the next year's grants program. The committee begins to respond with a few related assessment criteria (eg. there is no allowance for discretionary funding; the categories are too constraining). The pressing agenda does not allow for a full discussion of the issues raised by Lina and Bob, however, a motion is passed to eliminate the specific breakdown and funding limitations in the grants program budget when presenting the plan to the Board.

This final episode occurred well into the session when the Program Committee realized that there was a need to present the staff report to the Board as soon as possible. At issue was assuring that the Board provide direction to the staff. Based on past experience, it was acknowledged that staff items were often held until the end of the Board meeting agendas and too frequently deferred to a later date. The controversy developing around the staff director made this issue all the more imperative.

Episode 6.

Jack. We recommend the acceptance of the staff report as presented to us and that we want this on the agenda. We recommend that this be put on the agenda at the soonest possible time.

Dennis.No, it's gotta be first thing, something like that.

Jack. I don't want to lock in somebody who's got an agenda and blow the game, because he won't tolerate our agenda if he's got his own.

Bob. The first item on the agenda is the review of the agenda and...

Dennis.That's right.

Bob. That's right...We'll make that recommendation, namely item two on the agenda.

Episode 6. (continued)

Jack. I understand that. I didn't want to lock in a person who might have another agenda he won't give up.

Dennis. But wait a minute. I'm concerned for staff in this and they've expressed this time and time again that we go through our board meetings and put them off and put them off and finally it ends up that they only get to deal with about half the stuff they want, that they have to get dealt with and they have to go back to Butte without decisions and then this bottlenecks and eventually the staff gets blamed for not acting.

Jack. Let me be more blunt, ok? If anybody has to put anything before this report they have to justify why it's more important than what we're recommending and then they've got to put their GD cards on the table immediately as to why it's got to be taken up before. We are saying as soon as possible and if somebody's got a hidden agenda I want to know what that agenda is.

Dennis. Good point.

Jack. And then, he's got to lay it on the table and if he ain't gonna lay it on the table then he's gonna suffer and he's going to go last and that's my blunt reasoning behind my move.

Dennis. There's a motion on the floor. Is there a second? (second)
Is there any discussion?

Lina. I'd like that repeated.

Dennis. Would you repeat the motion? Oh, that the Program Committee recommends acceptance of the staff report as presented and it be put on the agenda as soon as possible.

This episode provides another example of a process assessment for within the discussion of the motion to put the staff report on the Board agenda, is an assessment concerning the process of agenda formation. The motion is presented and further qualified ("It's gotta be first on the agenda"). Dennis defines the problem for the staff recounting the scenario of previous Board inattention to staff needs. Jack provided a further diagnosis, contending that to operationalize the group's concern, it must address the process of agenda formation at the Board meeting.

Consensus is established in the group and the motion is carried.

F. Analysis

While the descriptive framework appeared too static and simplistic, it yielded an interesting set of observations; that there are two quite different types of self-assessment activities demonstrated in these episodes. The first type is directed toward the assessment of product (eg. the staff publications in Episode 3, the grants program in Episode 4, and the guidelines for grants in Episode 5). These product assessments were initiated by the Board chairman or the staff. Multiple assessment criteria were used and the dynamic of the process centered on developing (or avoiding) consensus around the appropriate assessment criteria. In the two cases where consensus was not reached, no consequent group action was taken. In the sequence where agreement was arrived at (Episode 5), it was certainly influenced by the expressed time constraints.

The second type of assessment that emerged in this analysis was the assessment of group process dimensions (eg. the ideological split in the Board in Episode 1, the group's ability to differentiate certainties from uncertainties in Episode 2, and the process of agenda formation in Episode 6). In these assessments, it was difficult to locate assessment criteria. While there were criteria implicit in individual comments, the focus of the assessment activity was on identifying problems and trying to diagnose them. In Episodes 2 and 6, recommendations for solving the problems were offered. In all of these assessments the group expressed a consensus of opinion.

Footnotes for Chapter IV.

¹National Center for Appropriate Technology, Publication Number 024.

²Ibid

³The NCAT charter calls for expansion of the Board to 27 members.

⁴as confirmed by the first board chairman

⁵Two major digression in the meeting included a discussion with the Washington representative for NCAT on his performance and an interview with a person who later became the NCAT information coordinator

⁶Bales, Robert Freed, Personality and Interpersonal Behavior.

Chapter V. Boston's Neighborhood Marketing Project Team

A. Background

The Neighborhood Marketing Project team was formed to develop public media strategies to promote the regeneration of declining neighborhoods in Boston. The aim of the project was to encourage gradual change by strengthening the housing market in neighborhoods such as Dorchester, Roxbury and Jamaica Plain. These neighborhoods were transitional areas experiencing high rates of abandonment and mortgage foreclosures, although the housing stock remained sound (much of which had architectural significance).

The Neighborhood Marketing Project¹ was funded by HUD under the Innovative Projects program and was administered out of the Office of Program Development (OPD) in City Hall. The principal team members worked in various city departments; the OPD, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), and the Parkman Center for Urban Affairs.

Formally linked through this project, the individual team members were associated long before the grant, bound by their common interests and personal investments in these transitional neighborhoods. Some of the members were district planners at the BRA and involved in the associated Little City Halls (a decentralized system of local government). More than half of the team members purchased homes in these neighborhoods and were actively committed to neighborhood regeneration both personally and professionally.

The Neighborhood Marketing Project evolved as the individual members became more deeply committed to the concept of neighborhood confidence

raising as an alternative to previous wholesale efforts at urban renewal and neighborhood revitalization projects dependent on bricks and mortar. As Hollister described it;

...the Boston planners reasoned that much of their work up to then had involved them in defining and reenforcing negative images of cities and neighborhoods. Their focus on the negative, on community weaknesses, fostered a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Why not, they concluded, try just the opposite--seek to directly affect the psychology of individual residential location decisions; why not try to put in motion self-fulfilling positive prophecy, to build public confidence in the future of areas with sound housing stock, but unstable populations? 2

In 1975, some of the project members while working as district planners at the BRA put together a Jamaica Plain slide show that spawned a popular neighborhood poster. An associated film group produced a half-hour television show on the Jamaica Plain neighborhood that also received positive acclaim³. Writers and reporters from public media slowly began to respond to the overtures made by some members of the team and occasionally printed or broadcast a neighborhood story with a more constructive orientation.⁴

These experiences among others became the basis for the proposal to HUD in 1976 for an Innovative Project Grant on neighborhood marketing. The project organization reflected the informal structure that related the complementary, although independent, activities of the various members. While the grant was coming through, some of the members took on new responsibilities within City Hall. The project director, John Weiss, became deputy director of OPD. Two other BRA planners, John Coggeshall and Bob Rugo, became full time support persons under the grant working closely

with neighborhood residents and prospective buyers. Participation of Ralph Goetze from the BRA was an inkind contribution ; while Bob Fichter of the Parkman Center was on subcontract. Other subcontracts were let to other individuals for film production and public relations as well as to M.I.T. for the evaluation component of the grant (under the direction of Professor Hollister). These subcontractors, while they contributed to the dynamic of the project team, were not considered integral group members.

The Neighborhood Marketing Project objectives remained intact over the first project year. Their relative importance, however, changed. The major project objectives were:

- to encourage local residents to remain in those neighborhoods,
- to encourage people to move into the neighborhoods, and
- to change the negative attitudes of key actors including
realtors, media personnel, bankers, and government officials.

The project, as described in the proposal to HUD, was a research and demonstration effort with a sizeable evaluation component (upon specific request from HUD). Project activities included the development of:

- written pieces (brochures and pamphlets) and graphics
(neighborhood posters)
- conferences and neighborhood tours for key actors and
potential buyers
- an hour long television special on Dorchester and other
short tv ads
- promotion of positive media coverage in local and metro-
politan press and television
- development and maintenance of an informal network of
residents, neighborhood organizations, merchants and realtors

- research on activities of other cities in this vein and on population trends and neighborhood change
- evaluation of project activities
- project support functions

The Neighborhood Marketing Project team met with early successes. By January 1977, given a modest amount of effort, it was possible to leverage positive news coverage in the major metropolitan newspaper that had a recognizable impact⁵. Through the incremental activities of Rugo and Coggeshall in the selected neighborhoods, residents began to respond and take some significant steps toward assuming more responsibility in their neighborhoods⁶. Fichter's activities with key actors blossomed beyond expectation as realtors, bankers and area employers showed increasing interest in the Boston neighborhoods⁷.

After an energetic spring, the project team spent a quiet summer (what might be described as a latent period for the group), meeting once in June and again in late August. In the first meeting the group watched a tape of the tv documentary on Melville-Park a district in Dorchester (and the project's major activity expense up to that point). They discussed the public response to the show. The group's confidence at this meeting was strong, bolstered by the discovery that they were not alone. The back-to-the-city movement was just beginning as the post-war baby boom generation was reaching its family formation (and house buying) stage⁸. Prospects for strengthening the housing market in these neighborhoods could not be higher. Furthermore, other cities, including St. Louis, Seattle and New York were reporting successes with their new "city boosterism" as Hollister has termed it⁹.

At this June meeting, the project team acknowledged that they were not the prime movers of this trend, that what they had been promoting over the past several years and now were watching come to pass, was not the result of their labors alone. As one member put it, "It's like kicking a ball down hill". This acknowledgment was the beginning of some important changes in the group's perspective on their mission and the scope of their activities.

The August meeting of the Neighborhood Marketing Project team was arranged specially through the efforts of Hollister and myself to engage the group in a facilitated self-assessment process. I conducted personal interviews with the project members and from these discussions framed an interpretative "status report" that was presented to the project team in a three hour group session. The report included what I hoped would be provocative questions that could guide group discussion about future project plans and activities. The general reaction to the interviews and the full group session was positive. Several comments were made along the lines of "very helpful..provided me with some good insights" and the like.

Despite the intensive effort on our part and the personal time (approximately five hours of interaction) invested by the project members, however, the formal self-assessment process did not lead to noticeable changes in project operations or strategies. In fact a meeting to plan future group efforts intended to be held soon after the assessment session was cancelled. The fall continued much as the summer had as members worked at their own pace with little communication among each other and no coordination of project activities.

It was not until much later that fall that the project team met together as a group. The two meetings in November were taped and the discussions provided greater insight into the group's effort to assess changes that were occurring in the project orientation and strategy. Analysis of these meetings in the context of the previous months' activities is presented in this chapter.

While I participated in the formal project evaluation, my intervention is not the crux of this case study. My role in the evaluation effort was two-fold; developing the evaluation strategy and facilitating a group self-assessment process. My participation included attendance at group meetings; conducting individual interviews; facilitating the assessment meeting; and follow-up observations in the fall. The data included memos, notes, tapes, publications and interviews over a period of nine months.

B. The Project Team's Attitude toward Self-Assessment

The Neighborhood Marketing Project included a sizeable evaluation component, as part of the HUD grant stipulation for Innovative Projects. An evaluation plan developed by Hollister was submitted with the original proposal. HUD's response to the initial submittal included a request for a larger more comprehensive evaluation effort. The final subcontract to Hollister through M.I.T. designated the following services¹⁰:

- purchase detailed demographic breakdowns for tv ratings of 6 half-hour shows and participate in project activities
- show video tapes and other materials to groups and survey their responses

- analyze research on Boston housing markets
- monitor press and tv coverage of target neighborhoods
- conduct "before" and "after" interviews with key actors
- build evaluation component into major project activities
- draft final report

It can be seen from this Scope of Services that the evaluation component of the project included both monitoring functions as well as research responsibilities. The evaluation effort was an integral part of the project; evaluation activities were to be built into the ongoing project rather than occurring at the end of the project. Unlike the traditional adversarial relationship between project staff and evaluators¹¹, Hollister was both friend and colleague of many of the project members. The project team was actively interested to learn of the impact of its efforts and to some extent regarded the evaluation as an extension of project activities being coupled with its research function.

My intervention as part of the evaluation effort was also welcomed by the project team. The group was accustomed to my presence early in the summer at project meetings and by the time of the individual interviewing the team members were quite responsive to my questions. Without exception, the interviews went well beyond the allotted hour. By the time of the facilitated self-assessment session, I perceived that the group was comfortable with my initiatives and actively engaged in the session.

The group's positive orientation toward the evaluation of their activities (particularly project products) may have derived from what I regard as a striking self-consciousness. At all of the meetings I attended

I observed that all the members brought with them stories or vignettes that demonstrated project impacts. These were constantly being traded during the meetings. I viewed their intent as two fold. The stories certainly contributed to reenforcing members' perceptions of the overall project success. In addition, these stories were being offered by some members on a competitive basis (not overtly however), serving to impress the group with particular project impacts.

The political consciousness of the group further encouraged frequent discussion of project effectiveness, particularly how others outside the group perceived the project and how the group might gear project efforts to create or diminish expected reactions.

The reflective attention of the group tended to focus on project outputs. The group's ability to examine itself in process as a working group was less developed. Since the group operated less as an operational unit and more as a collection of independent affiliated workers, group activities were not given much attention. Furthermore, the leadership function was dispersed across the members and the project director exerted little managerial control over group process.

It is the assessment of both group process and changing goals and strategies that is the center of this analysis. As the group began to develop more effective leadership, resolve interpersonal conflicts and initiate cooperative group efforts, group self-assessment activity started to focus more directly on group process and on the evolution of project objectives.

C. A Context for Observing Self-Assessment

Members of the Neighborhood Marketing Project team were quick to acknowledge that their project objectives and their working strategies had taken shape in a slow incremental fashion over several years of collective activity¹². The HUD grant provided the group with the opportunity to more fully articulate an evolving orientation to neighborhood change.

In December of 1976, the project team sought the reactions of Robert Buzzell and Walter Salmon of the Harvard Business School to their neighborhood marketing strategy¹³. The major issue raised by these professors concerned the identification of the target audience or consumers of the marketing effort. The group found it difficult to define the target group in full. Only one segment could be easily identified - the affluent "young professionals"¹⁴, aged 25-34, considered by Salmon as "discretionary buyers". This was the main target group that had been approached through individual members' efforts up until that point¹⁵. There was sufficient uncertainty about the scope of the target group, however, to lead Salmon and Buzzell to strongly recommend that the project team fully define their target groups and, specifically, build a matrix relating those groups to different marketing strategies. It was hoped that this would provide a mechanism for clarifying project efforts.

In preparation for the scheduled "matrix-building" meeting, Rugo composed a memo in early January¹⁶ underscoring the importance of "generating new buyers" as the major key to confidence raising and eventual prevention of further neighborhood decline. The perceptions of the key actors and of current residents were seen primarily as dependent on the

behaviors of new buyers. The preferred strategy was to concentrate their marketing efforts specifically on potential home buyers while encouraging broader metro-scale attitude change through constructive media presentations.

The planned matrix building session did not result in a specification of the project's target audience and related strategies¹⁷. However, a conceptualization of the movement of new buyers into transitional neighborhoods did emerge. Goetze expanded on the notion of a neighborhood ecology, characterizing home buyers in marginal neighborhoods by the timing of their arrival and their motivation. The spectrum of buyers moved from the first Pioneers to Early Adopters, followed by the Public Mass(or Herd) and joined later by the Stragglers. At that time in mid-January 1977, the Neighborhood Marketing Project team was targetting its marketing efforts to the Early Adopters;

Early adopters are the leading edge, the trend-setters for the masses. They are conscious risk-takers and, in contrast to the pioneers, watching whether others are following on their heels. Whereas pioneers may be independent or secretive (depending on your point of view) the early adopters are sometimes evangelistic, bargain-oriented, able to check things out on their own, eager to sell it to others. Early settlers are more concerned than pioneers with the extent of their similarity with existing residents, and whether other settlers are following (which will self-fulfill the notion that they've found a bargain). 18

After these early winter sessions, the group met infrequently, individuals pursued their particular responsibilities. The project structure encouraged such autonomous activity. While the project director headed OPD, where Rugo and Coggeshall worked full time; Fichter operated out of the Parkman Center; and Goetze was at the BRA. The subcontractors were

scattered about Boston and Cambridge. Little project management was practiced at that time as everyone was operating independently. Gaps and overlaps in activities were not being perceived. The appended compilation of project activities through spring 1977 provides a brief overview of the project team's accomplishments (Appendix II).

My first encounter with the Neighborhood Marketing Project team was at a mid-June meeting. The purpose of the session was to first review the tv documentary on Melville-Park produced for the group on subcontract, and aired on Channel WNCA June 3rd. Professor Hollister was then to present information on his evaluation effort.

This was a session for review of specific group product. Individuals shared their personal reactions to the film during and after the group viewing, exchanging anecdotes about others' reactions and considering the viewing data obtained through a ratings and shares survey, station-calls and a phone survey of area realtors¹⁹.

Hollister presented his understanding of the project goals and his plans for furthering the evaluation of the show, soliciting the group's advice on his plans. At various junctures in this meeting the group also engaged in general assessments about the project activities. There was a great deal of discussion on other people's reactions to the show, both reported responses and conjectures. The group demonstrated a considerable concern for the political ramifications of their efforts, much time being spent judging the show from different angles and perspectives. So many different parties were considered (those in the film, general Dorchester residents, potential buyers, realtors, Boston politicians, the media) and

so many pros and cons presented that it was not clear to me how the group finally assessed the show.

I see this confusion stemming from a new concept of the target audience that had developed since the winter meetings. The term "Pepsi Generation" was used to describe the breadth of the audience they had wanted the film to appeal to. Rather than sharply define the potential home buyer and possibly exclude an important segment, the group had sought a universal, all inclusive approach. By the time of this meeting the group had begun to reconsider this "please all" approach, admitting its political advantages but questioning its effectiveness or merit for their marketing purposes.

Several realtors had been called to elicit their reactions to the show. The results of this phone survey stimulated a discussion on the potential for realtors to change. Most of the group was skeptical. Fichter asked at that point a provocative question about the extent to which the group was addressing itself to the realtors and whether the group might not be missing something, not exercising the potential power they had. This was the first indication that I had of potential dissension in the group concerning the dimensions of the target audience.

In the latter part of the meeting, general impressions regarding the project were shared. Here Goetze introduced the demographic trends and how they interacted with the project's momentum, asking, "Is the project preceded by headwinds or followed by tailwinds?". He and Fichter "certainly sense(d) a tremendous tailwind". This appeared as the first exchange within the full group on the potential impact of the population

trends. The group acknowledged that the numbers were significant (apparently the upcoming 25-34 cohort would be twice the size of previous generations). But no conversation ensued concerning the implications of these figures coupled with the back-to-city trends for the project.

This June meeting was the last full group meeting until the facilitated self-assessment session organized for the end of August. The summer was somewhat of a dry spell for the project. After the airing of the tv documentary there were no major project activities scheduled until the next fall. A couple of group members were away travelling for much of the summer. Individual activities continued at a lessened pace.

According to Weiss, the project was dragging due both to the natural summer slowdown and to organizational problems that had not been sufficiently addressed. The subcontractors had not been integrated effectively into the project. In addition there were building tensions between the project staff and Fichter. Another factor in this dormant summer period was that many of the project activities specified in the grant had been completed even before the funding had come through (belatedly). Consequently there was little pressure on the project members to maintain a steady activity level. They acknowledged freely that they felt they had out-performed the grant requirements and their own expectations as well.

This was particularly true with regard to Fichter's activities at the Parkman Center. Fichter's project responsibilities dealt primarily with sounding the "key actors" in the neighborhoods and in the metropolitan area and encouraging action on their part through frequent communications, seminars, tours, articles, etc. He concentrated on the realtors but also

made contact with the banking community.

At the outset, it was not anticipated that the key actors could be easily influenced and become prime movers in neighborhood regeneration. As indicated in Rugo's January memo, selling the neighborhoods to new home buyers was the key to influencing residents and key actors who only then would encourage the transition within the neighborhoods.

It was surprising to everyone on the project including Fichter that many of the realtors and other key actors took an interest in the potential of these neighborhoods. The demographic trends pointed to a much larger market that could be addressed through more conventional marketing techniques in cooperation with existing key actors.

The implications of these developments were slow to be recognized by all the project team members for several reasons. The summer held few opportunities for exchange among group members. Not only were there few group meetings, but the individual members continued to operate in an autonomous fashion, neither needing nor seeking information about others' activities. This was particularly true regarding the project staff at OPD and their communications with the Parkman Center. The subcontractors also had little communication with each other or with those in the project proper.

Through my individual interviews in mid-August with project team members, it was clear that perceptions varied about the new marketing opportunities. Fichter and his assistant Randy Rose, at the Parkman Center were most aware of the implications for the project. They were enthusiastic about the broad-scale possibilities for metropolitan-wide marketing.

They considered major industries, hospitals and service employers as prime targets for selling the turn-around neighborhoods. Lou Carter, the group's public relations consultant, also concurred with this approach.

On the other side of the spectrum were Rugo and Coggeshall who had been closely attuned to the neighborhoods in Dorchester as both residents, district planners and project staffers. Their orientation toward neighborhood marketing was small-scale and personalized, catering largely to that original target audience of young professionals. They were generally more mindful of the residents in these neighborhoods, preferring neighborhood change to be a slow evolutionary process. Both of these project staffers had the "street level" knowledge that was critical in developing and maintaining the local contacts necessary to the project's success. It was generally acknowledged that the best real estate agents for these neighborhoods would be the residents themselves. Rugo and Coggeshall were seeking to engage the residents more actively in the marketing efforts. They were not themselves hard-sell neighborhood salesmen.

Consequently Rugo and Coggeshall viewed the project's marketing strategy in keeping with their own activities. In their August interviews, it appeared that despite their understanding of the demographic trends and their knowledge of Fichter's accomplishments, they continued to see the target audience as a small group of people, requiring a personalized marketing approach.

Weiss and Goetze represented integrating forces, sharing the perspective that all interests could be served effectively and that the project itself could be expected to evolve without abandoning its basic premises

or compromising strong positions. They saw the necessity of integrating the larger scale marketing approach with the more delicate individualized marketing effort.

This issue of expanding the target audience and consequently the marketing strategies was brought out to some extent in the group self-assessment session held on August 19. For a summary of the session and the interview schedule that was utilized see Appendix III. The session dealt with issues raised in the personal interviews concerning goals, project strategies, program, project administration, measures of success and the project evaluation.

The discussion on goals revealed a continuing confusion about the target groups and their interactions. The following comments, taken from the minutes, provide a view of the variety of opinions and the self-contradictory nature of several observations regarding the project target audience.

Hollister underlined the importance of remembering the existing residents as a significant project target group. Fichter noted that while there may be a problem with sharpening the contrast between old and new residents, he would rather see residents confronted with affluent new neighbors than otherwise. Rugo thought the issue was less to do with a contrast in wealth, but more a question of different personalities working together. Weiss felt it important to be clear that the marketing is not for regentrification²⁰, that the press should not misinterpret this idea. He also noted that the way in which the group represents itself is important. The emphasis should be on conveying that a static neighborhood is

not good; it must always be replenished. Weiss further noted that there was a feeling that they were talking racially, but he feels that the "bulge" is both black and white. Fichter disagreed stating that the "bulge" was mainly white.

Fichter proceeded to discuss the success of the project to date, amazed at the opportunities that were unfolding. While it appeared to be an Ivy League opportunity, what could be done about the blue-collar worker? I noted that it is easy to emphasize white professionals here because they are most like ourselves and it's easier to deal with people with whom we felt comfortable. Weiss noted that the recent Hart survey found that most young people aged 25-34 would like to move but can't. Weiss wondered whether they should try to appeal to that group.

The final discussion on the project's future (whether to go public or become neighborhood consultants or to continue to develop the same strategy in new neighborhoods) was predictably inconclusive. The group was still unable to come to terms with the nature and scale of their target audience.

From this meeting I also gleaned something about the extent to which this issue concerning the target audience was interwoven with other complicated group issues. Most apparent was the organizational problems within the project. The loose structure had encouraged everyone to continue to work independently of one another on their own turf. While the group was committed to basic project objectives, the spirit among several members of the group was more competitive than cooperative. Stronger management and leadership was needed as the project director himself admitted.

While at first the project required little supervision, as various activities began to snowball (particularly Fichter's) and individual territories began to overlap, cooperation and coordination of activities became more and more essential. Recognizing the multiplicity of the target audience and the interrelatedness of the different segments of that audience would necessitate a reorganization of project activities and require a far greater degree of project coordination. Unfortunately, Weiss had little time to devote to the project and less time as his responsibilities in other areas increased.

While several group members commented that the self-assessment process had been extremely helpful and informative, it did not provide the "kick in the ass" that Weiss had hoped for. The expected planning meeting was not held in September and it was not until late October that the group reconvened. This delay was in spite of two major deadlines fast approaching in December. While the summer slowdown might be considered a dormant period, this fall interval could well be an avoidance phase. Granted many of the project team were particularly busy with work outside the project, but issues raised in the assessment session (see Appendix III) that really required resolution were not being addressed by the group.

D. Group Self-Assessment and the Evolution of a Group

The second fall meeting was held on November eight. The agenda called for discussion on potential television advertisements, an update on the Roxbury poster development and a review of the progress on the City-Wide Options Brochure of neighborhoods. A great deal of new information

was conveyed at this meeting pointing the way to impending group changes.

The target audience issue was raised as a consequence of a disagreement over the use of the tv ads. It was discovered that beneath the dispute over the value of the ads was a misunderstanding about the target audience. This following excerpt occurred after a decision had been made to consider a tv spot to advertise the brochure, an information piece on different neighborhoods for prospective home buyers. Discussion is underway on the call-in procedure that would be incorporated into the tv ad.

Bob R. All you had to do with the Melville-Park program is call up. We get hundreds of useless calls and we spent alot of our time taking calls and addressing envelopes and putting stamps on due to basically nostalgia calls 21...

Vicky. Your question is how are you going to allocate your resources and whether you should have people answering telephones rather than having Bob and John do all the shit work.

John W. That's right, if we are going to gear towards that, you assume you are going to get a large number of calls, you're right, I go along with that. It's inappropriate for you two to spend two or three weeks straight on the phone except for where you in fact are getting people who wanted more information and you could provide it and someone else couldn't.

Ralph. On the one hand if people ask for the 3-D²² brochure, we're prepared to mail 500 of them, that's probably a serious indication of interest, whether it's nostalgia or something, it may have secondary benefits. The key thing is, is it handled when someone dials 3445. You can either play the role of the operator, simply, "What is your name, your address, it will be in the mail tonight"...

John C. The point is if you advertise and get 400 calls a week, you can't really talk to people much. But if you advertise in the Globe realty section and you get 20 calls per week, not only are the calls better, but you can talk to-

Ralph. Wait, you're not selling, that's the whole point. There's a misunderstanding here that's important.

John W. Yeh, you think that the purpose of the ads is to sell 3-Ds.

Ralph. It's not.

John C. Well, what is it?

John W. It's to present an image to a broadcast audience.

John C. Then you should have the image without the telephone number.

John W. No.

John C. Why?

Vicky. Or you should have an answering service and forget trying to get feedback.

John W. Fine. Well, I'll go along with that. The whole marketing function has (we've gone through this) has so many different levels and the level of the ad in the Globe is one thing and it is much more specific. You assume that the person is interested in buying. But the ad on tv or whatever you do on tv is simply an image breaker. It's an idea that floats out and I think that to expect the same thing, it's incorrect...

Bob R. You're defining the work differently.

John C. Let them go to City Hall.

Ralph. It will cost us very little.

John W. No. Well, we'll talk about it. That's a specific item. Let's get off of that. But I think that what we should do is that if we decide to go ahead with the ad and we will clearly have to put up a way a translating that in terms of how we are going to respond to it and if we can get two or three people from down stairs or somewhere during the week that the ad is going on, that's what we should do. As opposed to taking up your time. There's no reason why we can't do that, it just takes work. I think that we are incorrect in just saying that the tv ads are the wrong way, cause it's part of the whole package, that's all.

In this episode an operational conflict about the value of call-ins from a tv ad is found to be rooted in the misunderstanding over the intended target group for the ad and the project strategy. Once the conflict is acknowledged it becomes clear that responses to image breaking activities may not require the individual attention that is necessary for specific selling of the neighborhood and its resources. Behind this discussion is

the resistance of some of the group to a second level of marketing activity (mass marketing) that is evolving. The tv ads will not be useful to the individualized treatment they prefer to give to interested buyers. They criticize the tv ads and the call-ins when they don't see the value of the effort to their own activities. They are right as Weiss notes that they should not handle the calls, but not necessarily correct in attempting to reject the usefulness of the tv ads per se.

This discussion first centers on the value of a project output/product. But a resolution of project goals, who is being served, and what is the appropriate strategy is required to sort out the best course of action. Ralph is the hinge; he perceives that there is a misunderstanding that needs clarification (a process issue), a misunderstanding about the purpose of the tv ads. Had this not been recognized it is unlikely that the conflict would have been dealt with at all. As it turns out, John Weiss expands on the purpose of the ads, reiterating that there are indeed two marketing objectives, both valid that are getting confused. A mismatch has occurred. Resistance is still voiced but it is overruled by Weiss who ends the discussion, bowing to the initial issue of allocation of resources and promising that Rugo and Coggeshall will not have to be misused.

Weiss notes that this misunderstanding has occurred before ("We've gone over this"). The conflict is not resolved here, but at least it has been brought out and articulated before the whole group. Conflict remains as Weiss insists on handling the operational difficulties that were created by the conflict (treating the symptom, not the illness).

The rest of the meetings showed signs of impending organizational change. It was discovered that work on both the Roxbury poster and the city-wide options brochure was way behind schedule. In both cases, no coordination of activities had been provided; no one was in charge. The group diagnosed the problems thoroughly; Weiss acknowledged his inattention; and Fichter pushed for solutions. In the case of the poster, a decision was made for Rugo and Fichter to handle the production jointly, a landmark decision for the first cooperative undertaking in the project.

The discussion came to a head with the brochure. Fichter was dismayed to learn that the brochure would not be ready by December; he had been counting on its completion. He needed something to distribute to realtors and employers that winter in preparation for the spring turnover. As it became clear that much work was needed before it could go to press, Fichter exclaimed, "What do we have to do to mobilize ourselves to get the damn thing done? We are missing opportunities now." He immediately began to consider contingency plans, having reached his threshold for tolerance.

An agreement was made to schedule weekly meetings from there on out. Weiss promised to develop a work plan and make assignments. The next meeting occurred almost on schedule two weeks later on November 21.

This next meeting centered exclusively on two proposals presented by Coggeshall and Fichter for revising the city-wide options brochure. Initially the proposals were seen as competitive. The one proposed by Coggeshall was an artsy folder with a back pocket for additional brochures as they were produced. It was considered flexible and creative, tailored to individual needs and requests. The other proposal of Fichter's was a slick

marketing piece intended for a broader audience containing a comprehensive set of information on the neighborhoods. Much effort was spent trying to figure out the differences. Was it content? form? the intended audience? timing? Eventually Weiss and Goetze, the mediating forces in the group, strove for compromise. By the end of the meeting, the group was earnestly seeking to blend the two proposals into one, understanding the ultimatum issued by Weiss for cooperation and commitment to the project goals, all of them.

The central difficulty was in having the full group accept the multiple project strategies that were emerging over time and figure out how to integrate them. This conflict had been brewing since the spring and was not being easily resolved.

The issue was particularly sensitive because it was further manifested in both ideological and personality differences within the group. Until this meeting, the group also lacked the strong leadership necessary to insist upon convergence of opinion and spirit. This meeting represents a head on effort to finally deal with the conflict. Resolution was essential at that point for the productivity of the group and its very survival was at stake.

The following transcript presents significant segments of the meeting. It illustrates the progression from outright aggressive conflict to gradual acceptance of the need to converge. The group has finally engaged in a major process assessment.

A critique of Fichter's proposal is underway at a level of detail

that covers up more basic disagreement-

Ralph. Before we shoot it down, I would say that there is a lot of value in considering the perceptions and tendencies of the average buyer. I think the other thing that I fear is a difference, yours (Coggeshall's) is really selling to pioneers, to early adopters, whatever phrase we use. You're (Fichter) dealing with the coming wave of the mass market which is sure to come and those are the differences that we're dealing with. So you're having a different audience in mind, who has different perceptions, that's really the difference between the two and the question is where do we want to spend our time, for yours (Coggeshall's) is, and certainly we all believe in this, is handcrafted, tailored approach, quite labor intensive and yours (Fichter's) is something that requires a good slick job and you commission 2000 or 3000.

Bob F. I think you're right. You're dealing with handcrafted and I'm dealing with plastic.

John W. Alright let's get back on the track.

John C. I don't think we're off it. I view mine as being plastic. You can turn out thousands of them and you can redo those without having to ...Actually you had a very informative comment and that is how these two fit together. I don't think they fit together at all. I think these are totally competitive proposals (ok) and we either do one or we do the other, see what I mean?

John W. Now wait a minute. Every bit of information, you (Bob F.) want to present about schools, taxes, institutions you can do within a single product or within a flyer...

Ralph. Wait a minute. That's the underlying argument. We may think that the way the average-person-buying-a-house approach is crazy. But rather than say it's crazy and reject it; you have to say, they are coming at it looking for where the hospitals are...

John W. Yeh, but you don't have to list 500 realtors here. Why have it here. They can go to the GD yellow pages. I would venture the same thing is true about churches. By the way, you look under ST. in the phonebook for churches, everyone knows that...

Bob F. Wait a minute. This is a marketing project. I think we've learned a hell of a lot. And one of the things we've learned is to begin with the support of the people we are dealing with...

John C. We're arguing not about content, we have largely the same content. We are arguing about the format, precisely about the format. He has a book. I will count the number of pages, at least thirty-six pages long. And in this thirty-six page, stapled together and bound book, he has all the information. I have a whole bunch of

John C. ...separate pieces, ok and if you decide you want to list 500 realtors, you produce a little 4 page goodies and list all the brokers with their telephone numbers on it. Or if you decide not to use the list and you have already printed it, you pick that little thing up and you throw it away...

Vicky I think the underlying issue is this. You're making a bigger product (Fichter), one that has to be done all at once. And John (there is an interruption). Will you shut up. All these meetings drive me bananas...It's not at all clear to me that one is going to be any faster than the other. I don't know what the production time would be...

John W. So the critical issue has been posed. It's not content, it's time.. (after again characterizing the two levels of buyers) We have to address these kinds of things. And that's the only thing I want to make clear as we proceed on this thing that this is not the young pioneer. This is not us at all. It's BC college, ok? We have to be aware of them and what their tastes are and what their risks are in their mind...

John C. I agree that mine is complicated. I am perfectly willing to agree that mine is complicated. It's complicated because I am firmly convinced that the thing that we are talking about is a very complicated issue, ok? And there are many different purposes that we want to serve by the product that we are producing here and I am also firmly convinced that one object cannot adequately serve all those purposes...

Vicky Who are we doing this for? There are clearly two factions in this room (laugh - I think there are eleven). Are we doing this for Jack Sharpe (an area broker) and only for him? My point is that the format, the audience and the level of detail appear to be connected together.

John W. To go back to the question. The question was, who are we writing this for. Clearly in my mind, it's been an evolutionary thing and that's why what we have now 10 months after we started it is something that we've all looked at and said, "Oh my God, that's not what we had in mind. Well, it probably was what we had in mind when we first started, but it has been an evolutionary thing and we've been learning...

So what we are talking about is two levels of information, one is to attract people into the city by demonstrating that the city of Boston is a good city to live in. Now what we're trying to do is two fold, introduce them into the neighborhoods, but at the same time for that person who wants more information, give them more specific information about what those neighborhoods are like, in terms of schools, in terms of taxes, in terms of mortgages. How do they go about buying a house...That's first clearly, something that we never had in mind when we put this thing together.

John W. Now the question still remains can we accomplish both goals with one document? John has said he's thought that thing through and he does not think you can. Now let's go back. I still think that both goals are valid. I think that you cannot gear the product towards one audience which is just those people that are going to look for a house, very specifically those who are caught on the hook. The product has got to be geared to both...The problem with one is length and time and the other confusion. I think we've got to have both...I think the documents that you both have presented are pretty good examples of your philosophical biases at this point in time, although we've talked about it, it does represent where you are both coming from...

The question still remains which format are we going to go with. Now we have to go into this with a commonality, we're not going to go into this with people not believing in what we are doing, now that is the key. Because we have to have a division of labor where we're going to have a large number of people working...We have to have the sense that we are on the right track. So I want everyone to walk out of here thinking this looks like the right direction, if we don't we'll scrap the whole thing. I mean it. I really do.

Ralph. I want to be sure that what we're talking about is not form.. I had the feeling that what our discussion was was who is the audience, what is the approach to the audience and what is the substance. I don't think myself that it's all either hard core data or image-building stuff (that's right). It's both, I'm sure that overlaps between the two of them...

Bob F. We seem to go like this (he makes a motion with his hands, going apart and coming together again) and then come back together. Let me propose a compromise, something that has a jacket with a pocket so you can put in other things, but something that is complete in itself...

John W. What that is is an attraction getter to come to live in the city of Boston without any specific information on different neighborhoods. ..it's the initial attraction mechanism...

The meeting continues as the group tries to figure out a good compromise format. The ultimate compromise is suggested, that of having the book recommended by Fichter inside the pocket by Coggeshall. A great deal of laughter and joking occurs breaking the tension and clearing the air for a constructive conversation on designing the brochure. It is fully articulated that there are two levels of information that need to be conveyed

to a broad audience of potential home buyers: the initial eye-catching image breaking message about living in Boston neighborhoods and the more specific data and advice on particular neighborhoods and their resources and drawbacks. The group further agrees on delegating responsibilities, setting up a work plan and continuing regular meetings. Trust is restored to the project team.

E. Analysis

This conflict over defining the target audience and appropriate marketing strategies is particularly important for it represents a multiplicity of issues that needed resolution by the group. The evolution of the project team into a working collaborative group depended on turning the competitive conflict situation into an opportunity for convergence. A description of the self-assessment effort of the group demonstrates the progression of this issue and the development of the group as well.

In June, the group concentrated on evaluating group products. Process assessment was not occurring. The group did acknowledge the potential for an expanded market given the new information on the demographic trends. This learning, however, was not integrated into group activities.

Time passed through the summer where no opportunities for the group to act on these insights presented themselves. Individuals continued to perform their project activities at a slackened pace.

A facilitated self-assessment session was organized at the instigation of the evaluators. Further articulation of the new expanded market

and alternative promotional strategies were made. Potential conflicts and significant issues were pointed out by the evaluators and discussed by the group. Yet no immediate changes occurred. In fact the planning session was put off for another two months. This silent period in the early fall might have been an avoidance period.

By the end of October, meetings began again. In face of multiple production delays and continuing conflict among members it became clearer that they were indeed interdependent and the activities of one group member did actually affect those of other group members. The need for better management and increased communication was expressed. Decisions were made to meet regularly, set up a work plan and make joint assignments. Behind several discussions on project outputs lurked the "misunderstandings" that were becoming more directly acknowledged.

Finally, the conflict was acted out head on in the presentation of two competitive proposals. At last the threshold had been reached, allowing the group to perceive the conflict and appreciate its significance. As Schon notes in his Taxonomy of Learning (1974), "the mismatch between expectation and outcome must grow beyond a certain threshold before we perceive error". It is this perception that cues in the learning process for "learning is always in response to error and always guided in part by the wish to reduce error".

The learning response was not totally instrumental. The group sought to understand the conflict, going through several iterations of diagnosis and critique. And eventually a new group strategy emerged as facilitated by Weiss and Goetze.

The direct confrontation in the last meeting provided the opportunity for Weiss to exercise his authority²³. He chose wisely to insist on convergence and compromise, directing the group in a thorough discussion of the differences and commonalities of the proposals.

In review, there were early verbalizations of potential change; the passing of time; reminders and warnings by outside evaluators and more discussion; avoidance and possible entrenching of opposing positions; the expression of symptoms of the conflict (lack of coordination, missed deadlines) and efforts to allay the symptoms; and finally direct confrontation and emergence of critical group norms (such as the mandate for convergence)²⁴.

The ability to directly assess this target audience/strategy issue progressed as the group recognized the need to do so and discovered the underlying conflicts that had to be resolved. The confrontation was as essential to this development as was Weiss' and Goetze' facilitation of compromise.

Although I did not continue observing the group after that last meeting, I did learn from Hollister that a series of project changes occurred shortly after the meeting which confirm that group learning had taken place; the group assessments had been integrated into the group operations. Vicky Kayser (BRA staffer) became increasingly more involved with the project and acted as production manager for the brochure. Fichter contributed written material to the brochure and began to work more closely with Rugo and Coggeshall. Rose became the project administrator, assisting Weiss in project management. Regular meetings continued to be held.

Footnotes for Chapter V.

- ¹This 15 month project is officially titled "The Development of Public Information and Promotional Strategies in Support of Neighborhood Preservation".
- ²Hollister, Robert, "The New Boosterism; Selling America's Neighborhoods and Cities", draft, August 1
- ³Harris, William, "Television Image of the City: The Jamaica Plain Case".
- ⁴e.g. Merton, "Buying that House Down the Block", The Real Paper, and Lupo, Alan, "Sun shines on Boston too", The Boston Globe.
- ⁵Menzies, Ian, "Dorchester Rediscovered as a Place to Live", Boston Globe.
- ⁶including the formation of neighborhood organizations, tours, house banks.
- ⁷including activities with the Boston Mortgage Review Board and the Greater Boston Real Estate Board.
- ⁸Fichter, Robert, "The Young Professionals".
- ⁹Hollister, op. cit.
- ¹⁰excerpted from the Professional Services Contract issued by Boston's Office of Community Development to M.I.T.
- ¹¹Campbell, D.T., "Reforms as Experiments", American Psychologist.
- ¹²established through personal interviews
- ¹³see Parkman Center minutes of 12/20/76 meeting
- ¹⁴Fichter, op. cit.
- ¹⁵The Neighborhood Project team were themselves a part of that target group.
- ¹⁶Rugo, Bob, memo 1/4/77.
- ¹⁷Goetze, Ralph, "Some Notes on Neighborhood Evolution".
- ¹⁸Goetze, ibid.

- ¹⁹ ratings provided by Arbitron, phone survey conducted of area realtors by the evaluation staff.
- ²⁰ Regentrification implies an influx of upper middle class buyers that leads to skyrocketing housing prices and the exodus of long term residents.
- ²¹ Nostalgia calls are those call-ins by persons who want to reminisce about their old neighborhood but are not particularly inclined to consider moving back.
- ²² Triple Decker housing brochure. Triple deckers are three story dwellings, built around the turn of the century and comprising about 20% of Boston housing stock.
- ²³ The emergence of Weiss' leadership marks a transition from a "semi-differentiated/pluralist" leadership structure to that of a "differentiated" leadership structure, based on Crosbie's (1975) terminology. In keeping with Crosbie's explanation of the determinants of leadership emergence, this transition was enabled by the group's increasing recognition and appreciation of different abilities and contributions of various members; the increased complexity of group activities and organization and the crisis that had been developed within the group. A reaffirmation of the group's commitment to the project objectives was also occurring.
- ²⁴ There is an interesting parallel here with the cognitive process discussed by Karmeloff-Smith and Inhelder in their block building experiment with children. They discovered two sets of responses to the rigged blocks that defied simple balancing techniques familiar to the children. "While the child is exclusively success-oriented, ie. concentrating on balancing, positive action-response is all important. It encouraged the child's natural tendency to repeat successful acts...There are rarely any pauses in his action sequences. As his attention shifts to means, however, pauses become more and more frequent in the course of the sequence".

The Neighborhood Marketing Project team demonstrated an acute interest in success and failure in their June meeting; group assessment centered on products. By the fall (as the blocks continued to tumble), the group moved from an action response to a theory response. During the confrontation described in the last meeting the group had begun to "pause", delving earnestly into the process issues that underlay the central conflict; Weiss and Goetze supporting the need to devise a new method or approach to handle the "block-building" problem.

Chapter VI. Conclusions

This chapter presents a set of postulates concerning self-assessment activities in small groups. These have been derived from my experiences with the four case studies and stem from the conclusions drawn in Chapters II through V. For each postulate, necessary definitions are provided along with related evidence and support from the case studies and the literature. The postulates are presented in a progression that moves from propositions about self-assessment to observations on small groups to implications for intervention.

Postulate I. Small groups frequently engage in self-assessment.

I accept Schein's definition of a group as "any number of people who (1) interact with one another (2) are psychologically aware of one another and (3) perceive themselves to be a group"¹. This is in keeping with Merton's definition and carries with it the implication that one group can be "less of a group than another because among them the degree or range of shared expectations, frequency of interactions, compliance with group norms, sense of collective identity, level of visibility or stability of rankings is less"².

Bales further delimits small groups (from 2 to 20 members) as requiring face-to-face interaction that enables members to develop specific impressions of other individual members³. I would add an instrumental characteristic of small groups; their tendency to develop group objectives.

By self-assessment activities, I mean processes of evaluation engaged in by three or more members of a group that focus on facets of group

activities, be they group objectives and policies, group products or processes; hence the term self-assessment. These activities do not generally appear to be conducted in a self-conscious or explicit fashion, but rather appear to be a generic part of small group interaction.

Festinger has proposed that individuals in groups possess a drive to evaluate themselves, their opinions and abilities⁴. On the basis of my observations, it appears that groups also exhibit a related "drive" through efforts to assess various facets of group activities. Group self-assessment differs from a collection of individual members' assessments about the group or their own activities in the group. Group self-assessment involves an exchange among members that leads toward an accepted or consensual group assessment.

The claim that self-assessment activities are engaged in frequently is based on my observations that, in every group meeting I attended across all four cases, the groups demonstrated several incidents of self-assessment activity.

Postulate II. Group self-assessment is not a discrete group process, separate from other group activities, but rather is a part of a larger group learning process.

In concurrence with Schon, "learning is always in response to error and always guided in part by the wish to reduce error"⁵ and as such may be characterized by Vicker's dimensions of control mechanisms that

- receive information
- compare with a standard
- select a response⁶.

These are alternatively referred to by Vickers as reality, value and action systems. Bales corroborates the occurrence of these process through his systematic observations of small group processes of

- orientation
- opinion
- suggestion⁷

that parallel Vickers' three functions.

The assessment processes identified in the case studies were initiated in response to detected errors (eg. the NCAT Program Committee's examination of Board agenda formation and the Boston group's response to missed deadlines, etc). These assessment processes were imbedded in processes of information exchange and led to some form of group response. Never did the assessments stand alone. Group self-assessment served a function in the larger learning process.

I will not attempt to delve further into the different types of learning such as examined by Schon (eg. instrumental, additive, paradigm learning, etc). In general it appears that three basic processes are engaged in when group learning is occurring. While Vickers views them as different types of learning in and of themselves, I see them as interrelated dimensions of all learning processes.

Group self-assessment takes place in this context as a function of learning, associated with the valuation process (as part of Vickers' appreciative system). Self-assessment rarely occurs , if at all for a single purpose but is multi-intentional as a dimension of group learning.

Postulate III. Different types of group self-assessment are initiated for different reasons in different groups.

There are three distinct types of group self-assessment that have been observed throughout the case studies;

Product Assessment

Process Assessment

Goal Evolution Assessment

While this does not stand as an all inclusive list, these types of assessment emerged in the case studies. Product assessment is directed to specific group outputs or program that have been developed or are in the process of being developed by the group. Process assessment is directed to dimensions of the group functioning that enable the group to be productive and satisfy member needs (eg. communication, decision-making, leadership functions, coordination efforts, etc.). Goal evolution assessment is directed to the changing nature of the group's objectives and of its environment, enabling directed group development.

Group self-assessment occurs when a sufficient level of error is detected by the group through one or more of the following ways;

- when recognized leadership initiates the learning process,
- when there is uncertainty or confusion in the group concerning group activity,
- when there is disagreement or conflict among group members about group activity, or
- when pressure is exerted from "significant others" outside the group.

Progressively higher levels of error are needed to instigate product, process and goal evolution assessments. A relatively small error can trigger product assessment through one of the above means. Hence product assessment tends to occur more frequently and to be handled more easily in most groups.

Process assessment requires a higher level of error to be recognized before the group engages in this type of assessment. A significant level of error is needed for goal evolution assessment to take place. Consequently this type of self-assessment occurs less frequently and proves particularly challenging for groups.

It also appears that different groups have different tolerances for error. Groups with more effective leadership, higher expectations for establishing both clarity of pursuit and group consensus, and greater sensitivity to the environment possess lower thresholds for error. Consequently these groups engage in group self-assessment sooner and more frequently than "lesser" groups.

Postulate IV. Product assessment centers on the identification and application of appropriate evaluation criteria.

Product assessment is the most direct and most frequent form of self-assessment. As information is obtained by the group about a particular product error, individuals in the group begin to make judgments based on selected criteria. These criteria may have been formulated during the product planning stage or new criteria may be brought up extemporaneously (to wit the publication assessment by the NCAT Program Committee).

Most often the focus of the assessment is on the selection of appropriate assessment criteria, rather than on an evaluation of the product itself. The dynamics of the product assessment center on the development of group consensus on appropriate criteria with which to assess group product. Note in the NCAT Program Committee's discussion of publications how the board chairman pressed the importance of accuracy as the key criterion, while the other group members offered assessments based on utility, style and uniqueness.

Sometimes an assessment is called into question when information about the product error is not available or not shared by the full group. If the related criterion is considered significant by the group, then the assessment activity may be deferred until the necessary information is obtained.

Assessment criteria for group product may be sought from outside the group when uncertainty or disagreements occur, as when the Project 81 community subcommittee continued to query the project coordinator on the quality and value of their group efforts.

The optimum assessment process requires sufficiently reliable information about the product error and leads to an evaluation based on an agreed upon set of assessment criteria. When the group has completed an assessment, alternative actions can be considered.

The less tangible and discrete the product, the more complex the assessment process, for there will be a greater number of criteria from which to choose, a larger amount of information to gather and process and

probably a greater range of individual position and judgments to consider.

Thus the Neighborhood Marketing Project team found it much easier to assess the television show on Melville-Park than the informal networking activities of Rugo and Coggeshall.

Postulate V. Process assessment centers on the identification and diagnosis of problems in group interaction.

Process assessment occurs as a consequence of a negative product assessment. It is not a matter of applying objectified assessment criteria as in product assessment. Rather, process assessment is an instrumental group activity geared to locating a problem or dysfunction within the group that has affected group productivity or member satisfaction. While assessment criteria may be implicit in the members' comments, the focus of the assessment is on the group members and their interactions.

If the product error is a specific or isolated occurrence, the assessment leads to the identification of a specific malfunction (as when the Neighborhood Marketing Project team determined the Roxbury poster was behind schedule, clarity of instruction and supervision of the photographer were found lacking). When the product error is a repeated occurrence, process assessment can lead to a more generalizable diagnosis of faulty process dimensions (as when the Neighborhood Marketing Project team discovered several missed production deadlines and Project Management and Communications were targetted as problem sources). When a group confronts and accepts such diagnoses, remedial actions can then be considered.

Groups do not tend to articulate specific criteria or standards with which to assess process dimensions. There appears to be a general expectation that group processes are "working" when they lead to desired levels of productivity and member satisfaction.

When a process is identified as not "working", the tendency is for a group to proceed directly to prescriptions for action (such as the immediate suggestion for regular meetings and a work plan brought up in the Neighborhood Marketing Project team meeting in November). However, when the problem is recognized as a chronic one, affecting several group outputs over time, discussion may lead to a diagnosis of the process difficulty (as when the NCAT Program Committee discussed the lack of trust exhibited in larger committee meetings). Such diagnoses often uncover political or interpersonal conflicts that require resolution.

If the group is prepared to confront these conflicts (eg. when effective leadership exists or when the conflict reaches crisis proportions as in the Neighborhood Marketing Project team), then a more thorough and lasting treatment of the problem is likely. If the group is not able to deal effectively with such a diagnosis, the tendency is to avoid the confrontation, defer the assessment, or treat the problem superficially (as with the NCAT Program Committee). Subgrouping may occur as a consequence.

While product assessment may be objectified by dwelling on the assessment criteria and standards, process assessment is more immediately directed to the group itself and to dimensions of interaction among its members. The performance of the group is being examined; members status

and ranking within the group may be challenged. Thus process assessment is a more sensitive and challenging experience for groups.

Postulate VI. Goal evolution assessment involves the group in a recurrent discussion of group identity and its relationship with the external environment.

Product and process assessments contribute primarily to the maintenance and refinement of the group's activities (thus preserving the "dynamic equilibrium"⁸ of the group). Goal evolution assessment confirms group maturation and directed growth. When groups begin to engage in goal evolution assessment, they are responding to changes both within the group (changing membership or member status, changing group potential regarding skills, knowledge and "theories in use"⁹, completion of production phases, etc) and in the groups' environment (including changes in clientele, sponsors, competing groups, etc). These changes can result in discrepancies between the original group goals and policies and the current opportunities, and constraints. As the group becomes aware of these discrepancies (errors), an examination begins that comes to center on the groups' identity and its relationship to its environment.

This examination, as observed in both the CIC and the Neighborhood Marketing Project team, occurs gradually over several meetings (not necessarily consecutively), sometimes in intentionally directed discussion, more frequently as it emerges through related topics. As mentioned earlier, this form of assessment requires the highest level of error (discrepancy) for it to be recognized and addressed by the group.

The CIC Steering Committee came to consider the evolution of its goals as it reached a turning point in its organizational activity and in the context of a facilitated self-assessment process. Discussion continued after the May assessment session, however, emerging in June and again later that fall. At issue was whether or not the group should pursue an implementation phases, sponsoring its own policy recommendations. The decision was reached to continue with the original group objectives, largely the result of the survival pressures facing the CIC that summer.

The Neighborhood Marketing Project team engaged intermittently in goal evolution assessment over a period of several months. Both internal and external changes were occurring. The progress made with certain "key actors" was unanticipated. Furthermore, the group's perspective began to change as new information about demographic trends, other cities' promotional activities and different media potentials were discovered.

The conflict developing in the project team (and aggravated by the process difficulties) embodied the tension between original project goals and methods and the emerging set of opportunities and attendant strategies.

Goal evolution assessment is by far the most complex and sophisticated type of group self-assessment. It requires a group awareness of both internal and external changes and an ability to consider directed change in group priorities and orientation.

Postulate VII. Good groups conduct good self-assessment.

Postulates IV through VI describe normative conditions and consequences of good self-assessment. In general, good group self-assessment results in consensual group evaluation providing the basis for appropriate group action. Good self-assessment is instrumental to the group learning process.

The following qualities of a good group appear requisite for optimum self-assessment:

1. shared commitment to group goals
2. trust in members' intentions and personal goals
3. mutual appreciation of members' contributions to the group
4. recognition of interdependence of members
5. shared motivation to improve the group's productivity
and member satisfaction
6. facilitative leadership

The less cohesive the group, the greater the need for effective single leadership to facilitate group self-assessment. Thus there may be trade-offs between the degree of items 2 through 5 and its strength of leadership in 6. Disagreement and conflict among members during self-assessment activity is regarded as healthy, when the group possesses the above qualities enabling it to resolve differences when necessary.

As a group becomes "more of a group", these qualities are acquired and lead to more effective group self-assessment. This is in keeping with McGregor's view that self-assessment is one of the key characteristics of an effective group, where "the group is self-conscious about its own oper-

ations. Frequently it will stop to examine how well it is doing or what may be interfering with its operations". While an ineffective group "tends to avoid any discussion of its own maintenance. There is often much discussion after the meeting of what went wrong and why, but these matters are seldom brought up and considered within the meeting itself where they might be resolved"¹⁰. Thus a good group is able to recognize error more confidently and engage more frequently in self-examination.

Postulate VIII. Intervention should be geared to develop good groups.

Based on the previous postulate, groups that have yet to develop the qualities of a good group are not able to engage in effective group self-assessment and consequently in beneficial learning processes. Furthermore as pointed out in Postulate III, such groups are less sensitive to error and tend to engage less frequently in self-assessment. Intervention may be helpful in enabling these groups to more effectively and more frequently assess themselves. However, intervention must first be geared to issues of group development.

This position is in contrast to my intervention strategy demonstrated in the CIC and in the Neighborhood Marketing Project case studies. This previous strategy was based on the assumption that good self-assessment would make good groups.

Product assessment poses fewest problems for a group and may in itself require little attention of a consultant. More significant is process assessment where underlying group conflict must be examined. The

intervenor can enable the group to consider the barriers to this form of assessment and work toward resolution through developing some of the group qualities noted in the previous postulate. The intervenor can then help the group make its process criteria more explicit, facilitating the emergence of appropriate group norms.

Goal evolution assessment may not be relevant to groups of limited duration such Project 81 task groups. But it is particularly important for group of longer standing, when internal and external change is expected. In the Boston case study, the changing environment that opened up new marketing possibilities served to aggravate the conflict within the project team.

Goal evolution assessment may be regarded as an opportunity for the group to expose and resolve significant conflicts, but it requires a healthy leadership and a certain degree of group cohesion to weather the difficult transitions. An intervenor can help a group prepare for such confrontations and anticipate future changes in the group and its environment.

The intervenor may find that an examination of how and what a group assesses will provide a sound basis for diagnosing the current abilities and problems of a group. Indeed, demonstrating to a group its own self-assessment process may be an instructive starting point for intervention. The video play-back techniques used by William Ronco in his inquiry approach may be particularly useful here.

The intervention strategy might also include an analysis of the level of error required to trigger self-assessment in the group. However, the primary thrust of the intervention should be toward facilitating the emergence of the qualities of good groups.

Just as observations of group self-assessment may provide a good diagnostic for the intervenor and the group, analysis of group self-assessment during and after intervention may demonstrate the extent to which progress in group development has been integrated into the group learning process.

In summary, this thesis has explored the processes by which small groups reflect on and evaluate facets of their activity. I began with the assumption that effective group assessment is instrumental to effective group activity. I discovered during the course of the research on four case studies that the crucial independent variable is not self-assessment but rather dimensions of group interaction (eg. interpersonal conflict, leadership, cohesion, etc.) to which intervention should first be addressed.

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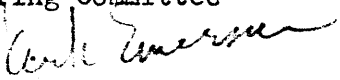
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APPENDIX I.

To: The CIC Steering Committee

From: Kirk Emerson 

Re: CIC Self-Assessment

Date: June 14, 1977

Although self-assessment is never completed (I hope), here are the results from your Steering Committee's self-assessment process to date. In addition, I have included a brief description of the basic approach we have taken toward evaluation, the major steps involved in the process, and some further questions which you might want to address. The assessment questions themselves are included in the results section and the input from your initial design session are appended.

I want to thank you all for letting me participate with you in this process. I am tremendously impressed (awed really) by your commitment to the CIC and to Arlington and by your interest in self-assessment. All of my expectations were exceeded throughout the process. A lot of questions as well as answers were generated which I think will be helpful to you and the CIC's future effectiveness.

The Self-Assessment Process

The underlying basis of this self-assessment process was to engage the CIC Steering Committee (S.C.) members in the design and implementation of their own self-assessment. The purpose of this process was to examine several dimensions of the CIC activity in an effort to 1) assess strengths and weaknesses, 2) consider ways to improve the CIC activities, and 3) provide a basis for future planning. It was not the intention of this self-assessment to evaluate the success or failure of the CIC. Rather, this was to be a functional assessment enabling the S.C. to articulate organizational needs and resources and to take action based on their learning. It has been my hope that such a process of self-assessment will become internalized in some fashion into the CIC operations.

Based on the interest expressed in an evaluation process by several S.C. members, I proposed in early April a self-assessment plan which the S.C. agreed to participate in. In brief, the process went as follows:

1. Assessment Design - a one hour session with the S.C. to determine
a) the dimensions of the assessment (organized by goals, on-going structural functions, and underlying processes) and b) the appropriate criteria for assessing those dimensions. April 14
(See Appendix A for the results of that session)
2. Design Review - a one hour session with the S.C. to go over the questions which I composed based on the results of the previous session. Questions were rephrased or amplified and new questions were added. May 10
3. Self-Assessment - a two hour session with the S.C. which involved answering the questions individually, tabulating the responses, and discussing them as a group. May 17
4. Synthesis - preparation of this summary of the CIC self-assessment and presentation to the S.C. for further discussion. June 14

Summary of Results

It is difficult to summarize the results of this comprehensive self-assessment process. Since several sections have not been fully discussed, the significance of many of the responses cannot be presented here. A few general observations, however, can be made at this point.

- **Goals and Goal Oriented Activities.** The questions concerning relative proportions of time spent on CIC goals generated much discussion on the changes that have occurred over time in the CIC efforts. The need was expressed to determine the direction of the CIC activities in the future, particularly regarding the appropriate emphasis on recommendations and their implementation.
- **Underlying Structural Functions.** From the organizational charts it appears that a restructuring of the CIC organization might be needed to clarify roles and responsibilities internally and in relation to the staff. Fund raising, membership, and coordinating the task force efforts are considered key functions for the Steering Committee to concentrate on in the future.
- **Ongoing Processes.** It is apparent that setting agendas and planning together with decision making and implementing ideas are seen as significant processes that have to be improved.
- **Improvements.** There has not been time for sufficient discussion of the recommendations made by individual S.C. members on how to resolve some of the difficulties which surfaced from the self-assessment. Hopefully, this report will encourage such discussion in the future.

More Questions to Consider

In the spirit of self-assessment, here are some questions regarding where the CIC might go from here in its self-assessment process.

- Is this self-assessment sufficient for our purposes at present? Are there additional questions we now should focus on? Should we get input from the S.C members who were not present? Is it important to expand the process to include the task forces and other CIC committees?
- How can we best use the results of our self-assessment to strengthen the CIC now? Should we refer to the results as they relate to given activities or attempt to more formally address the results as a whole? Can the results help us set our agendas with respect to future CIC planning?
- How might a self-assessment process be incorporated into the CIC activities to guarantee that such self-learning continues? Should we go through such a process annually, biannually, or according to need? Is it really necessary to repeat the process? Could the process be modified or amplified so that briefer, more frequent self-assessment could be made?

Self-Assessment Results

The results from the CIC self-assessment are presented here as tabulated group responses. The questions are presented, then the answers, followed by summary comments and any discussion that came from the group during the session.

Section A. Goals and Goal Oriented Activities

1. On the average, how many hours a week have you devoted to CIC activities in general ? _____ hrs/week

The average hours per week for individual S.C. members varied from 1½ to 20 hrs/wk with a group mean of 6 hrs/wk.

2-a. Given the amount of time you have spent directly on achieving CIC goals, what percentage of that time was spent on each of the four goals?

2-b. Estimate the proportion of time the S.C., as a group, has spent on working toward each of the four CIC goals.

2-c. If you feel the S.C. should spend its time differently re. goals in the future, indicate your new percentage estimates.

<u>CIC Goals</u>	<u>Range of % Time Spent (Mode)</u>		
	2-a your time	2-b past S.C. time	2-c future S.C. time
• Documenting/defining citizen attitudes and concerns	0-50 (20)	25-40 (25)	10-60 (25)
• Providing a conduit between citizens and town officials on town problems	0-25 (20)	10-25 (25)	10-25 (20)
• Providing an organizational vehicle for citizen input	25-65 (25,50)	20-40 (25-35)	10-35 (20,25)
• Producing specific recommendations for town policy	20-75 (20)	10-30 (25)	10-50 (25)

Comments on Question 2a-c

The results from this set of questions raised lots of additional questions and generated significant discussion. There was frustration expressed about the questions; some felt the goals were "so interrelated and hard to separate out. You can't do one without the others."

Many felt there were three distinct time periods in CIC history which made averaging percentage of time overall per CIC goal very difficult. Steering Committee members agreed that the CIC has been and continues to change regarding the relative importance of its goals. Perhaps the goals are cyclic; as an organization, the CIC is not static. The most frequently occurring responses (the modes) suggest that all goals have in the past and should in the future require approximately equal amounts of time (20 to 25%).

For many S.C. members, generating specific recommendations is now the most important goal. Although the defining/documentation of citizen attitudes and concerns was an initial goal, the recommendations have surfaced as more and more important. "They are the proof of whether we have done anything or not." There was discussion on whether the documenting, conduit and organizational goals were means to the end of producing recommendations. However, some felt strongly that the surveys and resulting documentation of citizen attitudes and concerns continue to be substantive goals themselves. Some S.C. members felt a fifth goal, that of implementing the recommendations, is now important. A basic policy issue emerged for the group -should implementation be a CIC goal. Differences of opinion were recognized along with the need to resolve future CIC goal emphases.

3. Rank the relative importance of the goal oriented activities as they have contributed to reaching the four goals. For each activity under a given goal, indicate the appropriate ranking in the space to the right of the activities. (1 = most important, 2 = next most important, etc.)

Goals and Goal Oriented Activities

Ranking of Contributions of Activities

Documenting/defining citizen attitudes and concerns

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| a. conduct six surveys | 1 |
| b. run policy oriented task forces | 3 |
| c. run issue oriented task forces | 2 |
| d. sponsor conferences | 4 |

Providing a conduit between citizens and town officials on town problems (dispersion of critical information)

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. have periodic meetings with agencies and town officials | 3 |
| b. hold both conferences | 4 |
| c. generate <u>Feedback</u> and the Gazette | 1 |
| d. distribute special issues and supplements | 2 |

Providing an organizational vehicle for citizen input

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. run task forces | 1 |
| b. hold open meetings | 2 |
| c. run workshops (eg. for moderators before and after January conference) | 4 |
| d. run the January conference | 3 |

Producing specific recommendations for town policy

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. developing task force recommendations | 1 |
| b. holding the April town conference | 2 |

Comments on Question 3

Regarding the most significant goal oriented activities, the surveys, Feedback, the task forces, and development of recommendations were seen as primary contributors to reaching the respective goals. For all goals, the conferences were viewed as least significant.

4. Concentrate on one of the goals which you feel is particularly important for the Steering Committee to work toward in the future. To achieve this goal what activities need further work? What new activities do you recommend?

Goals Important to Work on in Future

• Producing recommendations for town policy

- getting task force members to do homework
- better(more thorough) staff research; both information and implementation; background
- more effective task force meetings; goal directed instead of palaver
- new activity: some way of getting more (or better) input from citizens and possibly from experts-open meetings?
- more research and better
- recommendations must be made more specific; value and need documented ; town agencies capable of implementation specified; steps of implementation spelled out

• Documenting/defining citizen attitudes and concerns

- re. values of the Red Line to Arlington; town support of an independent citizen's group to assure that needed access to honest information is available and that reporting 'back' is considered.
- surveys
- task forces to identify areas to explore

• Providing an organizational vehicle for citizen input

- this is what we are all about, particularly the task forces. We needed workshops for moderators.

• Additional goals

- further work- a better learning process(and teaching) to have better understanding between teacher and student for a better prepared student
- new activities -an improved development of Arlington Center (A Task Force has been started for discussion)

Comments

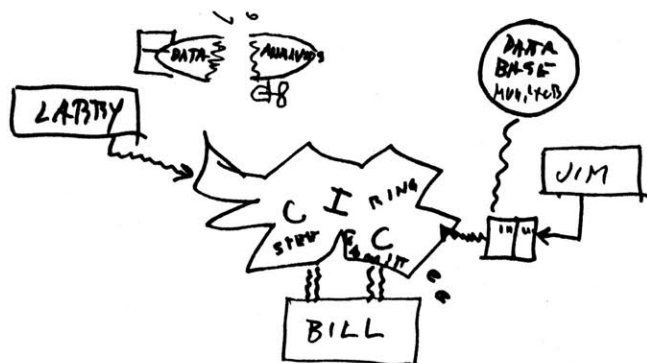
Most of the S.C. members emphasized recommendations as the critical goal for future work. Time did not permit discussion. The responses speak for themselves.

5c.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	representative of citizen sentiment						not representative of citizen sentiment

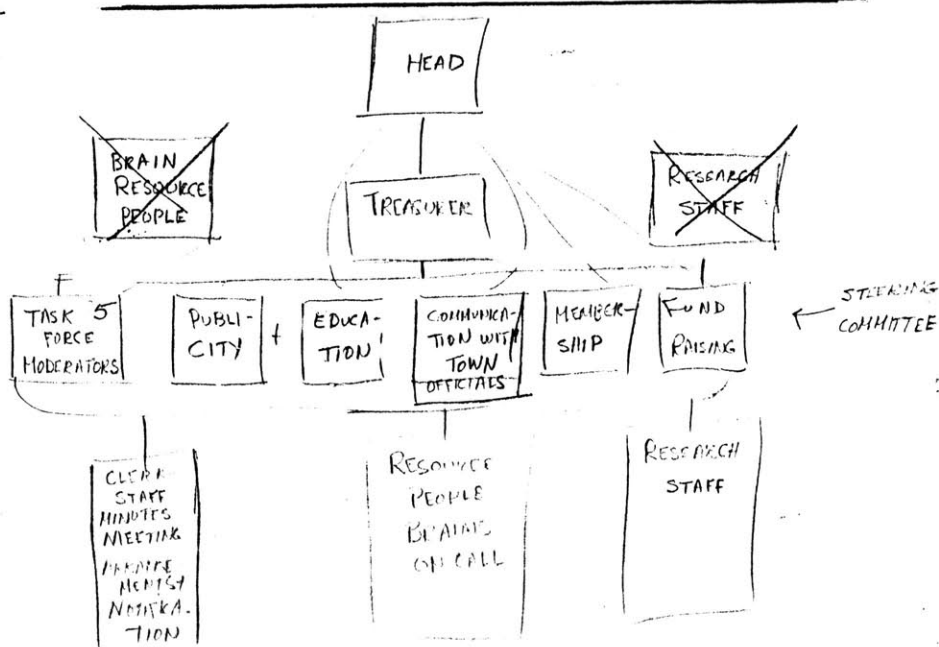
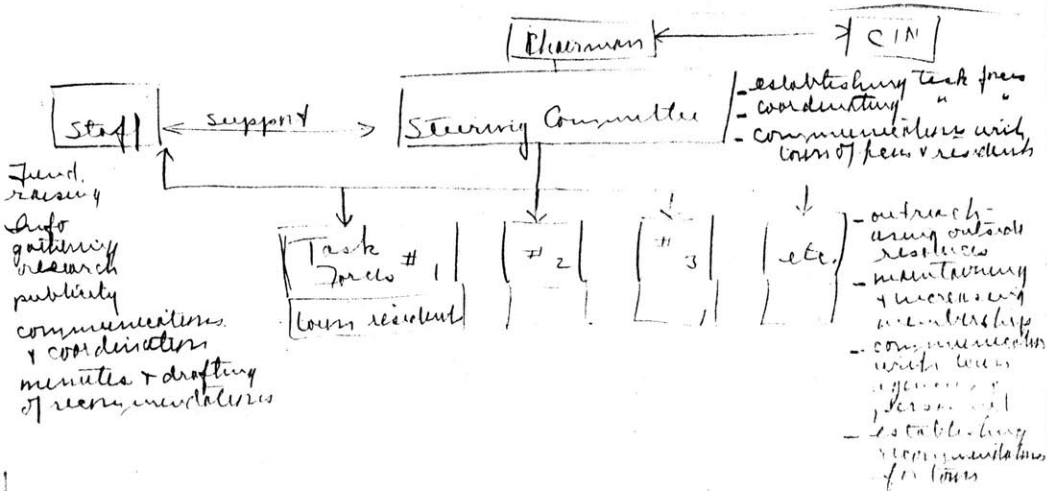
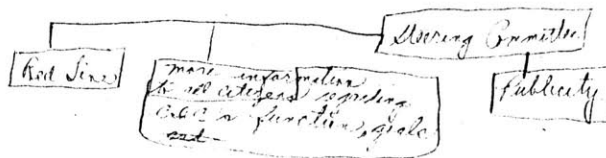
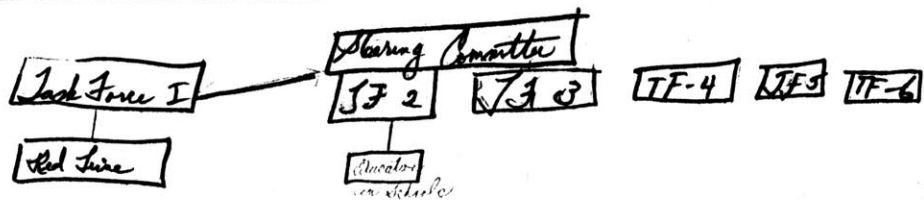
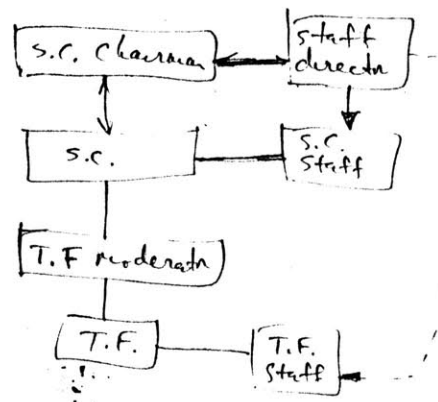
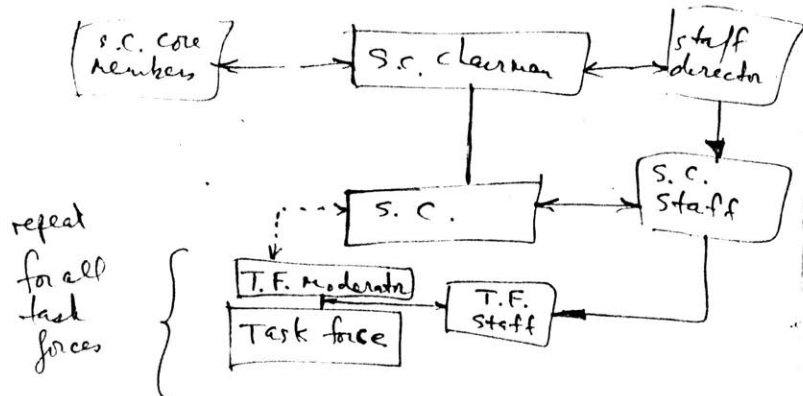
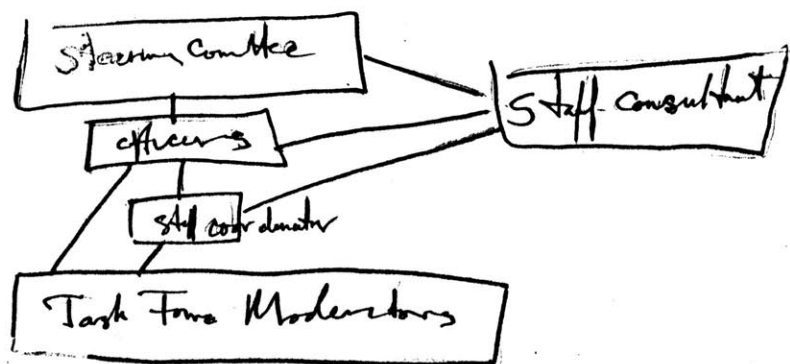
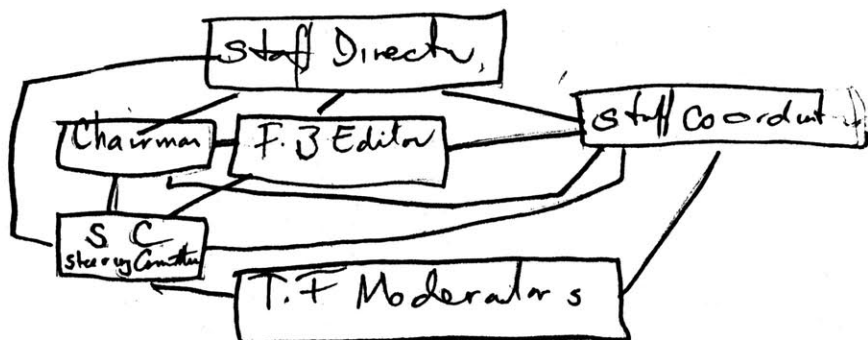
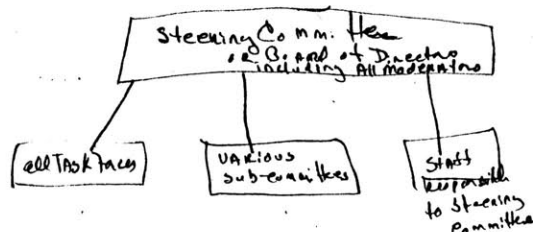
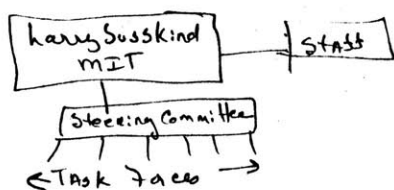
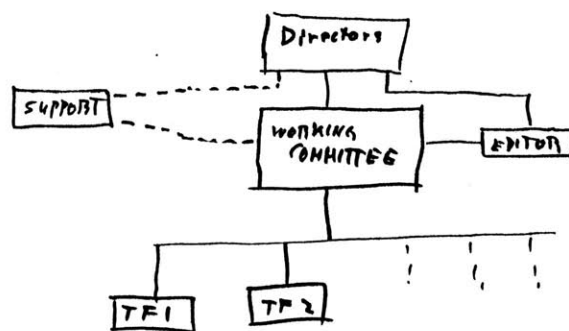
These responses indicate that the majority of the S.C. members feel that the CIC recommendations to the town of Arlington are feasible to implement and are representative of citizen sentiment. The recommendations as a whole were judged by most of the S.C. members as having relatively small impact on the town.

Section B. Underlying Steering Committee Processes

1. Draw a diagram of the way you see the organizational structure of the CIC as it has really functioned over time.



2. Draw a second diagram of how you think the CIC could function better in the future.



Comments on Questions 1 and 2

Two basic observations can be made regarding the organizational charts drawn up by the S.C. members. The diagrams of the present CIC structure are generally complicated and unclear. The recommended organizations are far more structured. Several recommended organizational charts suggest a more central position for the Steering Committee as opposed to the staff director.

A significant comment was made at the end of the session (around 11:30 pm). "I want to redo my organization chart. I find that thinking about these questions, you answer one one way and then suddenly you start thinking about the next question and it reflects back on the other one. And we're saying here, and I agree, that part of our problem is setting an agenda. Well, on my organizational chart I didn't really take care of that. And I think that can be done organizationally."

3. Measure how well each of these functions were carried out by the Steering Committee (assuming that staff actions are the full responsibility of the Steering Committee). Rate them (in the spaces on the accompanying sheet) on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = not effective

- 2 = slightly effective
- 3 = somewhat effective
- 4 = very effective
- 5 = most effective

4. Rate the relative contributions of the staff and the Steering Committee in carrying out each function. Rate them (on the accompanying sheet) on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = completed mostly by staff

- 2 = more staff than Steering Committee
- 3 = even mix of staff and Steering Committee
- 4 = more Steering Committee than staff
- 5 = completely mostly by Steering Committee

5. What do you think should have been the appropriate mix of contributions from staff and Steering Committee? On the same scale as above, rate the functions on the accompanying sheet.

Ongoing Structural Functions of S.C.

Most Frequently Occuring Responses

	3. Effect- iveness	4. Staff/S.C. contributions	5. App- ropriate Staff/S.C. contributions
1. Providing publicity	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
2. Fund raising	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>
3. Information gathering/research	<u>4</u>	<u>2,5</u>	<u>2,3</u>
4. Using staff support	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
5. Providing outreach; using outside resources	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
6. Maintaining/increasing membership	<u>2,4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
7. Analyzing data	<u>4</u>	<u>1,3</u>	<u>3,5</u>
8. Coordinating/directing task force efforts	<u>2,3</u>	<u>3,5</u>	<u>3,5</u>
9. Sharing with the CIN	<u>1,3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
10. Communicating within the Steering Committee and with the town	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
11. Educating	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>

Comments on Questions 3, 4 and 5

These results were not discussed during the self-assessment session due to lack of time. Regarding the effectiveness of the S.C. functions, fund raising, providing publicity, information gathering/research, and analyzing data appear as effectively carried out. Communicating within the S.C. and with the town is seen as having been only slightly effective. There is a split in opinion regarding the effectiveness of maintaining/increasing membership, coordinating/directing task force efforts, and sharing with the CIN.

In comparing responses to questions 4 and 5, the differences suggest desired changes in relative contributions of staff and Steering Committee. Most S.C. members felt that fund raising responsibilities along with data analysis (two functions which were rated high in effectiveness) should be shifted to the Steering Committee.

6. For those functions that you rated lowest in question 3, explain what you feel the difficulties were. Do these functions have anything in common that may have made these functions particularly difficult? Answer below.

Difficulties with Functions

● Fund raising

- not done by _____
- insufficient staff and effort
- not really necessary goal up until now
- all fund raising was by staff, staff did not educate S.C. as to what to do
- Larry did all but a trivial bit

● Providing outreach; using outside resources

- lack of foresight and planning
- SPSS and SPSS K are destroyers...you get tremendous output and need never think what you are doing...who asks, "what are the DKs and NHs telling you?" Simple % are only direction signs. (perhaps more appropriate under data analysis function)

● Maintaining/increasing membership

- insufficient effort
- interesting and attracting good people
- membership discouraged by inconsistent meetings and ineffective agendas
- increased membership should be a goal of the task forces... Emphasis should be placed on keeping members interested and entertained-and feeling useful and needed as contributors to the mission of the task forces

● Analyzing data

- I don't think the steering committee itself analyzed any data.

● Coordinating/directing task force efforts

- The moderators should be on the S.C. so they have a general sense of the overall organization. Possibly they could get minutes of the meetings so they have a general sense of what's going on. Also, members of the S.C. should have more direction as to their responsibilities.
- very poor lines of communications
- insufficient reports from task forces concerning their progress/difficulties

● Sharing with CIN

- done mostly by staff direction, chairman and editor. Little information distributed to S.C. and little opportunity for them to participate
- saw very little from CIN

- Communicating within the S.C. and with the town
 - inconsistent follow through on agendas led to confusion
 - S.C. did not do much direct communication. It was done through minutes of meetings, Feedback, chairman, staff director , editor and staff
 - this needs further development
- Educating
 - insufficient effort
- Additional remarks
 - yes we were simplistic
 - I don't get a common thread through all of this. However, I believe that when there is a handbook and other written information on the organization, things will become clearer.

Comments

Although fund raising is indicated in Question 3 as effectively carried out, half of the Steering Committee members made comments on the difficulties related to fund raising. Additional attention was given to maintaining/increasing membership and coordinating/directing task force efforts.

Section C. Underlying Steering Committee Processes

1. What processes has the Steering Committee been most effective in carrying out? and why? (Star those processes and briefly indicate why you picked them on the right of each process).
2. What five processes should the Steering Committee concentrate on to improve? and why? (Circle the corresponding numbers of the processes and briefly indicate why you picked them to the right of each process).

<u>Processes</u>	<u>Question 1 -*</u>	<u>Question 2 -0</u>
Educate through capacity building/ learning and doing	<u>2</u> -Individuals who participated grew greatly	<u>-</u> -Educate whom? What is capacity building?
Talk/Dialogue/Listening	<u>5</u> -Individuals who participated grew greatly -There was lots of this!	<u>-</u>
Set agendas/plan	<u>-</u>	<u>5</u> -Very poor -Too casual at moment -Need more definitions
Make decisions through consensus	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u> -Has been a lot of procrastination -Discussion did not always lead to decisions -Poor follow-through by group
Use time appropriately	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u> -Agendas could be more detailed and followed
Implement ideas	<u>3</u> -Through discussion, ideas germinated	<u>3</u> -This is for Task Forces not S.C. -Conference was postponed -Follow up needed
Ask questions	<u>2</u> -Exploration by groups was very fruitful -Lots of this	<u>2</u> -Have retreats; always responding to immediate needs; think ahead

Questions 1 & 2 continued

<u>Processes</u>	<u>Question 1 -*</u>	<u>Questions 2 -0</u>
Maintain relationships (personal interactions) between S.C. and S.C., Staff, Susskind, Task Forces	<u>2</u> -Staff kept info flowing between the groups	<u>3</u> -Need better tracking of Task Forces -Too much dependence on too few individuals
Maintain formal communications between the above parties	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u> -Key to success of CIC -Poor reporting back to S.C.
Be responsible in responding to those with needs (like a particular task force or a community member)	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u> -Need to improve communication between S.C. and Task Force
Encourage commitment to the CIC	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u> -S.C. members are committed; need to get Task Force members committed

Comments

Most of the S.C. members felt that talk/dialogue/listening were effective Steering Committee processes; implementing ideas and encouraging commitment to the CIC were also regarded highly. The processes considered in need of improvement are agenda setting/planning, making decisions as well as implementing ideas and maintaining internal organizational relationships.

3. What particular process do you feel is most critical for CIC's future success? Discuss ways that the Steering Committee might be able to improve in that area.

Recommendations for improvement in processes

- Set agendas/plan
 - set agendas and plan for objectives; track Task Forces to monitor progress and help define objectives
 - planning: defining (setting) goals for CIC
- Make decisions (through consensus)
 - make decisions
 - make decisions
- Implement ideas
 - implementing: getting task forces to work
- Maintain relationships (personal interactions) between S.C. and S.C., Staff, Susskind, & Task Forces
and
- Maintain formal communications between the above parties
 - more clear structure is needed with more clear participation in diverse tasks outside S.C. meetings by all members
- Encourage commitment to the CIC
 - more and better publicity (no reflection on quality, just on quantity)
- Additional processes
 - better training of moderators
 - define self
- Use time appropriately
 - use time well

Appendix II. Neighborhood Marketing Project Activities 10-76 to 3-77

Direct Project Efforts (Demonstrations, Conferences, Seminars)

- 10/28/76 The Parkman Center hosted a meeting with city realtors to discuss the project and their perceptions of the problems and needs of their areas.
- 11/17/76 The Parkman Center hosted a conference on issues of locational choice which included staff members, new and long-time city residents and academics including Richard Coleman of the Harvard/M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies.
- 11/18/76 At a meeting of the Boston Mortgage Review Board, a voluntary group of bank and community representatives set up under the sponsorship of the Office of the State Banking Commissioner the Parkman Center was given responsibility for a series of conferences for banking and community representatives to explore the issues of redlining, disinvestment and neighborhood preservation.
- 12/14/76 A Parkman Center conference with the Boston Mortgage Review Board was attended by two bank presidents, two senior vice-presidents and a senior mortgage officer, the heads of two real estate firms, the regional administrator of HUD, a representative from the Federal Reserve Bank, the president of a local commercial television station, the director of a Neighborhood Housing Services program and the chairman of the M.I.T. Department of Urban Studies and Planning. The projects perceptions of the inter-relatedness of all the actors in the neighborhood housing market process was discussed.
- 1/18/77 The Parkman Center continued to expand the project's contacts with the brokerage community with a meeting with eight residential brokers doing business in the City of Boston.
- 2/19/77 The Parkman Center hosted a conference with fourteen recent city homebuyers to explore the information and decision making process they went through. This will be written up in the future.
- 3/7/77 The Parkman Center held a meeting with Harvard Business School professors Lee Preston and Bernard Booms and their students who are working on a marketing project in Cincinnati.
- 3/8/77 The Parkman Center and the Broker's Institute sponsored a reception in the penthouse lounge of the First National Bank Building for approximately 30 city and suburban real estate brokers, and city and press contacts.

Direct Project Efforts (continued)

3/27/77 The Parkman Center hosted a meeting with the State Banking Commissioner, bank and community members of the Boston Mortgage Review Board and invited bankers and appraisers to discuss with the Director of Seattle's Urban Reinvestment Task Force the relationship of traditional appraisal methodology to neighborhood decline.

(Tours and Media)

11/22/76 The Executive Director of the Borker's Institute of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board was taken on a tour of Dorchester as part of a series of contacts to develop a working relationship.

12/3/76 The Parkman Center was host to a two day conference of the Community and Economic Development Task Force of the Urban Consortium. The project staff made a presentation which was followed by a bus tour of the target neighborhoods.

12/3/76 The media consultants have done substantial research on a program about the Melville-Park neighborhood and are concluding negotiation for a prime time air date on a commercial station in June.

Project Facilitation of Public/Private Efforts

10/17/76 The City Conservation League sponsored a walking tour of the Lower Mills section of Dorchester. Project staff attended to provide additional information about the area, to meet residents who joined the tour, and to establish contact with any potential homebuyers whose enthusiasm might be whetted by the tour.

11/76 Project staff provided editorial and graphic design assistance to the Melville-Park Neighborhood Association which wrote and printed a neighborhood marketing flyer.

12/13/76 Project staff wrote up and conveyed to the Dorchester United Neighborhoods Association (an umbrella group of civic associations) an idea brought up by a local resident to encourage maintenance and civic pride, a contest to be called "Dorchester Doorways" which would not only inspire fix-up but could be used to demonstrate to the metropolitan area an aspect of Dorchester.

Non-Project Events (Outgrowths of the Project)

12/5/76 The Melville-Park Neighborhood Association conducted a "practice" house tour attended by 120 people at which the neighborhood marketing flyer was distributed. The experience was a successful enough to convince the group to do a full scale tour this spring.

Non-Project Events (continued)

- 2/17/77 The Dorchester United Neighborhood Association presented Ian Menzies with a public service award for his columns on Dorchester
- 3/9/77 One real estate broker with whom the project staff has been meeting has taken on the task of encouraging his fellow brokers to get Boston back into the metropolitan Homebuyers Guide from which it has been absent in recent history.

Project Facilitation of Media Coverage

- 8/24/76 Contact of project staff with newspaper reporter Alan Lupo resulted in a Boston Globe article, "Sun shines on Boston, too", which discussed the general approach of the project, a more balanced perception of the City as a place to live.
- 9/6/76 Articles were published in the Boston Globe and Dorchester Argus about a block party in an integrated neighborhood in the target area. One organizer/spokesman was a young, new homebuyer who had been counseled a few months earlier by project staff about moving into Dorchester from the suburbs.
- 11/18/76 The Melville-Park neighborhood was the subject of a news story on commercial television station WCVB-TV, Channel 5 at 6:00PM. The story was very positive and resulted from previous meetings of project staff with the neighborhood association which set up the filming.
- 12/6/76 Melville-Park continued its marketing campaign with a story on the 10:00PM local news program of public television station WGBH-TV, Channel 2.
- 12/23/76 Project staff discussed neighborhood issues and opportunities with a Boston Globe reporter, Kay Longcope, who is considering purchasing a home in the target area. A prospective home buyer and journalist can become highly sensitive to neighborhood issues as the project perceives them and also tends to absorb the enthusiasm necessary to the success of the project.
- 1/5/77 Following a neighborhood tour with project staff, Boston Globe columnist Ian Menzies wrote an article entitled "Dorchester re-discovered as a place to live" which was published across the top third of the op-ed page with a photograph and large headline. The article included an invitation to phone project staff for further information. In addition to talking with callers, staff assembled a package of information designed to interest people in living in Dorchester.

Project Facilitation of Media Coverage (continued)

- 1/19/77 The Boston Globe published a follow-up article on the op-ed page about the response to its story of 1/5/77 about Dorchester. This story also included a second invitation to telephone project staff.

Non Project Media Coverage (Outgrowths)

- 9/76 September issue of Progressive Architecture contained an article on "triple deckers" which attempted to provoke the interest of Boston's large contingent of practicing architects in a housing form which is both abundant in the target neighborhoods and generally underappreciated.
- 9/4/76 While not a direct project activity, the Second Annual Real Paper (city weekly) Renter's Guide illustrated the self-sustaining nature of the type of activity the project is undertaking. The target neighborhoods received good coverage in this paper due to work the project staff had put into the First Annual Guide last year.
- 12/9/76 Dorchester Argus newspaper published an account of the Melville-Park house tour which strongly emphasized its implications for future housing market strength and conveyed this information to a local Dorchester readership.
- 2/10/77 The Dorchester Argus reprinted the Globe Menzies article of 1/5/77 and published an article on the response to the column.
- 3/7/77 A 90 minute program entitles "Survival Boston" was presented by WCVB-TV. The theme of the program was to explore the problems of the city. The residents who were included in the program to discuss life in their neighborhoods were positive and included one couple who had agreed to assist the project in talking with interested people about their neighborhood following the response to the Globe Menzies columns.
- 3/14/77 The Boston Globe published an article on the brokers presentation of 3/8/77. The article emphasized the opportunity for suburban brokers to help buyers find homes in the City which they would like and can afford when suburban offerings prove too expensive. This appeared with an editorial concerning findings about the high cost of new construction and the difficulties experienced by first time home buyers.
- 3/27/77 The Boston Globe featured an article about the growing interest in Victorian homes and two books published for this market. The article twice mentioned Ashmont Hill, Dorchester as a place where this desirable types of home could be found. This if the first time the Globe's architecture writer took notice of Dorchester despite previous efforts to interest him.

Non Project Media Coverage (continued)

- 3/29/77 The Globe published a reasonably positive article by Alan Lupo (see 8/24/76) about a middle income family in an integrated section of Mattapan with a particular emphasis on their success at achieving good education for their five children through a combination of public schools and scholarships to private schools.

Research and Evaluation

The research and evaluation component has identified areas for market sampling and new homebuyer interviews. A target group of industry actors has been identified to determine their present attitudes. All of the present activities of the project staff have been monitored. Actual survey work will commence as soon as a contract is signed.

Internal Project Support Functions

- 11/18/76 The Parkman Center arranged a showing of "Jamaica Plain: Options in the City" (tv show) for the benefit of members of the project team and a specialist in attitude surveying. The purpose of the showing and subsequent meetings was to develop a survey instrument which would help to assess reactions of various kinds of present and potential residents. The Parkman Center developed a first draft survey instrument which has been put on "hold" for the time being. It may be adapted as an evaluative tool.
- 11/19/76 The Parkman Center arranged for the project team to view a French-made television program on Boston and its ethnic communities. The program, produced by ORTF in the fall of 1975, has not been seen in this country. The project team viewed it for its value as a possible model for consideration in the media component of the project.
- 12/7/76 The Parkman Center sponsored a meeting for project staff with Richard Coleman and David Birch of the Harvard/M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies to learn about their current research in neighborhood evolution and to share the perceptions of the project participants.
- 12/9/76 The Parkman Center contributed its considered recommendations concerning the preparation of informational material. A large and attractive Boston brochure was suggested as a necessary context piece for later sub-neighborhood promotional items. Also strongly urged was a guidebook to local housing markets on the model of an Atlanta booklet described .

Internal Project Support Functions (continued)

12/20/76 Project staff met with Dean Walter Salmon and Prof. Robert Buzzell of the Harvard Business School, both marketing specialists, to seek criticism and advice on the project approach.

1-3/77 Project staff attended meetings of the housing sub-committee of the Boston Bar Association.

Appendix III.

Interview Schedule used in Personal Interviews with the Neighborhood Marketing Project Team

1. Would you describe the context and background of the project; the City's objectives and orientation; the origins of the project's approach and strategies?
2. How would you describe the project's objective; what is the fit between the project's objectives and those of the City; what is the fit between the project objectives and your own?
3. What changes have you perceived in the City's approach; compare the project's initial orientation to now; how have project successes or pitfalls affected the direction and quality of the project?
4. Make a diagram (2x matrix) of the project objectives and activities. Indicate the % of time you have spent on each activity.
5. What are your measures of success; how do you validate the effectiveness of your efforts; what is the project's yardstick?
6. If you could alter any events or circumstances during the project thus far, what would you do?
7. What questions/issues should the full project team address before planning the next phase of the project?

From the analysis of these interviews, several topics emerged; goals, strategies, program, project administration, measures of success. For each topic I presented a synthesis of our findings (a status report) at the session. This included specific issues that had been raised as well. The following outline sketches the basic findings and interpretations as they were presented to the project team at the August meeting.

Goals

- The basic three goals of attracting new buyers into the neighborhoods, encouraging residents to stay and reinvest in their homes, and influencing the attitudes of key actors persisted.
- Staff learning and development of a national network were seen as additional project objectives.
- The main focus, however, appeared to be on potential buyers and the key actors.
- Qualification of these goals included the pursuit of gradual integration in the neighborhoods and the interest in "capturing the bulge"

Goal Issues

- Was the project beginning to short change the residents by concentrating more on new buyers and key actors?
- How should the project team deal with the potential conflict among goals^{**}?
- Should other targets be considered, such as renters, minorities and blue collar families?^{***}

*capture the bulge refers to the especially large 25-34 year old cohort, the baby boom generation.

**particularly regarding the clash between efforts at preservation/stabilization and regentrification.

***a compilation of the goals/activities matrices was also presented which suggested that project efforts, according to the reports of the individuals were evenly spread across the three target goals.

Strategies

- The generally accepted project strategy for turning the target neighborhoods around was to be slow, gradual and low key; opportunistic; move between public and private sectors' and be noticed but not noticeable.
- The strategy for controlling the pace of change in these neighborhoods was to not overwhelm any one area with too much activity; to assure many areas of choice for the buyer; to know when to pull out from certain target areas; and to provide multiple messages to many target groups.

Strategy Issues

- Should there be many smaller project efforts or fewer big ones?
- Was the strategy for controlling the pace of change really sufficient?
- How and when should the project team focus on other neighborhoods outside Dorchester?
- How can or should the project "go public"*

Program

- Consideration was being given to how much and what form of tv and radio marketing the project would undertake in the future.
- Triple-Decker marketing had become a new program thrust
- The real estate store was accepted as a potential future activity.

*a phrase used by Fichter to describe the juncture facing the group. Just as a partnership may consider the step of issuing stock, "going public", the project had to decide about enlarging its scope and bringing others in.

** an information center on available housing in Boston neighborhoods.

Program Issues

- How to better coordinate project efforts?

Administration

- There was not sufficient effort being made to manage the project.

Administrative Issues

- How to foster better communication on the project team?
- Should there be a written plan/framework to project activities?
- Might regular staff meetings prove helpful?

Measures of Success

- All members had accumulated significant bits of positive feedback.
- There was not reported negative feedback concerning the project.
- There were increasing numbers of inquiries concerning the neighborhoods.
- In comparison with certain other cities' efforts, several members felt the project was proceeding favorably.
- A future yardstick might be the entrance of new people into the real estate business.
- Change in property values (direction and pace) might be an index of project impact but should be carefully interpreted.
- Formal evaluation efforts were underway .

Measures of Success Issues

- Members should seek & record links between neighborhood activity as well as metropolitan movement and the various project efforts.