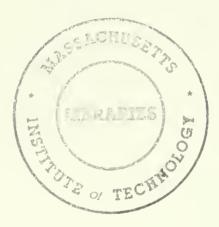WORKING PAPER
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EVOCATIVE AND PROVOCATIVE MODES OF INFLUENCE
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE

By

Edwin C. Nevis

W.P.#1417-83   March 1983

MASSACHUSETTS
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
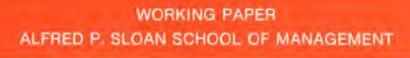50 MEMORIAL DRIVE
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Anyone who has ever tried to influence others while carrying out a
professional role has struggled with questions such as the following:

- How do I act in order to be influential?

- What strategies or tactics for being influential seem

  comfortable to me? (What are my guiding assumptions concerning

  the exercise of influence over others?)

- How "mild" or "strong" an effort is required in a given situation?

- What response will satisfy me as being worth my efforts?

- How shall I deal with my frustration or confusion if my efforts at

  influence do not seem to be working well?

- How will I know that I have been truly influential? (What are my

  needs/criteria for confirmation or validation as an instrument

  of influence?)

These questions, and others like them, make up the core of what it
means to be influential. In particular, they call for sharp focus on the
use of self as an instrument of influence, and on now the personal experience
of the intervenor as a potent factor in this endeavor. Awareness of one's
own immediate experience, and the ability to use this in here and now interaction
with the client system, become the key skills for the practitioner of
influence. In Gestalt parlance, this is referred to as "use of self" and is
defined as the way in which one is aware of self and other and how one acts
upon one's observations, values, feelings, etc., in order to have an effect
on the other. This includes the articulation awareness of all kinds, such
as feelings and sensations, thoughts, images and fantasies, etc.

How an intervenor observes and acts -- indeed, what is observed and
attended to -- depends to a large extent on how the goals of intervention are
defined. On the one hand, the intervenor may decide to focus on a clear outcome

or end-state for the target system, and thus may develop an "investment"
in the attainment of that specific goal. On the other hand, the goal for the
intervenor may be the achievement of system interest and in something s/he
considers important but which the system does not yet see as an interesting
issue or an interesting way of looking at a problem or process. In the
second instance, specific outcomes are less critical to the intervenor than
is the enhancement of the system's awareness of choices or alternatives which
derive from heightened consciousness. These are not mutually exclusive goals,
but they do refer to different points of the cycle of experience. The concern
for achievement of an outcome directs intervenor attention and energy to the
action and contact stages, the concern for generating interest directs attention
and energy to the awareness stage of the cycle. And, if intervenors characteristically
value one objective over the other, they are likely to have preferences for varying
modes of exerting influence, and preference for different ways in which to
use themselves for this purpose. This becomes an important determinant of
strategies for influencing others, and it shapes the intervenor's stance.

Studies of change agents of all kinds reveal two major modes which
predominate the strategic stances which follow from preference for one intervention
goal or the other: the provocative mode and the evocative mode. The provocative
mode rests on a belief that system outcomes are what count if one is to be
influential in actuality, and that nothing of real consequence can occur unless
the intervenor causes, or forces, something to happen. In this mode, compelling
intervenor behavior drives toward specific actions by the system and rests
upon a strong desire to achieve a reaction within a fairly narrow band of
possible actions, one that is tightly bounded in the eyes of the intervenor.
Strong intervenor actions are taken which are designed to jolt, or intrude
upon upon the system's awareness so that the system moves rapidly to produce

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action in response.

In the <u>evocative</u> mode, the intervenor strives to get the system interested in what it is doing, what is being attended to by the members of the system, and what is the process being used. To evoke means to bring about a shift in what is attended to by the system; the goal is the creation of fresh awareness and the education of the system to be more effective in its awareness processes. There is greater willingness on the part of the intervenor to allow the client system to remain at the awareness stage of the cycle of experience and to let client actions <u>emerge</u>. The aim is for the intervenor to be arousing but not unsettling, as in the provocative mode. William S. Warner referred to this mode as "therapist as evocateur."*

We see then, that to be influential requires that an intervenor use himself or herself in an important way, but that there are divergent ways of doing so. The provocative may be seen as a <u>forcing</u> approach; the evocative mode is best seen as an <u>emergent</u> approach. Figure 1 lists the qualities which distinguish between the two modes. In reviewing these distinctions, it is important to recognize that both can be applied usefully with the same client; they are merely   different tactical means of actualizing a strategic choice as to

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*Warner, as part of the first group at The Gestalt Institute of Cleveland to be influenced and trained by Fritz Perls, Laura Perls and Isadore From, quickly grasped this distinction, being inherently a polished evocateur. The evocative mode was further refined and developed by the Cleveland group -- who were able to separate out the power of the the mode from the provocative aspects of Fritz Perls' early work -- and made it a cornerstone of what became known the the "Cleveland Style," in contrast to the more provocative aspects of what some have called the "California Style," or "therapist as provocateur."

how the client system can best be helped to energize itself.

Insert Figure 1 About Here

Before looking at how these modes apply to consulting setting, it will further the understanding of them to look at their reflection in the arena of real social change. Here, it is more customary to think of provocative means, such as actions in support of revolutionary changes. But careful analysis indicates indicates a range of behaviors and consequences which make up this mode. One can be provocative without being assaultative or a terrorist; confrontation need not be violent -- as was well-demonstrated in the community organizing techniques of Saul Alinsky (1969). One of his favorite actions was to have a large group of people stage a sit-in in the lobby of a corporation considered to be slack in affirmative action programs. While this action almost always obtained reaction from the target group, it is qualitatively a very different provocation than a kidnapping or a bombing. And while it may result in anger, it does not generally lead to violent or strongly aggressive retaliation. Thus, in the provocative mode the agent of change can put himself/herself "on the line" with varying degrees of risk and consequence. The ultimate use of self, of course, can be to risk life itself. I use the labels confrontative and assaultative to capture the difference between the Alinsky-type approach and more violently anarchistic acts such as terrorism.

The ease with which provocative examples can be found in social change efforts does not mean that evocative modes are lacking at this level. On the contrary, numerous significant social changes have come about through the power of attractive life styles or compelling nonprovocative presences. The teachings and life style of Buddha, the fasting and otherwise ascetic life of

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Ghandi, the wartime speeches of Winston Churchill, and Martin Luther King's
"I have a Dream" speech, are all examples of the evocative mode on a grand
scale. In this regard, it is interesting that Daniel Ellsberg's (1974)
response to being called a hero by multitudes of college students for his
release of the Vietnam war-related "Pentagon Papers" (a highly provocative act)
was to say: "Better all of you simple stand clearly and strongly for what you are
and what you believe in than to rely on single acts of great provocation
by someone who happens to be in a unique position to take this kind of
risk.

Analysis of the typical range of consultant-client interactions indicates
few examples of assaultative provocation, though coercive efforts to make system
members comply with a change often make the consultant an accomplice to what
may be seen as a highly provocative act. And certain kinds of therapy, such
as the synanon approach to drug addiction and the Est programs, rely on
strongly unsettling or rely on attacking methods to bring forth a client
response. Given the "for hire" role of most internal and external consultants,
it is unusual to find clients "brutalized" to any degree; indeed, most
professional codes of ethics make strong statements about the unacceptability
of such behavior.

On the other hand, what I have labeled confrontative provocation is to
be found frequently where effective consultation is practiced. When a consultant
chooses to challenge the client through use of disagreement, through powerful
statements of interpretation or fantasies which stretch or push the client's
boundaries, or through persistent demands for certain client behavior, this
mode is being applied. The confrontation meeting, the actions of a third-party
intervenor, and assertiveness training programs are applications of confrontative
provocation. The key element is that the recipient of the action feels some

pressure to respond to such a direct intervention, but is not prevented from
carrying on with normal functioning. These approaches act to enlarge the client's
awareness and to push the system toward action, but they enable a more
reasoned, controlled action to take place than in the case of assaultative
provocation. The system can just take in the experience and not do anything
at that point; it can decide whether to maintain or change its boundaries in
response, even though it may experience pressure to move.

One way to understand the evocative mode in consulting is to consider
organizational assessment or diagnosis as resting largely upon its use. Here,
as I have pointed out previously, the aim is to enhance the awareness of both
consultant and client, within the context of a basic faith that this activity will
lead to emergent action. The asking of questions in organizational assessment
serves to focus the client's attention on what the system is doing, and shares
with the client what is interesting to the consultant (as manifested in the areas
and questions put to the system). Likewise, survey feedback interventions
are designed to be evocative. The difference in this discussion is that it is the
use of oneself that is proposed as a determinant of how well these methods
and structures will work. The combined force of the method and an active interested
intervenor enhances the potential for influence.

Figure 2 summarizes examples of these modes in both social change efforts
and consulting situations. The three variations are grouped as though there
is a continuum, running from the evocative mode at one end, through confrontative
provocation, to assaultative provocation at the other end. The evocative
end point represents large intervenor investment in awareness goals, and the
assaultative end point reflects huge intervenor investment in action or
outcome goals, with much less concern for the development of emergent actions
by the system. The confrontative method would fall somewhere in between.

The examples in Figure 2 for the provocative modes make greater reference
to strong, specific, directed actions; the evocative mode does not quite
lend itself to similar analysis, though we can identify some of the behaviors
which establish such a presence in a given consultant. The evocative process
is more subtle and relies much less on specific linkages than does the
provocative. What the client responds to is not necessarily predictable,
and the response itself may be one of many possibilities. For example, the
consultant may have a highly friendly, convivial manner, but this might evoke
suspicion or mistrust in the client system, as opposed to trust and openness.
A non-commital, taciturn consultant might evoke anger in the client system or
curiosity as to what the client is thinking but not saying. Furthermore,
these aspects of consultant behavior may have little or no significant evocative
power with a given client, and some other aspect -- perhaps the consultant's
reputation -- may have a stronger impact in arousing client openness. In
any case, a response is obtained -- something is always evoked -- even if the
stimulii which help to elicit it are not obvious. The cues are subtle and often
not in the awareness of either the consultant of the members of the client system.
Moreover, forces in the client have much to do with what is evoked. It may
say as much about the client as it does about the consultant that a particular
response is evoked.

If the evocative mode has the kind of power suggested herein, the influence
of the consultant may depend as much on an ability to elicit or bring forth
the broadest array of possible responses in others, than on any single action
or structure in the situation. Whether specific advice is heard or listened

to, the extent to which client systems are willing to consider stretching

boundaries or a new possibility may, in the final analysis, depend more on

day-in, day-out intervenor presence and the forces evoked than on identifiable

acts of provocation. Daniel Ellsberg may be correct in his judgment to

this effect; certainly, if one chooses to work for change within the system

there is much less likelihood of generating counter-force if evocative modes

are used to their fullest potential. Yet it is not necessary to chose between

the two, if confrontative provocation is employed rather than the assaultative

mode. The assaultative mode gives provocation a bad name, largely because

of the violent, coercive actions involved. But, even though non-violent

provocation may receive a violent response -- as with the Selma protest

march of Martin Luther King and his followers (Garrow, 1968) -- confrontation

between parties committed to a common goal may provide just enough spark

to set off useful action. Here the risk being taken by the intervenor is

based on reasonable probability or work out well, or it allows for a retreat

if the action misses the mark or is more than the recipient can handle at

that moment. In most assaultative acts this is not the case, and risks often

take on an all-or-none quality.

It may well be that a workable intervention sequence emphasizes the

evocative mode first and works up to use of confrontative provocation with a

more aware, interested, and "primed" client system. Particularly where a

great deal of confusion or anxiety exists in a system, creation of an

atmosphere which facilitates emergent action may work better than one which

forces the action. If so, this suggests that in many organization change efforts

the developmental/learning approach of evocative-derived action might precede

the political-like tactics or action strategies of the provocative mode.

The problem with this in many situations is that it takes time to allow this

sequence to flourish, and the approach may not manifest enough force to produce action quickly where this is seen as imperative. On the other hand, the provocative approach certainly works to speed things up but it can be perceived as so forceful and attacking that it generates counter-force and resistance of another kind. Both modes have significant values and limitations; artful consultation requires sensitive and intelligent balancing of the two approaches.

Presence

To fill out the picture concerning the evocative mode, a few words seem in order about the concept of presence and of how the consultant presents himself/herself to the world. The ingrediants of presence play an important role in what gets evoked and in how something is elicited in another by an intervenor. What the consultant stands for, and how s/he wishes to be perceived, determines the quality of the influence that is felt by the recipient. Presence is the manifestation of the ways in which assumptions, values, and self-image come together to create an influence potential for the consultant.

Figure 3 lists some important aspects of presence and indicates the range of variation in how these are displayed. The list, adapted with additions from unpublished lecture notes of William S. Warner (1975), is a sampling of the many factors that contribute to presence. The reader can add other items.

Insert Figure 3 About Here

A review of Figure 3 indicates that there is fundamentally nothing mysterious about the behaviors or attitudes expressed. Moreover, they tend

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to be largely background factors in consulting work, with the nature and content of the consultant-client task being foreground. Yet the composite pattern of those items which makes up the totality we call one's presence implies uniqueness, or that which differentiates one consultant from another. If there is no mystery in the composite, we can speculate that the potential to evoke will be small. If there is great mystery, the potential may be great, as in the case of highly charismatic leaders who evoke a great deal of awe in those who are exposed to them. My own view is that the key to evocation is not that the consultant be so highly interesting as to become the center of attention, but that s/he offers enough interest to stimulate that interest of the client to look at objects, ideas, processes, people, etc., in a fresh way. The problem with the charismatic leader is that s/he draws too much personal attention and tends to control the initiative for action (provocative mode?), thus creating a severe dependency issue that blocks other creative avenues for attention and action. The kind of encounter group leader that Lieberman, Yalom and Miles (1973) found to be most effective appears to have worked largely from what we call the evocative mode, as contrasted with the more provocative charismatic leader, who did not fare as well in their study.

CONCLUSION

The concepts discussed above refer to phenomena which have been dealt with before by others, but I hope that the framework presented here illuminates new insights as to how to be influential in a consulting role. Those who have hesitated to be highly confrontative may draw some support to be more provocative in this vein. Those who have been action-oriented, putting their energies largely into programmatic concerns and end-states, may see

better the value of staying at the awareness level and learning to be influential

without trying too hard, and by simply using the power of their "being,"

and what they are. There is an interesting comment by Maimonides (1881-85),

"Guide of the Perplexed" in which he says that the only way to explain why

some commandments appeared is that they were put there to <u>evoke obediance</u>

to God for its own sake, and not for any further specific reason attached

to those commandments. Extrapolated to consulting work, the message suggests that

the process of evocation is at least as important as the content of the issues

people grapple with in their working lives. Failure to respect this wisdom

and the power of the evocative mode results in over-valuing the content

issues of the work and tends to support pushing for change. Hopefully,

papers such as this, taken together with the growing interest in Eastern

philosophy and the current research on modeling and the role of mentors,

will evoke enhanced interest in the importance of the evocateur. As patience

wanes and frustration increases in response to the difficulty of achieving

change goals in a complex world, we see growing tendencies to resort to

assaultative provocation. The evocative and confrontative modes show us

that there are other ways to exert useful influence.

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FIGURE 1. BEHAVIORAL QUALITIES OF EVOCATIVE AND PROVOCATIVE MODES OF
USING SELF AS AN INSTRUMENT OF INFLUENCE

EVOCATIVE MODE	PROVOCATIVE MODE
BEHAVIOR WHICH SHOWS OR EN-HANCES YOUR WAY OF BEING IN THE WORLD.	ACTIONS WHICH MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN; CAUSE SOMETHING TO OCCUR.
BEHAVIOR OF THE CONSULTANT WHICH BRINGS FORTH SOMETHING FROM THE CLIENT, BUT THE RE-SPONSE IS CLIENT-DIRECTED AND OFTEN NOT PREDICTABLE BY THE CONSULTANT.	AN ACTIVE, DIRECTED INTERVENTION; PLANNED OR SHARPLY FOCUSED BEHAVIOR DESIGNED TO FORCE CLIENT TO ATTEND TO SOMETHING SPECIFIC.
BEHAVIOR CREATING CONDITIONS-- SUCH AS TRUST, HOPE, SAFETY, VISION-- WHICH ALLOW EXCITE-MENT OR INTEREST TO GROW IN OTHERS.	ACTIONS WHICH BREAK UP OR VIOLATE UNDERSTANDING, EXPECTATIONS OR CONTRACTS BETWEEN OR AMONG PEOPLE.
DISPLAYING YOUR SKILLS OR VALUES WITHOUT DISRUPTING THE FUNCTIONING OF THE CLIENT SYSTEM.	ACTIONS WHICH INTERRUPT THE NORMAL FUNCTIONING OF THE SYSTEM'S PRO-CEDURES OR STRUCTURES
ACTIONS WHICH DO NOT COMPEL A PARTICULAR RESPONSE, OR TO WHICH THE CLIENT SYSTEM NEED NOT MAKE A DIRECT RESPONSE.	THE CLIENT CAN HARDLY AVOID RESPOND-ING: MUST DO SOMETHING IN REACTION TO THE BEHAVIOR.

FIGURE 2: EXAMPLES OF PROVOCATIVE AND EVOCATIVE MODES OF THE USE OF SELF IN CHANGE EFFORTS

EVOCATIVE MODE	PROVOCATIVE MODE	
	CONFRONTATIVE	ASSAULTATIVE
BUDDHISM, TAO	EVANGELICAL PREACHING	COERCIVE PERSUASION
GHANDI'S ASCETIC LIFE STYLE	GHANDI'S BOYCOTTS & SIT-INS	DRAFT CARD BURNING
UTOPIAN COMMUNITIES	TECHNIQUES OF SAUL ALINSKY	TERRORIST ACTS, SUCH AS BOMBING KIDNAPPING, AIRPLANE HIJACKING
APPRENTICESHIP LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS	STRONG RHETORIC; LECTURING POLITICAL SPEECHES, PROPOGANDA, ETC.	WILDCAT STRIKES, CLAMSHELL ALLIANCE BREAK-INS AT SEABROOK NUCLEAR
M.L. KING'S SPEECHES	M.L. KING'S PROTEST MARCHES	D. ELLSBERG'S RELEASE OF PENTAGON PAPERS TO THE PRESS
PRES. CARTER'S ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE PEOPLE OF ENERGY SHORTAGE	PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS	SYNANON THERAPY
NON-DIRECTIVE COUNSELING	SADAT'S HISTORIC TRIP TO JERUSALEM (1977)	ROLFING
MAKING ONESELF AN ATTRACTIVE MODEL	ENCOUNTER GROUPS	EST PROGRAMS
USE OF RICH LANGUAGE, IMAGERY, SYMBOLS, GESTURES, ETC.	ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING	ACTS WHICH BROWBEAT OR "RAPE" OTHERS INTO RESPONDING: ANY ACT OF HOSTILITY OR AN ACT WHICH STRONGLY VIOLATES AN AGREEMENT
AWARENESS ENHANCING TECHNIQUES SUCH AS THOSE USED IN GESTALT THERAPY, PSYCHOSYNTHESIS (GUIDED IMAGERY), SYNECTICS, ERIKSONIAN THERAPY, THE BODY WORK OF CHARLOTTE SELVER AND CHARLES BROOKS, ETC.	TAVISTOCK GROUPS	
	CONFRONTATION MEETINGS	
	BIO-ENERGETICS	
	THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION	
	INTERPRETING ANOTHER'S BEHAVIOR TO THEM	
	STATEMENTS TO CLIENTS WHICH STRETCH, OR GO BEYOND ESTABLISHED BOUNDARIES	

FIGURE 3 ASPECTS OF PRESENCE

(Adapted, with additions, from lecture notes of W.S. Warner, 1975)

FACTOR	EXAMPLE OF HOW MANIFESTED
APPEARANCE	· Size; body type; color of skin; anatomical characteristics. · Facial characteristics; hair/beard, etc. · Posture; carriage; fluid vs. controlled vs. jerky movements and gestures. · Age - actual and apparent; "congruence" of age and behavior. · Dress: casual/formal; bland/colorful, etc.
MANNER	· Where/how place self in relation to others; one of the people vs. a leader, vs. a "poor country boy," vs. a "city sophisticate." · General flavor: friendly/distant; cordial/brusque; courtly/ earthy; hard/soft; public/intimate; informal/businesslike. · Behavior at first meeting; shy/outgoing; definitive/enigmatic. · Degree of being "known" or "unknown."
VOICE	· Sound quality: loud/soft; thin/resonant, etc. · Pitch: high/low. · Modulation: even/varied; limited/ broad range.
LANGUAGE AND SPEECH	· Richness/barrenness of language used. · Use of metaphor, imagery, simile vs. simple, highly concrete statements. · Colloquial vs. academic speech patterns. · Flow: reticent/ effusive; measured/spontaneous
MOOD STATE	· Even-tempered vs. manic, vs. depressed. · Serious/ humorous. · Emotionally available/"poker-faced." · Optimistic/pessimistic
ROLE/TITLES	· Use of names; importance and nature of reputation (before and after contact). · Importance of formal titles: "Doctor," "Mimister," "Ms.," etc. · Professional role definition: expert-healer-minister-priest-rabbi- medicine man-guru. · Generational role definition: father-mother-brother-sister-grandparent.
VALUES	· Explicitly stated attitudes and values. · Implicit or inferred from behavior.
SEXUALITY	· Availability of energy: how expressed and radiated. · Emphasis on same sex related characteristics. · Acceptance of opposite sex related characteristics. · Androgynous balance.
UNIQUENESS (STYLE)	· Quality that distinguishes how above factors are integrated; active/passive; flamboyant/serene; clear/opaque; microscopic/ macroscopic; orderly/bumbling; complex/serene; inward looking/ outward looking, etc.

Date Due