

1949

A proposed design for the evaluation of change in a small reference group.

Irene Perry
University of Louisville

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/etd>

Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Perry, Irene, "A proposed design for the evaluation of change in a small reference group." (1949). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 2361.
<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/2361>

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ThinkIR: The University of Louisville's Institutional Repository. This title appears here courtesy of the author, who has retained all other copyrights. For more information, please contact thinkir@louisville.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

A PROPOSED DESIGN FOR THE
EVALUATION OF CHANGE IN
A SMALL REFERENCE GROUP

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

Of the Graduate School of the University of Louisville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Of Master of Arts

Department of Psychology

By

Irene Perry

Year

1949

NAME OF STUDENT: Irene Perry

TITLE OF THESIS: A Proposed Design for the Evaluation
of Change in a Small Reference Group.

APPROVED BY READING COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF THE
FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

Noble H. Kelley

NAME OF DIRECTOR: R. A. Kemper

DATE: _____

Table of Contents

	Page
I. Title	1
II. Introduction	1
A. Explanation of group psychodynamics and group psychotherapy.	1
B. Aims of the study.	2
III. Hypothesis	4
IV. Assumptions Underlying the Hypothesis	4
V. Methods and Procedures	7
VI. Assumptions Underlying Methods and Procedures	9
VII. Items of Adjustment	11
VIII. Analysis of Data	13
A. Table 1. The ratings given the 21 adjustment items.	13
B. Table 2. The rank order given to the 10 highest rated items.	14
C. Dummy sheet: Method of paired comparisons for each member after 2 weeks.	15
D. Dummy sheet: Method of paired comparisons for the individual and level of aspiration after 2 weeks.	15
E. Dummy sheet: Method of paired comparisons for each member after completion.	16
F. Dummy sheet: Method of paired comparisons for each individual and reaction to achievement after completion.	17

G.	Table 3. Self rating, average total self rating, and average total level of aspiration in experimental group, after 2 weeks.	17
H.	Table 4. Average group ratings and average total group ratings for each member in experimental group, after 2 weeks.	18
I.	Table 5. Same as Table 3 but for control group.	18
J.	Table 6. Same as Table 4 but for control group.	18
K.	Table 7. Self rating, average total self rating, and average feeling of achievement in experimental group, after completion.	19
L.	Table 8. Average group rating and total average group rating for each member in experimental group, after completion.	19
M.	Table 9. Same as Table 7 but for control group.	19
N.	Table 10. Same as Table 8 but for control group.	19
O.	Table 11. Group ratings and level of achievement of well adjusted in experimental and control groups.	20
P.	Table 12. Group ratings and level of achievement of poorly adjusted in experimental and control groups.	21
Q.	Table 13. Average group rating, average level of achievement, and differences between them for the well and poorly adjusted in experimental and control groups.	21
IX.	Historical Background	23
	A. Group psychotherapy.	23
	B. Level of aspiration.	26
X.	Bibliography	38
XI.	Critical Self Analysis	40

1. Title.

11. Introduction.

I. Title: A proposed design for the evaluation of change in a small reference group.

II. Introduction:

Course Psychology #475, titled Experience in Group Dynamics and organized by Dr. Noble H. Kelley at the University of Louisville, has as its goals a purpose somewhere between the aims of group psychodynamics and group psychotherapy. In group psychodynamics, the study of the changes that take place within groups, we find that as a consequence of the unbalance among the internal forces of the group, changes in the group structure occur.¹⁰ The types of changes that work toward increased stability are manifold. The course under discussion is primarily interested in the ideological shifts that result when the group redefines its attitudes and beliefs.

The design of the course is such that a permissive, accepting, leaderless atmosphere is created wherein the members come to express attitudes. Attitudes may be defined as "enduring perceptual, cognitive processes with respect to some aspect

of the individual's world."¹⁰ By understanding these processes as they relate to the self and the other members in the group, it is believed that the individual can better perceive the relationships between motives and behavior which lead to a unitary, integrated adjustment which may be termed insight.¹⁵ The attainment of insight should facilitate a positive adjustment which may be described as "the satisfaction of all the motives of the individual with regard for their functioning as interrelated systems, and with respect for and consideration of others."¹⁵

The course may well be considered, with certain limitations, group psychotherapy, in that it fits the description of a group in which no discussion is initiated by the therapist; in which members work together, directly and meaningfully interact; and as a result of which the members modify their feeling tones and habitual responses, thus making for a more positive adjustment.¹⁶ Thus, although it is not primarily intended as such, the end product of the course corresponds to the desired end product of group psychotherapy.

It is the goal of this paper to measure adjustment before and after the effects of the course have influenced the members. According to Bell, there can be two

types of measures of adjustment - in terms of the objective evaluation of his conduct by another individual, or in terms of the individual's own evaluation of his behavior; we will attempt to use both in order to make a comparison.² In addition, we will try to obtain predictions by each person as to expected change of adjustment and later a retrospective estimate of the change that he felt did take place. Studies similar to this have been done in areas where academic or manual tasks were assigned and the subject was to estimate his new performance on the basis of his last one. Such research was done under the heading of level of aspiration, a term originally coined by Lewin.¹¹

By a before and after study of group and self ratings of adjustment in Psychology #475 and a control group, estimates can be made as to the benefits of such a course, as well as exploring the similarities and differences in the two types of evaluations made. Also, we can see whether there is a relationship between the group estimate of the individual's adjustment and the individual's rating of his feeling of success or failure with regard to the adjustment he has made.

III. Hypothesis.

IV. Assumptions Underlying
the Hypothesis.

III. Hypothesis:

Following a course in group psychodynamics, those individuals who are rated by the group as poorly adjusted will rate themselves significantly higher as to the amount of change toward positive adjustment than will those individuals who the group judges to be better adjusted, but lower than persons judged as poorly adjusted who have not had group psychodynamics.

IV. Assumptions Underlying the Hypothesis:

1. Those persons, who according to the estimate of the group rate low, as to adjustment, will view a small positive change as being greater than will the group that is considered better adjusted. Lewis in his article on level of aspiration cited a study made by Gardner where ten subjects having the highest average positive discrepancy scores were also rated highest on (a) dissatisfaction with status and (b) importance attached to intellectual achievement. The ten subjects having the lowest discrepancy scores were rated lowest on (a) subjective achievement level, (b) general sense of security, (c) tendency to face failure frankly, (d) realism, (e) motivation, and were rated highest on fear of failure. ¹¹ It may be assumed, thus, that the latter

ten subjects are not so well adjusted as the former group according to the type of ratings they received. Because the difference between their past performance and new level set is smaller than that set by the better adjusted group, any small success will appear larger to them than a small success will appear when the expectation is larger.

2. After a course in group psychodynamics, the individuals better understand the attitudes of others as well as their own, thereby increasing insight.

As Schilder states, "to understand another individual completely means to have insight into one's own problems, although there are many psychological obstacles which hinder the transfer of insight from another individual to oneself. However, the probability of such a transfer is increased when there is a group situation which tends to lower the barriers between single individuals. Group activities which allow a free expression of one's individual problems, and which make it possible that the individual elaborates later on the expression of the problems which have been mobilized in the group and which are therefore of psychological value."

"Whatever the specific mode of expression may be, the final value of a group psychotherapy method is dependent on the degree of social and psychological insight upon which it is based. It will increase this insight when it is not used as a rigid scheme, but as a social experience which by trial and error leads to better adaptation."¹⁴

3. Adjustment can be measured objectively and subjectively. Bell says adjustment can have two meanings in that it can be in terms of the objective evaluation of conduct by another, or in terms of the individual's own evaluation of his behavior.²

4. Differentiation between poorly and better adjusted individuals can be done by using those who fall in the upper and lower most points on our rating scale that verbally defines these points as the limits of good and poor adjustment.

V. Methods and Procedures.

V. Methods and Procedures:

1. A list of 21 items were gathered from such sources as the Bell Adjustment Inventory² and discussions of adjustment by Young and Shaffer.¹⁵ The items were chosen so as to best fit the two criteria of applicability for rating members in a course in group psychodynamics, and also in so far as they seemed to best indicate good adjustment. (See attached page with items listed).
2. The 21 items were first distributed to 5 experienced psychologists to be rated on a scale from 1 to 5 (1.very poor, 2.poor, 3.don't know, 4.good, 5.very good). The ten items which had the highest mean ratings were again distributed to 5 psychologists to be ranked. The 5 items with the lowest rank order were selected for use. They were reworded so as to be operationally expressed, thereby facilitating the rating by the members in the course.
3. After two weeks of the course have elapsed the 5 items will be administered to the group in psychology #475. Each member will rate himself on a scale of 1 to 6 ranging from 1. very much less, 2. much less,

3. less, 4. more, 5. much more, 6. very much more, for each of the 5 items by the method of paired comparisons. This means that he will ask himself how he feels he rates on the stated scale as compared to member A, to member B, to member C, etc. In addition each member will follow the same procedure for his rating of every other member in the group. Each individual will also state his level of aspiration (the goal toward which he is acting) as to the amount of change toward positive adjustment at the end of the course for all 5 items, by using the same 6 point scale to indicate his aspired rating.

4. At the end of the semester the entire procedure will be duplicated. This time, however, each person will rate feeling of successful achievement on a 6 point scale ranging from 1. very strong failure, 2. strong failure, 3. failure, 4. success, 5. strong success, 6. very strong success.

5. As a control group a discussion type class where all members participate, namely in the foreign language department, will be used. The likelihood of the members having had psychology #475 is slight. The entire procedure described for the psychology class will be dup-

VI. Assumptions Underlying
Methods and Procedures.

VI. Assumptions Underlying the Methods and Procedures:

1. One of the best methods of determining the level of aspiration and the reaction to its achievement is the direct verbal expression of the subject during the situation to which it refers. This statement was made by Lewin in his writings on the level of aspiration.¹¹

2. The items used for evaluation measures adjustment. Since the items were collected from such sources as the Bell Adjustment inventory² and discussions of adjustment by Young¹⁷ and Shaffer,¹⁵ and were first rated by 5 experienced psychologists and their ten top choices were again ranked by 5 psychologists, we will make the assumption that the poor items were filtered out, leaving the most valid ones for use.

3. The sample used will be representative of people who have enrolled and will enroll in the psychology course #475.

Since the number of the course remains constant and since it is a course required by the department of all its majors, we can assume that in the latter half of the undergraduate career all psychology majors will take the course.

4. The control group will be fairly well matched with the experimental group.

A foreign language course with a 400 number will be used which will attract people of same age range and same status as to years of college.

5. Total adjustment can be factored into its components. Bell in his adjustment inventory has used many independent items to obtain a picture of total adjustment.²

6. Method of paired comparisons affords one of the best methods of thoroughly comparing members of a group.

Each rater has a single person to use for the comparison instead of an intangible group. Also, the error of central tendency is avoided, since an either-or choice is demanded, thereby eliminating the tendency to rate the person near the mean.

Vll. Items of Adjustment.

VII. Items of Adjustment.

Please rate on a scale from 1-5 (see below) the following items which, from your psychological experience, seem most adaptable for a questionnaire to measure adjustment in a class of group psychodynamics (475, under the sponsorship of Noble H. Kelley, University of Louisville. September, 1949.)

Scale

1. Very poor
2. Poor
3. Don't know
4. Good
5. Very good.

Questionnaire to be used in #475.

1. The individual enjoys being with the other members of the class.
2. The individual has no difficulty in participating in the group conversation.
3. The individual takes the lead in initiating discussion.
4. The individual enters the class after it has begun without feeling embarrassed.
5. The individual is not shy.
6. The individual is not self-conscious when volunteering his ideas.
7. The individual is at ease with the opposite sex.
8. The individual finds it easy to speak before the group.
9. The individual takes his regular seat rather than a more convenient one when he enters after the class is in session.
10. The individual makes friends readily.

11. The individual is not greatly disturbed by unfavorable criticism.
12. The individual cooperates with the group.
13. The individual is not excessively excitable.
14. The individual does not get upset easily.
15. The individual's feelings are not easily hurt.
16. The individual does not remain in the background during the discussion period.
17. The individual accepts the other members of the group.
18. The individual accepts graciously opinions that are at variance with his own.
19. The individual doesn't derogate others.
20. The individual has optimal social aggressiveness (defined as the ability to meet and associate readily with many types of people).
21. The individual shows optimal emotional expression during interaction with the group.

The 5 items having the lowest rank order after final ranking by the judges were selected and are as follows:

1. The individual cooperates with the group.
2. The individual comes to the foreground during the discussion.
3. The individual accepts opinions that are at variance with his own.
4. The individual has free emotional expression during interaction with the group.
5. The individual accepts unfavorable criticism.

Vlll. Analysis of Data.

VIII. Analysis of the Data.

Table 1. The numerical rating on the basis of a scale from 1-5 ranging from 1. very poor, 2. poor, 3. don't know, 4. good, 5. very good, of a list of 21 statements on adjustment which were administered and rated by 5 psychologists at the University of Louisville. The mean score for each question is shown.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Rater
3	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	Muench
2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	2	2	3	4	4	2	5	4	Bixler
4	5	2	4	3	4	2	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	2	1	4	4	2	4	Bowman
4	5	3	5	2	2	3	5	1	3	4	4	2	4	4	4	5	5	2	5	3	Kemper
2	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	5	4	2	4	4	2	2	5	1	3	5	3	4	Swink
3	3.8	3	3.6	3	3.4	2.8	3.6	2.8	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.6	3.2	4.2	3.6	3.8	3.8	Mean

Table 2. The ten statements having the highest mean score were selected for ranking by 5 psychologists on a scale ranging from 1- the best index of adjustment to 10- the poorest index of adjustment. Mean rank given for each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
10	6	7	4	3	9	5	8	2	1	
4	10	5	1	6	3	7	9	8	2	
4	8	7	2	10	3	5	1	9	6	
7	4	9	1	5	3	2	8	10	6	
3	5	10	9	1	8	7	4	2	6	
5.6	6.6	7.6	3.4	5	5.2	5.2	6	6.2	4.2	Mean rank

A dummy sheet using fictitious names and scores.
 To be used after 2 weeks of the course are over.
 Beginning at the first name on the vertical axis, rate
 this person on a scale from 1 to 6 (scale below) as
 you feel he compares on the item listed below, with each
 person on the horizontal axis going from left to right.
 Continue down the vertical axis following the same pro-
 cedure for every person in the group.

- Scale
1. very much less
 2. much less
 3. less
 4. more
 5. much more
 6. very much more

Item 1. The individual cooperates with the group.

	Smith	Brown	Jones	Wells	Aver.
Smith	X	2	3	3	2.7
Brown	5	X	5	3	4.3
Jones	6	6	X	3	5
Wells	2	2	2	X	2

Following the same procedure and using the same scale
 as above, rate yourself as you feel you compare with
 every other person in the group. In addition, in the
 last column state the score (using the same scale) you

expect to achieve after completion of the course.

	Smith	Brown	Jones	Wells	Aver.	Level of Asp.
Smith	X	4	4	6	4.7	5

The identical procedure will be followed for each of the 5 items.

A dummy sheet using fictitious names and scores.

To be used after completion of the course.

Beginning at the first name on the vertical axis, rate this person on a scale from 1 to 6 (scale below) as you feel he compares on the item listed below, with each person on the horizontal axis going from left to right. Continue down the vertical axis following the same procedure for every person in the group.

Scale

1. very much less
2. much less
3. less
4. more
5. much more
6. very much more

Item 1. The individual cooperates with the group.

	Smith	Brown	Jones	Wells	Aver.
Smith	X	4	4	4	4
Brown	1	X	6	2	3
Jones	6	5	X	1	4
Wells	2	4	6	X	4

Following the same procedure and using the same scale as above, rate yourself as you feel you compare with every other person in the group. In addition, in the last column state the score (using scale below) you feel expresses your reaction to your achievement.

1. very strong failure
2. strong failure
3. failure
4. success
5. strong success
6. very strong success

	Smith	Brown	Jones	Wells	Aver.	Reaction to
Smith	X	4	3	2	3	3

Table 3. The self ratings of every individual in the experimental group after two weeks of the course for items 1-5, the level of aspiration for each item after completion of the course, the average total self rating, and the average total level of aspiration.

Fictitious names and scores are used for demonstration

A- stands for level of aspiration.

Items	1 A	2 A	3 A	4 A	5 A	Ave. Totl. Self Rating	Ave. Tot. Level of Asp.
Smith	2 3	4 4	3 5	3 6	3 3	3	4.2
Jones	2 6	2 3	5 5	4 6	4 4	3.4	4.8

Table 4. The average group rating for every individual in the experimental group after two weeks of the course for items 1-5, and the average total group rating for each individual.

Items	1	2	3	4	5	Aver. Tot. Group Rating
Smith	3	2	1	3	5	3.8
Jones	1	4	6	5	2	4.2

Table 5. The self ratings of every individual in the control group after two weeks of the course for items 1-5, the level of aspiration for each item after completion of the course, the average total self rating, and the average total level of aspiration.

Table constructed same as table 3.

Table 6. The average group rating for every individual in the control group after two weeks of the course for

items 1-5, and the average total rating for each individual.

Table constructed same as Table 4.

Table 7. The self ratings of every individual in the experimental group after completion of the course for items 1-5, the level of feeling of achievement, the average total self rating, and the average total level of feeling of achievement.

L- stands for the level of feeling of achievement.

Items	1 L	2 L	3 L	4 L	5 L	Ave. Tot. Self Rating	Ave. Tot. Fee: ing of Ach.
Sand	2 4	3 3	2 3	4 6	4 6	5	4.4
Lee	2 2	3 2	2 5	4 3	2 2	2.6	2.8
Baker	1 1	3 1	2 1	3 3	2 4	2.2	2

Table 8. The average group rating for every individual in the experimental group after the completion of the course for items 1-5, and the average total group rating for each individual.

Items	1	2	3	4	5	Average Tot. Group Rating
Sand	4	3	3	2	5	3.4
Lee	6	2	3	2	2	3

Table 9. The self ratings of every individual in the control group after completion of the course for items 1-5, the level of the feeling of achievement, the average total self rating, and the average total level of the feeling of achievement.

Table constructed same as Table 7.

Table 10. The average group rating for every individual in the control group after completion of the course for items 1-5, and the average total group rating for each individual.

Table constructed same as Table 8.

Table 11. Those individuals who, on the second rating by the group had average total adjustment scores between the limits of 1 and 2.5 and by definition are to be considered the poorly adjusted group, are listed below with their group rating and the achievement scores they assigned themselves after completion of the course.

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

	Gr. Rating	Lev. of Ach.
Smith	2.3	4
Jones	1.4	6

CONTROL GROUP

	Gr. Rating	Lev. of Ach.
Sand	2.2	5.0
Lee	1.0	6

Table 12. Those individuals who, on the second rating by the group had average total adjustment scores between the limits of 4.5 and 6 and by definition are to be considered the well adjusted group, are listed below with their group rating and the achievement scores they assigned themselves after completion of the course.

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

	Gr. Ratings	Lev. of Ach.
Brown	4.8	3
Wells	5.2	3.2

CONTROL GROUP

	Gr. Rating	Lev. of Ach.
Baker	5	4
Kelly	4.7	5.2

Table 13. The average group ratings and the average level of achievement ratings and the difference between them for the well and poorly adjusted in the control and experimental groups.

Exp. Gr. Poorly Adj.			Control Gr. Poorly Adj.			Exp. Gr. Well Adj.			Control Gr. Well Adj.		
ave. gr.	ave. ach.	diff.	ave. gr.	ave. ach.	diff.	ave. gr.	ave. ach.	diff.	ave. gr.	ave. ach.	diff.
2.1	4.2	/2.1	2.0	5.0	/3.0	5.4	2.4	-3.0	4.8	2.8	-2.0

IX. Historical Background.

IX. An Historical Background

Since the aim of the experimental group used in the study (Psychology #475) has as a goal the better understanding of the self and others through interaction in a permissive group, it is well to review some of the literature related to the topic. The expression of attitudes by the members of a group is the means to better understanding. As Schilder states,

"Only when the individual dives down into his personal experiences and brings them forward for the group does he encourage others to do likewise."¹⁴

It is the encouraging atmosphere which leads to free expression of personal problems. Each member can elaborate upon the proposed issue by bringing forth from his background relevant material. Thus issues become mobilized by the group and are of particular interest because so many of the individual members made contributions to the discussion.

Since man is a group animal, his development is conditioned by group values and attitudes.¹⁶ Man can thus better gain insight and understanding in a medium which closely approximates the one in which he actually

functions. A group is an aggregate of 3 or more people who in an informal face to face relationship influence each other deeply and modify the personality permanently.¹⁶ So group psychotherapy seems to afford an excellent means to achieve understanding of others and of the self. From observation it has been concluded that in schools and institutions group interaction has a therapeutic effect as well as being essential in personality growth generally.¹⁶ A study made on seven graduate psychology students points out some interesting things. The leader structured the session by saying in essence that all were interested in human relations and if there were any concerns that anyone would be interested in sharing with the group he should feel free to do so. The meetings were phonographically recorded. The leader took a non-directive role, as 89% of his statements fell into the category entitled "non-directive response to feelings" and 0.3% into the "directive counseling" category. The statements of the students were classified into feeling and content categories. Over 500 statements were classified by 4 judges. Results showed that 4 out of seven felt that group therapy had exerted a decided influence on them. Three out of the seven said that the therapy sessions were interesting but not especially valuable.

The questions the author found of interest were (1) whether any changes in the types of conversation was carried on by the two groups, (2) whether there were any expression of insight and action for either group as has been demonstrated by individual non-directive therapy, and (3) whether there were any changes in attitudes as expressed by the members of the benefitting and non-benefitting groups.

Benefitting

Non-benefitting

1. At beginning an equal number of therapeutic (personal problems) as inter-actional. At the end of the sessions the therapeutic statements rose in number.

2. Decline and rise at first in the number of problem statements. In the second half of sessions increase in the number of statements showing understanding and discussion of plan or action.

3. Made $2\frac{3}{4}$ times as many therapeutic statements as non-benefitting group.

4. More expression of attitudes toward self in sec. half.

5. Increase of positive and negative feelings to self. Decrease in ambivalence to self.

6. Follow up after 3 months.
All took positive action as result.
All personally changed.

1. No real pattern. Toward the end the casual statements rose.

2. The second half fewer statements of problems. Slight decline in insight after session 1, then remained constant. Slight increase in discussion of plans in second half.

3. Although trends similar to benefitting group, not as pronounced.

4. No trends in attitudes to self or others.

5. Increase in negative attitudes expressed to group at end.

Seems from the study that discussion of personal problems in the group bears some relation to the therapeutic effect of group therapy, although further re-

Group therapy has been found especially helpful with people with individual characteristics such as being withdrawn, egotistic, etc., who can't develop a transference for an individual worker; with the dull and repressed; with the socially maladjusted. It is a supplement to individual counseling and case work treatment; a means of tapering off individual therapy; a continuation after a case is closed in order to socialize the individual. With children it has been found helpful, as it is based on the need of the child for security, love, self-expression and creation. In all it is a means of gaining a working understanding of one another.¹⁶

About 1931, Kurt Lewin introduced the term anspruchsniveau, which gained popularity in 1935, and which translated means level of aspiration.⁶ Lewin has set up a diagram that shows simply and clearly the steps involved in the process of setting a level of aspiration. Explanation of the terms may well be the best means of understanding the concept.¹¹

Last performance 1	Set level of aspiration 2	New performance 3	Reaction to new performance 4
goal	attainment		
discrepancy	discrepancy		

feelings of success
or failure

According to Frank, "level of aspiration is level of future performance in a familiar task on which the individual, knowing his level of past performance in that task, explicitly undertakes to reach."⁴

There are also other terms that should be defined.¹¹

The ideal goal differs from the action goal in that the former is the goal which the individual would like to achieve, but realizes is out of reach for the present, whereas the latter is actually the goal set out to reach. It is the action goal that is usually taken as level of aspiration. The distance between the ideal and action goal is called the inner discrepancy.

The difference between level of action goal and level of expected performance yields another score called the goal expectation discrepancy, which depends in part on the subjective degree of probability which the individual holds with reference to reaching his action goal.

The goal discrepancy is the difference between past and present goals, and is positive when the latter is higher than former and negative when it is lower.

The difference between level of aspiration and

attainment is called the attainment discrepancy and is either positive or negative. It is the size and direction of the attainment discrepancy that determine feelings of success or failure, terms which will indicate the psychological factor of feeling success or failure not as indicating the difference between aspiration and achievement.⁵

What determines the level of aspiration? There are many factors offered by people in the field as influencing level of aspiration and much experimentation has been done on all the possibilities. The following will attempt to condense and summarize finds.

One important factor in setting a new goal is success or failure the individual feels after completion of the performance. Success and failure are subjective experiences composed of various factors. Success can be determined by the fact that the performance was above level of aspiration (or at least at it), and failure when the new performance falls below level of aspiration. Also adequacy of the performance to the task may be supplemented by reference to the performance of the group.

Festinger in 1942 found that after attainment of level of aspiration there were

- 51% raising level of aspiration
- 41% maintained same level of aspiration
- 8% lowered level of aspiration

but that after non-attainment there were

- 7% raising
- 29% maintaining
- 64% lowering

Jucknat rated reactions to attainment and non-attainment experienced by the subject. Using scale

S!!	Very good success	F	Weak failure without
S!	Just success		much evidence of serious
S	Solution without		feelings
	evidence of dis-	F!	Strong failure
	tinct success		
DS	Solution with	F!!	Very strong failure
	considerable effort		

Frequency of Raising or Lowering Level of Asp.
after different intensities of Success or Failure

	S!!	S!	S	DS	F	F!	F!!
Cases	24	45	29	34	36	41	17
% Raising	96	80	55	56	22	19.5	12
% Lowering	4	20	45	44	78	80.5	88

The conclusion drawn is that the stronger the success, the greater the rise, and the stronger the failure, the greater the lowering.¹¹

Aspirations of the group is a second important factor. It has been shown that the individual may change his level of aspiration from session one to session two in the direction of conforming to the group's aspiration or performance. Chapman & Volkman showed that knowledge of group's performance changed the level of aspiration when the knowledge was presented before the individual had formed any first hand acquaintance with the task. When the individual had some experience with the task, and was then told the performance of others in the group, the level didn't change. This indicates that at different periods in the process of formulating the level of aspiration, the group's performance is an influencing factor.³ Lewin cites the study showing that when subjects know their position of standing in reference to the group, those found to be above average tend to lower their level of aspiration, those close to the average tend to raise the level slightly, and those below the mean of the group raise their level considerably. There exists a frame of reference in which each performance of the individual is placed on a scale formed by the performance of his group.

11

The relation of personality variables and level of aspiration has undergone quite a bit of research.

Hoppe says that ambition, prudence (or daring), self confidence (or inferiority), and courage to face reality are the personality variables which underly level of aspiration. Frank states that caution, ambition, a tendency to face reality and ego level are involved in level of aspiration. Jucknat claims ambition, prudence and tendency to fear failure are determinants.⁵

Frank specifically suggests that self confidence, ambition and wishful thinking are expressed by high level of aspiration, while realism, cautiousness and self-protectiveness are expressed by a low level of aspiration. He suggests that more investigation may show that people whose average difference score is high will be dissatisfied with their status, whereas the individuals with low average difference scores will be fearful of failure.⁴ An attempt was made to draw up a rating scale to measure many suggested variables. This scale was to be used along with results of an actual experimental situation involving those persons who were being rated. The scale was briefly as follows:⁵

1. Indicate where subject feels he stands in relation

to group with respect to intellectual performance.

2. Indicate dissatisfaction with status or extent to which he'd like to possess a superior status.

Really measure degree of dissatisfaction with present status, not how much higher he'd like it to be.

3. Indicate the extent to which the person has a general sense of security - life situations.

4. Indicate how much importance is attached to success or failure in the intellectual realm.

5. Indicate extent to which he fails to hide feeling of inferiority in the intellectual sphere.

6. Indicate need to protect ego and avoid failure in intellectual areas.

7. Indicate extent to which individual checks level of aspiration against performance (measure of reality).

8. Indicate how highly motivated you feel the subject would be upon entering into the test.

The raters interviewed the subjects, observed them under test situations, and interacted with them socially before ratings were made. All the items had high reliability except dissatisfaction with status, however, when the pooled ratings were compared to the actual performance of the individuals the correlation was uniformly low. The results showed that those with the ten

highest average difference scores in the experiment rated high on items 2 and 4, while the ten lowest rated low on items 1 - 3 - 5 - 7 - 8 and highest on fear of failure.

Gardner claims that the results don't negate relationship between level of behavior in an experimental situation and personality characteristics, but shows that level of aspiration in an experimental situation can't be taken as diagnostic of presence or strength of any particular one of the variables dealt with in the study. The mistake of Hoppe, Frank and Jucknat is that they unequivocally trace level of aspiration behavior to any one of the variables because they are all operative in a pattern. Although results were in the expected direction, the difference between groups was not significant.

Under the same heading of personality and the level of aspiration it is interesting to review the conclusion made by Frank that the average difference score of an individual (difference between average performance and average estimate) is a relatively permanent characteristic of the personality. To shed light on this, Gould experimented with a random

group doing 6 unrelated tasks. She found there to be a low level of aspiration intercorrelation. She states that "since we're dealing with end processes, we don't know the psychic motivations."⁷ In other words, the nature of the task and many other operative factors will determine levels of aspiration set and they will naturally be different in different situations. Frank says that there are 3 needs an individual has:

1. To keep level of aspiration as high as possible regardless of performance.
2. A need to make level of aspiration approximate future performance (reality always exists).
3. To avoid failure.

These needs seem to be operating at all times and therefore tend to maintain the permanence of the average difference score for a said individual. However, Gould feels that since the individual can't be high in all things, he sets up values within values in order to adapt to reality. The individual differs in intensity and extent of fields of interest and goal strivings. This negates the relatively permanent character of the average difference score for a given individual.⁵

The position of the individual in relation to the group - that is his rank seems to have a relation to the level of aspiration. Anderson and Brandt did an experiment to

substantiate the assumption that those in lower ranks on basis of past performance set much more difficult or more erratic goals. It was concluded from the study that "The further up or down the scale a child's score deviates from the mean of the group, the further in an inverse direction does his goal tend to deviate from his previous achievement score."¹

Jucknat in her study of 500 students showed similar results. The good students set their initial level of aspiration from 7 to 10 on a 10 point scale; the medium student set level of aspiration from 5 to 6 on the scale; the poor student set level of aspiration at 1-4 and 7-10, which showed great variability.¹¹

In addition to the determinants of level of aspiration discussed to this point, there is the socio-economic that has been investigated. Gould did a study on 81 students; using 6 unrelated tasks, she calculated their average difference or discrepancy scores (difference between average performance and average estimate). She divided these into Low and High groups. Below are the categorized results:

<u>High discrepancy</u>	<u>Low discrepancy</u>
1. Foreign born fathers.	1. American born fathers.
2. Religious minority groups.	2. Protestant
3. Fathers were businessmen.	3. Fathers were professionals.
4. 60% of fathers made \$4,000 a yr.	4. 57% of fathers made \$4,000 - \$10,000

The author bases the estimate of the future, not on the subject's definition of success or failure, but the need to avoid failure. The theoretical explanation of the results of study are that the future is an expression of the present status of the group in question. The more unsatisfactory the present is conceived to be, the more urgent is the need to depart from it. Thus we see that those in the proven socio-economic group have on the average a higher level of aspiration. On the other hand, those satisfied with the present will not seek great change in the future, and will reveal a low average level of aspiration. There is one more issue involved - if the future seems hopeless, then the individual may have a low level of aspiration so as to ensure concrete achievement of aims and avoid failure. The high scores appear where there is dissatisfaction with hope. High discrepancy scores are likely to be prevalent with those people who say, "If you aim high and don't succeed, it's better than if you don't aim high." An implication of the whole theory is that the very high and very low income groups may have low average discrepancy scores due to lack of desire for change and lack of hope respectively, while the middle income group may have high discrepancy scores.⁸

At present there is no complete agreement as to the whole issue of level of aspiration and its measurement. Hoppe

sees the level of aspiration as highly subjective and the totality of constantly shifting goals or demands in connection with one's own future performance. He does feel that the level of aspiration can be inferred from spontaneous remarks made by subjects, way subject goes at a task, occurrence of successful or failing experiences. He assumes an inner and outer level for each individual.⁶

Jucknat says level of aspiration should be "level in a difficulty scale at which the subject is willing to test himself in the presence of an experimenter."⁶

Gould says there is no 1 to 1 relation between level of aspiration and quantitative measures. Gardner feels that at present quantification of level of aspiration is spurious because by the methods used to reveal and quantify, you get a manufactured situation and result.⁶

Thus we will find results of studies at variance with one another and theories that are contradictory. Research is needed to clarify the issues in reference to level of aspiration.

X. Bibliography.

Bibliography

1. Anderson, H., and Brandt, H., "A Study of Motivation Involving Self Announced Goals of Fifth Grade Children and Concept of Level of Aspiration," Journal of Social Psychology, 10: 209-232, 1939.
2. Bell, Hugh, The Theory and Practice of Personal Counseling (Stanford Univ., Stanford University Press, 1939).
3. Chapman, D., and Volkman, J., "A Social Determinant of the Level of Aspiration," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 34: 225-238, 1939.
4. Frank, J., "Recent Studies of the Level of Aspiration," Psychol. Bulletin, 38: 218-225, 1941.
5. Gardner, J., "The Relation of Certain Personality Variables to Level of Aspiration," Journal of Psychol., 9: 191-206, 1940a.
6. Gardner, J., "The Use of the Term "Level of Aspiration," Psychol. Review, 47: 59-68, 1940b.
7. Gould, R., "Factors Underlying Expressed Level of Aspiration," Journal of Psychol., 6: 265-279, 1938.
8. Gould, R., "Some Sociological Determinants of Goal Strivings," Journal of Social Psychol., 13: 461-473, 1941.
9. Guilford, J., Psychometric Methods (N. Y. McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1936) Chaps. 7, 8, 9.
10. Kresch, D., and Crutchfield, R., Theory and Problems of Social Psychology (N. Y. McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1948).
11. Lewin, K., "Level of Aspiration," Personality and the Behavior Disorders, (N. Y., Ronald Press Co., Edited by J. McV. Hunt, Vol. 1, pp 333-378, 1944).
12. Lundberg, G., Social Research, (N. Y., Longmans, Green & Co., 1942), Chap. 8.
13. Peres, H., "An Investigation of Non-Directive Group Therapy," Journal of Consulting Psychol., Vol. XI, No. 4, 159-172, July-August 1947.
14. Schilder, P., "Introductory Remarks on Groups," Journal of Social Psychol., 12: 83-100, 1940.

15. Shaffer, L., The Psychology of Adjustment (Cambridge, Mass., The Riverside Press, 1936), Chap. 5.
16. Slavson, S., "Group Therapy," Mental Hygiene, 24: 36-49, 1940.
17. Young, K., Personality and Problems of Adjustment, (N. Y., Crofts & Co., 1940), Chaps. 16-17.

XI. Critical Self Analysis.

A Critical Self Analysis

The author, having analyzed the study, has concluded that she has undertaken to experiment with more material and ideas than one researcher is capable of handling at the Master's level, and especially as a thesis project. Because of the scope of the topic and the attempt to cover it adequately, weak spots have resulted. It is with this in mind that the author will attempt to point out such weaknesses, to clarify them, and to improve upon the established design. It is hoped that this will better adapt it for use, although, because of its complexity it cannot be regarded, even in its corrected form as near perfect an instrument as a scientific researcher expects of his work.

1. Psychological terminology has not, up to the present time, singular definitions or interpretations, so that in order to insure that each reader understands the material in the same way, the author will have to clearly define terms like adjustment, attitudes, realism, etc. In that way the reader will know by what interpretation the author is abiding. Elaboration of the terminology is thus

essential to the full understanding of the entire design. In order to do this the author will, before final revision, review the literature more thoroughly so as to include the ideas of more than one author, thereby giving a more complete view of current interpretations.

2. The author feels that the items used for the adjustment inventory could have been improved upon by having a large number of experienced psychologists submit items which to their knowledge would best be an index of adjustment in a discussion group when self and group ratings will be attempted. This method would eliminate resorting to Bell's Adjustment Inventory for items which had to be adapted for the group in question. The new means of securing the items will enable the psychologists to construct the statements in such a way that they will be behaviorally defined and thus applicable to the groups used. Also, the new method will facilitate the amassing of a very large number of items which can be rated by a group of about 25. It is hoped that an increase in the number of items and the number of raters will increase the reliability of the results achieved. This larger set of items and the increased ratings given each item, should

increase the distribution or spread of the items thereby enabling the author to obtain a sufficient number of items rated two or more standard deviations to the right of the mean. This will eliminate the use of taking the items with the highest mean rating, a method which does not give as precise results.

3. In the paper the term "leaderless atmosphere" was employed. It is felt that this term needs clarification. The term refers to the fact that although the group organizer or professor is present, he shall participate in the capacity of a leader to a minimum. He shall not initiate discussions or dominate them. Although the fact that his position and role of the person who is to fix the grades makes his symbolic leadership role more prominent, his behavior throughout the discussion period should be non-domineering. The arising of a leader from amongst the members of the group is prevalent in group psychodynamics. The absoluteness of the term "leaderless atmosphere" gives a false impression which the author hopes the present discussion rectifies. The minimal interference played by the leader figure is the feature to be stressed.

This is still not to be viewed as a perfect instrument, but it is hoped that in some small way it can make a contribution to the field of psychology.