**Further notes on Group Behavior, Rapport, Trust, and Etiquette**

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Research on group behavior can be applied to college classrooms, because all members of the class, including the professor, share a common goal--mastery of the course material. When faculty view a classroom full of students as a task-oriented learning group, rather than as a collection of individuals, they (we!) are more likely to assume responsibility for group development activities. Faculty can use the [Analysis of Group Behaviors chart](http://www.ntlf.com/html/pi/9708/borderchrt.htm) to plan and set norms for acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; to derail non-task-oriented behaviors; and encourage students to focus actively on the task-oriented dimensions of the class.

Blake and Mouton analyzed group behavior in the 1960s and identified three groups of behaviors that occur in most groups. The first category, **maintenance-oriented behaviors**, includes behaviors that assure individual comfort, set norms, help individuals build relational ties, and assure what we could call the "pleasure of the group." Group maintenance-oriented behaviors make participation enjoyable. Of course, in a classroom setting, enjoyment is a boon only if it facilitates the task of learning the course content. Students can be encouraged to learn about each others' interests, majors, work, and leisure time activities; and to tutor each other, and to study for tests together. Interestingly, in a group that manifests many group maintenance-oriented behaviors, members tend to form friendships and keep in touch even after the group task is completed.

The second category, **self-oriented behaviors**, contains behaviors that disrupt or otherwise interfere with the successful completion of the work of the group. Self-oriented behavior, or "crazy-making," creates havoc, makes participation difficult, and sets a negative emotional tone that makes the group not only unpleasant, but ineffective as well. Unpleasant behaviors such as griping, pairing up, triangulation, or withdrawal from the group cause group members to be nervous, ill at ease, and distrustful of one another. In a classroom setting, self-oriented behaviors might include reading the newspaper, cutting class, or talking to one's neighbor during the lecture. Crazy-making behaviors pull the group's focus away from the task at hand and exacerbate dysfunctional aspects of communication. When such behaviors dominate, no one can concentrate on the task. Some class members are engaged in petty conflicts, while others expend their energy trying to improve communication rather than on trying to learn the course material. When I hand out this chart and use it to set norms for classroom interactions, self-oriented behaviors disappear because they have been named and explained. Once the parameters of crazy making are drawn, no one wants to be seen as a derailer of group progress and learning. Students recognize that the purpose of a learning group is to move all participants to a higher level of expertise.

The third category, **task-oriented behaviors**, comprises behaviors that support the successful completion of the work of the entire group.

Task-oriented behaviors can occur with or without either of the first two categories being present, however, a group that is entirely task oriented is rather mechanistic and not much fun. When the task is over, an entirely task-oriented group disbands and no further contact is unlikely. On the other hand, if group members meld enjoyment and pleasure with task completion, the group forms strong bonds, friendships, and tends to continue working together whenever possible. A professor who encourages students to come prepared; to ask for information, offer clarification, elaborate on their own and others statements; and to provide personal insights sets the tone for a task-oriented class. A professor who teaches students how to divide tasks, share information, and evaluate their own and the group's progress supports task-oriented learning. A professor who teaches students to see each other as resources and collaborators rather than as simpletons builds a task-oriented learning group. In such a class, learning and fun become mutually supportive, because the professor has set norms to assure a safe atmosphere, derail ineffective behaviors, and clarify tasks that lead to learning and mastery for the whole group.

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