

Lecture 7

Group Discussion

- **Discussion:** a cooperative exchange of information, opinions, and ideas
 - Discussion is one of the best methods for solving problems.
 - Discussion is not always perfect, but is valuable if every member is working and committed to listen, to think, and to reason with one another.
- **Discussion Formats**
 - **Panel discussion:** panel is a relatively informal discussion that takes place before an audience.
 - **Forum:** panel members invite questions and comments from the audience.
 - **Round table:** small group of participants talk about a topic of common concern while sitting around a table.
 - **Symposium:** more formal kind of discussion. Invited experts deliver short speeches on a particular subject.

Factors for Success

- **Group size:** 5 to 7 is ideal size. Most ideal would be 5 or 7 for voting.
- **Seating arrangement:** circle is most ideal. Don't sit too close together; it causes tension.
- **Cohesion:** members must have respect for each other, share some of the same values, and look to each other for support.

Group Problem Solving

- Difference between conversation and discussion is that discussions generally follow a sequential pattern, and conversations jump around.

John Dewey's 6 steps to problem solving

1. define the problem:
 - Have to understand problem before one can solve it.
 - Focus on what exactly needs to be solved.
 - Refer to scenario on page 158
2. establish criteria for a workable solution
 - Group should decide on criteria, or a set of standards, that is solution must meet

3. analyze the problem
 - Break the problem down into small pieces for closer inspection
4. suggest possible solutions
 - propose as many solutions as possible
 - brainstorm
5. evaluate each solution and select the best one
6. suggest ways for testing or carrying out the solution

Conflict in groups

- it's inevitable; it should be a positive force
- disruptive conflict: if "getting my way" is more important you than helping the group, you have lost that cooperative attitude so essential to good discussion.

- Types of negative behaviors that harm a group.
 - **Nitpickers:** want everything spelled out and will quibble until they get what they want.
 - **Eager beavers:** want to offer a solution whether or not they have given it any thought.
 - **Fence sitters:** don't dare take a position until they're sure what the "key people" will say.
 - **Wisecrackers:** the group clowns, people who seek attention in any way possible.
 - Usually can be controlled by picking up pace of discussion. Person is just bored.
 - **Superior beings:** look down their noses at the whole business.
 - **Dominators:** don't know when to quit talking.

Participants:

- A group can only be as effective as its weakest member

- **Responsibilities:**
 1. be clear and simple.
 2. encourage members to react to your ideas.
 - Ask questions: "Was I clear?" "What do you think about what I just said?"
 3. Be interesting
 4. offer reasons for what you say.
 5. think before speaking

Leader responsibilities:

1. should know how to run a meeting
2. should know the people in the group

3. should know the issues the group will discuss

The leader is a moderator

- Moderator: must get the discussion started, keep it moving, and bring it to a close.

Leaders should work to see that everyone participates and that no one monopolizes.

Leaders must be especially careful with members who are reluctant to speak

Leaders should provide occasional paraphrases of what someone has said.

- Students will work on Problem solving worksheets in groups.