

# Appendix A Some borderline cases in defining learning projects

The definition of a learning project contained in Chapter 2 is fairly precise. Some specific questions and borderline cases may arise, however, either at the conceptual level or at the operational (interview) level. This appendix tries to clarify a few of these difficulties.

## The learner is doubtful

Some series of episodes cannot be classified with assurance as learning projects because the learner is doubtful or uncertain about some aspect. Occasionally he cannot sort out his reasons for beginning a certain episode. He sees his reasons only dimly, or he cannot judge their relative strength with precision. Consequently, he is not sure whether the desire to gain and retain certain knowledge and skill was more than half of his total motivation. In addition, with a few series of learning episodes, interviewees cannot precisely recall the number of hours involved.

Probing and other efforts to help the interviewee sharpen his recall may cure some of these difficulties. If, however, there is still much doubt about whether a particular example meets the criteria, it is best to assume that it was not a learning project.

## Brief episodes

Another difficulty arises when a person's learning effort consists of a large number of very brief episodes, as sometimes occurs when watching television newscasts or when reading newspapers and weekly magazines. Ordinarily we exclude such episodes because the knowledge and skill are not clear and definite in the person's mind beforehand. He knows only that he is "going to catch up (or keep up) with the news." He has little idea of what items will be included. (In wartime, or after an assassination or space flight, this may be different: he may turn to the news media because he knows they will concentrate on that topic.)

Sometimes, though, the person will encounter a certain topic in which he is particularly interested. At that moment his motivation changes from a vague general interest in the contents of the newscast or newspaper to a desire to learn about the specific item he has encountered. If this occurs enough times with a given topic, the total of all these three-minute episodes over six months might be seven hours. Consequently, to set some sort of minimum duration for an episode, we arbitrarily exclude any episode of less than 10 minutes.

This is not an essential part of the concept of a learning project. It is just a convenient rule for use in borderline cases found in interviews.

## Levels of comprehensiveness

Learning projects occur at various levels of comprehensiveness, and shorter-term or specific learning projects may occur within broader ones.

Let us imagine a mother whose first child is having difficulty going to sleep. Between October 5 and November 23, she may spend many hours reading about children's sleep, discussing the problem with her husband and pediatrician, and deliberately learning occasionally through trial and error. Clearly this could be a learning project, but it might also be a portion of one or two larger learning projects. For example, she may have gone through a similar flurry of learning about sleep two months earlier, in July and August, and then felt no need for further learning during September. We could consider each of the two flurries of activity as a learning project, or we could consider them as a single learning project with a relatively quiet month in between. At an even more comprehensive level, the woman might consider these episodes and her efforts to learn about feeding and disciplining the child as a unified attempt to learn about raising that child. Two higher levels are also possible: a 20-year project of learning about raising all three of her children, and a 30-year project of trying to become a better mother-wife-person.

Which of these is "really" the learning project? Three answers are possible.

First, each of them is a learning project, because each fits our definition.

Second, if only one must be selected, we could be guided primarily by the woman's own perception of which series of learning episodes is clearly distinct, with a clearly discernible beginning.

Third, our research purposes and strategy might influence our decision. If he is trying to understand at the most comprehensive level how learning fits into a person's life, the researcher might study the broadest learning projects. Usually, though, it is more useful to select the smallest learning project that is clearly distinct in the person's mind, or that is marked by a clear flurry of activity after a relatively dormant period. When studying reasons for beginning a learning project, it is best to seek projects that have recently been initiated or "started from scratch" rather than revived or continued. An educator might be especially interested in certain subprojects within a larger course or educational program: an essay or leaderless discussion group within a college course, for example, or a series of 10 sessions planned by an outside resource person within the longer-term program of an autonomous learning group.

## Preparatory steps

Before beginning a learning project, the person must decide what to learn. As part of this decision, he may try to become clearer about the problem or puzzle that is sparking the learning. He must also decide, at a comprehensive level, just how to go about the learning. Should he take a course, pay for private lessons, or plan the learning himself?

If he does decide to plan the learning himself, he must then make many decisions about how, when, and where to learn. He will also have to select the detailed subject matter, and he may set intermediate targets. In addition, he may have to arrange appropriate conditions for learning. For example, he may arrange a study area in his home.

In some episodes, the person's primary intent may be to deal with some of these decisions, arrangements, and other preparations for learning. We allow these preparatory episodes, up to a maximum of two hours, to count toward the minimum criterion of seven hours for a learning project.

## Maintaining a capacity

Several months after completing a speed reading course, a person might devote certain episodes to *maintaining* the capacity to read rapidly. Someone who has learned a foreign language might select certain activities to help him maintain the vocabulary or fluency already gained. The jogger, after his first few weeks or months, may be primarily interested in maintaining his physical condition, not in improving it. Each of these examples should probably be included as a very deliberate learning episode, even though the main purpose is to maintain rather than gain something. The person is probably motivated by the fact that if he does not perform these episodes, his capacity or skill in the future will be less than if he does perform the episodes.

## Doing one's best at the moment

Another type of borderline case occurs when a person tries to do his very best at a particular time. When playing a sport or game or musical instrument, for example, he may do everything possible at the time to play well. He may evaluate his own performance (or seek feedback from others) and try to detect weaknesses. He may try to apply some principles that he recently read about, or try some new technique.

When performing some responsibility, too, such as looking after children or leading a group, a person may try to perform to the best of his ability. He might also resolve to try harder to be more patient or cooperative while performing such a responsibility.

Such episodes meet our criteria only if more than half of the person's motivation is to increase his level of skill in order to perform even better in the future. If his motivation is primarily to *be* rather than to *become* a better person – to do a good job or play a good game today – then it does not meet our criteria.

## The single strongest reason

Occasionally an interviewer finds that learning is the strongest *single* reason for an episode, even though it accounts for only 40% of the total motivation. The right-hand column of Table 1 in Chapter 2 provides an example. Though it may seem logical to count this as a learning episode, our criterion of "more than half" prevents this.

The example in Table 1 also points up the necessity for our criterion, and the flaw in looking at the *single* most important reason. The flaw is the assumption that we know just how to combine or divide the other reasons. Another interviewer might combine the third and fourth reasons in the table into a new single one called "pleasure, relaxation, escape, interest." For the women in the right-hand column, this would become their strongest reason. Consequently, the two interviewers would not agree on whether or not her strongest reason was to learn. Our criterion of "more than half" (instead of the *single* strongest reason) avoids this problem.



## Appendix B Influential factors

Adults vary greatly in how often they begin a learning project, and how much time they devote to learning. Some men and women conduct a large number of learning projects each year, and spend hundreds of hours doing so. What factors – past and present, internal and external, conscious and hidden – influence them to learn so much?

Other adults make little effort to learn. Why? What stops some individuals in key positions from trying to learn a great deal about an issue before making a major decision? Why do only a few citizens study peace, population, or pollution before voting on these matters or spreading their opinions to others? Why do accident-prone individuals not try to improve? Why do some intelligent adults shy away from learning about the past and future of man's life on earth? What blocks many parents from trying to improve their competence in raising children?

A large number of factors may form part of the answers to these questions. At present we can only speculate about which factors are especially influential. It will be many years before researchers are able to determine the relative importance of the entire array of factors.

### Past experiences

Certain past experiences are probably among the most influential factors that determine how much time a person devotes to learning. Such factors might include (1) the extent to which the person's parents read and learned, (2) the amount of activity or achievement in his childhood home, (3) the use of vocabulary there, (4) the number of years he spent in school, (5) the characteristics and curriculum of those schools, (6) his satisfaction with his previous attempts to learn, and (7) his ordinal position among his siblings. Landsman (1969) suggests another factor: the frequency and intensity of positive experiences at all ages, especially during childhood. Houle's stimulating exploratory study (1961) suggests several other factors.

Childhood experiences have certainly influenced some men and women strongly. One young adult, for example, stated: "From my childhood I was taught the beauty and adventure of books, and the necessity to constantly seek out answers. I was encouraged rather than discouraged to ask *why* as I grew. I developed in an atmosphere of openness where subjects ranging from Thoreau to the current crisis in the news were discussed, not around me, but with me, encouraging me to participate in the discussion. I was taught, and subsequently learned, that there is so much to know and so little time in which to learn it."

## Psychological characteristics

Many of the person's current personality or psychological characteristics will also influence the amount of time he spends at learning. If the person is outstanding in some of the following characteristics, for example, he will probably conduct more learning projects than most people: (1) level of mental ability; (2) energy level; (3) degree of initiative and aggressiveness in daily life; (4) degree of deliberateness and rationality in daily life; (5) amount of insight into himself; (6) amount of current knowledge and skill; (7) strength and number of interests; (8) positive perceptions regarding the pleasure, usefulness, and appropriateness of learning; (9) extent to which he is future-oriented, and willing to put forth effort in hopes of later gratification, rather than living essentially for the present (Kuhlen, 1963); (10) importance in his life of motivation for growth, expansion, achievement, creativity, self-actualization (compared to motivation from lower-level needs, anxiety, threat, deficiency, defensiveness and protection, attempts to satisfy the real or imagined demands of others); (11) past or anticipated residential mobility; (12) general readiness to change, and optimism about the future (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965); (13) amount of margin (a concept being developed by Howard McClusky), that is, the amount of energy, power, time, money, and other resources left over after the person deals with his current minimum tasks and routine demands; (14) strength of motivation for achievement (Parker & Paisley, 1966); (15) amount of enjoyment from using the mind; (16) amount of curiosity, and amount of pleasure from exploring new fields and phenomena; (17) clarity of life goals; (18) competence at setting learning goals; (19) extent to which his self-concept and self-assessment are clear and accurate rather than denied or distorted; (20) extent to which he perceives positive consequences in the development of new media and educational technology (Rees & Paisley, 1967); (21) extent to which he deals with a problem rather than its symptoms, understands the heart of a problem, realistically perceives his own role in causing a problem, and feels that he should accept at least partial responsibility for solving his problems.

The absence of most or all of the characteristics just listed will usually reduce the number of learning projects that a person begins. In addition, a person may be especially likely to make very few learning efforts if (1) his habitual reaction to new situations and requirements is negative, (2) he does not react positively to ambiguity, puzzlement, and unanswered questions, (3) he is fearful of failure, (4) he rarely returns to a task when interrupted, (5) he cannot clearly see the gap between his present self and his ideal self, and (6) he has not yet reached a high level of ability in thinking in a flexible and integrated manner.

Several other current characteristics of the individual must be understood before one can predict, with any assurance at all, the amount of his learning in any one year. These characteristics include (1) his concept of himself, (2) his high-priority, long-term goals, (3) his values, attitudes, and beliefs, and (4) his developmental tasks, role changes, transitions, personal crises. Several other influential factors became evident during the wide-ranging interviews described by Dow (1965).

Negative characteristics can have a positive influence on the amount of learning. Some persons may be driven to learning by their emotional problems, by their difficult or boring or unsatisfying marriage, by their search for a husband, by their troubled childhood, or by their frequent failures in life. Attending a course or reading extensively may provide satisfaction or social stimulation to those who lack a happy home life or a variety of other satisfying activities.

## **Other people**

The amount a person learns is also influenced by various characteristics of the people around him. The customs and expectations of his circle of friends and relatives may be important, for example. These acquaintances may praise and support anyone who tries to learn, or may scoff and tease. They may themselves learn frequently – or rarely. The types of people with whom a person interacts may be affected by his age, sex, occupation, income level, and social class. Studying the factors that make some people readers and others nonreaders, Ennis (1965) found that many readers feel they live “in a book-rich and book conscious circle of family and friends [p. 24].” Many adult learners receive stimulation and support by being part of an enclave of learners (Houle, 1961). Jourard (1968) has suggested that the way to understand the person marked by “turned-on, fascinated, autonomous questing” is to study the significant people in his world as he perceives them. Researchers, too, are usually more productive if they work in a stimulating intellectual milieu, or have contact with colleague at meetings and by mail or phone.

## **Community and societal factors**

Community or societal factors may also be important. Entire communities or societies may be oriented to learning much more than other communities and societies. Urban and suburban Californians, for example, may be more stimulated to learn than peasants in developing countries. The typical medical doctor or sales clerk in London and Boston may learn more now than his counterpart did 200 years ago; an even greater increase may occur in the next 200 years.

Sometimes a community or group is established specifically to promote learning. Universities and residential adult education centers are sometimes examples of this. Some recently established utopian (“intentional”) communities have individual development as a major goal.

Other communities and situations marked by a great deal of free time lead to learning efforts by a few individuals, through reading or discussion. Examples are prisons, hospitals, concentration camps, remote military outposts, and certain occupations. Some people leave their ordinary surroundings, perhaps for a religious retreat or mountain cabin, in order to think or learn or write.

The geographical proximity of certain facilities and services may increase the adult's learning efforts. In particular, the availability and accessibility of libraries, bookstores, educational institutions, discussion groups, counseling, and other sources of help and materials may be influential.





# Appendix C Freedom, autonomy, and control: The relationship between helper and learner

During the past ten years or more, a large proportion of the literature on education has dealt with such concepts as freedom, control, authority, autonomy, and the role and functions of the teacher. In a major review of teaching methods research, for example, Wallen and Travers (1963) found that "the vast majority of the studies" revolved around the control or authority of the instructor. The authors declared: "The common denominator of these studies is that they all involve as a primary dimension authoritarianism as we define it, i.e., the degree to which some person or persons (in this case, the teacher) exercises control over the behavior of others (in this case, students) [p. 470]."

Much of the discussion about these concepts has been emotional or imprecise. The process of trying to sort out my own thinking about these concepts helped me see the usefulness of distinguishing four types of learning projects according to the primary locus of the control and responsibility for day-to-day planning: self, object, person, or group (see Chapter 7).

That process also led me to develop a set of more detailed variable characteristics for describing help. These variables are fairly clear and precise, though a few may be difficult to measure or estimate in particular helping situations. They can be applied to the relationship between a learner and any one of his helpers *within* any type of learning project. I find my thinking is much clearer when I replace such general concepts as autonomy, freedom, and control with more precise variables.

Let us start with the simplest situation: one learner receiving help with his self-planned learning project from one helper. These two persons interact face-to-face with no one else present, or perhaps they interact by mail or telephone. The helper might be a friend, acquaintance, colleague, teacher, salesman, librarian, supervisor, counselor, consultant, medical doctor, spouse, or parent.

## Some variables

One variable is the extent to which the helper influenced the learner's decisions. How great an impact did the helper's information, advice, and encouragement have on the learner's decisions and other preparatory steps?

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Within the total impact or influence of the helper, one can conceptually distinguish two types of influence. One type is providing information, advice (or suggestions or recommendations), and reasons that help the *learner* make the decision and understand the reasons for it. The helper provides detailed information about the various possibilities that are open, but lets the learner himself make the decisions. This is similar to the role of the consultant, who enables someone else to do something; the consultant does not himself make and implement decisions. The other sort of influence by a helper is a controlling, managing, and directing sort of influence. It is the extent to which he is "in charge" of the learning project – the extent to which he rules or governs it. This sort of help means that the learner gladly or reluctantly gives up some of his responsibility, control, autonomy, and perhaps initiative and freedom. The distinction between help and control is important, because it helps us realize that a learner can receive a great deal of help without giving up any of his control or responsibility.

In addition to considering the actual help or influence, one can note how much help the learner *wanted* from the helper. As the learner reflects back on his relationship with the helper, does he wish he had received much more or much less help than he actually did, or does he feel satisfied with the amount? Too little help may be the sign of a rather useless helper, or of one who is encouraging the learner to assume more responsibility for his own planning. More help than desired is often the sign of a helper who tried to control and dominate the learner's decisions and arrangements. Sometimes another clue is a dramatic increase over a period of time in the amount of help that the learner welcomes.

Another variable that can indicate an attempt to dominate the learner is the following: to what extent was the helper trying to influence the learner more (or less) than he actually did? In other words, does the learner feel that he had to resist the helper's attempts to influence his strategy and subject matter even more? At the opposite extreme, does the learner feel that he had to work hard at getting even the amount of help he did get?

In summary, we have three major variables that can help us study freedom, control, coercion, influence, autonomy, and authority in a helping relationship. We look first at the helper's actual influence. How great an impact does he have? We then note whether this is congruent with the amount of help that the learner wanted or welcomed. In addition, we note whether the learner felt a lack of congruity between the actual amount of help and the amount that the helper wanted to provide.

These variables may become clearer when put into the form of a diagram. Figure C1 presents each of the three variable characteristics as a vertical continuum. In Figure C1,

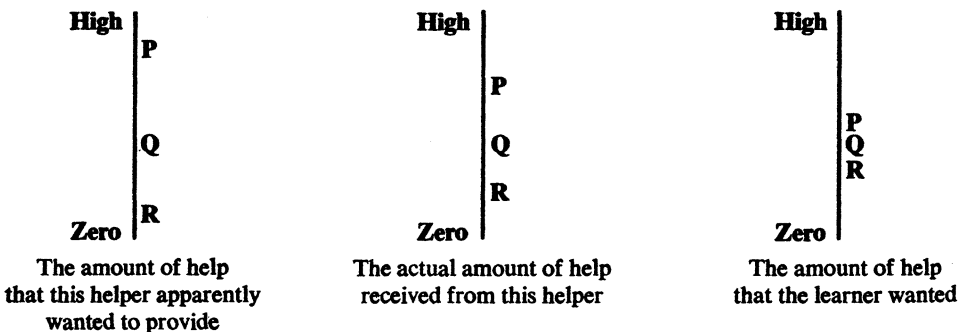


Fig. C1 / Three helpers (P, Q, and R) on three continua.

Mr. P was overeager: he intended to influence the learner far more than the learner wanted; Mr. Q was just right: all three characteristics are congruent; and Mr. R was reluctant to help much.

One other characteristic of the help is especially relevant for studying control. For what *reasons* does the learner accept the helper's advice, suggestions, and decisions? Perhaps it is because he trusts the helper's judgment, or finds that the helper's enthusiasm for the recommended action is contagious. On the other hand, perhaps he follows the helper's advice in order to please or impress him, or because he feels some sort of obligation, or because he anticipates certain rewards or punishments from the helper.

## **Individualized help**

Most human help in a one-to-one situation is highly individualized, but some is not. Human help in a group, and help from printed materials or computers, are usually less individualized than one-to-one human help.

Adults need individualized help particularly in self-planned learning. Indeed, by definition, the self-planner has decided to build his own sequence of learning activities, rather than follow a sequence of learning activities determined by a group, by programmed instruction, or by a series of recordings or television programs. Consequently, he will probably need individualized help, not just mass or prestructured sorts of help.

To be more specific, one can look at the extent to which the help is designed for this particular learner and learning project rather than for different learners and learning projects. Even when one learner and one helper interact face-to-face, the help may be so influenced by tradition, habit, previously established procedures or structures, pre-conceptions about the learner's needs, or the helper's own goals that it is in effect designed for someone other than this particular learner. Such a helper provides habitual or stereotyped help, not individualized help. He may not be sensitive to the characteristics, needs, learning goals, and perceptions of the person he is dealing with.

As a second but related variable, one can ask the following question: to what extent (in the learner's opinion) would he have been able to influence the helper's words or behavior if he had tried? In less precise words, how much control or influence did the learner have over the helper or other resource?

One can also note how satisfied the learner is with these two variables. To what extent does he wish the help was designed more specifically for his particular learning project? How much more influence over the helper's behavior and words would he have liked?

## **Possible uses for the set of variables**

The last two sections have provided a set of characteristics that vary from one helping relationship to another. From the hundreds of characteristics in helping situations, we have selected a few that seem especially important when considering who dominates the helping relationship and how individualized it is.

Basically, then, the set of variable characteristics enables us to study or analyze various helping relationships in self-planned learning projects, and to describe those relationships. In addition to studying and describing a relationship, we could compare a variety of situations and helpers to detect some crucial differences among them. For example, we might compare the help in self-planned learning provided by a spouse, trained learning adviser, medical doctor, management consultant, piano teacher, judge, presidential adviser,

professor, research assistant, travel agent, librarian, tutor, elementary school teacher, or instructor in independent study. We could also use the variables to compare the help in person-planned and group-planned learning projects with the help in self-planned projects. Rather than comparing two or more current helping relationships, we could try to describe trends over time by comparing "modern" help with earlier or traditional help.

Looking to the future, we could tentatively but precisely describe certain characteristics of ideal help. These characteristics could then be used in selecting and training helpers. Our advice to the helper might be something like this: give the learner approximately the amount and sorts of help he wants. If in doubt, give too little rather than too much help, because this may help him be more competent and confident in planning his next learning project. Do not try to decrease his control or unduly influence him. Give him accurate, detailed reasons for any recommendation you make.

We could also study which variables are important in the learner's choice of a helper, and in his satisfaction with the helpers he does choose. If the learner is dissatisfied with the helper, the variables could help us pinpoint just what went wrong.

Further research could study a variety of possible relationships among the variables themselves. Certain positions on certain continua, for example, may typically occur together. Researchers could also study the ways in which these variables influence the learner's behavior and perceptions – his success and efficiency in the learning project, his confidence and competence in future self-planned learning projects, his attitudes toward help, and his perceptions of himself as a learner.

## **Influential factors**

No one position on a continuum will be best for all learners and all subject matter. Various characteristics of the learner and the content will influence the characteristics of ideal help. The influential characteristics of the learner probably include his age, occupation, income level, cultural background, place of residence (whether rural or urban, especially in developing nations), mobility, major personality characteristics, need for affiliation, attitudes towards schools and instructors, operating principles of learning, habitual style of learning, and competence at learning.

The influential characteristics of the desired knowledge and skill can best be summarized by a series of questions. How difficult is the subject matter for this learner? How large or threatening is the task of gaining the subject matter? How familiar is the learner with the subject matter? How close to the learner's self is it, and how much will it affect his self-concept and mental health? Is it completely original (no one has ever gained this knowledge before), or is it established knowledge? How many other persons are, in the learner's awareness, learning the same subject matter? What are his major reasons for wanting to gain it? How long does he want it to last? Is it for credit? How clearly has he defined just what he wants to learn, and why? What methods and help are objectively most efficient for gaining this subject matter?

## **Nonhuman resources**

So far we have been talking primarily about human helpers. Some of the variables can also apply to the help received from nonhuman resources, such as a book, program, recording, or computer. By studying one particular resource or one-type of resource in several learning projects, a general profile of its characteristics could be developed.

## **Preparatory steps**

Our discussion up to this point has concerned the total helping situation – the total relationship throughout the learning project between the learner and one resource. It is also possible to apply the variables separately to each preparatory step, or to major clusters of preparatory steps. This procedure will enable us to produce much more precise descriptions and answers than the general approach, because important differences in the characteristics of the help may occur from one cluster of steps to another.

To the preparatory steps, we can add the function of providing subject matter, which is not a preparatory step because it occurs during a learning episode, not a planning episode. This addition will give a more complete picture of the types of help provided by any one resource.

A glimpse of what a profile of one helper might look like is provided by Table C1. It assumes that a scale from 0 to 100 has been developed for each variable, and that appropriate measuring procedures have been developed. Table C1 presents the empirical data that might result from interviewing a learner about the help he received from his major helper in a self-planned learning project.

## **Some personal characteristics of the helper**

The personal characteristics of the helper may greatly influence the helping relationship, even if they are not especially conspicuous to the learner. These internal characteristics include his self-concept, perceptions, feelings, motivation, and thoughts.

It is not always easy, of course, to distinguish between the personal characteristics and overt behavior of the helper. Indeed, the two sorts of characteristics are interrelated. Several of the helper's internal characteristics, for example, will affect the variables listed earlier.

Some inner characteristics that mark the highly effective or highly desired helper are emerging from various studies. Carl Rogers, for instance, has written extensively about a small number of helper characteristics that are related to effective help for at least one broad class of emotional problems. An unpublished study by Stanley Searle, conducted at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in 1968, listed several characteristics of the most effective helpers in adult learning projects. Using a list of 169 variables printed on cards, he interviewed 20 adult learners intensively. In her doctoral thesis, Mairi Macdonald (1968) listed the characteristics of persons chosen as helpers by adults with a problem.

The ideal qualities of the helper will be affected somewhat by the preparatory steps that require the help, by certain characteristics of the desired knowledge and skill, and by the degree of self-direction that the learner desires. Nonetheless, a fairly consistent composite picture of the ideal helper emerges from the literature, and from other sources and experiences.

One cluster of characteristics might be summarized by saying that the ideal helper is warm and loving. He accepts and cares about the learner and about his project or problem, and takes it seriously. He is willing to spend time helping. He is approving, supportive, encouraging, and friendly. He regards the learner as an equal. As a result of these characteristics, the learner feels free to approach this ideal helper, and can talk freely and easily with him in a warm and relaxed atmosphere.

A second cluster of characteristics involves the helper's perceptions of the person's capacity as a self-planner. The ideal helper has confidence in the learner's ability to make

Table C1 / The Characteristics of One Helper

Variable	Deciding whether to begin	Choosing the planner	Deciding detailed content and strategy	Diagnosing difficulties	Obtaining resources	Dealing with motivation	Actually receiving subject matter
Actual amount of help or control	30	20	30	20	0	10	20
Proportion that is <i>control</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amount of help and control welcomed by the learner	30	20	30	10	10	10	30
To what extent was the helper trying to provide more or less than this?	0	0	0	10	-10	0	-10
Reasons for accepting help: ratio of "trust his judgment" to pleasing, impressing, obligation, consequences	90	100	90	100	-	100	100
Extent designed for this particular learner	100	100	90	100	-	100	90
Extent he could influence the helper	100	100	100	100	-	100	100
Learner's satisfaction with the two previous variables	100	100	100	100	-	100	100

appropriate plans and arrangements for his learning. The helper has a high regard for his skill as a self-planner, and does not want to take the decision-making control away from him.

Third, the ideal helper views his interaction with the learner as a dialogue, a true encounter in which he listens as well as talks. His help will be tailored to the needs, goals, and requests of this unique learner. The helper listens, understands, accepts, responds, helps. These perceptions of the interaction are in sharp contrast to those of "helpers" who want to control, command, manipulate, persuade, influence, and change the learner. Such helpers seem to view communication as "an inexhaustible monologue, addressed to everyone and no one in the form of 'mass communication' . . . a transcribed message from an anonymous answering service to whomever it may concern [Matson & Montagu, 1967, p. 6]." Gibb (1964) has described the person who molds, steers, controls, gives information, indoctrinates; such a person's orientation to the helping relationship is not marked by shared problem-solving, freedom, candor, interdependence, and mutual exploration. Such a helper perceives the learner as an object, and expects to do something to that object. He is not primarily interested in the other person as a person, and in his needs, wishes, and welfare.

Another cluster of internal characteristics involves the helper's reasons for helping. He may help because of his affection and concern for the learner. Or the helper may, in an open and positive way, expect to gain as much as he gives. Other sorts of motivation, too, are possible – pleasure from knowing he was helpful, satisfaction from seeing progress or from the learner's gratitude. It might be interesting to study the efforts and motives of the individual who is especially active at encouraging and advising learners in several areas of knowledge and skill.

Finally, the ideal helper is probably an open and growing person, not a closed, negative, static, defensive, fearful, or suspicious sort of person. He himself is frequently a learner, and seeks growth and new experiences. He probably tends to be spontaneous and authentic, and to feel free to behave as a unique person rather than in some stereotyped way.

## **Strong motivation for amateur teaching**

Much of the teaching in our society is done by school teachers, college professors, and adult education instructors. Certain other professions, too, often include teaching as one major responsibility. For example, film and television producers, visual artists, writers, advertisers, editors, judges, lawyers, medical doctors, and clergymen may perceive teaching (imparting information or changing human behavior) as part of their job.

In addition, a great deal of "amateur" teaching occurs throughout our society. The term *amateur* is not used to suggest poor quality, but to indicate that the person is not paid for his teaching and is not doing it as a necessary part of his job.

Much amateur teaching is merely a response to a request for help from a learner. In this section, however, we will look at amateur teaching in which the teacher takes the initiative. He is strongly motivated to impart certain knowledge and skill, or to change the behavior of certain persons in certain directions.

One dramatic example of this is the person who pays for newspaper advertisements to spread his message about peace, proposed legislation, government policy, or any other issue. A 45-year-old Tokyo man, for example, put his life savings into \$63,800 worth of

## APPENDIX C

advertising in five American and British newspapers in 1966. His 12,000-word message presented his views on ways of achieving peace, world affairs, fasting, and dealing with the fear of death. A writer in *Life* magazine declared that the Tokyo man "struck a splendid blow for the grandeur of the individual when he blew the 11 grand to have himself published." He had previously sent pamphlets to 5,000 important persons, but had received no response. Unfortunately, he paid dearly for his efforts to educate the public. Four years later, although he had once owned an apartment house and a prosperous mail-order business, he was "alone and broke, driving a truck in Yokohama." Also, "because of his idealistic extravagance, his wife divorced him, taking their sons with her" (*Time*, August 10, 1970).

Similarly, a man in London, Ontario, became convinced that a Canadian government White Paper on proposed tax reform was unfair and inaccurate. He spent \$23,000 on advertisements in leading newspapers. His reason, according to his Toronto *Globe and Mail* ad (February 9, 1970), was his belief that "there are hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are not able to appreciate the frightening implications of the White Paper because it is so complicated." He was not backed by any organization or political party, but was willing to accept donations.

Other persons with strong views write letters to the editor or to their political representatives. Some write articles or brochures to express their views. Some seek interviews on television or radio.

Some people with definite views join a demonstration or protest. When demonstrators on both sides of an issue confront one another in the streets or on the campus, we have a clear example of a situation in which everyone wants to teach and no one wants to learn. Each side wants to spread its views through placards and a show of strength or numbers, but neither side has much interest in understanding the views of the other.

Certain political and religious groups have a strong urge to convert others to their views. Hoffer (1961) has suggested that the urge to proselytize is strongest in a movement when the believers feel some deep misgiving or deficiency, or when they see that their creed (communism, slavery, or whatever) is not really working out in practice. In other words, a confident and accurate belief that they already have an important truth is *not* their major motivation.

Alcoholics Anonymous provides another example of amateur teaching. The member who helps the alcoholic has already himself experienced the alcoholic's hopelessness and low self-esteem, and has found that the organization's principles, beliefs, and attitudes are effective.

Perhaps the most widespread amateur teaching can be found in child-raising. Many parents deliberately teach their children certain knowledge, skills, manners, habits, and even attitudes and emotional reactions. Some adults also set out to reform their marriage partner, often with negative results.

When neighbors have a noisy party, we wonder how to punish them or change their behavior. Selye (1956) has pointed out that revenge (the wish that another person not prosper) is "a savage distortion of the natural wish to teach others not to hurt us. . . . It is nothing but a grotesque malformation of our urge to teach [p. 286]."



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## About the Author

Since 1963, Allen Tough's central interest has been the major efforts of men and women to learn and change. He has been particularly interested in efforts that are self-guided and those that rely on help from peers. Allen is now an Associate Professor of Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, teaching and continuing his research in adult learning, goal-setting, and major intentional change.

Allen's major publications include *The Adult's Learning Projects*, *Learning Without a Teacher*, and *Expanding Your Life*. He has also contributed some twenty book chapters and journal articles to the professional literature and presented almost a hundred papers at conferences and seminars around the world. His research findings have been widely cited, sparking more than thirty further studies in five countries.

He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology (University of Toronto), a master's degree in education and psychology (University of Toronto), and a Ph.D. in adult education (University of Chicago).

Teaching, consulting, speaking, and research have taken him to India, West Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and all over the U.S. and Canada. In his personal life, Allen especially enjoys hiking, music, his two children, travel, reading, reflecting, and personal growth.