

Looking forward to 614 before it began, my point of view was dominated by my research into power and influence in groups, the proposed group formation model created by my trio, and an inkling in the back of my head that choosing a method of group formation would be more contentious than we had allowed for in our trio's proposal. Having now concluded the session, upon reflecting my memories are dominated by the visceral learning about group processes that I experienced, new appreciation for other aspects of group dynamics that I had not paid as much attention to, and a fuller sense of myself as an actor within groups resulting from the collected experiences.

I would be remiss to start with anything other than Learning Group Formation as the earliest significant experience of my second trip to Pajaro Dunes, even though we had some other meaningful activities before that. In reading other's proposals for Learning Group Formation, some stood out that spent more time addressing the process of choosing which method would be used rather than strictly focusing on the method. I was not eager to spend much time on that decision-making process, but acknowledged that it would probably take more time and effort than we had allotted in our trio's proposal. Surprisingly, when it came to deciding which method to use we had a relatively brief process and to my astonishment we collectively chose the method I preferred well. However, describing the decision-making process as efficient leaves out the massively frustrating and time consuming experience from the day prior in which I at first felt that we succeeded in accomplishing only nothing-at-all over a painful seven-hour stretch. That we collectively agreed to stop the process at 9pm only served to confirm my hunch that the group was most interested in not accomplishing anything. What other reason could there be to cease proceedings than to prevent them from proceeding?

During this first day of debate my assessment was mostly that many people were afraid of the act of group formation and what would come of it, were trying to avoid their fears, and that many others wanted to help these folks avoid confronting their fears. I admit that I may have suffered from confirmation bias as I held that as a likely factor before we began. To the contrary, I was very interested in the potential growth from the many possible uncomfortable things that would come from the process of choosing a group and being chosen. I did not see clearly how to advance the process towards my desired experience

of group formation though, and only once articulated the benefits we would potentially reap if we could only get to that stage of the process. I held back my communication to the group due to the high frustration I was feeling and my sense that communicating this frustration would not advance things. Then I got more frustrated at my inability to see past my frustration to find a message that would resonate and help us move forward. Only after the conclusion of the first day did I also realize that I wasn't just frustrated that we weren't moving forward, I was also mad at the group for robbing me of the opportunity to experience the group formation I was looking forward to by spending so much of the allotted time on other matters of little growth opportunity.

Despite this frustration, I have drawn some lessons from the actions that did lead to progress as I observed them. Firstly, Lindsey's persistent efforts to lead us into small groups were important and I will remember that persistence. Secondly, Grace Amos's use of her referent power to first lead us in a physical activity and then surreptitiously move the group into a co-creating activity was much appreciated. It was mentioned later that some were displeased that Grace had taken such authority without it being explicitly granted but I was quite pleased to see this transpire. It occurs to me that collusion between facilitators was possibly also at work in this maneuver and if so I am even more approving and impressed.

Further takeaways for me about this process came to my awareness during the debriefing. Defensive Routines were not an aspect of group dynamics that I paid a lot of attention to before the exercise nor have I studied them more in depth since, but certainly they are always at play and were performed perhaps more than anything else during this process. Stages of Group Development made sense to me in a new light though after this process. Not so much in the Tuckman's stages sense, but the concept of the inflection point beyond which the group can proceed at a much faster rate was palpable to me. This and the use of invisible power, as given by the group, through the act of not agreeing to move forward were very interesting processes to witness.

When it came to the actual group forming process as I said I was thrilled with the method we arrived at, although I was quite sad to only have an hour and 15 minutes in which to execute it. I think much more productive growth could have occurred if we had something closer to 3 hours to do this work. I was

looking forward to engaging in the challenges of being rejected, rejecting, seeking to understand the needs of others, and asking for my own needs—if indeed I could know them—from others. In the end, I did some of that but also tried to follow the rules and get it all done on time, which is another personal trait I have and choose to continue, usually. I have no regrets about the group I ended up in because I think it will be challenging and useful for me. However, I do have a regret about my behavior during the forming process. I wish I would have left my nearly formed group as an act of prioritizing my needs over the groups. I don't even want to be in a different group, but near the end I had another group seeking my attention, including from someone I had agreed to group with but not ended up with. I wish that I would have left my formed group and at least considered the other group. Once I realized I had that regret about my behavior though, I lost any second thoughts about the final group and, having also met further by the time I write this, am confident in my "choice".

I am surprised to find myself in a group of people with strong tendencies towards planning and action, as I find those traits desirable but very personally challenging. I am a little worried that I will not be able to keep up with my group from that perspective, although I am thrilled to be faced with the challenge to perhaps finally get over my own obstacles in this way. Having worked with the group some, I have also been pleasantly surprised at their willingness to be patient and uncomfortable while exploring what to do and why to do things. They are willing to consider wise courses of action before diving into their collective tendency for action, somewhat in contrast to how many team members billed themselves. I see myself in this group as a constructively differentiated point-of-view which is a nice contrast to frequently seeing myself as a destructively different point-of-view within certain teams.

The great joy for me at this Pajaro Intensive was the Experiential Learning Groups. I anticipated this activity, which many others seemed to have missed or just not understood, with great optimism far before arriving at Pajaro. Part of my anticipation came from my experience with my wife, a psychologist with a strong passion for group work. While I don't understand group processes like she does, I've certainly picked up on her enthusiasm over the years and had an idea in mind of what an unstructured group might be like and how it could provide useful insight. The experience of the group fulfilled those promises to a

surprising degree given the limited time spent. During group, I found myself focusing on the “accelerants” provided in the shape of the best practices list provided and the 6 levels of communication outlined prior and trying my best to inject those into the group. I felt myself to be “driving” the group a lot while also attempting to leave space for others to do their work too. I created some disagreements that proved to be constructive when discussed, but failed to gain traction on some suggestions I made to others. When it came time to share feedback with one another, I received some subtle but important advice from the others in my group. The takeaway I constructed was that my communication was welcome but that I should take care to construct it to represent myself in wholeness rather than letting frustration dominate my messaging. I got some contradictory advice too, which I found fruitful in its variety and have tried to come back to since leaving Pajaro. When it came time to give advice to others I found that as much as I tried to be helpful, most of my advice took a shape of me telling others to be more like myself. I haven’t quite decided how I feel about that yet. Either it represents my unique perspective and awareness of self-as-instrument somehow, or perhaps it signifies a limitation in my ability to see others in ways different than the lenses I use to view myself, or possibly both mixed together.

Beyond these key experiences, I’m also taking away some value from the new assessments and models that we covered. FIRO-B was a useful exercise for me to better understand the gap between what I want from others and what I express to others; particularly when it comes to inclusion and affection. The learning styles inventory was an interesting construct as well and one I need more time to consider and digest in terms of personal preferences. The overall experiential learning cycle though I appreciate immensely and am already trying to integrate more clearly into my teaching and coaching strategies at work. Having this process fully memorized, digested, and mentally available amid work will be invaluable I feel. I think I have more to pull from the organization types that we explored using the 4 houses exercise, so I will continue to think on that going forward to better be able to assess them.

In all I was thrilled with my experience at Pajaro this second time to the same levels of my first Pajaro intensive but in completely different ways. My SLC will be reshaped due to the insights I have experienced and my professional and personal lives are already reflecting my newly evolved lenses.