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SW 5101
HBSE Cell Matrix

In order for a group to resist change one must know what defines a group. Shriver uses several definitions to describe a group one of them being “a small, face to face collection of persons who interact to accomplish some purpose.” (Shriver, p. 382)

How Groups Resist Change

One way groups resist change is by ignoring conflict and groups ignore conflict by developing group think. Group think is a “mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in group, when the members striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative course of action. (Shriver, p. 394) The group has become a closed system to alternate views that challenge the group think.

Groups also resist change by getting change back messages from another system they are part of. Groups may have developed dramatic change and are in the process of implementing the change which will affect other systems the group works with. The other systems resist the dramatic change and send the message for the group to go back to its previous state by withholding funding or support. The group than does not implement the change due to the messages it has received from the other systems of the change not being beneficial.

Another way groups resist change is changing the group which than all the members have to change with it. If a group is moving toward change with decisions that affect the group, and there are some members who disagree with the decisions being made. The group changes their purpose which than force all the members to change with it.

Groups resist change by changing their energy output and input. Energy “the capacity for action”, “action” or the “power to effect change” is what moves groups along. When groups are creating energy they are in synergy which allows the groups to continue to stay healthy. Groups resist change by changing the synergy input and output so the group is now falling apart or declining known as entropy.

Groups may also resist change by not allowing energy exchange between systems the group works with. The group has no linkage with the other systems because they have closed the group off to energy exchange across it boundaries.

Shriver, J.M.(2004) Human Behavior and Social Environment: Shifting Paradigms in Essential Knowledge for social work practice (4th ed). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Anderson and Carter, Social Systems Terms Handout in class.

Class Discussion