

CoDe

Coaching Development



the magazine of the BCU Coaching Service

THE AIM OF THE BCU COACHING SERVICE IS:

To promote the sport and recreation of canoeing and to ensure that newcomers are introduced to canoeing in a safe and enjoyable way and that they and those already in the sport are assisted to progress to whatever level and in whichever discipline within canoeing suits them best.

EXAMINERS / ASSESSORS

Aspirant and Established Examiners/Assessors PLEASE NOTE

From 1 January 1998 only certain grade 2 Examiners (or grade 4 Assessors) will be entitled to recommend an Assessor/Examiner upgrading. Their entitlement to do so will be indicated by the letter 'U' after the examiner/assessor status on their record. Thus E26U would indicate a grade 2 Examiner who: 1) attended a forum in 1996; and 2) who is entitled to recommend assessor/examiner upgrading.

The designation is shown on the label for this (October) issue of *CoDe/Focus*. Please seek clarification from your RCO if you have any query.

From 1 January Assessors seeking upgrading will need to clarify that the Course Director is entitled to recommend upgrading.

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REMEMBER, REMEMBER

THE CANOE-FEST IN NOVEMBER

- PADDLING - AND 'REASON' - THE LOT

THIS 'END OF THE SEASON'

IS BOUND TO BE PLEASIN'

SO WHY NOT SIGN UP ON THE DOT... ?

Yes - it will even include a bonfire, barbecue and disco
- besides a more formal 'do' for the 'more mature' ?

Full details available in October Focus
BCU, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Notts NG2 5AS

CoDe is the official organ of the BCU Coaching Service. Members are free to express their views within its pages. Articles and comments therefore reflect the thoughts of the author and do not necessarily state the policy of the National Coaching Committee.

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Contributions, including pictures, are welcome. Please send them to: BCU, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5AS.

Editor: Director of Coaching

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Dear CoDe

Dear CoDe,

On the whole, the article 'Building a solid frame work of skills to paddle a double canoe' (CoDe 76) covers the business of paddling in tandem well with plenty of emphasis on co-ordination and communication. However the principle of 'shovelling as much water as is possible' is, in my opinion, a terrible concept to promote.

One of the first principles to understand for any type of paddling, whether canoe or kayak, is that we are not shovelling water anywhere, and the paddle is not moving through the water (except say on recovery to the start of the stroke). A much sounder and more accurate concept is of the paddle acting as an anchor past or around which the canoe (or kayak) is manoeuvred by pulling, pushing or levering. My experience has been that if this principle is not established early on then progress is limited and a great deal of re-learning has to be done if an efficient quality technique is to be achieved.

KEVIN COLEMAN, Conwy

Dear CoDe,

In April 1997 I remember reading the article 'Instructors who've had enough' and remember thinking at last the writer of this piece has really hit the nail on the head. At last - common sense reigns !

As a level 3 coach working voluntarily with young people, it was great to know that the Director of Coaching agrees with me that the real danger for young people in canoeing is significantly less than they experience in everyday activities - the recent article in *Canoe Focus* gives ample illustration of this. It is a shame that some people appear not to appreciate it.

After a certain period of disillusionment with the BCU during which time I considered sending portions of the handbook to the Society for Plain English for translation, my faith is restored when the Director of Coaching - the man in the hot seat - has the courage to write such an article.

It was with disbelief that I read the letter by Jack Travers, who you quite politely stated had missed the point. Missed the point is an understatement - was he reading the same article ?

The style of his letter suggests a didactic rather than inspirational approach and it is perhaps that approach that has caused him to go off on a tangent from the theme of your article. Perhaps it will be he who will resign from the coaching scheme !

Finally thanks Director of Coaching for a breath of fresh air! Those of you who haven't read the article - look it out and read it !

DAVID SURMAN, Oxford

INSTRUCTORS REQUIRED

Mendip Outdoor Pursuits (Somerset) require instructors for 1998.

Applicants must hold minimum 2 NGB instructor awards. Contracts from April. Interviews late 1997. 01934820518 for application details.

COACHING SUPPLIES

Caps and clothing are all emblazoned:

'BCU Coaching Service' or *British Canoe Union Coaching Service*

Coaching Polo Shirt

Black, at £15.00 each Size: M L XL XXL

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(These superb jackets are fleece lined, the shell being breathable Cyclone material)

Cotton Baseball Caps

£9.00 each Black, adjustable

Premier Baseball Caps

- please note that this item is withdrawn

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Canoeing for Disabled People

Geoff Smedley - £17.95

Instructors Crib Cards £7.95 per set

(a set of 12 plastic cards - 5" x 4" - outlining the main elements of the basic strokes, plus the W(R)IGGLE test).

Please state *KAYAK* or *SOLO CANOE* or *TANDEM CANOE*

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S/NVQ - contents only	£8
S/NVQ with binder	£10

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Please send cheque / Visa etc No with order to:

BCU, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Notts NG2 5AS

NOW'S THE TIME

'Never put off until tomorrow, what you can do today' my old dad used to say. If only I'd followed his advice !

'The road to Hell is paved with good intentions' was another of his favourite sayings.

What I am getting around to is that we need more articles for CoDe. Now that the season is drawing to a close (for some) it's a good time to get down to writing that piece which has been 'at the back of the mind' for some little while.

All contributions, as they say, will be gratefully received.

CONSTRUCTIVE DE-BRIEFING

by Phil Harriskine

You have spent hours preparing the craft, the equipment and yourself; you really want to pass because you love canoeing; all your mates know that you have an assessment coming up and you are fairly sure that you are at the right standard. After a hard week-end where the act of being assessed has taken the shine off your performance, you walk into a room where a couple of people will tell you 'pass' or 'fail' determining whether you can return home and to your peers jubilant or despondent. One star to five star, level one to level five; it might make us sound like a hotel grading or a multi-storey car-park, but forget principles. By the time we reach assessment we all want letters after our name.

It is obviously important that we adhere to standards or the whole system of qualifications falls apart. It is also important that candidates for assessment leave a course with a positive sense of accomplishment regardless of whether they have passed or failed. The assessment team have failed in some respect if a candidate walks away from an assessment with the resolve to give up paddling.

In writing this paper (a part of my action plan for level 5 coach-sea) I am not intending to produce a policy statement on how debriefing should be done; there are too many variables in the shape of various individuals to do this. I am hoping, however, to draw some aspects of the process to the attention of examiners, by putting forward guidelines, points and hints which can be reflected upon and discussed rather than 'followed'. Simply doing this, and thereby ensuring that this element of assessment has been addressed, can make debriefing more considered and hopefully more successful.

The recent experience that most of us have with regard to passing or failing some form of assessment probably lies in public examinations and/or job interviews. Although it is useful for examiners to remember how being assessed feels, the above situations are only of limited relevance; rarely does a candidate meet the exam marker face to face, and job interviews are among the crudest form of peer or norm referencing. Indeed, in recognising the differences between norm and criteria referenced assessment (the measurement of performance against others rather than against a set of requirements respectively) one moves towards practice that should make assessment a positive experience, since performance can be measured against requirements as stated in the various syllabuses. This is relatively straightforward when solely assessing performance. It is more complex when assessing 'coaching' and/or 'judgement'. Features of assessment like this reveal that in working towards a model for de-briefing it must needs be done in the context of the whole assessment programme. One of the benefits of a cyclical process is that it is logical to start anywhere; I shall therefore begin at the end of the programme, the focus of this article: the de-brief, and then consider issues leading up to it.

Conducting discussions of this nature require that certain 'mechanical' issues are addressed; these are covered below along with some accompanying ideas.

Personnel.

There is varied opinion as to how many of the assessors should be involved; the whole team can be seen as dominating and daunting yet can offer various perspectives on an issue. A single assessor is possibly less intimidating but the result can be construed as arising from only one person's perspective, (if several assessors work in this way it is obviously very time efficient).

Venue.

This should be somewhere without interruptions or disturbance in order that the candidate's performance can remain the sole focus of attention, balanced somewhere between formal and informal would seem most appropriate.

Seating.

This should be arranged in such a way that does not intimidate the candidate or suggest that the assessment process is still underway; it is a discussion rather than an interview.

Timing.

It is often worth stating beforehand that there will be a time limit for each candidate's de-brief. This ensures that all have the same time and allows candidates not to be delayed by one individual; it does not preclude subsequent discussion after the course, indeed some 'digestion' time can often be constructive.

Communication of result.

This seems to arouse strong feelings for various approaches. In order to have a constructive discussion does one communicate it immediately allowing relief or disappointment to influence debate or, impart it later and risk the candidate's anxiety obscuring their thoughts? This probably needs to remain the decision of individuals; perhaps assessors need to be flexible in their attitudes on this in order to accommodate differing circumstances and individuals. I think that it is critical, however, that a candidate who has failed is not invited to speculate upon their result.

Nature of content.

This should relate to the syllabus and the brief that candidates have been given thus ensuring that the assessment has been conducted on an objective basis. *Sequence of content.*

It is worth sandwiching areas of weakness between points of positive performance. This is not suggested in order to soften or disguise the blow of criticism, it rather allows the candidate to appreciate that there are positives within their performance and renders them more receptive to addressing weak areas in discussion and with regard to their future aims.

Discussion.

Candidates must be given the opportunity to discuss their performance; it is not an interview and it is as important to listen as it is to talk. The obvious reason being that a candidate needs to understand fully reasons behind a decision; less apparent, but equally important is that a candidate needs to feel that they have a stake in the syllabus and its execution. The articulation of points by candidates means that they understand them and have accepted the responsibility of addressing them.

The above points are obviously concerned with the de-brief element of the programme and can help make it more effective. However in many respects they are merely symptomatic of an ethos that will have been running throughout the course and some of these are discussed below.

The Waiting Room

Whilst this is never going to be an entirely comfortable place or time perhaps some of the anxieties can be ameliorated. Facilities for refreshments, somewhere to sit, a video could all help. Equally there are some activities that achieve more than simply pass the time; candidates can be reviewing their aims as on form C3c and course evaluation sheets can be completed. The value of these is twofold; firstly they allow course members to give feedback to the assessment team which is of direct benefit to us as course organisers and assessors. Secondly it carries an unspoken message that candidates have a part to play in the general process of assessment. To this end I have included a possible example at the end of this paper, it includes nothing new but it may serve as a more helpful starting point than a blank sheet when you come to design your own.

A non-assessing assessor.

This idea arose accidentally following a course on which a level 3 coach wanted to act as observer in order to embark upon the process of becoming an examiner. Although he was included in the assessment team he carved out a role for himself wherein he provided a sounding board for the candidates. They knew that they could bounce ideas off him and that when he asked a question it was not loaded in that the answer would not be assessed. I think that this allowed for candidates to work things through when not in the spotlight and resulted ultimately in candidates demonstrating what they would normally do rather than what they thought assessors wanted to see. This may well be a role that cannot be cast and has to emerge.

Continuous de-briefing.

In consideration of the de-brief it must be asked whether it is entirely fair to leave this process solely until the end of the course. Admittedly it can put an extra strain upon the process, however this can often be outweighed by it preventing someone steadily compounding failure as a session and/or programme continues. If a performance can be tweaked more firmly into the pass category then it must be worthwhile.

Session briefing.

This ties in tightly with the previous paragraph since that process is more straightforward. If each session is preceded by a clear briefing to candidates including details as to how it will be organised, time commitment involved and what particularly is required. Having done this assessors can refer back to those points in order to give candidates the opportunity to turn in a more polished performance.

Workshops during assessments.

If the programme allows it is worth considering whether all sessions need to be geared towards assessment; a workshop on a given topic, where assessors and candidates work alongside each other helps develop ideas, establish a constructive within the course and generate a sense that coaching does not have a set of finite 'right' answers (solutions are preferable).

Aims beyond pass / fail.

An assessment should still be a learning experience and all candidates, regardless of whether they have passed or failed, should leave the course with some new ideas and maybe a fresh direction. It is, therefore, a useful part of the introductory session to record what candidates want from the course in addition to a result. Returning to these in the final session provides a conclusion that will hopefully result in all being able to recognise that there has been a positive and identifiable benefit from the course.

There is little here, if anything, that is revelatory and it would almost be insulting to all the assessors who give up a lot of time to run courses if there were. Ideas have been harvested (stolen) from different courses with which I have been involved and I hope that in putting them together in this form there is scope for evaluation, discussion, modification and practice that will help to refine and develop assessment and subsequent de-briefing.

Bibliography:

Assessor Training - Bill Taylor

Doing Reviewing - Roger Greenaway (Journal Adventure Edn. Outdoor Leadership)

Teamwork - David Trethowan (Industrial Society Press)

Questionnaires completed at E2 seminars.

NEW DIRECTOR APPOINTED TO NCF

The National Coaching Foundation has appointed John Stevens as its Chief Executive, in succession to Geoff Cooke.

John Stevens was educated at Loughborough University, and recently gained a Master of Business Administration degree from the Open University. He represented Loughborough at Rugby, Athletics, Swimming and Water Polo, and Wales and Great Britain in Surf Lifesaving.

MAINTAINING THE STANDARD

Complaints are being received from level 2 coach training course directors that candidates are appearing on the courses who are clearly below the standard of ability required for the 3 Star Test.

There is no desire to artificially inflate the level of performance required, but it is important that the integrity of the 3 Star (in particular) is maintained.

Examiners are asked to pay careful attention to the descriptions of the ability level required.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

ASSESSOR TRAINING DAYS

25 October Plas Pencelli, Brecon. Martin Barry, Robert Egelstaff, Plas Pencelli OEC, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7LX (01874 665241) Fax (01874 665257)

22 November - North Yorkshire Sam Cook, Beverley Park Centre, Pateley Bridge, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. HG3 5JB (01423 711287 day, 01423 711626 eve)

24 January 1998 - Bristol Docks Claire Knifton, 72 Cornercroft, Clevedon, Somerset BS21 5DR (01275 343702 eve)

25 January 1998 - Leicester OPC Andy O'Connor, 241 Duncan Road, Leicester. LE2 8EJ

14 March 1998 - Chichester Mike Watson, 6 Hillside Crescent, Angmering, West Sussex. BN16 4AA

COACHING PROCESSES COURSES

27-28 September - Mid-Cornwall Andy Barclay, Hillside, 6 Castle Hill, Lostwithiel, Cornwall. PL22 ODE (01872 324402) 01208 873088 (eve)

11-12 October - Shrewsbury Roger Drummond, South View, Severn Bank, Shrewsbury. SY1 2JD

18-19 October - North Wales Plas y Brenin, Capel Curig. Gwynedd.

25-26 October - Nottingham Current Trends, Adbolton Lane, Nottingham

08-09 November - Nottingham Current Trends, Adbolton Lane, Nottingham

13-14 December - Nottingham Current Trends, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham.

18-19 January - Nottingham Current Trends, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham.

08-09 February - Nottingham Current Trends, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham.

20-22 March 1998 - Pangbourne Kevin Dennis, County River Centre, Whitchurch Rd, Pangbourne, Reading

LEVEL 5 COACH TRAINING COURSE

8-13 November - North Wales Plas Y Brenin, Capel Curig, Gwynedd. 01690 720280

October/November - Scotland Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore, Inverness-shire, PH22 1QU 01479 861276

SURF COURSES

FIVE STAR TRAINING WEEKEND

11-12 October

Northumberland College Watersports Centre. £80. Phone 01670 841 200 ext 333.

LEVEL 3 COACH TRAINING WEEKEND

22-23 November

Northumberland College Watersports Centre. £80. Phone 01670 841 200 ext 333.

E3 FORUMS

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FORUMS FOR GRADE 3 EXAMINERS PLANNED FOR 18-19 OCTOBER (SEA) AND 15-16 NOVEMBER (INLAND/CANOE) HAVE BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL THE SPRING.

Groups and Individual Behaviour in Canoe Sport

by Les Porter

Les Porter is a Professional Studies Tutor at the School of Education of Brunel University, an active researcher into teaching and learning methodologies and BCU Regional Coaching Organiser for the Southern Region.

'...how could we ever have been so stupid? Why did we shoot that fall' Danny Smith a top member of the BCU and Senior Instructor murmurs to himself following an incident where a member of his group had been trapped in an incident on the Upper Dee. 'It's as though we set out to wreck everything we've been working for over the last ten years.'

'Yeah you can say that again,' Terri Davies (another SI) agrees. 'We should have seen this mess coming a mile away. You can just see the Headlines' (and with that remark she begins to suggest make-believe headlines) 'BCU Senior Instructor takes group of novice paddlers over a waterfall...'

'Stop, please stop!' Danny exclaims with a look of pain. 'I can't stand any more; it's been going on for days now. We're finished, that's for sure; not much we can do now except minimise the damage. But what I can't understand is how we ever got into this fix in the first place. We all knew that paddling this river in spate was risky. What made us go ahead and do it...'

What happened in this situation? What led this experienced group of instructors, to go so badly off the deep-end and take a group of novice paddlers into a situation that they could not possibly have handled? What caused them to put themselves into a situation that ended their careers? As the characters involved realise, there is no clear simple answer. Individually, most members of the decision making group recognised the dangers of the river. Yet, when they discussed this course of action together, something seemed to happen: they lost sight of the many warning signs that had been inbuilt into their instructor training and were visible to most of them and 'accentuated the positive' - they overestimated the potential benefits associated with the group completing this river trip.

The 'something' to which I just referred is often described in social psychology, by the phrase **group influence** (McGrath 1984). It refers to the fact that when we are part of a group - when we work together to reach common goals - our behaviour is often quite different from what it is under other circumstances. You are probably familiar with this phenomenon yourself. For example you realise that your actions may be quite different when you are in the presence of other people (especially ones with whom you have an ongoing relationship) than when you were alone. Similarly, you know that when you joined various groups (eg. Scouts, Guides, play groups, school governors, photographic societies, churches, local councils) you were expected to behave and think in certain ways - ones endorsed by these groups. Groups, in short, often exert powerful effects on their members. Since most individuals join many different groups during their lives, such effects play an important role in many contexts, and involve a wide range of social behaviour. This discussion is about the consequences of belonging and proceeds as follows:

First, I consider the basic nature of groups - just what they are, and how they function. Next, I turn to the impact of

groups upon **task performance** - how being part of a group affects the performance of individuals and the question of whether groups or individuals are more efficient in completing various tasks. Thirdly I consider **decision making** in groups, examining the process through which group decisions are made, their nature, and several forces that tend to distort or bias their outcome. Finally, because groups often exert their strongest influence upon their members through the action of leaders, I conclude with a section on leadership.

Roles, norms and cohesiveness

I noted earlier that groups often exert powerful effects on their members. Given the definition of groups just offered, this is hardly surprising. Since people belonging to a given group share common goals, interact with each other, and are interdependent, it is only reasonable to expect that they will influence one another in important ways. It makes sense to consider the issue of how precisely, do groups exert such effects. There is general agreement that there are three aspects of groups that are most important in this regard: **roles, norms, and cohesiveness** (Forsyth, 1983)

Roles: Differentiation within the groups.

Think of one group you have belonged to. Once you have a specific group firmly in your mind, consider the following question: Did everybody in it act in the same way and perform the same function? Your answer is probably 'no'. On the contrary, a considerable degree of differentiation may well have existed. Specific persons worked at different tasks and were expected to accomplish different things for the group. In short they played different roles within this context. Often roles are assigned in a relatively formal manner'... David you take the lead during this section, Debbie you be Tail-End-Charlie and I'll sweep the middle of the group... Whatever the mechanism involved, however, once individuals assume specific roles within a group, they are expected by other members of the group to behave in certain ways. Such role expectations can be very powerful, and frequently they constitute an important way in which groups exert strong effects upon their members. Have you ever heard anybody say to you '... sorry Les I don't think I'm capable of being Tail-End-Charlie because...!' 'I never have!'

Norms: The rules of the game.

Norms are rules - explicit or implicit - established by various groups to regulate the behaviour of their members. Thus they tell group members how to behave (Sorrels and Kelley, 1984). *'... when we come to the next small rapid, I want you to break out upstream left and wait in the eddy until we signal you to go on through...'* Since most groups insist upon adherence to their norms as a basic requirement for membership, it is hardly surprising, that individuals wishing to join or remain in specific groups generally follow these 'rules of the game' If they do not they may soon find themselves on the outside looking in!

Cohesiveness: The effects of wanting to belong.

Consider two groups: in the first, members like one another very much, they have all paddled together for a long time and enjoy the social company of each other. In the second, members dislike one another and get along poorly they often disagree on routes through the white water and often disagree which rivers to paddle. Which would exert stronger effects upon its members? Obviously the first. The reason for the difference, too, is obvious: cohesiveness is much higher in the first than the second. At first glance you might expect that cohesiveness is always a 'plus' and usually this is so, but in a few cases cohesiveness can actually get in the way and interfere with effective performance. For example, groups high in cohesiveness may spend so much time in pleasant social interaction that their level of performance while paddling suffers. Similarly, finding show that high cohesiveness can interfere with performance in industrial settings when group members feel they are not supported by management (Schriesheim, 1980). Under such conditions, cohesive groups may decide to pursue their own self interest, while ignoring the larger goals of the organisation. For example, take the paddler on a long distance K2 expedition, who because he was only concerned with his own ego refused to finish one day's leg at a shorter distance than was

decided. He continued and totally exhausted his partner who was then unable to paddle the next day - the aim of the expedition was lost.

The Benefits and Costs of working with others.

According to a famous poem 'No man is an Island; No man stands alone'. While these words may not equally apply to all spheres of life, they certainly seem accurate where canoeing is concerned. Paddlers rarely perform tasks entirely on their own. More frequently, they work with others, or at least in their presence. A key question concerning groups, therefore, is what impact, if any do they exert upon task performance? In order to answer this question it is necessary to consider two separate but related issues: (1) what are the effects of the mere presence of others on individual performance (in other words do individuals perform differently in front of an audience than when alone)? and (2) how efficient are groups, relative to individuals, in performing various tasks?

Social facilitation: Performance in the presence of others.

Imagine as part of your SI assessment, you must make a lecture in front of a large audience. You have several weeks to prepare, so you write your talk and then practice it at home in the evenings. The moment of truth arrives. You are introduced and begin your lecture. How will you do? Will you stumble over your words and perform more poorly in front of your peers than when you were alone? Or will the presence of these people actually spur you on. Early research concerned with the issue yielded confusing results (Triplett, 1898). Sometimes performance was improved by the presence of an audience. In other situations, though, the opposite was true. How could this puzzle be solved? One intriguing answer was offered by Zajonc (1965) in what has come to be known as the drive theory of social facilitation. To simplify this theory, the presence of others increases our level of motivation or arousal. This increased arousal in turn, enhances the performance of dominant responses in a given situation. If these are correct, performance is enhanced. If they are incorrect, performance is reduced. For example how often have we seen the paddler in an assessment situation, who asks us 'to be ready to rescue him in case he doesn't eskimo rolls. How often does this person fail to roll when being watched? Rarely I would suggest! (Read Markus, 1978 for further discussion).

A potential resolution: The distraction conflict model.

This model suggests that the presence of others induces competing tendencies to (1) pay attention to these persons and (2) pay attention to the task being performed. The conflict generated by these competing tendencies result in heightened arousal, which then produces social facilitation. The theory was developed jointly by Baron, Sanders and Moore (e.g., RS Baron, 1986; Sanders 1983; Sanders Baron and Moore, 1978). While this theory may not offer a final answer to the persistent puzzle of social facilitation, it seems quite promising in this respect. In any case, it has added substantially to our understanding of what many social psychologists consider to be the simplest type of group effect.

Groups and task performance: Do 'many hands' really 'make light work'?

Earlier I noted that most canoeing is performed in group settings; individuals rarely perform their tasks entirely alone. The reason for this is reliance on groups; there is a strong and general belief that people working together can accomplish more than people working alone. (The well known, Synergy Factor) This is often the case. By co-ordinating their efforts, groups can often attain goals that none could hope to reach alone. But does this necessarily imply that groups are always, or even usually, more productive than individuals? The answer, it turns out, is fairly complex. Working in groups does indeed offer certain advantages. For example, it allows individuals to pool their knowledge and skills. Similarly, it allows for efficient division of labour, so that specific persons perform those tasks for which they are best equipped. On the other hand, though, group settings exact certain costs. As I mentioned earlier, when cohesiveness is high, members may spend a lot of time engaging in pleasant - but non productive social interaction. (chatting about last night instead of loading the mini-bus to catch the ferry to France for example). Further

pressures to adhere to existing norms and 'do things the way we've always done them' may interfere with the development of new and better procedures for completing essential tasks, (... we do a low brace turn with our paddle slightly above the water because the picture in the book shows it that way ... !!). In short, group settings offer a mixed bag of potential pluses and minuses where performance is concerned. Perhaps the most important single factor determining whether groups or individuals are more efficient, however, involves the type of task being performed.

Type of task and group performance:

A useful framework for understanding the different types of tasks performed by groups has been proposed by Steiner (1972, 197-) According to his approach tasks can be viewed as falling into one of three different categories.

Additive tasks are ones in which the contributions of each member are combined into a single group product. For example in a white-water-rescue, when several persons combine their strength to lift a swamped kayak off a pin. Obviously co-ordination is crucial in such a task. It makes little sense for the people trying to lift all to exert their effort at different times. Only if such co-ordination exists will there be anything to 'add' in determining the group's final output.

Conjunctive tasks, here, the group's final product is determined by the weakest link - by the poorest performance member. An example is a K1 relay race. Obviously the final time for the team depends on how fast the slowest V weakest member can paddle. At the point where this person can paddle no longer the whole system fails and the team has to withdraw from the race.

Disjunctive tasks, here too the group's product (and hence its success) is determined by a single member. However in this case, it is the best or most competent person who sets the limit. For example a group of paddlers have the opportunity of taking a number of routes down a river and are faced with a number of complex problems which they discuss. The group can only adopt one solution as they have decided to stick together, so the success will reflect the quality of the best idea or solution proposed by any of its members. (A word of caution: the best solution is not always recognised as such. If it is not, group performance will be below this level)

Conclusion

To return to my basic question: how do groups and individuals compare with respect to each of these types of tasks? In general on additive tasks, groups usually outperform individuals, provided that (1) the type of co-ordination mentioned above exists and (2) a phenomenon known as social loafing, in which individual members decide to take it easy and let others do the work does not develop. Unfortunately, existing evidence suggests that in many cases, co-ordination among group members is difficult to attain. Individuals seem to distract one another and get in each other's way, with the overall result that groups actually produce less than equivalent numbers of individuals working alone (e.g. Wood, Polek and Aiken 1985). The situation is even less favourable to groups in the case of conjunctive tasks, where overall performance is determined by the weakest member. Here individuals tend to surpass groups in both output and quality. Finally with respect to disjunctive tasks, groups tend to have an edge, provided they possess at least some competent, talented members and provided such persons are successful in getting their ideas or solutions accepted (Laughlin, 1980).

Well why did the incident in my opening scenario happen? I put it to you that this was a group undertaking, a disjunctive task, there were competent, talented members of the group, all who could have performed well as individuals. But in this situation, what was missing was co-ordination and leadership. The ego of the leaders needed enhancement by their peers and it was perceived by the instructor in charge, that the group would see his leadership as a failure had he aborted the trip. He carried on regardless of his own misgivings hoping that someone else in the group would take control of the situation. Research by Harkins, Latane and Williams suggested that this type of social loafing is quite general in scope, occurring in both sexes, in several different cultures and under a wide range of

leadership conditions. The research suggested that many people will 'opt out of leadership' when working with others. In canoeing on moving water this tendency has many important practical implications. Is social loafing, then, an unavoidable part of group task performance? or can something be done to lessen the impact? Fortunately growing evidence points to the latter conclusion. The work of Williams, Harkin and Latane, (1981) suggested that social loafing can practically be stopped cold by making the output or effort of each participant readily identifiable. Under these conditions, individuals cannot hide in the group so the tendency to sit back and let others do the work for them virtually disappears. In my example if the leader had been made accountable to the rest of the group and was continuously asked to discuss his action plan with all members then the incident would probably not have happened.

Secondly social loafing can be sharply reduced by increasing group members' commitment to successful task performance. Here pressures toward working hard should offset temptations to engage in social loafing. Moreover the larger the group, the stronger such pressures should be. Thus output per group member may actually increase rather than decrease as group size rises. Convincing evidence has been reported by Zaccaro (1984). I suggest to you that in my scenario no members of the novice group had been involved in the planning or discussion and were merely following their leader. Without commitment by all members of the group, the case is lost.

Don't let it happen to You!

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IMPORTANT NOTICES

PLEASE REMEMBER, FROM 1 JANUARY 1998 IT IS GOING TO BE NECESSARY FOR CANDIDATES TO REGISTER CENTRALLY FOR COACHING QUALIFICATIONS BEFORE ATTENDING THE COURSE OF THEIR CHOICE

FULL DETAILS AND A COPY OF THE INFORMATION PACK WILL BE INCLUDED WITH DECEMBER CODE.

1998 COURSES.

A BULLETIN AND FORMS FOR NOTIFYING COURSES FOR ENTRY IN THE BCU CALENDAR, FOR 1998 HAVE BEEN SENT TO ALL ORGANISERS OF COURSES ON LAST YEAR'S DATA BASE. IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO RUN COURSES - PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT

REQUIRE AUTHORISATION - AND HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE INFORMATION PLEASE WRITE TO THE BCU OFFICE IMMEDIATELY

FE FUNDING

NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN THAT DUE TO A CHANGE IN THE FORMULA UNDER WHICH FUNDING IS ACCESSED THROUGH A CONTRACT WITH A LOCAL COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION, THE BCU IS NO LONGER ABLE TO PAY A FEE TO COURSE ORGANISERS FOR STUDENTS ON COURSES FOR THE OBTAINING OF QUALIFICATIONS.

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THE PYGMALION EFFECT

by **STEPHEN BANKS**

Whilst leafing through some of my old psychology textbooks recently I came across some educational studies which may be of interest to those involved in the teaching, coaching and instruction of others. For the sake of clarity these three will be referred to collectively as teaching through out this article.

The work I allude to investigated a phenomenon known as the Pygmalion Effect. (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; Rosenthal, 1973). Pygmalion was a king of Cyprus and a sculptor in Greek mythology who created a statue of a woman that was so beautiful that he fell in love with it and it came alive. The essence of this tale is that it is possible to create in others what we expect to find. People may live up or down to our expectations until they become a self fulfilling prophecy. This is the Pygmalion Effect and as people involved with the learning and development of others we are in a particularly prominent position to exert it.

Most people involved in teaching in whatever field would doubtless believe that they do their utmost to ensure that all people in their care learn and develop as much as possible. Rosenthal's work showed however, that even the most conscientious teachers can allow expectations and subtle discrimination to interfere with their teaching without them ever realising.

Pre-conceptions

The study in question involved teachers being told of pupils in their new class who were particularly bright and who should make rapid progress. In fact the children were selected entirely at random without knowledge of their actual aptitudes. The children's progress was measured at four, eight and twenty months. By four months the 'labelled' pupils were already doing significantly better than their peers, by twenty months the disparity had grown to impressive proportions with an average IQ improvement twelve points greater than the rest of the class.

Over the twenty months the researchers spent many hours observing lessons and narrowed down four major sources of influence in the learning environment.

- 1 An emotional climate is created by teachers in that they will show warmth and understanding to favoured students and generally more positive body language if their expectations are higher. For example, the amount of eye contact between teacher and pupil closely correlated to expectations.
- 2 Teachers provide widely varying amounts of information to students, they attempt to teach more material of greater challenge to those who they expect to be able to cope with it.
- 3 The amount of work generated by pupils increases in line with higher expectations as they are often given more opportunity to talk, are posed more challenging tasks and questions and are shown greater patience and understanding. They are also encouraged to do more practice and extra work.
- 4 Feedback to favoured students was found to be more frequent and more in depth.

Rosenthal's work showed that teachers' preconceptions and expectations had a considerable effect on their charges, even when those expectations were based on fabricated information. Whilst these studies have been criticised over the relevance of using IQ scores as a measure they nonetheless have obvious implications for all those involved in the education of others in whatever sphere. For instance, if we assume that a

child from a school in a poor area will do less well and we transmit that expectation to the child, a self fulfilling prophecy will be set up. Because we expect the child to do badly we give less encouragement, input and feedback, therefore the child falls behind, thus reinforcing our original assumption and subsequent actions. This is a particularly difficult cycle to break because it occurs so subtly and unconsciously.

How does it affect us as canoeing instructors ?

As teachers of canoeing, it is unlikely that we will have such large amounts of contact time with any one group though it is possible for us to deal with the same people on a regular basis over an extended period. It is therefore also possible to have expectations which may promote or hinder their progress. We may of course come across people who have already been affected in this way, people who are convinced that they will not be able to succeed as a result of their prior experiences. They may have been taught to under achieve and even to fail.

So, what can we do to alleviate this danger ?

- 1 The first and most crucial defence is awareness. Be aware of the possibility and also of the mechanisms involved. Be aware of personal prejudices no matter how minor. We cannot prevent something we don't know is happening.
- 2 Adopt a variety of teaching styles and techniques which will build flexibility into sessions and allow people to work at their own level and up to their potential.
- 3 Involve people in their own learning, don't foster dependency on the teacher. Ask more than you tell, stimulate understanding and encourage exploration thus better preparing people to deal with the wide range of variables that the canoeing environment can produce.
- 4 Regular self evaluation of teaching is a healthy practice. Have a colleague observe or video you working. By having criteria for observation it will be possible to compare sessions and enhance personal development.

This list is by no means exhaustive though hopefully it will provide a foundation upon which to build and as a stimulus to debate whilst offering some protection against negative self fulfilling prophecies.

In spite of the fact that most of us will not be at the stage of turning solid rock into a beautiful partner, though it does have a certain appeal, it would appear sensible to ensure that the only Pygmalion Effect we have is a positive one.

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The posts don't move !

by Nigel Smee

We wanted our baby to learn to speak English, so from the beginning we taught him to speak English. He was taught that a train was called a 'Train', not a 'Choochoo'. A duck was called a 'Duck' (not a 'quack-quack') etc. Consequently, aged three, he now has a very wide vocabulary of 'real' words and can hold a sensible conversation equal to many children older than himself. This is partly because he has not had to learn one set of names or terms for things and then relearn them and learn a different set for the same thing. He hasn't had to go through the internal process of interpreting what we say, working out that we actually mean something different, figure out what the real meaning is, and then apply it to his world. I don't believe in making things more complicated than they are, or letting students do the work of interpreting, which as an instructor, is my job to do for them.

In another example, I don't teach the complicated skill of map and compass work. I teach the easy skill of using a map, and another time the easy skill of using a compass. The two are connected, but not related, skills. Teaching them all as one big lump only confuses.

Perhaps I'm getting too old and intolerant now, or maybe my own style has diverged too far from the normal, but I get more and more upset nowadays when I hear or see other people teaching in ways which I have rejected.

Articles printed in *Focus* and *CoDe* only help to heighten my irritation. Here are a couple of examples. Instructors are still telling students to pull paddles through the water. Students are obediently doing it, and they both get upset when the boat doesn't do what they want it to. The students only learn to paddle by ignoring, or at best interpreting, what the instructor has told them. It's so unnecessary, so why is it still going on?

We should say what we mean, using simple and unambiguous terms and names. I was one of those who lost the battle to get the stern rudder acknowledged as a rudder action that goes at the stern, but surely all paddlers will realise that to make a kayak go forward you do not put the paddle in the water and pull it back past the boat. What you do is put the paddle in the water and pull the boat forward past the paddle.

For a sweep stroke you put the paddle in the water and push the front of the boat away from the paddle. For a draw stroke you put the paddle in the water and pull the boat towards the paddle, and so on.

I use the analogy of sitting on a skateboard, going along the path between two rows of iron railings. You lean forward and grab a metal post and pull yourself towards it. Then you lean forward with the other arm and pull on a post on the other side and pull on it, and move forward towards it again and so on. The pull on the arms is transferred through the bum, knees and feet to the wheels. To move away from the railings, you grab a post and push away, or pull in to get closer. The posts don't move.

In a canoe or kayak, you carry your own 'post' and have to stick it in place at each stroke. The analogy is direct and fairly accurate, and cuts out most of the need for interpretation.

Another way I teach which differs from most I have seen is in

teaching rolling. I teach rolling as something you do with your boat, not something you do with a paddle. After getting people to do capsizing drill so that they are confident being upside down and able to bail out, I get them to capsize and come up for air by the pool hand rail, next capsize and swim a bit to the rail. They immediately realise that they can get their body up to the surface of the water for a breath, and the boat halfway up, without bailing out, especially when wearing a buoyancy aid and leaning back rather than out to the side. Next I get them to find out the balance point of their boat, by keeping their heads half in the water and using their hips and legs to move the boat up and down through the point where it either wants to flip up the right way or go back upside down. At this point many of them come right up without wanting to. They progress to swimming to the side of the pool and coming right up on the hand rail, then on a float, then on a floating paddle blade, then hands only. We polish their flick and lay back position and soon, usually well within one two-hour session for a pair of students, they can hand roll without problem. This technique has the added advantage that I can stay warm and dry on the pool side for the whole session, as I believe that paddling is a dry sport unless you are doing it wrong !

Another session will get them to use the additional skill of rolling while not letting go of the paddle, ie: forward or reverse Screw roll. If I want to get someone to learn to do a screw roll, I never teach them a Pawlata, and then expect them to unlearn it to do something else. Why should I ? It may be that I am in a silent majority of instructors who teach students to do what we want them to do, not just repeat verbatim the wrong instructions which we were given when we were taught, and expect our students to go through the same agony of interpretation that we had to go through - but I don't see much evidence of that.

DofC comments: Perhaps the term 'stroke' is at the basis of any misunderstanding which may exist with regard to how a kayak or canoe is manoeuvred. Quite clearly, if all that happened was that the paddle moved through the water, then the boat would stay still !

Paddle 'stroke' implies movement of the paddle - as in 'stroking' the pussy cat (sorry - 'feline companion') - whereas in fact the paddle blade is 'planted', and the boat pulled past or around it. Any movement of the blade itself relates normally to slicing it through the water or air in order to 'plant' it in the required position.

The question remains as to what stage this concept is introduced to the novice. I see no difficulty in establishing the principles straight away where the forward paddling technique is concerned. Does the same hold true for the 'sweep stroke' however ?

'Sweep the paddle from the front to the back, reaching it well out from the side' is a common instruction. In fact, it is 'as if' the paddle were swept around. In reality, the paddle is 'planted' and the boat is rotated around it by the action of the body which is firmly attached to the craft..

Many coaches use introductory exercises to the 'sweep stroke' which seek to establish the principles of body rotation involved, but in many instances where we introduce techniques, instructors often still only tell the student 'half the story' - and, as Nigel indicates, the role of the lower body can be largely ignored.

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