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Pitfalls in Vision and Direction Giving

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The Framework for Grouping and Group Direction says energy for grouping comes from the perception of salient exigencies to group. The exigencies for grouping, the rhetorical resources for responding to those exigencies, and the potential for grouping pitfalls can all be organized using the Quadrad: four terms that represent the recurring forms of dramatic action (perceived exigencies, rhetorical responses, pitfalls) involved in any grouping. The first two Quadrad terms represent *fundamental components* of grouping activity: the Purgatory Puddle and The Way/Process. The last two Quadrad terms represent *dimensional manifestations* from grouping activity. The first of these dimensional manifestations is some sense of where the group might be headed, which is called the group's Vision/Outcome, and the second is some sense of who can be trusted to provide direction to the group, which is called the Savior Complex. These two dimensions run through all grouping activity. They are inherently necessary for, and manifest integrally throughout, any group. In this chapter, we discuss pitfalls found in these last two bases of the Quadrad.

❖ VISION/OUTCOME PITFALLS

A sense of Vision/Outcome begins to develop while grouping members learn to understand their task as they frame and address it during early grouping interaction. That sense may manifest in agenda items, goals, objectives, or a mission statement; it may also manifest in the first rough drafts of a solution to the group's problem or an early description of a desirable group outcome. Vision/Outcome is the product or result of group work: the fruit of the group's labors. Vision/Outcome includes anticipation of those fruits, and helps guide ongoing choices made regarding how to achieve those fruits. Vision/Outcome is not necessarily clear to group members at the start of their grouping activity. *Outcomes* of a grouping effort (a combination of what the group achieved serving its task, relational, and individual functions) may be easier to assess than a group's vision. A group's vision and its outcomes may not entirely coincide once grouping has ended. The group's vision may result in them being disappointed with the outcomes they actually achieve: their fruits dismay them when they are not what was envisioned. Even as the "ends" of group work, Vision/Outcome is dynamic, as members co-construct an evolving understanding of their purpose and product.

Vision/Outcome is a group's *Promised Land* and is composed of those two components: promise and land. Potential Vision/Outcome pitfalls manifest as *promise* pitfalls, *land* pitfalls, and as combinations of those two sets of problems, which result in several *finishing issues*. Our focus in this chapter is on pitfalls involving task outcomes because relational and individual functional outcomes are covered elsewhere.[4]

Promise pitfalls manifest in insufficient attractiveness or salience of the Promised Land toward which a group works. Promise pitfalls indicate an undesired destination. A Vision/Outcome that is not perceived to be important (not salient) or attractive is not sufficiently desired. Such a Vision/Outcome creates no exigency of attraction for group efforts to reach it as their destination. Promise pitfalls are perceptual, manifesting in the lack of enthusiasm of grouping members to get to a particular Vision/Outcome (as opposed to land pitfalls, which are substantive and flow from the qualities of the actual fruits of the Vision/Outcome). Working to get your body into shape can be motivated by what is unpleasant about being out of shape (a Purgatory Puddle–type exigency) or by what is desirable or attractive about being in shape (a Vision/Outcome–type exigency). If you are not attracted to

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either the aesthetic or health benefits of being in shape, that objective
lacks sufficient promise or salience to stimulate your efforts.

A completed Vision/Outcome must continue to generate enthusi-
asm or finishing issues may result, such as poor implementation
and follow-through. The lack of support for its fruits by the group
members who produce them is a pitfall that eliminates the member
acceptance of grouping outcomes. A promise pitfall also manifests if
nobody outside the group values the group's outcomes enough to
respond appropriately. *The solution to this last concern is an ongoing dis-
cussion of the exigencies perceived by stakeholders and how those play out
in group processes and outcomes.* Such a discussion is part of what is
meant when policy makers describe a process as transparent: that
stakeholders are able to know what issues are being discussed and
what processes are being employed by the group so that the stake-
holders' concerns can be taken into consideration as the group works
toward shaping its Vision/Outcome.

*To address most promise pitfalls, try to be sensitive to group mood as they
discuss possible outcomes. If there is a sense of excitement about the outcome,
there is probably energy for the effort involved to get there. If you sense that
energy, make the equation explicit: "Does this mean we are willing to put the
effort into pulling this off? How shall we measure our progress toward that end
and how shall we adjust if we are falling short?" If you sense a lack of such
energy, raise that as an issue of concern and have group members discuss what
it means and whether there is anything they can do about it. Talk explicitly about
trying to co-construct a Vision/Outcome that excites group efforts. Explain that
potential promise will make the load seem lighter. Find a way to implement the
old "spoonful of sugar" orientation (to help the medicine go down).*

Table 7.1   Summary of the Vision/Outcome Pitfalls

Vision/Outcome Pitfall	*Examples*
Promise Is Inadequate	An undesired destination.
Bad Land: Disadvantages	An undesirable destination: (un)anticipated and opportunity costs.
Don't Reach Land: Solvency	An unattained destination: unsolved problem; unmet goal.
Vision Nature Problems	Wrong test for task; mistreatment or distortion of vision (construct).
Finishing Issues	Failure to get feedback or to finish well: termination trauma.

Land pitfalls manifest in negative aspects of the substance or nature of the Promised Land a group works toward and then achieves. Something desired is not necessarily desirable. By analogy, an addictive drug may be desired by the addict but undesirable because of what it does to the addict. Land pitfalls indicate an undesirable destination. An undesirable Vision/Outcome has negative consequences either because of some *disadvantage* it has over the status quo or because it fails to *solve* or to address the exigency that started the group on its trip.

Disadvantages to the Vision/Outcome

Advantages and disadvantages are metaphors borrowed from economics and argumentation studies. The terms invite comparisons between alternative choices. If a group faces two choices, one way to compare them is to look for benefits of one choice that do not accrue from the other. An advantage that is salient to a grouping member becomes an exigency for trying to turn the group in the direction of attaining that advantage. A disadvantage, if it is perceived in advance of the final decision, becomes an exigency for trying to turn the group away from a Vision/Outcome that causes the disadvantage. Land pitfalls include disadvantages to the Vision/Outcome selected or developed by the group. *To make a reasoned choice about whether to accept a Vision/Outcome with a disadvantage to it, ask, "How much will this disadvantage diminish our overall benefits from the Vision/Outcome?"* There are three ways to look for these disadvantages.

Opportunity cost is what the group loses by directing its energy the way that it does; opportunity costs are the other things that the group could have accomplished had it been using its energy doing something else. Consider the star college athlete who has the choice to finish 2 more years of college or to leave college in order to get an early start at being a professional player. The rewards from being able to play 2 more years of pro ball are an opportunity cost to staying in college. In rare cases, the opportunity cost to staying in college can amount to millions of dollars. Any choice a group makes to go in a particular direction, to follow a particular direction giver, or to select a particular Vision/ Outcome will have opportunity costs: the benefits that could have been realized had different choices been made. *When your group is settling in on its Vision/ Outcome, ask, "What opportunities will we lose if we pick this Vision/Outcome?"* The second and third sources of disadvantages to a Vision/Outcome come in anticipated and in unanticipated costs.

Almost 100 years ago, towns across America and Europe were faced with a problem: whether to allow "horseless carriages" (cars) to operate within city limits. The *anticipated disadvantages* to cars were obvious: noise that scared the horses that were the preferred mode of transport at that time and tires that went flat or were easy to get stuck. But at least cars were clean, never leaving piles of manure in their wake. Examples of *unanticipated costs* are the disadvantages we had to invent new names to describe: urban sprawl, gridlock, smog, head-on collisions, and greenhouse gases. *No matter how good a Vision/Outcome seems to your group, without a healthy attempt to incorporate the ideas of experts and stakeholders, the chances of leaving possible disadvantages out of your calculations is significantly increased.*

The sooner you can get your group to broach the subject of potential problems with their Vision/Outcome, the more likely the group will start to treat the consideration of such negatives as a normative part of their efforts and to make it a point to fully consider more than one alternative Vision/Outcome. Those are healthy signs. They indicate that grouping members perceive "permission" to raise potential concerns, rather than to self-censor what might prove to be a vital point. Encouraging such a norm for critical thinking also makes it more likely that the group will actually identify problems in advance that they can adjust to and attempt to ameliorate.

Make testing every idea for its downside into a group norm. Make certain that several possible Vision/Outcomes are considered so that the group becomes aware, as they test various downsides, that they have choices to make among potential desirable and undesirable effects from their Vision/Outcome. *Try to keep your group from becoming overly pessimistic, or feeling burdened by descriptions of problems, for there are always disadvantages to any course of action.* Selection of a Vision/Outcome with eyes wide open for potential disadvantages is the healthiest approach to constructing an effective group experience. *Be recursive, willing to reengage discussions of such disadvantages and what to do about them over time. Encourage levelheaded anticipation of negative outcomes and encourage processes that allow adjustments to group plans in attempts to limit negative effects.*

Solvency Pitfalls

Solvency pitfalls manifest as failures of group outcomes to meet group needs or goals. Solvency pitfalls indicate an unattained destination.

A Vision/Outcome that relieves most of the problems within a Purgatory Puddle or that accomplishes most of the advantage it is designed to attain can be said to have a high level of *solvency.* If a group's goals are met, the Vision/Outcome has addressed their purposes for grouping. Consequently, the failure to anticipate solvency problems is a pitfall to effective grouping.

Early in group life and throughout group interactions, attention to framing and revising group goals is important, as is the development of criteria for assessing whether those goals are met. Criteria are descriptions, in advance, of ways the group will assess or measure whether a goal, idea, or solution is good or worthy. Ongoing conversations about goals and criteria can help guide group process and outcome co-construction, as the group hones in on its desired fruits.

Vision Nature Pitfalls

In our discussion of disadvantages and advantages, we focus on *policy tasks,* which require a group to decide what to do, or how to do something. Every time a policy task or claim is considered, you should test Vision/Outcome solvency and disadvantages. But those are the *wrong tests* for other kinds of claims groups consider. For example, juries sort through the evidence in a murder case, groups of politicians disagree about the most important community values, groups of scientists argue about the kinds of relationships there are between phenomena, and we argue with our friends about who will win the next national championship. These topics involve issues of guilt, values, facts, and conjecture (Bormann, 1969); such tasks require different tests to determine if they are done well (Gouran, 2003). However, because of limited space, our advice is also limited. *When faced with a nonpolicy task, consult expert opinion, engage a careful discussion of the issues involved until a consensus is developed, and seek to anticipate and correct any pitfalls you face, especially those that limit your critical thinking.* Gouran's (2003) description of how people tend to sort through such claims gives us reason to believe you can be successful if you follow the basic advice in this book, but you might also consult a basic textbook on argumentation as well if given a formal and extremely important charge to complete an alternative type of group task.

When talking about a "vision" for one's group, there can be a tendency to *mistreat vision* as a thing that can be written down, cemented, and adhered to for the remainder of the group's life. In fact, groups can

write down what they think their vision is, but effective groups are open to modifications and learning. A pitfall arises when an early sense of group vision gets reified or treated as a warrant for rejecting excellent ideas because "they don't fit the vision." *Try to co-construct a living and dynamic sense of your Vision/Outcome, as something created by all and for which all are responsible. Like a bush needs pruning over time, so, too, should a Vision/Outcome receive care and be modified as the group learns more about itself and its task.*

Vision distortion can result when excitement about finishing obscures the group's need to test its Vision/Outcome against the criteria they should have built for themselves in early discussions of what they expect from their grouping processes and outcomes. The propensity for this pitfall increases if there are no trained group members because the group may fail to construct such filters in the first place or because they may fail to apply those early decisions as tests for the Vision/Outcome they eventually construct. A careful analysis of disadvantages and solvency issues can lead a group to conclude that they have performed adequate tests of their Vision/Outcome, but if they forget to ask, "Does this do what we originally said we wanted it to do?" they may accept a distortion of their vision. An additional distortion comes if the group tries to "tiptoe around an issue" so as not to disturb a sensitive member or stakeholder. Taking flight from the activities necessary to fully address a group goal distorts Vision/Outcome. The squeaky wheel that gets oiled, in this case, does so at the expense of other important issues. *Distortions of the vision construct can only be addressed through group conversations that detect when the pitfall is occurring and that resolve to work out ways to correct the problem.* There is motivation to do so if the group has developed a clear consensus about its goals and criteria. Here is a case where understanding the problem is 90% of the cure.

Finishing Pitfalls

Finishing pitfalls have to do with how a Vision/Outcome is implemented or with what happens after the group has finished grouping. *Failure to finish at all* is the most basic and self-explanatory of the finishing pitfalls and includes a group's inability to come to any conclusion or solution or outcome. Perhaps they are avoiding a conflict or there is a stalemate between alternative Vision/Outcomes within the group because of incompatible visions, values hierarchy, or personnel.

Additional finishing issues include the *failure to implement the Vision/Outcome, the failure to develop a mechanism for gathering feedback about the effectiveness of the Vision/Outcome, and the failure to gather the feedback.* If a Vision/Outcome is not implemented, if a group's report gathers dust on a shelf, grouping energy was wasted. If no (or a poor) feedback-gathering mechanism is developed, no data will be gathered that can help judge Vision/Outcome quality even if it is implemented.

Finally, insufficient closure for the group is a *poor termination process pitfall,* which many grouping members find an unsatisfactory end regardless of whether their grouping outcomes were otherwise acceptable to them. Humans tend to like to *debrief,* to share their stories of what just happened to them, and to celebrate their successes. Group members are no exception. *Have at least one meeting or celebratory gathering to help create a sense of closure and successful termination.*

The solution to finishing pitfalls is to anticipate them well in advance. People who work with horses know not to let their horse start to run in the direction of the barn (where food and water await) because damage can be done in the bolting that results. When groups sense they are getting close to the barn, close to home, close to finishing up, they may tend to bolt as well, leaving loose ends and unfinished ideas to dangle and wither. *Slow that process down. If you can, start to initiate talk about working through completion, feedback, and termination processes somewhere nearer the middle of group life than at the end. Talk about the tendency to bolt as the group nears its ends. When the group is about done, make certain someone is reminding the group of what it still wants to accomplish in order to finish well.*

❖ SAVIOR COMPLEX PITFALLS

How well grouping members respond to exigencies for providing and receiving direction is a sign of how well they operate as a system. The second dimensional manifestation of any dramatic action involving grouping activity is Savior Complex, which has its origins in system personnel. Savior Complex represents the myriad of activities involved in negotiating who will give and receive direction in a group, and how that direction will be given and received. Some direction is provided a group any time one of its members commits an act or makes a statement that commands the attention and/or resources of others in the

group. Such acts may move a group in a negative or positive direction or may function to reinforce where the group is already headed.

When we interact, we try to appear to be individuals whom others can trust. In groups, such efforts are involved in the tacit and explicit dance used to sort out who has what to offer the group. Grouping members provide direction by framing the Purgatory Puddle, by suggesting The Way/Process, or by advocating a particular Vision/Outcome. Other members use those acts as cues to their author's competence as a potential direction giver. Some members may try explicitly to frame a direction-giving or -receiving role for themselves by indicating their availability, interest, or competence. Examples are found in statements such as, "I am really interested in this subject and want to try to take an active part in this group" or "I don't know much about this, so I am going to just watch and learn" or "I did a lot of work on this subject on my old job." Savior Complex–specific rhetoric is any attempt to become or to act successfully as a direction giver. Broadly conceived, Savior Complex rhetoric often makes a tacit argument such as, "Follow me because of who I am, or because of what my experiences have been, or because of what my competencies are." "Follow me because of what I have done to help the group or because of what I can do to help the group." "Follow me because of how well I personify who we are: what we value, our process, or our vision." Such acts provide a multitude of cues about who might be able to give and receive direction easily and well.

The Savior Complex encompasses a wide range of member activities as each person probably serves alternately as direction giver and direction receiver (doer, follower, guide), though longer held roles such as a long-term guide, manager, or leader (see chapter 2 for definitions) are probably more stable and member specific. All grouping members are involved in the complex dance of direction-giving type and style preferences, power base choices, task or relational orientations, and temporal and procedural changes that are represented by the *Savior* and *Complex* metaphors. Remember from chapter 2 that *complex* has connotations both of the complexity involved in this direction-giving and -receiving dance and of the potential pathologies involved as members struggle for status and power. Both connotations are useful in anticipating the pitfalls groups may co-construct as they seek to find those who can be trusted to save them (or to help them escape from their Purgatory Puddle).

Table 7.2   Summary of the Savior Complex Pitfalls

Savior Complex Pitfall	Examples
Conception Pitfalls	Failure to want direction giver; overreliance on direction giver; overattribution of credit.
Ascension Pitfalls	Appointed, not emerged; flawed selection outcomes.
Poor Direction Giver Choices	Direction giver type choice; style choice; power base choice; fail to properly balance group functions given contingencies of the situation.
Transition Pitfalls	Failure to finish; failure to cultivate new direction givers; failure to enculturate new direction giver or group.

Conception Pitfalls

Conception pitfalls involve how grouping members conceive of direction and of direction givers. These conceptions can manifest in pitfalls to effective grouping both as grouping gets started and as grouping activities unfold. In general, any flawed conceptions of direction giving and direction givers will result in grouping members having inappropriate assessment tools in play as roles are negotiated in their groups. Those same flawed assessment tools are in play as they experience their grouping enterprise and evaluate how well it is going and why. Conceptions of how grouping should be done and of how direction givers should give direction are probably held by each of us as our own personal implicit grouping and direction-giving theories.

Failure to Want a Direction Giver. The first conception pitfall occurs when grouping members fail to want a direction giver though one is necessary. For example, groups that resist the idea that any one of their members is their primary doer or their long-term guide or their leader may be pitfalling if what they mean is that they will not allow anyone to have a role that gives that individual more power or status in the group than anyone else has. Some groups and grouping members console themselves for lowered task quality with rationalizations that at least they all contribute equally to the task and are cohesive. It is reasonable to oppose a particular direction-giving type in a particular circumstance. Leadership and management, for example, are not always indicated by grouping exigencies (see

chapter 2). Opposing any concentration of direction-giving activity, however, can damage grouping.

Failure to Want a Necessary Type of Direction Giver. The second conception pitfall manifests when grouping members want a particular type of direction giver (typically a leader or manager) because they believe that all groups require such centralized or formal roles. For example, some are not comfortable with grouping processes, even when they might succeed, if there is not a clear and explicit "organizational chart" of who fills which formal role because of the desire for the comfort having a manager provides. Others want one person they can rally around even though no crisis precipitates the need for such a commitment to a leader. Still others want the status for themselves that comes from playing the role of long-term guide, manager, or leader. All such cases are fraught with pitfall potential.

The type of direction giver and the need a group has to share and to co-construct their group direction should be allowed to play out through the interactive, communicative processes involved in grouping. Ongoing, changing perceptions of exigencies give energy for grouping activity and they should also be used rhetorically to help shape the form and direction of that activity. Remember that different grouping exigencies require different direction-giving types at different times.

Another form of this pitfall occurs when grouping members make flawed judgments about who is and who is not an appropriate direction giver. An individual's implicit theory of direction giving may create a pitfall if it results in rejecting a potentially effective direction giver because she or he does not fit the preconception. It is better to *allow grouping members an opportunity to "walk the walk" before deciding they cannot help direct the group. The orientation that all group members can and should help provide direction to the group enhances the role played by the ideals of the* demos, *consensus, and discussional attitude and increases possibilities of process prizes from grouping.*

Overreliance on Direction Giver. Once direction-giving roles are fairly well set, there can still be conception pitfalls at work including any tendency to rely too heavily on a key direction giver. A system might have a manager or guide who decides too much on behalf of the group or a doer who does too much. There is a tendency for pathological overreliance on key direction givers even within the normal development

of functional groups. As grouping tensions are experienced early in the life of a group, grouping members may "flee" from them by trying to place themselves under the care of a savior or powerful group leader (Bormann, 1996). A form of *mindlessness* suggested by Freud can manifest in efforts by grouping members to cocreate a mother or father figure, who will save them from their own responsibility for grouping (Elmes & Gemmill, 1990). There can even be the "hero worship" characteristic of indoctrination groups, where a single individual starts to speak for god or even becomes god to those who follow (Simons, 2001).

Overattribution of Credit or Blame. There is a natural tendency for over-attribution of causality to someone who is personified as the group's key direction giver. More blame or success is given to the direction giver than to the rest of a system, which is probably more responsible (cf. romance of leadership theory: Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). Any misattribution of cause allows inaccuracy in attempts to understand grouping dynamics and unfairness as grouping members are wrongly credited with cause for group co-constructions. Feeling hurt or big-headed by inaccurate attributions can distort an individual's grouping efforts. Grouping members, trained by their experiences with misattributions, begin to practice jaded grouping activities. Their future efforts may change because they need to "look out for number one" or because "what really counts here is whose butt you kiss" or "of course we didn't get any of the credit" so "only a fool tries hard."

The Framework for Grouping and Group Direction can be used by you to avoid or overcome these conception pitfalls. *Discuss the obligations and capacities every group member has for helping to give and receive direction.*

❖ ASCENSION PITFALLS

The Minnesota Studies, directed by Bormann, constitute more than three decades of empirical research using hundreds of case studies of natural and of ongoing groups. Their research indicates that group members negotiate who will give direction to a group through a *process of residues* in which grouping members are eliminated from consideration for playing key roles based on their actions in the group. This *process of emergence* unfolds until only one member remains to serve a primary direction-giving role in the group (Bormann, 1996). Using

their implicit direction-giving theories and their interactions with and observations of the actions of other grouping members, group members tend to make simple dichotomous distinctions between those who appear to be potentially effective direction givers and those who do not (Offerman, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994). That is the natural process of emergence.

Appointed Rather Than Emerged. The most common of the selection process pitfalls is when a direction giver is appointed instead of being allowed to emerge through grouping processes. Sometimes appoint-ment is necessary as, for example, ongoing systems hire a formal man-ager. But, that may nonetheless result in tensions among grouping members (either when someone is "brought in from the outside" or when someone is "selected from the ranks"). Regardless of the need for making such an appointment, the potential increases in such cases for the group to end up with a formal direction giver, who is supposed to be in charge, and an informal direction giver, who has great influence in the group. The pitfall worsens if the informal direction giver engages in role competition with the appointed direction giver.

A couple of key aspects of grouping activity are left out when a group misses the process of emergence. During a natural process of emergence, a direction-giving candidate has the chance to woo follow-ers to support his or her direction-giving attempts. A follower is some-one who starts to accept direction effectively, thus affecting group direction. A *lieutenant* (Bormann, 1996) is someone who helps make the case to the group that the group should follow a particular direction giver. An appointed direction giver begins work without any followers or lieutenants having made their choice to support him or her and must find an alternative way to develop such support while already acting as the direction giver.

Inadequate *credentialling* opportunities (Olson, 1987) may also be part of the problem. During an emergence process, grouping members get to know what each of their compadres has to offer the group in the way of pertinent past experiences and skills germane to the task they all face. Such credentials are at best provided in a resume when a direc-tion giver is appointed, and that falls short of the co-constructed mean-ings about an individual's competencies that an emergent Savior Complex process allows. Even in a group with an emergent direction giver, members who hold back their competencies from others in the group may cause a pitfall through their hesitant or constrained

participation and credentialling. If, for whatever reason, the group jumps quickly into following someone before other grouping members have a chance to show what they have to offer a group, there is also inadequate credentialling opportunity.

Flawed Direction Giver Selection Outcomes. The most obvious pitfall from flawed selection process outcomes is when the wrong member plays too much of a particular direction-giving role. *In the case of any poor selection outcome, the best advice is that you attempt to respond to the pitfall by remembering that roles and norms are negotiated among grouping members.* Nobody remains a direction giver long when grouping members refuse to follow. *Adjustments in the direction-giving roles can happen and should be considered normal and even a sign of grouping health.* In some circumstances, they are even built into a system of formal "rotation" of officers or chairpersons so that everyone gets a chance to serve in key direction-giving positions, which can be a very educational experience.

There will be an emergence of direction-giving preference in a group, even if it is only informal. Finding ways for your group to make use of those it prefers as direction givers is key to making them a useful resource and the group a functional system. *Try to provide adequate discussion of direction-giving credentials and interests so that all can hear what each perceives as their strengths and potential resources for serving the group.* Effective groups do eventually co-construct a Savior Complex that works for them, but they do not always talk about it. Such explicit discussions can soften the often painful pinch of the process of residues, consequently diminishing the possibly distorted perceptions of unfair and unworthy processes on the part of the person pinched.

Pitfalls From Poor Direction-Giving Choices

A healthy ascension process will provide some answers about what constitutes appropriate direction-giving process for a particular group (which is a third aspect of normal grouping processes that is lost when a direction giver is appointed rather than allowed to emerge). Still, unfortunate direction-giving choices can manifest that may hurt the group as they receive and help co-construct group direction. Such choices manifest postascendancy, which means that the group has settled, for the moment, its key direction-giving roles and process norms. The issue then becomes the ongoing set of choices made by the direction giver regarding how to provide direction.

Wrong Direction Giver Types. The wrong type of direction giver pitfall manifests when the grouping exigencies are perceived by grouping members to suggest one kind of direction giver but, for example, a key group direction giver tries to play the role of a manager for the group instead. Another example is when a group faces a crisis that will end it or forever change its basic nature. Members who keep trying to just follow or guide or do or manage may be maligned for their inability to transform the group through effective leadership. Given crisis contingencies, status quo protocols and less intense types of direction giving may prove to be insufficient.

Wrong Direction-Giving Style. A variety of direction-giving styles have been identified over the years (e.g., autocratic, selling, consultative, democratic, laissez-faire). Each style has potential merits and problems that should be considered by grouping members and direction givers as their stylistic choices are made. See Table 7.3 for a brief listing of such styles in addition to their merits and potential problems (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). Our focus is on getting you to realize that you and other grouping individuals have choices regarding what style will be employed by your direction givers or as you attempt to provide direction. Those choices can and should change according to the needs of the group. Each style is appropriate only when it works,

Table 7.3   Direction-Giving Style Choices

Type	Definition
Autocratic	Centers power and decision making in the direction giver; fastest; least likely to attain process prizes except perhaps acceptance during an emergency.
Selling	Direction giver tries to get others to think/behave as she or he desires or requires; may be necessary when supragroup announces fait accompli; manipulative.
Consultative	Direction giver consults with group then decides; tries to attain ideas and acceptance but not diffuse responsibility or authority; risks process prizes.
Democratic	Direction giver facilitates distributed power and decision making among members; slowest; most likely to attain all process prizes when time allows.
Laissez-faire	Direction giver takes a "hands off" approach to power and decision-making processes; some mature groups need direction giver to stay out of the way.

which will be affected by a combination of grouping contingencies and of any grouping exigencies that are perceived to be salient.

Strive to strike a balance between those members who advocate centralized authority for a direction giver (e.g., autocratic, selling, consultative styles) and those who oppose such centralizations as inherently flawed. Each style has its strengths as a process. *Explicit conversation about those strengths tends to increase the chance they will manifest even if the style of direction giving the group finally co-constructs might otherwise be unexpected to show those positive effects.* Flexibility of style choice skills and the ability to help others to adjust their direction-giving style choices are both worthwhile objectives.

Direction Giver's Orientation Toward Power. Power is the ability to get things done within your group. Power is not a thing or a possession. Power is a co-construction that requires the give and take among interacting people. French and Raven (1968) argue that there are six bases for power (see Table 7.4). Direction givers need to be astute regarding which base of power they attempt to employ. They need to *understand*

Table 7.4   Bases of Power

Type	*Definition*
Referent	Influence others because you are liked by them or they find you attractive in some way (e.g., as a colleague).
Expert	Influence based in competence or credibility given the intricacies of the task or subject matter at hand.
Legitimate	Formal authority or position you occupy in the group provides power to you or to whomever else holds that formal position (e.g., supervisors, CEOs, presidents, teachers, parents, and police officers all have some legitimate power; when put in charge of grouping individuals they could play a manager role because of that formal authority).
Information	Influence because of resources you can access or make available to others. You do not have to understand the information, only know that it is of value.
Reward	Ability to provide something desirable to others or to stop something undesirable from happening to them. The key is control over what others find rewarding.
Coercive	Ability to provide a negative thing (e.g., a punishment) to others or to remove a positive thing from others (also punishing).

what each group member finds "rewarding" and how to emphasize positive aspects of power in a relationship co-construction whenever possible. If inappropriate choices are made, remembering that power only works as a co-construction is the basis for suggesting a change.

Failure to Serve or Appropriately Balance Group Functions. The final direction-giving choice pitfall emanates from the most basic aspects of grouping (the functions groups are designed to serve—task, relational, and individual). It is not a problem when a group loses its focus on the task for a time, as long as it regains that focus in time to get its work done. It is reasonable that a group is "all business" at times, as long as individual and relational functions also get served at other times. What can be inappropriate is basing your implicit or explicit theory of how grouping should unfold in a construction that is comfortable to you but that fails to serve all three grouping functions. *A skilled group member can watch for signs of imbalance in serving group functions and should certainly note if any one of the functions is not being addressed. Bringing such concerns to the attention of the group is the first and most important step toward correcting any imbalance.* All three functions must be well-served in an effective group.

Direction giving, even leadership and management, are co-constructed roles. Except where institutionalization of power creates physical forces to cement the tyrant's rule, grouping members can stop inappropriate direction-giving practices by refusing to follow or by co-constructing a more attractive alternative direction, direction giver, or direction-giving process. That is what makes the follower, doer, and guide such potentially powerful direction-giving roles. *When style preference, power base choice, or any other aspect of a direction giver's activities are a concern to grouping members, talking about the concern enhances the possibility of serving group functions well and of attaining process prizes. Keeping silent and bearing the burden of an ineffective direction giver does not. So, speak up.* If a direction giver behaves poorly, the group must sanction that behavior or face continued co-construction of unhealthy direction-giving practices as a consequence of their flaccid response.

❖   TRANSITION PITFALLS

Failure to Finish. Failure to finish something is most likely if a direction giver is somehow cut off from the group. An individual providing a

short-term bit of guiding or following who is interrupted provides the easiest example, for they have not been allowed, because of the interruption, to finish addressing the exigency that helped call their work into action. Interruption can create significant difficulties when the individual interrupted has filled a role for an extended period of time on a particular topic or set of activities. Imagine that a key direction giver in your group dies on the way to the next meeting. What is your backup plan? What that person knows, including what has been done and what still needs to be done, may be lost in transition. One possible solution is *working to understand the roles played by your compadres and to co-construct the cultivation of the next set of direction givers for your group.*

Failure to Cultivate New Direction Givers. Failure to develop the next generation of direction givers has its origins in taking comfort from a group when it is has finally worked through its role struggles. When all is well, few feel an exigency to look ahead to times when new direction givers may be required. The consequence is typical: not preparing all members to be ready to take on new direction-giving functions in the group. The pitfall is more likely in groups where role rotation is not regularized than it is in groups that have built some rotation of roles into their expectations.

One basis for this pitfall can be traced to when grouping first begins: failing to get all members to contribute. Groups sometimes leave a member or two behind during early meetings, relying instead on those most willing to speak up, while others are allowed to play more passive roles. Some members may never learn to help shape group direction. Any willingness of grouping members to fail to cultivate direction giving from all group members, regardless of the reason, heightens this pitfall potential. To some extent, this whole book is about giving direction to groups. *Building a consensus for ongoing change and evolution of direction-giving roles into your plans as a group should make it easier for you to share direction-giving responsibilities and to back up current direction givers.*

If members believe they will never need to take on more responsibility, they may get lazy in their current roles or chafe at the constraints of those roles. Some members work against passing the direction-giving baton on to new members. They like the comfort of the status quo or they do not personally want to give up a desirable direction-giving role they play. Imagine a relay race where group success requires the ability to pass the baton from one team member to the next.

A transition pitfall occurs when one direction giver refuses to pass the baton or drops the baton or passes it on so poorly that others are not ready or interested in picking it up. This set of pitfalls is probably most evident when a previously successful and vigorous group "loses" its key direction givers and rapidly dwindles. A truly outstanding group should try to anticipate what may come next, including the need for new direction givers. College coaches call this preparation of the next generation of performers, "reloading"—preferring that to "rebuilding."

Failure to Enculturate New Direction Givers and Grouping Members. The final transition pitfall is failure to adequately enculturate a new direction giver and group. Remember that the new direction giver is immature in the new role and in the new system, regardless of previous successes in other roles. Remember also that the group has a new key direction giver, and it, too, is somewhat immature in its new form. It takes time to work through these issues. Some structuration processes must begin again, though many grouping members have vivid memories of "how things used to be."

A version of the enculturation pitfall is when an ongoing group assumes that one of their own members who has become a new direction giver "already knows the ropes." However, the new direction giver's experience of the group has not been what it will soon be in the new direction-giving role. He or she must learn what the new role requires of him or her. When a member misses several meetings or when a member moves to another institution and then returns after several years, similar discontinuities may result. Yet grouping members may make assumptions that the recently returning member is already "up to speed," and they may "miss the boat" on that judgment. *Prepare for these possibilities, discuss them in your group, then raise the issue again during and after any transition, and again, several weeks into a transition. Give people involved the chance to discover the difficulties they face including any temporal or procedural changes that have occurred in their absence. Try to raise and to discuss such issues as natural aspects of transition, rather than as signs of anyone's personal weakness.*

Most Savior Complex transition pitfalls can be avoided if grouping members develop norms for the easy sharing and co-construction of direction so that it is easy for all grouping members to give or receive direction from other grouping members and also to comment freely on any differences grouping members feel regarding the type, style, power base, or functional orientation choices made by their direction givers.

Transition pitfalls share a feature with finishing pitfalls in the Vision/Outcome. Few ever focus their attention ahead enough to anticipate the need until the group is caught in a swirl of change and must react. Typically, it is only at the point that such exigencies become salient. It takes an experienced and skilled group member to begin to frame such issues as important exigencies for the group to consider in advance. *You personally can show an interest in learning about roles played by others and, in them, learning about the roles you play.* Such an orientation, coupled with a free and easy exchange and sharing of direction-giving responsibilities, can help the group learn how to address more difficult pitfalls as they arise. *Try to encourage your group to talk about the next generation. Talk about how individual members are growing in their capacities as a consequence of their grouping experiences. Help each member get a sense of their own potential for a future with different roles. Then, make certain that some role rotation occurs over time in order to reward the extra effort it takes to become prepared in anticipation of potential need.*

❖ HOW TO EXPECT, DETECT, AND CORRECT THESE PITFALLS

The Breakdown-Conducive Group Framework argues that part of each group's work is the co-construction of ways around or through the pitfalls they face: expect, detect, and correct the pitfalls. Focus on how communication can co-construct a higher quality Vision/Outcome and Savior Complex. Vision/Outcome provides a place to test goals and criteria against actual desired outcomes. Savior Complex provides a focus on the personal responsibility of each member to help co-construct a vitality of group direction. You have the basic information you need in order to co-construct an effective group experience once the nature of potential pitfalls is clear to you and you become vigilant. Remember also to broach any important subject with your group in order to begin co-constructing a conversational history and group norms conducive to effective responses when pitfalls become evident (see Table 7.5).

An additional technique introduced in this chapter is to develop a grouping role specialization. You can develop a specialty as an effective group member by focusing the refinement of your own skills. See Table 7.6 if you are interested in specializing in effective grouping activities as a particularly astute type of guide: *procedural expert, dialogic virtuoso,* or *devil's advocate.* Consider these three direction-giving roles

Table 7.5   Broaching the Subject on Vision/Outcome and Savior
                     Complex Pitfalls

Focus on the task.

1. *Define key terms* in the charge or task or problem. What do our various
   stakeholders think that this charge is all about? What do experts on the
   subject think? How can we build criteria into our process for making sure
   we do quality work as measured by how outside experts and stakeholders
   might assess our work on this subject?

2. *Discuss constraints and resources*. What external issues might make our task
   more difficult? What might keep us from succeeding with the charge? What
   resources are there outside of the group that we might access to help us and
   in what ways are resources limited that might reduce the effectiveness of
   our Vision/Outcome?

Time out: We need some perspective taking.

3. *Identify possible exigencies for the charge*. Why did someone give us this
   assignment? What exigencies do you suppose he or she perceived that
   resulted in this charge? How do we build criteria into our process for
   making sure that we address the exigencies our stakeholders think are
   important in our Vision/Outcome?

4. *Identify possible stakeholders*. Are others outside the group going to be
   affected by our actions? How can we consult with these people to help test
   our Vision/Outcome?

Is grouping really the way to proceed?

5. *Is this the right group for this task?* What are our strengths and weaknesses as
   individuals given this task? What does each of us bring to the task in terms
   of knowledge, skills, insights, interests, and useful relationships with experts
   or others in the supragroup who might be helpful or provide access to
   resources? Are there any of us who should not be in this group? Is there
   anyone we need to try to add to this group to make certain we have the
   direction givers and receivers necessary to succeed?

If so: How do we ensure that we do an effective job of grouping?

6. *Should we assign any roles* (e.g., secretary, gatekeeper, manager, devil's advocate,
   dialogic virtuoso, process guide—see Figure 7.6) to particular group members?
   How do we suggest changes if a role is not being filled well or if it turns out
   that someone else in the group could fill it better?

How do we want to do this: What do we want to get out of this?

7. *Discuss grouping goals*.
   a. What group goals should we have for this charge? How do we want to
      address it and how well do we want to address it? What quality of
      Vision/Outcome do we want to come up with? What criteria can we
      develop for the general kind and quality of outcome we want to
      attain? Note: Criteria are descriptions in advance of ways to measure

(Continued)

Table 7.5 (Continued)

important aspects of something, such as of a goal, of a strong idea or piece of evidence, or of a Vision/Outcome. Talk together about the important aspects of the thing (goal, evidence, or Vision/Outcome) and what are the keys to making it desirable versus just mediocre or even unacceptable. Those become your criteria for testing that aspect of the thing (e.g., of your goal, of the evidence you collect, or of your Vision/Outcome). Use your criteria to test every Vision/Outcome possibility you develop against group goals. Also, see if the evidence from experts supports your assessment and that of your stakeholders.

b. What is going to be required of us individually and as a group if we are going to attain these goals?

c. How will we know if we succeed in attaining our goals? What criteria will we use to measure our level of success in approaching and in reaching our goals? How often should we check to see if we all feel we are accomplishing our goals?

d. What sanctions are we willing to use against ourselves if we are failing to meet these goals, either individually or as a group?

Table 7.6   Direction-Giving Skill Specializations or Role Clusters

Procedural Expert (function as a discussion-type guide)

Know, and be able to suggest, useful grouping *techniques* (necessary processes and helpful procedures) and *tendencies* (healthy norms, roles, communication network, and orientation that values the ideals of the *demos*, consensus, and a discussional attitude) for dealing with the concomitants of grouping (confusion, conformity, conflict, consciousness) and for working through common grouping pitfalls. Be able to describe the worthwhile *process prizes* (critical or creative productivity, member acceptance) attainable from optimized or synergized grouping.

Encourage your group to *discuss* their grouping *processes:* In advance, what kind of processes does the group set for themselves as a goal to use while they work; as grouping unfolds, are whatever processes the group is using working well for the group; after meetings, debrief how the meeting went and how the next can be better.

Make *use of reminders:* of generally understood standards for everyone doing their share of the work and for trying to do quality work; of specifically agreed-on goals for processes and outcomes grouping members claimed to want (the sooner desirable processes and outcomes are identified by the group, the better).

Encourage reflexiveness among grouping members, so they can revisit issues comfortably rather than forgetting or fleeing from them.

Dialogic Virtuoso (function as a dialogue-type guide)

Articulate the values and practices of dialogue and the importance of eliciting, sharing, and hearing stories about what really matters to grouping members.

In other words, the virtuoso has a passion for dialogue and for its role in human experience, can make keen judgments from small nuances in dialogue about what is going on, and is skilled in accomplishing the kind of facilitation of dialogue that makes others feel invited to participate.

Dialogic virtuosity involves *speaking "so that others can and will listen, and [listening] so that others can and will speak . . .* ; being profoundly open to others who are unlike you, and enabling others to act similarly. . . . Respond to another's invitation to engage in dialogue. . . . Extend an invitation to another to engage in dialogue. . . . Construct contexts that are conducive to dialogue" (Pearce & Pearce, 2000, p. 162; emphasis added).

Devil's Advocate (function as a debate-type guide)

Know and be able to explain how to *test ideas* and *evidence* for their merits and potential weaknesses. Do so with great care to minimize ego-defensiveness. This requires choosing your points of critical attack with discretion: (a) selecting only the targets that will most help the group and (b) accomplishing the criticism with a clear focus on the idea and not on any specific grouping member. Make certain that key assumptions and ideas get tested, especially your own (make a point of doing that openly), regardless of whether you agree with them or not. Do *not* use this tool to unduly advance your own cause or position.

Explain the role of devil's advocate so others may be less put off by your efforts. Encourage others to take on the role of devil's advocate to help take the sting out of the process and to enhance the quality of general group deliberations.

carefully and focus most of your efforts on the one you think is most conducive to your catching on easily and well given your own current skills, tendencies, and interests. Each of the three role specializations, once you have developed the capacity to play it well, provides a specific base for your claim to a group or to a potential employer that "I am an effective group member; I can help groups I am in to do better work."

❖ CHAPTER SUMMARY

In sum, once Purgatory Puddle exigencies are perceived and responded to rhetorically, The Way/Process grouping activities begin. Task, in particular, begins to be framed as potential Vision/Outcome. Personnel begin to transition through interaction into the Savior Complex. These four Quadrad bases for grouping exigencies, rhetorical activities, and pitfalling represent the recurring aspects of dramatic action in any grouping system.