ROOTS of Crosby & Associates and LIOS

The moral, theoretical, and historical foundations of the Leadership Institute which I founded and of my Organizational Development practice.

By Robert P. Crosby

Writing this has been a journey of its own. I began jotting down notes while back in my beloved Volpaia, Tuscany, Italy this fall (2011). Anticipating a concert that Friar Lorenzo had asked me to perform in Chiesa (church) di San Lorenzo in this village of 52 residents, I was reflecting on some of the content of my program. I was singing six songs from the rich African-American heritage in the U.S., one of which I had learned in 1950 from Charles King of the “Wings Over Jordan” choir, the first professional black choir in the U.S. Notes about these songs were printed in both English and Italian. I ended the concert, which included many Italian songs and arias, with their revered “Ave Maria.” Singing this repertoire, and doing it in a Roman Catholic church, represented a long journey for me from the bigoted community of my early childhood. This will become clearer later in this piece.

Although I was not writing for publication, I was eager upon returning home to send these notes to my friends.

Several edits later in response to astute feedback, I especially want to thank my friends who asked questions that led to important substantive additions on the first two pages and who challenged what I wrote about democracy later in my “notes.” For instance, some had never heard of NTL, T-groups, or any social scientist named here.

I founded the Leadership Institute of Spokane (LIOS…now the LIOS Graduate College of Saybrook University) as a for-profit consulting and training firm in 1969 fresh from having lived in Tennessee and having worked in almost every State during the conflictual 60's. With the national offices of the Methodist church located in Nashville, I spent a great deal of time traveling throughout the South. From 1954 to 1969 my continued education was with agencies, such as NTL, that were business rather than church related. Soon I was hired by such firms as Avis and began to get training and consulting experience even while working full-time on the national staff of the church. Such experience was seen as continuing education and valuable by my far-sighted manager.

Readers familiar with NTL (the National Training Laboratories) will also be acquainted with the T-Group which was invented in 1946-1947 by Kurt Lewin, the founder of Social-Psychology (much more about him later). Carl Rogers, a preeminent therapist in the 20th Century, has called it the most significant social invention of that century. Originally called the Basic Skills Training Group, it was soon nicknamed T (for training) Group, and became well known nationally through coverage in the popular media of the 50's. Life Magazine, perhaps the best known journal at that time, featured it in one issue. They called it, “Sensitivity Training,” which in the early years had been a phrase used in
reference to the participants becoming sensitive to *group processes and dynamics* as is emphasized in the next paragraph. However, Life Magazine highlighted a growing popular trend to identify this new training as a “pop-psychological” new-age “hip” activity. That kind of marketing led to the popularity and proliferation of T-Group training led by leaders both untrained and unaware of the original T-group intention. Variations with names including “Sensitivity” and, in the 60’s, “Encounter,” were used. I attended two Esalen Institute Encounter groups in the 60's that *bore little resemblance* to my extensive experiences in both the 50’s and the 60's with the founders and their colleagues. Esalen, located in California, was highly respected at the time.

Describing the T-Group to those who have not experienced it has always been a challenge. The T-Group leader does *not* lead in a discussion of the topics in which the participants are engaged. Rather, the leader brings to consciousness that about which individuals and groups are usually unaware. How are decisions being made (e.g., about what to talk about)? How are members dealing with disagreements, influence and authority issues? How aware and open are members about emotionality in the group interaction? What norms/rules are members operating from about how to behave, most of which are both unspoken and outside of usual awareness. Strikingly, participants are encouraged to be aware in the "here and now." Most humans are much more aware of the past or anxious about the future, yet all that we have is the “fleeting” now.

Openness, defined to mean my ability and willingness to share what I'm aware of in the “here and now” (I'm sad, glad, mad, afraid), is an awareness and skill missing for most. The T-Group can increase that awareness, but usually not without some frustrating moments as this ambiguous learning unfolds. *Unskilled trainers turned openness into personal confession which everyone already knows how to do!* While openness is about what's happening between us now, *personal confession* is the sharing of private stories from outside the group such as past history (e.g., I've been married four times). That lack of clarity is but one example of how the original intent became lost. While the sharing of secretly held past stories may be important in certain therapeutic settings, that was not the original intent of the T-Group.

Learning to be present, *here and now*, in all of life is exhilarating and enriching. Two thirds of the business participants in our T-Group trainings report, in an anonymous questionnaire, that this event is the most applicable training to both work and life outside of work that they have experienced in their life.

Since my major focus on the National Staff was to either lead T-Groups or to help design trainings for Youth Workers or Camping Leaders that were experiential and that often included T-Groups, I had close, personal, and often very intense encounters around racial, gender, and authority issues. My mustache was a lightning rod for some since *white* men with hair on their face were associated with *liberal activists* or, as stated heatedly in one T-Group, *Communist Castro*.

Furthermore, my then wife (Ruth - the mother of our five children) and I were determined to give our children interracial experiences. Even though we lived in a very
bigoted part of Nashville, I organized and directed an interracial day camp working with an African American church and a small United Church of Christ (a Northern based denomination that was very active in the Civil Rights movement) which we attended. Although I was on the National Staff of the Methodist Church, we had left the Belle Meade Methodist church because our children's teachers kept telling them that Martin Luther King Jr. was a communist. The Pastor was unable to stop such accusations.

We invited a family to our home for conversation, dinner, and back yard baseball. Ruth took the brunt of this since the obscene phone calls from neighbors came while I was outside with the kids and the other dad (a distinguished professor at Fisk University). Catholic and Church of Christ (a southern fundamentalist church) neighbors were, meanwhile, struggling about whether to let their children join the game as they always did. I'll never forget the smile on the faces of the two Catholic boys as they ran down the incline towards us to join the game. The other neighbor's boy not only missed that game but all games for a long time until they would let him play with our children again. My later conversation with the two young parents who decided yes revealed the pressure they faced in our community in making that decision. They did glow as they reflected on their decision!

Prior to the above mentioned moments, there was one powerful moment and two dominant persons who had shaped my passion for social justice, especially in civil rights, and later in me, a deep commitment to gay rights.

The moment was in 1944 when I was refused service at my favorite hamburger restaurant. I had invited one of my best friends, the bass in my High School quartet, to join me for lunch. The rejection stunned me. Melvin Cole, my African-American friend had hesitated when I suggested it, but I didn't know why until the lack of service became evident. I spoke to the manager. He made it clear to me that Melvin was not welcome. This remains painful to me even as I write this. It was a defining moment in my life.

The two mentors more deeply awakened in my innermost being that which I wanted to champion in LIOS, and in my consulting work.

Kurt Lewin died in 1947. Dr. Ronald Lippitt, a major student of Lewin's and his successor at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan (after moving from M.I.T), was my mentor for 31 years. Through him I met Lewin.

KURT LEWIN
No Lewin (le-veen ), definitely no LIOS!!!(and no consulting as described in my various books)

Born in Mogilno, Prussia (later, after WW 1, Poland) of German Jewish parents, he moved to Berlin in 1905. He became active in both Socialist and woman's rights issues in 1909 at the University of Freiburg. Because of his association with Jewish Marxists, it was clear that he had to leave Germany in 1933 with the rise of Hitler. Already with his
teaching at the U of Berlin, he was becoming known as a Gestalt Psychologist. Later writings reflect what was then being lectured by him, such as:

*Psycho-Sociological Problems of a Minority Group* (1935)
*Bringing Up the Jewish Child* (1940)
*The Background of Conflict in Marriage* (1940)

Kurt Lewin first coined the phrase, *Action Research*, and both developed and spawned the development of numerous applications. Lean manufacturing, which originated in Japan and swept across U.S. plants, is but one example of a process that uses action research as the core implementing activity. Action research is distinct in that it not only involves the people who will be affected by any change (and who often carry out the change) in the analysis of the problems, but also in the identification of possible solutions. So called *lean manufacturing* in the U.S. frequently is lacking on both counts. Too often American companies try to impose a solution discovered elsewhere and neglect the action research process by which it is developed, sustained and constantly improved.

The definitive book on action research (*Practical Action Research for Change*) is written by a doctoral student of Ron Lippitt and a close friend and colleague of mine since 1965, Dr. Richard A. Schmuck, professor emeritus, U. of Oregon.

Many trained in the applied behavioral sciences are aware of Lewin’s systems theory that bridged the early 20th century divide between psychology and sociology, between “nature” and “nurture.” Behavior is a function of the person and the environment. As Gordon Allport wrote, "His unifying theme is unmistakable: the group to which an individual belongs is the ground for his perceptions, his feelings, and his actions" (*Resolving Social Conflicts*, Kurt Lewin, 1948, 1997, p5).

Those trained in the applied behavioral sciences will also be familiar with *force field analysis*. Lewin emphasized the importance of focusing on reducing restraining (negative?) forces rather than, as was popular at that time, the increasing of driving (positive?) forces. Don’t neglect either, but “unfreezing” primarily comes from a careful identification of restraining forces and action planning to reduce or eliminate these. Force field analysis combined with action research in the context of the Lewinian systems formula...B=f(p,e)...is as powerful in the therapist's office as in either an O.D. situation or a community organizing project.

Lewin applied these concepts to all walks of life. He is called,"the practical theorist." Being present while Nazism was creeping into the fabric of the German psyche, he saw “decent” citizens, Christians of both Catholic and Protestant persuasion, naively embracing Hitler. The need for order in a country stuck in post-war disorder was compelling and seductive.

Lewin recognized that social change for individuals is almost always highly influenced by group norms. Consulting with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, his innovation was
to help farmers attempt new practices in the bleak 30's by bringing together neighbors
to support each other in these strange new irrigation, etc., practices. Recently, the
International Herald Tribune carried an article about Mozambique where there is, "...a
promising new effort to reverse a worrisome trend," that being individuals with AIDS who
fail to collect their lifesaving antiretroviral medicines. Twenty percent quit treatment or
died. After Dr. Tom Decroo organized patients into groups of six, only two% died. "No
one abandons treatment in the group," said Inocence Alface, "We give courage to each
other." "When patients are organized into these small groups, they're not ashamed
anymore...when a person is in a group, he feels, "I'm sick, but I count!" That's Lewinian!
And it gives students following in his legacy a powerful “systems theory” way of being in
the world.

Lewin would immigrate to the U.S. where there was also disarray economically. Nazism
was popular among many conservatives as was Communism among some liberals. A
similar naiveté helped the rapid move of the KKK across the U.S. in the late 20's. KKK
chapters could be found in most towns in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio,
and Indiana besides the South and, less frequently, in other parts of the “Land of
Liberty.” My parents, with much embarrassment and shame later, briefly joined. They
were recruited by my saintly grandfather (who earlier had written, "Twenty Pathways
Leading to Judgment"), and the pastor who had baptized me! One chapter in grandpa's
book is called "Prejudice."

As in Germany, Christians were caught up in this need for order (and scapegoats)
though here it was a Protestant movement aimed at Blacks, Catholics, and Jews,
whereas in Germany the aim was at Jews, Gypsies, and Gays. This naiveté was
strongly exploited by those in power in Germany, and by those who were hoping for
power in the U.S. “There is a thin line that divides those ordinary people who joined the
Klan from those who did violence carrying the Klan cross. A thin line between those
ordinary people who staffed Hitler’s camps and those who stayed silent. A thin line
between those Americans who torture and abuse...and those of us who turn our eye
away. Each of us is responsible for injustice anywhere because each is everyone and
the mask of indifference and the mask of bigotry hovers above, ready to slip down on us
at any unaware moment" (p37, Get Unstuck from Fundamentalism, by the author).
Lewin - the grandfather of LIOS - was caught up - a targeted potential victim - in this
massive social disorder! (It is disconcerting that, according to the Southern Poverty Law
Center, there are over a thousand hate groups in the U.S. today, an increase of 50%
since 2000.)

In the late 40's, the right-wing was reacting again to the fear of our country being
overtaken, this time by Communism. While home from college in 1947, I visited my
previous church school class. The teacher, a wealthy pillar of the church, had become a
supporter of a group that was the primary source for the House Un-American Activities
Committee (HUAC). This fundamentalist Christian church, located only a few blocks
from my home in Wilkinsburg, Pa. was led by The Reverend W.O.H. Garman. For
instance, that group supplied HUAC with all of the incriminating accusations (so-called
evidence) against Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam claiming *that the Methodist Bishop was a Communist!*

Oxnam was subpoenaed, and not allowed prior knowledge of the charges against him or an attorney. He guessed correctly that Garman’s group was the source. He successfully refuted every accusation and, given the national press coverage, greatly reduced the credibility and power of HUAC. Later, ex-President Harry Truman called it, "The most Un-American thing in America."

Meanwhile, in my home-town church, my church school class teacher was bringing Garman's materials into the church intending to expose our pastor and church as Communist leaning. My father, who had learned much since his brief KKK foray, found this literature in the church school office shortly after it arrived. Dad was the elected Sunday School Superintendent. Without hesitation he threw it in the church furnace. Harsh plans met with harsh tactics!

After that personal experience I became an avid student of right-wing activities. In both College and Seminary I pursued with passion my learning about these groups until I had amassed a huge file.

That file came in handy when I arrived in Wausau, Wisconsin in 1961 as the Assistant Minister at the First Methodist Church. My senior Pastor, Dr. ‘Jay’ Justus Olsen, was also a T-group trainer. We had met in 1958 at an NTL Training-of-Trainers session with, among others, the three original T-group leaders in 1947, Dr's Ron Lippitt, Ken Benne, and Leland Bradford. Idealists that we were, we imagined an exciting ministry together building an open learning community. Exciting it was!

I was in town barely two weeks until Jay asked me to be on the church’s Boy Scout committee. In small talk before the meeting began, two members mentioned an important meeting, after the scout meeting, to which they were going. It was to organize a Wausau chapter of a group closely affiliated with the John Birch Society. This society was the new manifestation of the HUAC accusing, especially, Protestant clergy. Telling me that this group was being formed to expose clergy *right here in Wausau*, they invited me to the meeting!

I went and what followed largely defined my two-year career in Wausau.

At the robust meeting I was praised for being the only clergy in attendance. I don't believe any of the others knew about the meeting. (Later, as the President of the Council of Churches, I debriefed this with most other clergy.)

To great applause, I accepted an appointment to be on a committee to plan a series of three meetings to alert citizens that there were, "Dangers right here in River City" and that they stood behind some of the pulpits!
The first speaker had been predetermined. A member of the John Birch Society from Milwaukee, a fiery orator we were assured, would kick off the series. I suggested the Rabbi to be next presenter since he had fled Hitler and could speak about the rise of Nazism. He and I had found each other quickly upon my arrival in Wausau, and discovered that we were kindred souls.

Who next? The committee had been meeting for a couple months and had often heard me speaking of the rise of neo-facism in America. Of course, the reader of this knows that I meant them! But they, like my family when they naively joined the KKK, had no clue.

So all agreed when a member turned to me and suggested that I speak. My subject, "The Rise of Neo-fascism in America and it's threat to Democracy."

The Rabbi's speech disturbed the few hardcore Birchers, but awakened many attendees. I reached into my right-wing file for my speech the next month, and eventually stated that this very group that was sponsoring these meetings appeared to be Wausau's very own neo-fascist group. I was immediately removed as a member, and the group ceased to exist after a few months.

So these struggles, and the dilemma about how to respond to attacks such as were made by the HUAC, the John Birch Society, etc., were very real to me. My Dad burned the literature. I infiltrated. How should one respond to innuendo, gossip, and false accusations?

Whatever else I wanted to look inside democracy itself for clues. I'll return to Lewin and his historic research that supports democracy as the system that will create social justice, and minimize scape-goating, that is, "if it is really democracy and not laissez-faire." More on this later.

Now fast forward to 1953. In the fall of that year I entered Boston University in the pursuit of more learning. Degrees aside (a 2nd Masters or PHD?), I chose B.U. because it was the only University I knew of that offered the new radical ecologically small-group oriented outdoor education classes which I had been “dipped” into by two major mentors of mine, Melvin Moody of Camp Wanake in Ohio (where I was on the staff from 1949 to 1955) and Dr. L. B. Sharp of National Camp (a 1000 acre camp in New Jersey funded by Life magazine where I had spent a month in 1952 living in a covered wagon). National Camp was staffed with outstanding conservationists. John Storer's Web of Life and Fairfield Osburn's Our Plundered Planet were amazingly integrated in our daily living where all paths had been created by animals and we lived in groups of eight in Sioux tipis, wagons, and canvass shelters. Missing? Leaders with skill in small group dynamics. Would I find such at B.U.?

Oh my! I would find it in a most unexpected way!
"This course is IN group dynamics, not ABOUT," said my soon to be admired Professor Dr. Walter Holcomb. I nodded my head without, I realized later, having the slightest idea about what he meant.

My first T-Group! Soon would follow my second! So six years after its invention as a way to deal effectively with INTERRACIAL issues at the request of the state of Connecticut, I was lucky enough to stumble, and fall hard I did, into what would be a major organizer of my way of teaching, consulting, and more importantly, BEING in my life. I capitalize INTERRACIAL because I fear that this fact, which was integral to Lewin's mission in life, gets lost in the understanding of the basic origin of the T-Group. My first T-Group was integrated. Prof Holcomb modeled (I took, audited, or visited when maxed out on audits, every course he taught) a training and teaching style that influenced what I later brought both to teaching and my consulting practice. A student of the renowned Columbia University professor, Dr. Harrison S. Elliot - a colleague of John Dewey who applied Dewey's educational philosophy to religious education - Holcomb brought both Dewey's concepts and his methodology to the classroom. His statement that, "Teachers teach not as they were taught to teach, but as they were taught!" was prophetic for my career. He was, though, one teacher whose philosophy of teaching/training was also the way he taught.

In these 50's the nation was torn apart with the rise of McCarthyism and associated scapegoat movements like the House Un-American Activities committee. These other movements lasted longer and had an even greater impact than did McCarthy though he was the most popular political figure in the U.S. for a brief period of time, ironically, during these years which I'm now referencing -1953 and 1954. He offered order and scapegoats as autocrats do. Many older clergy friends of mine were listed as communists simply because they belonged as teens to their church's youth group. The "evil" association here was that the national church youth work staff had participated in a conference which a communist delegation also attended. That the U.S. and the Soviet Union were allies didn't matter. Social Security, Roosevelt's W.P.A., and later Civil Liberties and Medicare were all dubbed Socialist/Communist and, therefore, anti-American.

Besides my stunning classroom experiences at B.U., I also became caught up in a man who embodied the essence of what I wanted my life to be.

HOWARD THURMAN

On our first Sunday, Ruth and I attended the beautiful chapel at the center of the Theological Seminary.

We were delightfully stunned!

In the pulpit was a very dark-brown man with a deep, sonorous, rhythmic voice. For me, his was the tongue of an angel. We were captured by his poetic pauses, the prayers that I sometimes didn't recognize as prayers until they were over, and sermons with the
cadence of a lyric poem as if being created in that very moment. Often the sermons had no obvious connection to the Christian calendar. On Christmas Sunday his sermon subject was "Faith Part 3" completing what was unfinished for him from the two previous weeks. His scripture readings of familiar verses were in a cadence and with emphases that awakened new meanings. And his sermons…oh his sermons…

"Faith is an action…a leap not to belief in a doctrine…but to a way of being…a leap across a chasm of unknowing! (pause)...and always within me there is the rumor that I may be wrong! (long pause and then with excitement)...and that's my growing edge!!!"

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive!"

"There is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls."

"Religious experience is fluid, dynamic, yeasty, - all of these. But the mind can't handle that so it has to imprison it in some way - bottle it up - and then extract concepts, dogmas, so the mind can make sense of it. But religious experience goes on and therefore dogma is always out of date."

Each Sunday evening about 20 of us gathered to hear more from this mystic, poet, philosopher, author, civil rights leader. I like to think that one of the black attendees was MLK, Jr., but we didn't get to know each other in that venue.

Years later I would learn that he was the first black to be named as tenured Dean of the Chapel in a white majority University. Also, I would later learn that in that very year (1953) LIFE magazine rated him as one of the twelve most important religious figures in the U.S.

He had attended Morehouse College with his close friend, Martin Luther King, Sr. MLK, Jr. was at B.U. in 1953 completing his Doctorate. Howard Thurman was an important mentor, so much so that it has been claimed that without Thurman's influence with MLK, Jr. and other key Civil Rights leaders, that the history of Civil rights might have been different. "I don't believe you'd get a MLK, Jr. without a Howard Thurman" states a noted scholar. Others state that he was, "The godfather of the civil rights movement." Thurman's meeting with Gandhi, at Gandhi's request, in India in 1935 had a huge influence on him. Less well known was the influence that Rufus Jones, the Quaker mystic at Haverford College, had on him. He earned his PHD at Haverford.

Later in the 50s I moved to Detroit as Director of Camping for the Methodist Church in eastern and northern Michigan. I was privileged to hear MLK, Jr. speak often during
those years. My work included the integrating of camp staffs even though there were hardly any black campers! Within two years two of the camps had black directors. Also, I wove a T-Group into the 10 day staff training. My worlds were coming together!

Morehouse College has two memorials on campus- MLK, Jr. and Thurman!

Thurman arrived at B.U. in 1953.

The T-Group on campus began in 1953 led by a teacher steeped in both Lewin and Dewey.

Totally oblivious to the above, I arrived with, I now see, a lucky charm. Or is it at least somewhat true that there are no coincidences.

In 1969, sixteen years later after my experience of the civil rights struggle, and the experience of about 70 T-Groups, I founded LIOS in Spokane. I had had several advanced training opportunities including one as a participant for a month in NTL’s first OD program at the Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine in 1965 led by Dr. W. Warner Burke and Dr. Goodwin Watson…my T-Group leader for the month. As a younger professor, he had been a colleague of John Dewey at Columbia University.

Four years later in 1973 in a contract (we were still a for-profit corporation) with Whitworth College led by a remarkable futurist, Ed Lindaman, we launched the LIOS Graduate Program. Dr. Ron Short, already on Whitworth’s, faculty and John Scherer, a Lutheran chaplain at Cornell U., joined me.

The first class consisted of 42 students, 35 of whom had been attending LIOS for training since 1969. The strongest variable separating LIOS from competitors (area Universities) was the T-Group in the context of teaching that reflected Dewey. Many have written across the ages - especially in spiritual treatises - about the fleeting, elusive “here and now” - the ultimate moment of existence, but few have realized the moment! And then, that “moment” again and again!

Soon students were pushing for Graduate credit.

The macro curriculum and teaching designs had been crafted for 20 years but especially in the 60s in the racial and anti-Vietnam war milieu of that time. I was constantly designing with two colleagues, Ruth Emory and Rene Pino, along with Dr. Ron Lippitt and his Grad students at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan which was originally at M.I.T. under Dr. Kurt Lewin! Dr. Richard Schmuck, a student of Lippitt, and I teamed together often. We met in Bethel, Maine in 1965. To quote him, "We are children of the same century and kindred spirits who found each other, with Ron Lippitt’s help, on the concrete steps of a Gould Academy building during the summer of 1965.” He deserves some credit for the designs used in the early years of the grad program. Certainly he helped me create and sharpen many unique interventions.
Ron, John, and I would constantly micro design, but the macro designs had their births primarily in the turbulent 60s. While the scope of the first year was clear to me, this micro-designing gave the appearance of a constantly emerging, what will we do next, chaotic beginning. The phrase emergent design was frequently used to characterize the program. Creativity was certainly evident, but for me there was a clear vision supported by a wealth of previously planned and delivered designs.

Ron came from academia with its careful course descriptions, and he became a powerful force in helping us become more organized over the years. Had we not done so, our life as a grad program would have faded away. We still have a very different way of talking about those early times, but have deeply enjoyed and valued each other across the years.

John had an ability to speak and inspire that captured students from the beginning. When conferences measured speakers, he was always rated at, or very near, the top. Living next door to each other, we would often micro-design as we walked the several blocks to the module held in the spacious basement rooms of the Manito United Methodist church where the first LIOS existed.

Now, back to Lewin and the social justice system called “democracy”!

In the late 30's Lewin's doctoral student, Ronald Lippitt, undertook a study of boy's clubs where they attempted to limit the research to a single variable - the style of the adult's leadership. A year into the study another student, Ralph K. White, joined the project. Eventually they used the terminology Autocracy (though two variants surfaced), Democratic (though some attempts turned laissez-faire), and laissez-faire/permissive, a style that surfaced in the study by the unintended behavior of mature adults who were instructed to be democratic or, in some cases, to be autocratic. The switch from autocratic to permissive happened when conflict occurred and reflected, apparently, the leader's life-long learning about what to do when things get rough!

So, one of the unintended findings was that how these sophisticated leaders were carefully instructed to behave and how they behaved were sometimes quite different.

Democracy, which is one form of authority, was often seen as authority-less! In a strange interpretation - given that we live in a society aspiring to democracy and structured with laws and checks and balances - this familiar word is also seen as permissiveness in the business world. "You can’t run a business like a democracy where everyone decides!" is a common way of thinking. Say “democracy” and business leaders think permissive or consensus and, of course, reject it. But rejection does not free them from the dilemma of how to lead. Clarity about these dynamics is directly related to productivity.

Democracy is not complete freedom of the individual. That is anarchy, or laissez-faire or permissiveness. Freedom is an important dimension in democracy, but only if it is
contained within order! In a work setting, we use the term “order” to mean leadership that ensures involvement of all employees in problem-solving while persistently working on clarity about expectations, goals, and roles (including who decides what...based on work flow needs as well as hierarchical position). Order that essentially allows only the bosses to do all the thinking and make all the decisions is autocratic. Democracy is an effective principle in politics and in the business world so long as it maintains a balance between the two extremes. In a permissive society it’s, "everyone for themselves." In a highly ordered autocratic society the slogan claiming that it is "good for the masses" crushes the individual. Democracy is a way to define authority. Those who equate freedom with democracy without these distinctions can easily confuse permissiveness with democracy.

White and Lippitt extrapolated, from the research, other factors critical in democracy - my adaptation is as follows:

1) While freedom of speech is essential, curtailing certain freedoms of action is critical in the interest of community. It's not “do as you please,” but rather choose what you do within the parameters of the social fabric. (Later, Joseph Campbell would write as recorded in The Joseph Campbell Companion, "Self-preservation is only the second law of life. The first law is that you and the other are one.")

2) Compromise is utterly essential. "Creative, artistic compromising is a necessary characteristic of most sound decision-making" (p 296, Autocracy and Democracy, White and Lippitt, 1960 - the primary source for this section of this article).

3) After a decision is made by a majority, or more often by those imbued naturally (parents, teachers, managers, etc.) and/or those delegated by election such as mayors, governors, congress, presidents, or courts, “...then freedom and individuality SHOULD BOW to unity and coordination”. Hitler thought that, "...half measures were an inherent curse on democracy," not realizing that democracy, that is, real democracy, allows for decisive, autocratic, efficient actions when needed, but often functions more slowly due to more conversation and open disagreement.

4) After discussion, the minority must yield to the decision of the majority... While retaining freedom of speech, the minority must realize that democracy leans heavily on the validity of decisions made by the majority or by delegated authorities. To consistently undermine majority decision-making with actions intended to block majority rule diminishes the effectiveness of democracy, no matter which party is in power. The “loyal opposition” is essential. An “obstructionist opposition” breeds distrust of governance and hopelessness. The same holds true in business - “us and them” must be discouraged, and decisions at all levels must be supported.

5) There must be a belief that there is equal opportunity. In business this translates into equal opportunity for advancement based on performance rather than favoritism, and sufficient pay for the job. On the other hand, in study after study people have consistently rated “feeling respected by their boss” as even more important than pay
considerations. Effective and emotionally intelligent engagement is the key to productivity and morale.

White and Lippitt conclude that, "The most efficient procedure does appear to be, as a rule, democracy -- if democracy is sharply differentiated from laissez-faire, with clear acceptance not only of active leadership but also of the firm use of authority when firmness is called for, and explicit delegation of authority to certain individuals when such delegation is appropriate." Also, "A leader or boss must be prepared at one time to exert authority so broadly and energetically that his opponents are sure to call him autocratic, and at other times to let other people take all the initiative…or all the glory. A parent, teacher, or employer who wants to be democratic and also efficient should continually seek to broaden the base of participation in decision-making, whenever participation is really functional and not too time consuming; yet he should usually (not always) exert active leadership and he should unhesitatingly, without the slightest feeling of guilt, use his natural authority whenever the situation calls for firm control or for swift, decisive coordinated action" (p 292 ibid).

Democracy is at times clumsy and slow. "All MEN are created equal" said the original document of US democracy and yet we all know how difficult and long is that journey to equal rights for all!

The founders of the first T-group laboratory wrote, "Democracy is an ideology which above all others demands that its practitioners be masters of skills of human relationships adequate to help groups of people make intelligent decisions concerning the changing problems that confront them. . . . Without appropriate and experimentally tested skills and methods for building efficient cooperative relationships, democracy has no hands and feet" (School and Society, 1947, quoted in T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method, Bradford, Gibb, and Benne, 1965).

Both Dewey and Lewin emphasized that democracy must be learned anew in each generation. It must be experienced, not simply conceptualized - in the classroom, at home, in community events, at work. Yet rarely is this true. Richard and Patricia Schmuck write about the lack of democracy found in their visits to 25 rural K-12 school districts, all west of the Mississippi River, in their, Small Districts, Big Problems: Making School Everybody's House. Each district had at least three schools (Elementary, Middle, and a Senior High); thus they studied more than 75 schools.

The Schmuck's have written extensively about the application of all this to the school and classroom. Their Group Processes in the Classroom, in its 8th edition and translated into many languages, can now rightly be called a classic. I recommend it to managers in industry! Dick has written (sometimes with Patricia) 24 books and nearly 200 articles.

I believe that my three business books illustrate the direct application of Lewin's work (and his students) to the workplace. My latest, Cultural Change in Organizations, tells in mostly story form what I believe he intended without using the word democracy.
A word of caution seems appropriate here. Since the popularly accepted, and *Oxford Dictionary*, definition of democracy seems more like Lippitt and White’s laissez-faire, perhaps a different word needs to be used when urging democratic principles.

Lewin and Dewey laid the ground for teaching democracy experientially. For instance, authority and “who decides” was a major theme in the early T-Group movement. I've seen participants split from the group to create a new group only, in time, to return with new learnings about authority. Usually the learnings come from less dramatic but still profound confrontations with a T-Group leader or, when done in a business, with a supervisor, CEO, manager, in the same T-Group. The transfer of unfinished childhood authority issues onto teachers, employers, and, in the T-Group setting, the trainers, seems universal. Certainly this seemed apparent in our Italian, Ukrainian, Egyptian (with participants from many nations - staffed by Gilmore and Chris Crosby), Jamaican (primarily Gil), Canadian, Mexican (primarily Chris), and U.S. Events. We consider this opportunity to help participants deal directly with this issue - often directed at us, the T-Group leaders, in expressions of anger that quickly emerge into mutual respect - as a major reason for the existence of the T-Group. As they deal with their current authority dilemma, they are then also open to a richer understanding of democracy, decision-making, influence, and the skills and differentiation needed to lead or follow in a democratic way.

We, in Crosby Associates, call this “Tough Stuff,” partly to have our own name brand, but more significantly, because we are dismayed by many practices done under the T-Group name and other names such as “Encounter Group.” A Tough Stuff trainer must distinguish between and move across the poles of order and freedom, firmness and warmth, emotion expression and emotion description, thinking and feeling, openness and personal confession, judgments and the ability to describe behavior, and be able to help participants learn from the immediate moment. And perhaps, above all, s/he must catch those moments when authority issues surface. As noted above, these are often issues, though veiled, with the trainer.

Research for over a half century has confirmed that *democracy ferments creativity and initiative* far more than autocracy or laissez-faire. These foment scape-goating. Market conditions and product relevance being good enough, *democracy also enhances productivity, bottom-line results, morale, and the equalizing of opportunity for all.*

At its heart, it is a constantly evolving social justice system. Difficult to learn, it always lies in danger of tipping to styles of too much order or too much freedom.

Enter institutions, consultants, and others who share the values highlighted in this article!

We have an important mission!!!