11

Expanding and Deepening the Learning

Learning new actions and new theories-in-use can be understood as a process of unlearning one set of rules and learning another. In previous chapters we have identified several rules for Model II action such as, "If an attribution is unillustrated, ask for the directly observable data." Producing such rules in ways that lead to good results in actual situations is difficult. As our discussion of hybrids indicated, participants may enact certain Model II rules only to discover that they have violated others. One reason for this difficulty is that human beings can pay attention to only a few things at a time. When an individual deliberately focuses on a Model II rule, other aspects of the situation may be managed by overlearned, highly skilled Model I behavior. A more interesting difficulty arises when using one rule appears to be inconsistent with using another. The conflicting demands may be temporary, existing primarily because individuals have not yet learned when to use what rule and how to produce each one. As we shall see, the conflicting demands can also be structural in that there are some inherent choices and trade-offs that must be made when using Model II rules.

This chapter deals with the important learning opportunities that arise when rules conflict or when interventions that seem consistent with a previously learned rule turn out to be wrong. As might be expected, such occurrences are frequent. The rules that participants learn are highly simplified, in the sense that they do not state all the conditions that govern their use. This is necessary, because the explicit statement of even a few of the relevant conditions would be immobilizing to the student. The way in which students discover these conditions is by inquiring into conflict among rules. Such inquiry can unearth the deeper reasoning that informs competence. It is through reflection on times when rules are misapplied or when individuals have not learned as yet how to apply several rules simultaneously that higher levels of expertise can be developed.

"Let's Think Forward"

The following episode occurred while participants were role playing an interaction between Marilyn, the director of a counseling organization, and a member of her staff. The staff member stated that Marilyn made herself unconfrontable. Marilyn replied that she acts as she does because of the way the staff members act toward her. When asked to illustrate what Marilyn has done that is problematic, the staff member mentioned an incident and said Marilyn had acted "in a way that I felt was extremely directive." After a few minutes of this, the interventionist stepped in:

Interventionist: Another way of dealing with this is, instead of saying "remember this and this." Another way would be [for the staff member to say], "I think I've done enough here that's been counterproductive and unhelpful to you, Marilyn, that what I'd like to do is not to try to think backward but to think forward and see if I can spot a situation in this session or the next one. How would you feel about that?"

Marilyn: I would welcome that.

Some of the participants objected to the interventionist's suggestions:

Paul: I feel some discomfort with that. Sounds like you're doing therapy, and like it gets people off the hook, but doesn't get into—everybody's going to be better next time, everybody's hoping, but there are theories-in-use there.

Carol: Were you trying to give Marilyn the sense that there was someone on her side? Or what was it that you were attempting to do with your intervention?

Interventionist: I started on the assumption it is true that she's damned if she does and damned if she doesn't; he's damned if he does and damned if he doesn't. We could sit here all night on that issue, because historically she's given them lousy data, and he [the staff member] has given her lousy data. Then when he made comments like, "I feel you came on strong," that is one of those statements that is [high on the ladder of inference], and it doesn't help her. . . . I think the theory is, Assist whomever is being given data that is not very helpful.

The interventionist went on to explain that he evaluates interaction by the standards of his theory of helpful communication and that he points out violations of those standards by any participant. This may lead him to appear to be "on the side of" one participant for several minutes and later to be "on the side of" another participant. It is important to identify the errors of each participant, lest the interventionist give the impression of being biased. People accustomed to a Model I world will be alert to cues that the interventionist is committed to helping one side or the other win. Hence, when there are several equally good interventions that might be made, a rule of thumb is to choose one that is critical of whoever has more recently been assisted. If the interventionist has recently been critical of the subordinates, then, other things being equal, he chooses an intervention that is critical of the superior, and vice versa.

Implementing such a strategy requires that the interventionist be able to empathize with each participant. One of the difficulties of members of the seminar was that they found it easy to empathize with the subordinates and difficult to empathize with Marilyn. Most of the discussion had been focused on Marilyn's errors; hence Carol's question, "Were you trying to give Marilyn the sense that there was someone on her side?"

The interventionist then returned to Paul's comment, and asked what he meant by "off the hook."

Paul: Your intervention has simply decreased the win-lose dynamics. They reached a position where they appeared very eager not to lose.

Interventionist: Okay. My view of it was, my intervention generated a commitment of responsibility on their part to look for the next one. I wouldn't call it off the hook, in the following sense: I think something will generate in an hour or so. What I didn't want to do was to go back to the previous histories, because both of them had made errors. [Here the interventionist illustrated some errors that each had made, and said that each could point to those sentences to support the view that the other was wrong.] And then we're caught in a circular position.

Notice that participants' questions are based on their view that what the interventionist has suggested is not consistent with what they understand to be Model II approaches. For example, Model II does not encourage face saving or the smoothing over of conflict, which are possible meanings of "off the hook." Similarly, supporting one side or the other does not seem consistent with the Model II value of generating valid information. The challenges by participants provide an opportunity for the interventionist to reflect on his reasoning, thereby connecting his intervention with Marilyn to the governing variables of Model II and to relevant features of the situation.

Another participant asked a question that focused more sharply on the conflict between the rules that had been guiding participants' behavior and what the interventionist had done:

Mary: Question I have: If the consultant is observing over time, and then it comes time to produce something. We have been learning that it's helpful to give DOD [directly observable data], and we have to go to the past for that. So I think that's why a lot of us were involved in this self-sealing process you were looking at, because we wanted to give DOD. So I'm thinking, "I thought we were supposed to use specific incidents." And I'm confused to hear that now we will rely on the future.

Interventionist: That's good. Paul, do you want to respond?

Paul: What was helpful to me was your comment about generating commitment. I put emphasis on generating valid information, and the other two issues, free choice and internal commitment, those are important too.

This episode illustrates, first, how the rules that guide learning can also get in the way of learning. Participants have learned that when someone makes an attribution, such as, "You act in ways that are unconfrontable," they should ask, "What has she said or done?" But in this case, asking for illustrations leads them to reinforce the escalating win-lose patterns in which Marilyn and her staff are caught.

Second, the episode illustrates how inquiry into conflicting rules creates opportunities for making explicit the reasoning that underlies the competent use of different rules. In this case, the interventionist was able to identify the relevant features of the situation that indicated it would be better to look to the future rather than ask for illustrations from the past.

Third, the episode illustrates how people may focus on different aspects of the web of reasoning that underlies competence. For example, Paul focused on the importance of free choice and internal commitment, as well as of valid information. An episode such as the one we have partially illustrated here is so rich in meanings that students cannot focus on all of them. Rather, what they focus on is a function of the learning path they are on. It is by participating in many learning episodes of this kind that students slowly build their understanding of the complex web of reasoning that underlies competence.

Case Team Membership and Clients with Power

In this section, we will describe how we attempt to expand and deepen learning by introducing students to the use of case teams and by exposing them to cases that are about the problems of actual clients, and that contain individuals in positions of power. It is our experience that these factors have an important impact on the quality of intervention that the students produce.

In becoming members of a case team that must work together, students begin to experience the problem of producing their own effective groups. And, by introducing real cases with client requirements, we expand the factors to which they must attend beyond the problem of learning to produce Model II skills on problems of their own choosing. By introducing cases with clients who have significant power in large organizations (public or private), we create conditions that activate the participants' biases and fears regarding power.

The faculty asked participants to study an edited transcript of a meeting of a case team at a consulting firm. The text of this case, and analyses of it, have been published elsewhere (Argyris, 1982, pp. 121-142). Briefly, the vice-president in charge of the team had asked the five members to meet with him to reflect on their effectiveness as a team and on the service provided to clients. He was interested in learning why a team of two competent consultants and three experienced managers, all of whom had successfully completed a similar project in another part of the client organization, had not produced the high-quality work expected by the firm and the client.

The vice-president opened the meeting by stating that he would talk last because he did not want to bias what others said. He encouraged everyone to be candid and promised that he would be candid. As each member gave his views, it became clear that everyone had sensed early in the project that the team was in trouble. The members said that it had not been clear who was in charge, because the vice-president had had to reduce his involvement in the case. Each member has concentrated on his own part of the project; and partly because everyone was under heavy time pressure, no one raised his concerns about how the team was working. Near the end of the project, the vice-president and one of the managers realized that the team's report was inadequate, and they rewrote it themselves. After discussing these and other features of the case, the team members agreed that the major problem had been the presence of "too many chiefs and not enough Indians."

The faculty asked participants to imagine that they were the consultants to this case team. They were to meet with the vice-president, role played by the senior instructor, with the task of helping the client to build a more effective case team. The vice-president wished to be cooperative. He also believed it important to apply rigorous, tough tests to the ideas his consultants suggested in order to decide whether to introduce them into his already pressured life, as well as into the lives of his colleagues.

The faculty asked participants to work in groups of four or five people. Three sessions were spent on this case, and each of four teams role played with the vice-president. Each team also met several times to plan its intervention. We begin with the first team's consultation to the vice-president:

Doug: Our consulting team felt that there was evidence that your team as a whole agreed that the project was somewhat ineffective.

Vice-president [*role played by faculty member*]: Yes, I think that's fair, although I think I was the leader in seeing that. And some of them went along. But certainly at our meeting, I think there was a consensus that the project was not as effective as it could have been, given the high-priced consultants we had.

Doug: Would you agree that the main purpose of the meeting was to explore the ineffectiveness of the project?

Vice-president: Oh, I think that was a very important purpose. Yes. And another purpose, of course, is what can we do about it. Which is why I'm really looking forward to what you have to say about it.

Doug began by asking the vice-president if he agreed with what appeared to be rather obvious inferences. It is not clear why Doug began with these questions. As the interventionist-as-vice-president said later, "I felt as if you wanted to document a position, that you didn't want to tell me what it was until you could document it."

Doug: Well, we as a team felt that one of the major difficulties we saw was that throughout the meeting, people could not easily test things that they brought up within the meeting.

Vice-president: I'm not sure I understand. What does that mean, test?

Doug: Well, we felt that you, as the vice-president, put yourself in a position, by making an opening statement that you were not going to bias what others said, and then in the conclusion summarized the case, and that by operating in that manner you left yourself least available for testing.

Vice-president: I can see how you might say that, but I don't think you really understand this team, and my relationship with the team. They're a pretty strong lot; and it's indeed because they're strong that I said to them at the beginning, "Look, I'd rather have you folks start off, and I'll wind up." So, I doubt that—if they didn't test, I don't think that has much to do with their not testing it.

Doug: Well, I guess our point was that by summarizing the case at the end, one of the things is that you as the vice-president never publicly tested any of the ideas that you felt about the project itself.

Vice-president: No, they stated their views, and I stated mine. I don't see how that prevented them from testing something that occurred before my summary.

Doug said that a major problem was that the group could not test their views; and when the vice-president asked him to explain, Doug started talking about what he thought the vice-president did that was wrong. So it appears that Doug believes that the vice-president was the problem, but he does not say so until he is pushed to explain. This indicates that Doug is easing-in, and this approach may lead the vice-president to mistrust him. The interventionist later said that, as the vice-president, he tried to hide his feelings and be cooperative but that he felt angry: "Here I'm taking all these initiatives, and the first thing they tell me is that I'm at fault."

Doug was acting as spokesman for a team, but the other members of the team later said that Doug had not role played the intervention that they had helped design. One team member, Ralph, said that their idea had been to work with the vice-president to help him see how he had contributed to a case team learning process that was single loop rather than double loop. Another team member, George, then read the opening sentence of the intervention that had been agreed on by the team. It began, "Would you agree that the main purpose of the meeting was to explore why the case team was ineffective?" The interventionist pointed out that this was very similar to the way Doug had begun and that it too appeared to be an attempt to ease in to build a case. He asked George to recall the reasoning that lay behind that question, and George replied:

> It was our reasoning, that the way we were starting out was to just lay out our reasoning about the case. Okay, what do we have in common? One, these folks think they didn't do well, right? So let's check that out. Two, we the consultants think their meeting was ineffective, insofar as even trying to explore why they had been ineffective previously. So, let's make sure that was their purpose, check that out. Then, I think the meeting itself was ineffective in achieving its goal. I see some similarities between the ineffectiveness of the meeting and the ineffectiveness of the team on the case. I want to give some examples to support that conclusion, and then see if you agree.

George's account indicates that the team members were conscientiously trying to follow Model II guidelines in designing their intervention. They intended to make their reasoning explicit and to test each step in their reasoning process with their client. Despite their good intentions, however, the intervention came out as Model I. Indeed, the second step of George's reasoning illustrates what may be an automatic tendency to "build a case": Since he thought the meeting was ineffective, he decided to first check if the vice-president agreed about the meeting's purpose. If so, George could do on to say that the meeting had been ineffective in achieving that purpose. Hence, he was building a case while protecting himself by not revealing the point of the question until the vice-president publicly committed himself.

The interventionist role played another way of designing the intervention, which was to state the three attributions that the team was making and to be prepared to go on to the next part if the vice-president agreed. George found that suggestion helpful:

> That's good. I think that resolves a problem we struggled with, which is: There are two conflicting principles. One is to lay out as much as you can in advance, so that you don't give the v.p. the feeling that he's being led into a trap. The other is to give evidence for anything that you say, so you don't feel that attributions that are unsubstantiated are being leveled at you. And those are often in conflict. What you've done is give a sense of where you're going in a way that's clear that the data will follow, if he doesn't agree [with your attributions].

This is another example of what we earlier discussed as conflict among rules. In this case, George and others on his team explicitly recognize the conflict between being open with intentions that are at higher levels of inference and testing reasoning step by step, starting at lower levels of inference. The interventionist can produce designs that resolve the conflict; and, by reflecting on the differences between what he has done and what they have done, participants will gain a deeper understanding of Model II reasoning. Notice that George infers a new principle from the interventionist's design, "Give a sense of where you're going in a way that's clear that the data will follow, if he doesn't agree." The intervention thus functions as a prototype.

George's ability to publicly reflect on dilemmas of design is itself a sign of learning. Such episodes occurred with increasing frequency in the seminar. For example, Tom identified another problem that indicates how a Model II rule such as "illustrate with directly observable data" can be used in the service of win-lose dynamics:

> What I find a tendency to happen is that to make your argument powerful you accrue tons of data that you can bang over the head of the person that you're talking to. And if they agree with you, you're holding this data and you have nothing to do with it. In other words, data [are] important, but you want to look beyond the data to what are the implications of the data for how you can help the client. And the other important thing is if that person disconfirms what you say, instead of throwing another piece of data at them, to listen to the disconfirmation.

We have discussed the reasoning that lay behind the first part of Doug's intervention. In the second part, Doug said that the vice-president had erred in saying that he would speak last. This too was based on a team design, and by looking at the reasoning informing that design we can gain insight into the participants' tendency to frame the situation as one in which the vice-president is the culprit.

George: [We had planned to focus on] the effect that the v.p. had on the meeting by saying at the outset that he didn't want to bias people's views, so he was going to hold his until last. [We felt] it was an important clue to the v.p.'s understanding of his own role in the group. Namely, that if he feels that expressing his views is going to bias other people, that implies that he feels he has a preeminent position in the group. And by alluding to that at the beginning, he is essentially asserting himself as preeminent by giving his own views special status.

Interventionist: Well, my reaction [as vice-president] is something like this: I am preeminent. I am the vice-president. I'm paid more than they are, and I'm an irresponsible person if I don't accept the preeminence.

George: The connection we were going to make with the rest of the case was that, what the v.p. did in his conduct of the meeting was hold off sharing his views until the very end. In the case, he withholds a variety of information (for example, his doubts about the competence of team members, and his perception that members are coming to him to complain about each other, but no one is taking responsibility for the case as a whole). He himself doesn't model the behavior that he's wanting them to do. So we see this parallel in the meeting, where by holding back and not testing his own views, he's doing in effect what he did in his leadership or nonleadership of the team, by not pointing to problems when he saw them, and so forth. That was the logic.

One of the interesting features of George's logic is that it is clearly built on prototypes that participants have learned in earlier seminars. For example, the X-Y case turns on the puzzle that participants do to Y what they criticize Y for doing to X. Interventions intended to unfreeze this kind of behavior often take the form, "You are doing the very thing you criticize." Such interventions serve to disconfirm the client's assumption that he has acted competently, and often lead clients to feel more personally responsible for the problem. This would seem to be the model behind George's observation that the vice-president "himself doesn't model the behavior that he's wanting them to do."

As the interventionist points out, there is a gap in George's criticism that the vice-president asserts himself as preeminent: In fact, the vice-president is preeminent and would be irresponsible to deny it. Other members of George's team tried to deal with this objection by role playing:

Paul: You want to hold the team responsible, right?

Vice-president: I want to hold them and myself responsible.

Paul: But, in the case and the meeting, in both of those situations what you did was rush in and fix the case, or rush in and tell them what was really wrong. And as long as you keep doing that, they aren't being held responsible.

Vice-president: And what might I have done? [*silence*]

Doug: You might have presented your ideas of the case, as the v.p., and asked the consultants if they indeed agreed with how you viewed the case. That's really what I was trying to get you to see [earlier].

Vice-president: But didn't you see here in the case, lots of data that they are willing to salute the chief? And I'm the biggest chief. So, I wanted to give the best possible deal that we would get openness and candidness. And so I owned up to the chief problem, and I said, "The chief's going to go last." Now, I think you're telling me that accents the very fact that I'm chief. I'm saying yes, but I'm in a Catch-22. You told me the consequences, which I buy. I haven't heard how do I get out of this Catch-22.

Notice that Paul produces another version of the puzzle model: You want to hold them responsible, but you act in ways that do not hold them responsible. There is an important degree of truth to this diagnosis, as it gets at how the vice-president contributes to the problem. But there are two difficulties with this view. First, it suggests that the vice-president is a culprit rather than someone caught in a cycle; and second, it does not suggest what he might do differently to untangle himself from this cycle. Paul has no suggestion to offer.

Doug has a suggestion, but it is an old one: that the vice-president begin by giving his views and asking for reactions. This suggestion appears to be based on the early heuristic, "Combine advocacy with inquiry." But it ignores the very real problem that led the vice-president to act as he did: If he goes first, he may bias what others say. Neither Doug nor the others seem to have understood or empathized with the problem that the vice-president faces.

The interventionist has guided the process of searching for a better design by role playing the vice-president to identify the dilemma or "Catch-22" in which he finds himself. Another team member picked up on this clue:

Ralph: I now hear you saying that you can sort of share our view that you're in a Catch-22. And I guess I'm hearing you say you want to get out of it.

Vice-president: Well, first of all, I want to be clear that I didn't think that that was your view. I thought your view was that I was wrong. And that no one saw me in a Catch-22. You only saw one part of it.

Ralph: Okay.

Interventionist: I just want to identify that, because that's part of that syndrome of, I think, how many of you automatically exhibit a blindness toward people with power. Now, let's go back [to the role playing].

Ralph: I can see your Catch-22. I think it would be very useful, for both you and the team, for you to acknowledge the Catch-22 that you experience to them. And perhaps begin this kind of discussion with that. And get it right out there.

Vice-president: And what might I say?

Ralph: I think you've said it very well today already, that "the way I experienced the work we did on the case was this Catch-22 situation; and I'm concerned that if I start the meeting this way it will have that effect, and if I start it that way, it will have this effect. And it's a dilemma that I experience."

Several participants found this discussion helpful in conceptualizing their learning. For example, Tom noted:

> A key point in this is the question of empathy toward your client. In particular, if the v.p. is your client, then you really have to empathize toward him. I know in my own development in this, that I went from a period of hostility, down to the period of, I can say, "I know it's not your

> fault, it's a systemic thing." But I still can't get up the empathy yet to really begin to look in terms of Catch-22s, and what is that person facing. That's sort of helpful; in listening to the word *Catch-22,* it's been giving me a direction to think in.

Notice that the interventionist did not try to help participants get to this point by urging them to be empathic. Rather, he helped them to look at what they were doing by role playing, reflecting on their reasoning, and role playing again. As participants became more competent at understanding and dealing with the vice-president's situation, they also began to feel more empathic with him. At the same time, they began to feel more clear and secure and hence less threatened by the vice-president.

Notice also that the shift to focusing on dilemmas can be understood as another illustration of learning by discovering inadequacies in interventions based on earlier learning. For example, the team's strategy was based on its diagnosis that the vice-president was acting in ways that reinforced the very behavior he wanted to change, and this diagnosis was based on the model of the X-Y puzzle: participants do to Y the very things they criticize Y for doing to X. Through several iterations of role playing and reflection, participants learned that this diagnosis, though accurate as far as it went, was radically incomplete. What they had missed were the features of the situation that the vice-president had to manage and that had led him to act as he had. Their new orientation did not eliminate the inconsistencies they had discovered with the help of the puzzle model, but added to them by allowing the participants to see the inconsistencies as one part of the dilemmas faced by the vice-president.

Along with this expansion of their vision, participants came to appreciate the importance of empathizing with their clients and also to appreciate their predisposition not to empathize with people in positions of power. The reflection papers that participants wrote following this case also show that they connected these issues of empathy and blame with their own experiences in earlier seminars. They recalled that they had felt defensive about being told they were incompetent, and in some cases their feelings of failure and guilt had impeded their willingness to experiment and to learn. They remembered that the interventionist had helped them to manage these feelings by pointing out that, while they were responsible for their actions, they were not responsible for the theory-in-use that they had learned through socialization and that led to these kinds of actions. He had also pointed out that the injustice and counterproductive consequences they created, although following necessarily from their actions, were not intended by them. In short, they began to apply to their work with their client (the vice-president) some of their new skills for managing the learning environment by recalling the importance of such intervention skills when they were in the position of the client. They were learning to combine a focus on the client's personal responsibility for error with deeper understanding of and empathy for the client's situation. This enabled them to help the client manage the feelings of failure and vulnerability that come with unfreezing.

Such learning does not come easily, nor does it happen all at once. As the following section will illustrate, the next teams to role play with the vice-president were able to build to some degree on the experience of the first team, but many of the same errors reappeared in a new guise.

The Second Team Consults to the Vice-President. One of the criticisms participants had made of the first team's approach was that it did not help the vice-president to understand what had led to the case team's inability to monitor itself. It was suggested that the vice-president be helped to see how the theories-in-use of the members of his team, including the theory-in-use of the vice-president himself, created difficulties. This was the approach chosen by the second team to role play.

Fred began the role playing by giving the vice-president a sheet of paper with a diagnosis of the espoused theory and theory-in-use of both the vice-president and the members of his team. According to the diagnosis, the espoused theory of the vice-president was to be straightforward, to work cooperatively with people, and to approach them when their work was not good enough, whereas his theory-in-use led him to fail to confront his group with evidence of the members' competitiveness and backstabbing and to cover up the group's error by rewriting the final report. The vice-president said that he thought "backstabbing" was too strong a word and that he was not sure that he was "covering up." He did, however, agree with the bulk of the diagnosis. Fred's team diagnosed the case team's theory-in-use as leading each member to work by himself and to refuse to raise problems with the team as a whole. Consequences of these theories-in-use included competitiveness, lack of interaction, and uncorrected errors. The vice-president said that the diagnosis made good sense to him and asked what was next. At this point Fred got into difficulty.

Fred: What we'd like to discuss next, if we're on common ground, is to look at possible solutions. As you see, we view the problem as something that happened interdependently, and we'd like the solution to take a similar shape. So that there is a sharing of responsibility for what happens. We also feel that the solution should incorporate a means of the group's monitoring each others' work. . . . Basically what we're interested in doing is to have you sit down with the group, and develop a new theory-in-use with the group. And do it jointly.

Vice-president: I like that idea. What do you have in mind?

Fred: Okay. I think one of the ways you could approach, and we can discuss this, this is a—there may be various different ways of getting at the same kind of thing. One of the ways that we see is that you could sit down with the group, present a similar kind of diagnosis, and then begin to discuss with them how they might explore ways of becoming self-monitoring, self-correcting, beginning to confront each others' errors, focus on the whole task, and so on. In other words, a meeting somewhat similar to what we're doing right now. With a great deal of openness and inquiry about each point.

Fred is careful to emphasize that responsibility for the problem is shared, a precaution that may be the result of his observing the first team's error in blaming the vice-president for being the culprit. But the most notable feature of Fred's suggestion is that it is highly vague. He proposes that the vice-president "begin to discuss with them how they might explore" solving the problems. But if Fred's diagnosis of the vice-president's theory-in-use is correct, then the vice-president would conduct such a discussion according to a theory-in-use that inhibits solving these problems.

While most clients would recognize that Fred is being vague, fewer would realize that he is giving advice that violates his own diagnosis. The interventionist saw this inconsistency as salient and chose to play the vice-president as recognizing it:

Vice-president: Well, if I understand this diagnosis, you're asking me to do something that it says I shouldn't be able to do.

Fred: Well, this involves a process of making an intervention of your own.

Vice-president: What do you have in mind?

Fred: Thinking through ways of your being able to present this to the group, in a way that would avoid most of the things you do in your theory-in-use.

Vice-president: Yeah, that I understand. And would you give me some examples? That's why I hired you people.

Fred: Okay. Before you have the meeting, we can have a role play, as a matter of fact, where you can work out some of the things and we can give you feedback. But some of the things that you could do is, for example—What do you think would be some of the problems you would have if you went in, knowing your theory-in-use, and presented your diagnosis to the group? What do you think some of those issues would be for you?

Fred continues to give vague answers. When he is finally pressed to give an example, he shifts in midsentence to a kind of client-centered strategy: "What do you think some of those issues would be for you?"

Fred's client-centered approach puts responsibility on the client to come up with the ideas about how to proceed. When participants gave their reactions to Fred's role play, some said that they thought he knew just what he wanted the vice-president to do but was masking his view with an inquiry-oriented, easing-in approach. Others thought that Fred simply didn't have a suggestion to offer and was covering up.

There may be validity to both interpretations. Fred may not have anything to suggest beyond his proposal that the vice-president present the diagnosis and "begin to explore" solutions with his team. Fred's unawareness that his own diagnosis indicates that the vice-president can't do this effectively suggests that he hasn't thought it through very carefully. At the same time, Fred may hold an espoused theory of consulting that says he need not think through what the vice-president could do. He may believe that, once he helps the client to have the right insights, appropriate action strategies will naturally follow. He may also believe that the client should be the source of these ideas and that he should put responsibility for generating them on the client. These espoused theories could serve to cover up, even to Fred himself, that he is covering up his incompetence by being vague and asking questions, because they provide rationalizations for these strategies.

Another team member, Kathy, then proceeded to role play a more forthright strategy. Building on the first team's experience, she suggested that the vice-president tell the team some of his dilemmas. She advised the vice-president to tell the team members how he would suggest resolving the dilemmas. For example, he might tell them that they should confront each other rather than coming to him with complaints about each other. The quality of Kathy's suggestions was mixed. She did not formulate the dilemmas well, and her advice that the vice-president say, "Don't come to me, talk to each other," might actually decrease the discussability of team problems, because it would do nothing to increase members' competence in discussing issues among themselves. Nonetheless, Kathy's approach was an improvement in that she was not engaged in a cover-up that might generate client mistrust. She put her ideas on the table where others could react to them and design improvements on them.

Following Kathy's role playing, Fred reflected on the reasoning behind his nondirective approach:

> I have a very strong feeling, which I'm looking at right now, it's a value that I have, that telling somebody what to do will eventually get into manipulation and build dependence. And I tend to see dependence as unconditionally negative. And it's very hard for me to, when I come up against that point, I bounce back.

This led to a discussion of the conditions under which dependence can promote growth. For example, Kathy's approach was to suggest a series of actions that the vice-president was capable of performing (state dilemmas, ask for people's suggestions) and that would help him and his team to learn. Hence, she was offering a kind of dependence that included ways of growing out of dependence. Equally important, this more forthright approach gives the client a choice whether to accept the suggestions or to raise objections. If the consultant offers ideas and identifies the consequences of those ideas, as well as the consequences of the ideas proposed by the client, then the client can make an informed choice, thereby reducing his dependence.

Paradoxically, Fred's nondirective approach actually involves more manipulation and dependence than does the forthright approach. Assuming for the moment that Fred was not simply covering up incompetence, then his questioning strategy was a way of getting the vice-president to discover what to do for himself, so that the vice-president would be internally committed to the ideas. But this puts Fred in the position of hiding what he thinks the vice-president might usefully do. The vice-president is likely to feel that he has to figure out what Fred is hiding, which makes it harder to reject Fred's ideas and puts him in a highly dependent position. Also, Fred is not saying that this is his strategy and so he is engaged in a kind of manipulation.

Replicating the Case Team's Problems. Not only were Fred's and Kathy's differences not resolved in their team meeting before the role playing, but the team also chose Fred to present what turned out to be the less effective of the two approaches. Despite the discussion of dilemmas the previous week, the team did not ask Fred to include these ideas in his intervention. What led the team to make these choices?

We will introduce our discussion of team process problems by discussing the role playing of a third team member. Jim intervened when Fred got in trouble with his questioning strategy and before Kathy had described her approach. The relevant conversation was:

Vice-president: And what advice do you have for me to do on that? I still—what is it that you think I should do?

Jim: Well, I think you, also, had information that the group was in trouble, and you didn't surface the problems with the group.

Vice-president: Yeah. That's true. And?

Jim: And I'm wondering what the reason was.

Vice-president: We're busy, swamped; the last thing in the world I want to do is spend a lot of time on this process stuff. It could pull them apart.

Jim: I don't understand why it would pull them apart.

Vice-president: Well, if I start confronting them on some of the issues, then they confront each other, my big fear is that the group will fly off in different directions. Especially if your analysis is correct.

Jim does not see the dilemma the vice-president was in because he does not see the validity of the vice-president's fear that confronting team process issues will be counterproductive. As we noted earlier, Jim and Fred's own diagnosis indicates that this is a likely result. Members of the case team, including the vice-president, act according to theories-in-use that inhibit the productive discussion of these issues.

There is another reason why it is remarkable that Jim does not see what is valid in the vice-president's fear: Fred and Jim's team itself had the very problem that the vice-president fears. This became evident in the discussion following the role playing, when the interventionist said that as the vice-president he had felt that he could pull apart the team that was consulting with him. Team members explained that there had been a deep disagreement over how to role play. Fred had wanted to begin with the theory-in-use diagnosis and use his more client-centered approach. Kathy did not want to use that diagnosis; she wanted to forthrightly tell the vice-president what to do, which was to state his dilemmas, ask other team members to state theirs, and then to discuss how to resolve them. Fred's and Kathy's disagreements were not resolved, but not because they were not discussed. Indeed, one team member said, "I felt that the meeting we had was 99.9 percent pushing your disagreements, and less on concentrating on interventions." It appeared that Fred and Kathy had become increasingly polarized, and other members of the team felt like helpless bystanders to their disagreement. This led Paula, the team member quoted earlier, to say:

> See, this is the problem I have with surfacing things. I'm wondering whether surfacing actually leads to some sort of resolution, or what happens after that? We could be great at surfacing, nobody's inhibited. But then what? How do you ever get a case team that's unified?

This was precisely the fear that the vice-president had about confronting process problems in his team and that Jim could not see validity to. When members of a team have only Model I theories-in-use, bringing disagreements to the surface can lead to win-lose dynamics and increasing polarization, and such a consequence was embedded in the very diagnosis that the team made of the vice-president's case.

The way in which the team reached the decision to go with Fred's approach is also instructive. After the meeting that ended with Fred and Kathy still far apart, the team did not meet again until an hour before the seminar. To the surprise of Jim and Paula, Fred and Kathy appeared to have reached agreement that Fred would begin. While Jim and Paula were puzzled, they did not ask how the agreement had come about because they feared reopening the conflict just before the team was supposed to role play. When Fred and then Jim got in trouble in the role playing, Kathy did not intervene, because she thought that proposing another approach would make the team look disorganized to the vice-president.

Kathy explained that she and Fred had talked after their team meeting and that Fred had told her, "I think [the interventionist] would chew you up, with the method you have proposed." Kathy continued, "And my mind clicked, and I thought, 'He will chew *you* up.' And I'm not really sure if I wanted to let you put your neck on the line, and let him chew." All this, of course, remained undiscussed until after the role playing. Kathy acted as if she agreed with Fred's going with his approach. Other members of the team thought that she didn't really agree and that she was going to let Fred begin, then step in with her own approach; but they didn't say anything. The team went before the vice-president with their pretense of unity, with the results that we have seen.

The reader will notice that participants were making many mistakes, despite having gone through the learning experiences described in the previous chapters. This illustrates something that is characteristic of the learning process: Participants go through many iterations of unfreezing, reflecting, redesigning, discovering new errors, and unfreezing again. Indeed, movement to new stages of learning typically begins with discoveries of ways one continues to act in accordance with Model I theory-in-use.

It was not only the second team that replicated many of the problems that had troubled the vice-president's case team. For example, the process by which the first team had chosen Doug to be its spokesman had similar features. Doug had advocated a different approach from the one that the team chose, but he also very much wanted to be a spokesman. Other members feared Doug was not committed to the team's design, but went along with Doug's speaking for the team. For his part, Doug didn't think much of the team's design, but what he said was that he would present it faithfully. After the session discussed in the previous section in which Doug role played with the vice-president, the team met to discuss its process problems. It discovered that members had been holding many negative evaluations of each other's level of commitment and of the design they had produced but that these had not been discussed.

The reflection papers written by participants reveal that they saw their replication of the case team's process problems as highly significant. Several participants reflected on the ways in which they had contributed to these problems. For example, Ralph, a member of the first group, wrote:

> Midway into the second meeting of our group, I found myself trapped in a corrective proposition I had formulated for myself (especially *vis à vis* the class) some weeks earlier. This corrective proposition was:
>
> When thinking the process or direction of the class or meeting is not productive or effective, reflect on why you think this and then surface your reasoning and invite inquiry only when you have an alternative to offer.
>
> I began finding myself immobilized since, although I experienced our case team as often ineffective and our process counterproductive, I had effectively precluded myself from acting because I found I could not come up with better alternatives or interventions which I thought would be useful or effective. In a meeting after our team intervention, I surfaced this dilemma and got some feedback leading to the following corrective proposition to the corrective proposition above:
>
> When thinking the process or direction of the class or meeting is not productive or effective,

> reflect on why you think this, surface your reasoning and intervene with either a positive alternative or an admission of your lack of one and invite help or inquiry.

Notice that the learning process Ralph describes again illustrates the iterative, dialectical features we have discussed earlier: He discovered an error in his theory-in-use and went on to develop a corrective proposition. When he then acted in accordance with this new proposition, he discovered that it, too, led to errors, and he revised it. The process was dialectical in the sense that he first sought to correct the error of throwing responsibility on others by thinking out loud before coming up with an alternative, and then discovered that he was withholding negative evaluations. This is an aspect of a key dilemma experienced by participants: On the one hand they are striving to craft interventions that are clear and competent, while on the other hand they are supposed to be forthright, to experiment, and to be willing to make errors.

Participants saw their team process problems as directly relevant to their conduct in the seminar. They had had difficulty in creating self-monitoring teams because of the same theory-in-use propositions that had led them to act in the seminar in ways that inhibited their ability to create a self-monitoring learning environment. Two participants wrote that they thought the process problems showed that it was not enough to be proactive in advocating one's views; it was equally important to be proactive in listening to the views of others, clarifying the various views expressed, and inquiring into differences among them. A third participant expressed the same idea by writing that collaboration "involves considering the other person's reactions to be as important in the communication process as the expression of one's own ideas."

These do not seem like new ideas, especially for a group of people who have been employed as psychological counselors. But they represent new learning in the sense that participants were digging deeper into their tacit Model I theories-in-use. They had always espoused openness, empathy, and active listening, but they were now learning that their inquiries often masked unilateral advocacy. Once they began to make their advocacy forthright rather than covert, they saw that it was indeed important to inquire and empathize. In short, they were learning to make their theories-in-use more congruent with their espoused theories.

The case team exercise appeared to help participants to deepen their learning on three fronts. First, they became increasingly able to step outside of win-lose frames and to empathize with the dilemmas people face, even when those people are in positions of power. Second, they became increasingly aware of the gap between insight and action, and began to reduce their cover-up of their inability to bridge this gap. Third, they became increasingly aware of their responsibility for group process problems and began to develop skills to monitor their group process. In these ways participants were unfreezing and beginning to redesign the very features of their behavior that require an interventionist to manage the learning environment. They were beginning to reach a level of competence at which the learning process could be self-sustaining. They began to be as much a part of the solution as they were a part of the problem.