



# Introduction to **Human Relations Studies**

*Academic Foundations and Selected Social Justice Issues*



George Henderson

Wesley C. Long

**INTRODUCTION TO  
HUMAN RELATIONS STUDIES**

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

**George Henderson, Ph.D.**, became the University of Oklahoma's third full-time African American faculty member at the Norman campus in 1967. In 1969, he became the Sylvan N. Goldman Professor of Human Relations, Education and Sociology. Later, he was appointed to three other distinguished professorships: David Ross Boyd Professor, Regents' Professor, and Kerr-McGee Presidential Professor. After he became the Goldman Professor, he founded the Human Relations Department, which he chaired for 20 years. From 1996 to 2000, he was dean of the College of Liberal Studies. Thus, he was the first African American in Oklahoma to hold a distinguished professorship; and he was the first African American at the University of Oklahoma to create a degree-granting department; and the first African American dean of a degree-granting college on the Norman campus. He is the author or co-author of 30 books and numerous articles that focus on human relations and social justice issues. For his teaching and social justice contributions, he has been inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame, and the Oklahoma African American Hall of Fame. Although he retired from the University in 2006, Professor Henderson still teaches on a part-time basis.

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# INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN RELATIONS STUDIES

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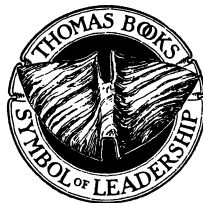
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## PREFACE

This book is written for students who are enrolled in their first courses pertaining to professional helpers: teachers, licensed therapists and counselors, business managers, human services practitioners, and community organizers, to mention a few of these professionals. The courses are available under various titles in departments of human relations, social psychology, elementary and secondary school education, school counselor education, and business management.

Professional helper curriculums are a potpourri of theoretical and experiential approaches to understanding and improving individual, group and organization behaviors. Despite their great diversity, the various academic and nonacademic helping professions programs share in the quest to help participants improve in one or more of the following relationships: interpersonal, intergroup and organization. Human relations training is available in selective colleges and universities, business organizations, and consulting firms.

This book is based on the authors' experiences as professors of human relations and community activists at the University of Oklahoma, which has the largest degree-granting human relations program in the United States. In 1969, the University of Oklahoma's Human Relations Program was one of the first in American higher education to offer a master's degree in human relations. Its specific objectives being to prepare students to work for the provision of equal opportunities for minority groups and women. Specifically, the program was approved by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to help students (1) learn the history and early theories of human relations programs and interventions; (2) develop skills pertaining to leadership, communication, group and organizational behaviors and analyses of behavioral science data; and (3) function responsibly in situations where conflict and tension call for coordination of interpersonal, intergroup and organization efforts. The Program became an academic department in 1974. Currently, the Human Relations Department also offers a bachelor's degree in human relations.

Early in its development, the department accomplished several notable things, including recruiting and graduating more multicultural graduate students than any other University department on the Norman campus,



graduating the first three master's degree students with cerebral palsy in Oklahoma, offering the first women's studies courses in Oklahoma, and hiring the first male full-time department secretary at the University. Simply put, those accomplishments, and others clearly demonstrated the department's commitment to cultural diversity and inclusion. Indeed, the University of Oklahoma's Department of Human Relations did not just talk about social justice, it modeled the concept.

Most college and university human relations courses are based on the best available social and behavioral sciences and education research findings. In addition to utilizing research data, human relations students learn how to evaluate the effectiveness of their own helping interventions. The most effective programs do more than provide students with knowledge for its own sake, however. Students are taught to objectively describe critically what is happening in specific human relationships; they also learn how to intervene to help clients prevent or abate inequitable situations. In short, no matter what helping techniques they use, students are taught to facilitate socially constructive behaviors. Some of them even learn how to help organizations increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the energy expended by their employees to achieve organization goals.

It is worth noting that well-educated professional helpers also function as educators: They teach problem-solving skills to their clients so that they can solve their own problems. This technique requires trust between helpers and their clients. Empathy is another connective tissue between helpers and their clients. However, empathy is not a commodity purchased in an open market; it is a subliminal personality trait that some people are born with and others must learn.

Most of the programs that we discuss in this book were designed to provide participants with opportunities to gain self-insight, knowledge of moral and ethical codes of behaviors as well as group dynamics, communication skills, and cognitive tools to diagnose problems and select appropriate strategies for change. Furthermore, the participants learn why self-growth and social justice activities must continuously be refined, improved and utilized to help make real equal opportunities for all individuals based on their merits. The following features of this book should be particularly noted:

*Emphasis on historical and current human relations problems and strategies for change.* We discuss selected historical events that led to the creation and development of human relations programs. Considering the past, one of the surest things about human relationships is that racial and ethnic group and sexual oppression have left their indelible effects on countless individuals. Given the progress made in the twentieth century to abolish racial segregation and discrimination and sexism, it is fair to ask if we still need to place so much emphasis on those things. The answer is "Yes." There is no getting around it.

The pernicious *isms* and *phobias* of previous years have directly and indirectly scarred our national psyche. The reprinted articles and essays in this book illustrate a few of the issues that concerned professional helpers may be involved in.

*An interdisciplinary approach.* Drawing on the literatures of several interrelated academic disciplines, mainly those in business management, social psychology, sociology, and teacher education, we delineate the intersections of multiple academic disciplines during the creation and development of human relations programs, the epitome of multidisciplinary areas of study. Undergraduate students who wish to specialize in a particular area of professional helping should do so in appropriate undergraduate and graduate programs.

*A spiral arrangement of content.* Topics discussed briefly in the first few chapters are revisited again in other chapters, but with more details. Therefore, this approach is not mere repetition; rather, it is a way of supplementing and complementing relevant issues, problems and strategies for change. This kind of scaffolding is a proven educational approach to presenting complex data.

*Emphasis on social justice and equity.* The consequences of unequal educational, economic, political and social opportunities for some of our nation's citizens are given special attention in this book. Crucial to the concept of a pluralistic society in a democracy such as ours is the requirement to understand, respect and accept culturally different people. The authors of this book take seriously the similarities and differences among and between culturally different people. This concept is an important part of the human relations narrative.

It is important to state that this book is only a beginning resource for those who want to become acquainted with the broad body of literature pertaining to human relations studies. Our intention was to enlighten readers, not to overwhelm them with data. Even so, much information has been compressed into a few pages. We have written what we believe is one of the first forays into a comprehensive history of the basic foundations of human relations education. As a result, experienced professional helpers and advanced undergraduates and graduate students may also find this book to be a valuable reference source. Finally, we are grateful to Gloria Pollard for her excellent editing of the manuscript.

G.H.  
W.C.L.



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HUMAN RELATIONS STUDIES**



**PART ONE:  
ACADEMIC FOUNDATIONS**





## Chapter 1

### AN OVERVIEW

*Think of what it is like to have most of your life ahead and be told you are obsolete! . . . That you are not a person but a joke.*

– Zoe Moss

This chapter is an overview of historically significant research projects and programs that were the foundations upon which human relations programs were created. The other chapters in this book elaborate on and supplement the issues and concepts that are in this chapter. Although the focus of this book is on professional helpers, much of the information is relevant for nonprofessional helpers too, especially students.

### A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Today, most human relations programs are based upon theories and practices that were created in the early twentieth century and refined in subsequent years. Hundreds of human relations books and journal articles were published in the twentieth century, but most of them were self-help guides for better living. Relatively few of those publications presented information about seminal research studies and practitioner interventions, both of which are essential in order to understand the interdisciplinary aspect of human relations programs. We have culled from the literatures some of the most relevant research studies and practitioner practices that pertain to the art and science of helping people to understand and, if they wish, to improve in their intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup and organizational behaviors.

There were several relevant human relations research projects conducted in the nineteenth century, but most of them analyzed factory workers' job efforts and production outcomes. At that time, scholars in what was known as the "scientific management movement" used time and motion studies to develop procedures for efficient and effective worker job efforts. They focused

on improving organization efficiency through increasing technical competence of managers and supervisors and their subordinates.

In retrospect, several men were human relations pioneers. Frederick Taylor, the “father of scientific management,” was the first person to use a precise analytic approach to the problem of increasing worker productivity. He studied piecemeal factory workers’ job efforts and outcomes to determine the most efficient and effective ways for them to do their jobs. Henri Fayol, the “father of management,” was the first person to state and widely publicize principles of management. In the early twentieth century, Elton Mayo and his Harvard University colleagues were the first persons to conduct scientific research focusing on the effects of factory workers’ interpersonal interactions in their job production outcomes. Several years later, studies of interpersonal interactions of groups outside the workplace were conducted by other social scientists. From those studies, it became evident that there were three ways to approach experimental studies of human relationships.

One approach was to study uncontrolled short-term group interactions. Because the behaviors of the subjects were not intentionally produced, they were of little use to experimental researchers. The second approach was to study uncontrolled long-term group interactions. Similar to the first approach, it also garnered no interest from experimental researchers because the behaviors of the subjects were not intentionally produced. The third approach, which appealed to experimental researchers, was to study intentionally induced group behaviors and compare them to the behaviors of an unaltered control group. Only with scientific studies that had experimental and control groups could human relations be something more than guesses, hunches and common sense on which practitioners can base their interventions. Equally important, without ample scientific data, human relations could never become a respectable academic discipline.

Louis Terman conducted the most definitive studies of human relations in 1904 when he studied the behaviors of leaders in small groups. In the late 1930s, Kurt Lewin developed the concept of field theory to conceptualize individual relationships in groups. However, it was not until the 1940s, when Lewin and his students began small group research on a broad scale, that small group research gained academic prominence. Several years later, George Homans made the insightful observation that when unrelated individuals were drawn together in a common activity, group norms emerged based partially on whether the team members liked or disliked one another. Also, he concluded that codes of behavior established by a group are often difficult for outsiders to comprehend. With an avalanche of information about small groups, social psychologists were able to better understand the nation’s changing norms and behaviors.