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ABSTRACT
        This report presents a review of research on group
discussion as used in adult education within the context of the
nature of man and in relation to his ultimate end of
self-realization. The review considers (1) those factors involved in
group discussion; (2) its broad purposes, for example, mutual
education, affecting self-concept, and attitudes and interpersonal
change; and (3) approaches to it, for example, the leadership role,
nonmanipulative approaches, and human relations and sensitivity
training. Discussion is also examined in the service of
institutions--parent education, religious education, education for
aging, and public affairs discussion. Discussion and the mass media
are reviewed, that is, international uses, community education, and a
recent scientific approach. Such pitfalls to be avoided as
mechanistic values, educational chauvinism, intellectual elitism, and
the tyranny of numbers are analyzed. The final chapter deals with the
"Precipice of Infinity" in which the following topics are discussed:
affective and intellectual self-actualization, and ideal discussion
groups, and whether life itself is at stake. (Author)

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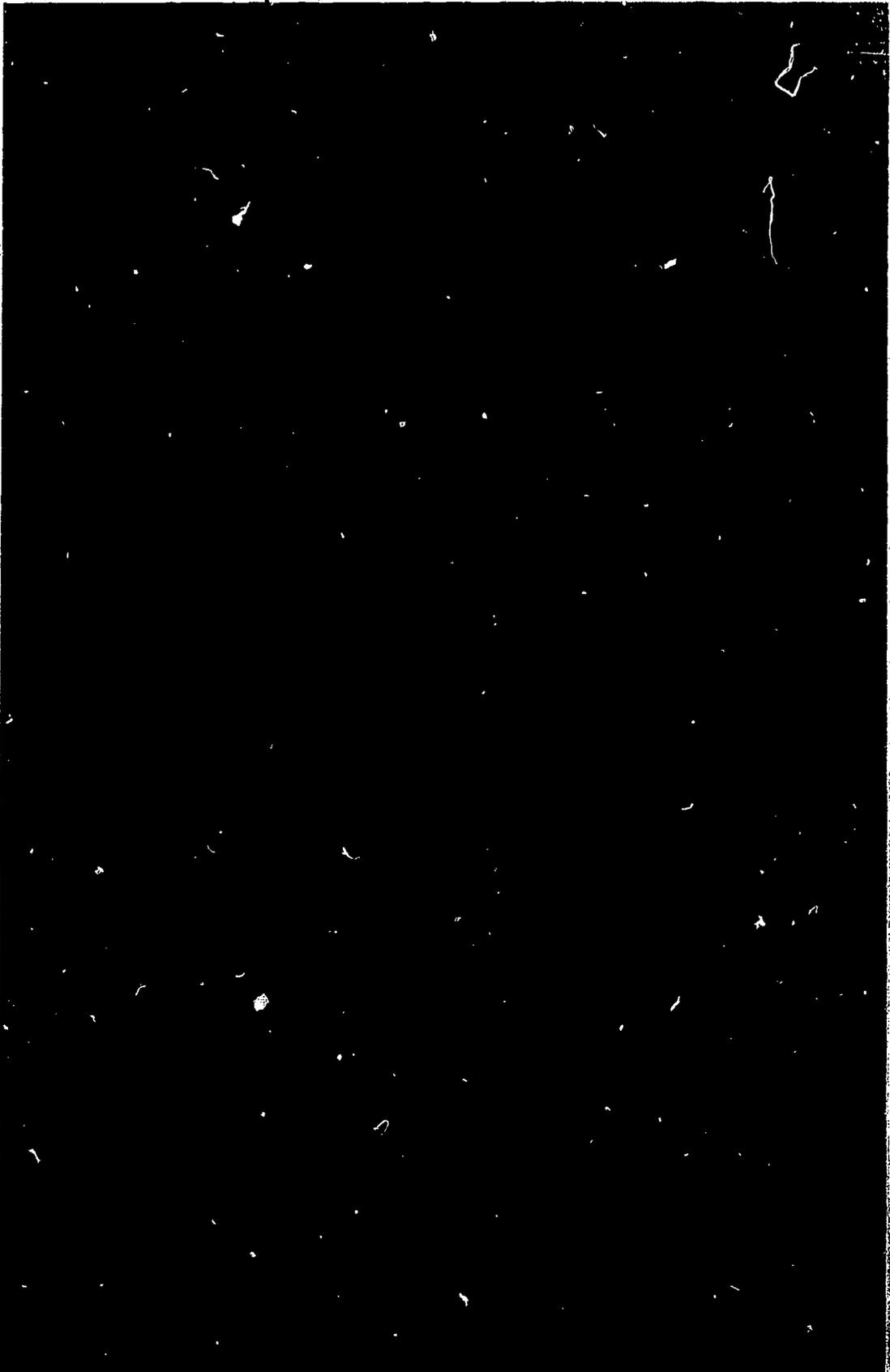
TOWARD GOG AND MAGOG OR ?:

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

OF ADULT GROUP DISCUSSION

by

FRANKLIN W. W. OSINSKI

JOHN OHLIGER

and

COLLEEN MC CARTHY

"Gog and Magog. In Biblical prophecy, the
heathen nations to be led by Satan in a war
against the Kingdom of God. Revelation 20:
7-8." quoted from The American Heritage
Dictionary of the English Language. New
York: American Heritage Publishing Co.,
1969. See also Ezekiel 38-39.

August, 1972

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A review is made of research on group
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factors involved in group discussion; its broad
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After analyzing pitfalls to avoid, such as
mechanistic values, educational chauvinism, intel-
lectual elitism, and the tyranny of numbers, it
concludes with consideration of the "Precipice of
Infinity"--affective and intellectual self-
actualization, an ideal discussion group? and "Is
Life Itself at Stake"?

FOREWORD

Group discussion has been almost univer-
sally accepted as an effective technique in adult
education. The extensive literature on this sub-
ject speaks of its importance from the adult
educators' viewpoint. Even a cursory examination of
the literature will reveal the many-faceted opinions
on the use and application of group discussion.

The vast amount of documents with discus-
sion in adult education which passes through the
ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education needed some
kind of sifting and sorting to bring about some
organized sense out of the various approaches
suggested by writers on this subject.

The authors have given us a review of what
they considered to be the relevant selected litera-
ture. It ought to be clearly apparent to the
reader that the authors have not included all of
the literature dealing with adult group discussion;
to do so would have been a more ambitious undertak-
ing than present resources permitted. Besides, one
questions what additional usefulness, other than
exhaustiveness, such an exhaustive search would
have served. The fact is that the authors have
included most of the more important and significant
literature, which literature is sufficient and
adequate to indicate what adult educators really
want to know about adult group discussion.

But the authors have given us something more
than a review of the literature, and here is the
real strength of their monograph. They have pre-
sented their review within the context of man's
humanness and his dignity, that is, his integrity
as person. This point must not be allowed to be
lost in the maze of claims that discussion is a
"pure" form of learning without any manipulation.
As good and useful as group discussion may be,
there are inherent problems associated with its
use, some of which the authors have indicated.

The three collaborators on this literature
review were: Franklin Osinski, member of the
Literature-Poetry Advisory Panel of the Ohio Arts
Council and one time junior high school teacher;

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John Ohliger, associate professor of adult educa-
tion at the Ohio State University, and author of
numerous books, monographs, and reviews; and
Colleen McCarthy, an experienced social worker and
returned Peace Corps Volunteer, currently pursuing
a program of lifelong self-education.

Our thanks to the authors for the tremendous
amount of time they spent in preparing this review;
the knowledge that they have performed a highly
useful task for adult educators ought to be deeply
satisfying to them.

Stanley M. Grabowski
Director,
ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult
Education

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I am man, not a machine
I wish to know, to create
Not sit and wait, with vacuous being
For the guiding hand, writ on the wall
Telling me Be this or that, know this fact or that,
I am Man on the journey to the Future.

The reader might question what these words have to do with a review of the literature of adult group discussion. Our answer is this monograph, what it propounds, the vision of humanity that it seeks to conceptualize--the particular reality within which the educator, researcher, or student operates.

To say that we are in a period of turmoil, change, reform, confrontation, or revolution is a truism. Apocalyptic talk, whether on a global, national, or institutional scale, misses the basic question: What are we?

It is our belief that the question of what we are should constitute the foundation of all writings truly designed for "adult education." We find that this question has been lost in much of the literature of the field, including discussion literature. The question is frequently treated at the levels of hidden assumption or cliche. At these levels the discussion of literature generally serves the function of encouraging the growth of institutional control by the few over the many. We are firm in our belief that research now should turn toward a reexamination of the question of the nature of man (we use the term "man" to include men and women) separate from the influence and control of environment. Though we reiterate that apocalyptic talk misses the basic question, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion, judged by present trends, that we are approaching a fundamental struggle over which view of man will prevail.

Houle, in his latest book (172) writes: "Any effort to build a system of educational process on the work of a specific goal, method of

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practice, or institution is limited. For example,
the attempt to make universal generalizations on
the basis of community development, group discus-
sion; or the procedures of an evening school are
repudiated by many educators of adults because
those generalizations do not conform to the reality
they experience." Houle observes in his book that
such attempts to formulate principles were pre-
valent in earlier years in American adult education.
His observation helps to explain the relative
paucity of generalized discussion literature in
recent years.

Discussion is not a panacea for social or
educational ills. All solutions presented as
panaceas are illusory, but though convenient answers
are not at hand, those who raise questions must
attempt answers, as we do here. What follows
reflects the firmness of our beliefs. It also
indicates confusion, ambivalence, and occasional
disagreements among ourselves and our editors. At
this moment in history it is difficult to see how
such a document could do otherwise. We are calling
for a change in direction at the same time that we
are in the midst of change. We seek to accomplish
the virtually impossible but absolutely necessary
task of constructing a base for our thoughts--a
foundation that is firm, yet not imprisoning.

Shortcomings in the Literature

Within the above context we are willing to
make value judgments about the literature under
review. At one end of the continuum, the best
literature addresses itself to what we conceive as
the true nature and purpose of discussion; going
down the scale, we rate much that is not so much
obsolete as merely trivial; that avoids, or is
irrelevant to, those fundamental social issues which
grow more pressing with the passage of time. At
the worst, too many researchers are burdening our
libraries with mounds of tiresome materials on more
factors to be quantified and categorized, minutiae
of data that add nothing to our wisdom.

The discussion literature is laden with a
number of shortcomings indicating a mental mode and

approach that frustrates personal growth. Many
discussion writers who reflect mechanistic values
exacerbate the social ills that afflict us. Dis-
cussion is seen as another social engineering tool
to "guide" people toward some pre-determined goal in
the social machine.

The discussion researcher, in attempting to
ascertain the most amenable discussion mode for
achieving his goals, too often runs the serious
risk of becoming a manipulator of human factors.
He recognizes "person" but not the integrity of the
person. A job is to be done, and it will be done.

Researchers are so bound to their own
theories and self-imposed academic limitations that
often the reality of the situations before them
gives way to pure fantasy speculations. Educa-
tional chauvinism, intellectual elitism, and
paternalistic attitudes are symptoms of this self-
delusion. Often researchers put themselves in the
position of demonstrating self-evident observa-
tions--that "a=b" and thus "a+b = a+b."

Part of the problem of redundant research
is the failure to question underlying assumptions.
Too often researchers start with a number of
assumptions and proceed with a research methodology
that may or may not disprove the assumptions.
Factors to which the researcher may be oblivious
because of the mental space he moves in, will
vitiate any basic suppositions and make the re-
searcher's work essentially an exercise in semantics.
Words are very often a poor reflection of the
reality being dealt with. Numbers are sometimes a
better descriptive tool, but because of the absolute
image of numbers, researchers may permit themselves to
be ruled by them without questioning the underlying
assumptions of mathematical structures. We must
redirect ourselves to dealing with real people, not
mechanically constructed images of people.

The Nature of Discussion

It is typical to begin works such as this
with a definition--in this case a definition of
discussion. But we find most such definitions

static, arbitrary, containing too heavy a baggage
of "hidden agendas," often trivial, and sometimes
within the realm of fantasy. Instead of offering a
definition here, we could posit a view that discus-
sion in the ideal sense is a reflection of man's
innate desire to interact with others. We prefer
to note with Freire that education (of which dis-
cussion is here considered a part) is never neutral.

This is Freire's attempt to clarify what he
means by "the impossibility of a neutral education"
(173):

First of all, it no more depends on my point
of view than on anyone else's wish. To say
that education cannot be a neutral action
is to state a concrete fact, the critical
perception of which is an essential part
of my attitude with regard to the educa-
tional process.

However, this critical perception does not
define education as a practice in which
educators fail to respect not only the
expressivity of the educatees but also
their right to choose and their right to
learn how to choose by the practical
method of choosing.

Education cannot be neutral because it is
always an action either for the 'domesti-
cation' of men or for their liberation.
While in the former sense it is solely a
domesticating practice, in the latter sense
it is a procedure in which the educators
invite the educatees to know, and to
'unveil the world' in a critical manner.

In the domesticating practice there must
be a dichotomy between those who manipulate
and those who are manipulated. In the
liberating practice, one does not find
subjects who liberate, and objects which
are liberated. There is thus no dichotomy.

While the former process is prescriptive,
the latter is dialogical.

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Thus there is no such thing as discussion neutrally defined. Though discussion can be seen as a "tool," as some authors do, tools are not necessarily neutral. A rifle is a tool that can be used to kill game for food or kill people, but it is never usable for helping people toward personal growth. And when one rifle is multiplied into millions or into atomic weapons it even loses some or all of its character as a "tool." Some would say that it then begins to take on a life of its own.

Factors Involved in Group Discussion

External factors are crucial in determining the context of discussion. Note the paradox: on the one hand, we have the small primary group meeting for face-to-face exchange. But its sponsor might be some institution, an organization removed from primary contact to the extent that it increases in size, remoteness, and impersonality. Yet almost all the literature refers to groups that are organized and/or led by institutional representatives.

The issue of directive versus non-directive discussion becomes moot in this context. Even where so-called non-directive techniques are used, certain goals are sought by agents who brought the group into being or who attempt to service an already existing group. A discussion under such auspices, when parameters are not freely chosen by the individual participants, is one carried out in an atmosphere of manipulation.

It is only fair to add that sponsorship of discussion groups is one means by which some institutions seek to humanize their operations. Improved communications and feedback achieved through discussion might render institutions less rigid if they honestly seek to be more responsive to their clientele, but only if the institutions, at the same time, seek to limit tendencies to gigantic growth.

Voluntarism in association can be correlated with increased freedom for the individuals

involved. Great Books and Great Decisions groups
meet voluntarily, but with resource material that
is institutionally selected. Those who come
together in private clubs associate voluntarily;
but within a framework of social pressures and
taboos. Structure in their discussion format may
range from nearly total spontaneity to the use of
"guidelines" and other resources developed by
professionals.

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CHAPTER II

SOME BROAD PURPOSES OF

DISCUSSION

Discussion as a "Tool" for Growth

The general literature on discussion is of value in acquainting a beginner with guidelines and uses of discussion. Here discussion is seen as a "tool." But discussion theorists rarely mention the value structure that is the basis for discussion initiation, or consider the ultimate psychological and varied consequences of their methods. For a writer to simply say that discussion affects personal change and attitude formation is avoidance of end results. The person who experiences the awesome power of an earthquake may never see the utter devastation thousands of miles away caused by a tide set off by that earthquake.

Paterson has written a treatise on "The Concept of Discussion: A Philosophical Approach" (118). He asks questions and faces certain realities almost none of the other writers do. Many of his statements fly in the face of accepted beliefs about discussion (118):

> Even if there were objective criteria by reference to which we could clearly measure the degree to which assimilation of material, grasp of principle, or mastery of skill had resulted . . . . I should still doubt whether such unquestioned benefits were the true touchstone against which to assess the value of class discussion. . . .
>
> In terms of the conscious intentions of the participants, the educational benefits above-mentioned must, like any social or psychological benefits resulting from the discussion, be viewed as by-products--genuinely educational by-products indeed, but still

by-products, not the realization of the true
significance of the discussion.

If educational discussion is to be a
genuinely 'dialectical' activity in a com-
pletely free and open setting, it would
seem to follow that any attempt to pre-
determine the course of a given class
discussion must be mistaken. True discus-
sion cannot be directed, or even guided,
for to attempt to do so is, in effect, to
opt out of the discussion, to close one's
consciousness to alternative interpreta-
tions of the phenomena under discussion
before these alternatives have even been
stated. . . .

One inevitably wonders how many counterfeit
discussions are staged in adult classes.

Contrast Paterson with Schwab (134), _Eros_
and Education, who states that "discussion is in
one sense only a systematization, a conscious and
controlled development of what every good teacher
tends to do." Thus Schwab says that stimulative
discussion constitutes a sin of pride, is a priva-
tion of possible and desirable ends, and becomes
positively miseducative.

For Schwab and many such as he, people grow
only to accept and appreciate the given present and
past. The future is not an extension of the
present, but a separate reality that grows from the
present. We are the Present and we are the Future!
To live only in the past, or to act only in the
present is to diminish the full expression of our
being. Discussion should not be perverted to serve
a method or a system that is blind to the Future.

Bormann (171), in his textbook _Discussion_
and Group Method, devotes a chapter to ethical
problems of discussion, and for this reason his
textbook is more worthwhile than the others.
Bormann recognizes the many impediments that can
and usually do exist as barriers to transcendence
of self.

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For typical treatment of discussion methods
in general one can briefly look at works by Hill
(67), Eyestone (41), Leadership Pamphlets (71),
Utterback (151), Beckhard (13), Menkin (101,102),
and Gutzmer (58).

Mutual Education and Growth

In reviewing the literature on group dis-
cussion, we found too few sources that represent
an attitude which values discussion insofar as it
leads toward freedom and growth.

In Leading Group Discussion (25), a
Syracuse University publication, Harry Miller and
Barbara Berger found the beginnings (1955) of
discussion "which involves growth in understanding
and enjoyment of the self and the complex world
about the self." Miller and Berger observed a
movement toward monopoly of opinion control and
manipulation, and also noted that education
"generally, prepares people for the more practical
tasks of life . . . but the life span and the period
of economic usefulness no longer coincide." Thus,
the development and nurturing of inner resources
become all the more important in order to deal with
outside manipulation of one's mind and economic
being.

Houle (70), in an address, "The Uncommon
School," delivered at Syracuse University, spoke of
the central concerns of Henry Thoreau; the proper
relationship of man to another in coming to know
himself and his own potentialities. Thoreau founded
a Lyceum, an adult education association wherein
men could meet together to educate each other. It
would behoove us as educators and nation builders
to reexamine such historical traditions.

Bloomberg (19) describes an experiment in
community development that focused on the intrinsic
value of each person. Individual growth and change
were effected within a pattern of authentic
experiences common to all. A number of discussion
theorists talk about the excitement of watching the
dynamics of interpersonal relationships as they

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psychologically grow, but this observing is more
of an entertaining sideshow to the discussion goal.

Barnlund and Haiman (11), in The Dynamics
of Discussion, write about a highly non-directed
discussion in which subject matter is of secondary
importance. Relationships, feeling, mutual under-
standing, and acceptance are paramount. "The way
for a student to feel as well as understand growth
process is to participate in the birth and early
growing pains of a new group which has no super-
structure imposed upon it from without."

Gordon (55), in Group-Centered Leadership:
A Way of Releasing the Creative Power of Groups,
propounds the view that the initiator function
should be gradually assumed by the group until
there is no longer a leader. The group then
becomes increasingly self-directing, determining
its own objectives and directing its own activities
to meet those self-determined goals. This type of
discussion seems to be a good way to provide an
uninitiated growth group with some means of orient-
ing themselves before taking matters into their own
hands. Gordon believes that the greatest amount
of creative power is released by a group that is
left to itself.

Wieting (155) reports in "When Neighbors
Meet" about a practical setup in Ohio under the
aegis of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. The only
connection between the discussion participants and
the Ohio Farm Bureau is through the published
Advisory Council Guide for the monthly discussion.
A minimum of structure exists, with the discussion
resembling what occurs anytime friends get together
and talk about common subjects of concern. An
elected secretary reports the essence of the dis-
cussion to the Farm Bureau office in the state
capitol. His feedback from the grassroots level
serves as one of the bases for government decisions.
Topics for discussion are not limited solely to
farm concerns but range over issues of national and
international interest. A problem with this setup
is that one is dealing with a generally homogenous
group--the conservative Ohio farmer. The range of
human contact is limited here, yet parochialism is
a very possible problem with any neighborhood type
of discussion.

One of the better ways for individuals to
learn from one another is by exchanging personal
experiences and insights. A work edited by Hunter
(74), When Tomorrow Becomes Today, reports the
results of a discussion program on retirement
preparation in terms of retired persons' stories
about how they felt and what they did in particu-
lar life situations. Participants talked about
their emotional, financial, and health problems.
Discussion proceedings simply carried over from the
normal life pattern of communication. By relating
to someone else's problems, participants were able
to gain insights into their own. They simply
needed encouragement to converse without any
pressures.

Extant are a number of studies of various
efforts of institutional structures deliberately
fostering programs with emphasis placed on the
intangible aspects of human growth. Solomon (141)
describes a project to effect growth within voca-
tional rehabilitation groups. Solomon's desired
goal for his groups was to experience more fully
awareness in various aspects related to self.
Among the signs indicative that personal growth did
take place were subjects becoming more genuine,
personal risk-taking, and sensitivity to others.
The basic problem with Solomon's approach is his
belief in the efficacy of professionally programmed
materials for growth sessions.

Malamud (95) has a worthwhile report on
Teaching A Human Relations Workshop. Whereas
Solomon believes in employing program materials
throughout all sessions as a focal point, Malamud
uses audio-visual materials only as a starter to
elicit reaction from participants. Malamud's
experience at first was frustrating. People expected
to be spoon-fed human relations as just so many
psychological facts. Much difficulty was encountered
in attempting to motivate discussants to discover
their own insights and absorb those insights in a
personal emotional way. These problems are under-
standable in light of the social phenomenon we will
observe repeatedly (the raising of personal
expectations as a result of the institutional value
structures inculcated into people from the time of
first exposure to those values).

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Psychologist Carl Rogers (124,130) has long
been keenly interested in the possibilities of man
expanding his being through a process of inter-
personal growth. In his book on encounter groups
Rogers advances the real possibilities of the
encounter group as an instrument of change. How
people and organizations change is a salient con-
cern of Rogers; the encounter group is seen as
facilitating change by creating an awareness through
group dynamics of feelings about change and its
constructive possibilities. Rogers concludes that
(129):

> Those who may have thought of the encounter
> group as a fad or phenomenon affecting only
> a few people temporarily, would do well to
> reconsider. In the troubled future that
> lies ahead of us, the trend toward intensive
> group experience is related to deep and
> significant issues having to do with change.
> These changes may occur in persons, in
> institutions, in our urban and cultural
> alienation, in racial tension, in our
> national frictions, in our philosophies,
> our values, our image of man himself. It
> is a profoundly significant movement, and
> the course of its future will, for better or
> for worse, have a profound impact on all of
> us.

Rogers' view of encounter groups is quite distinct
from the dime-store psychodrama or psychotherapy
versions that have proliferated around the country.

Affecting Self-Concept

The initial movement toward acceptance of
constant growth and change involves a solid basis
in attitudes of self. A number of discussion
researchers and workers have noted the importance
of attitudinal structures concerning self when
realizing any true success within discussion which
emphasizes interrelation on a personal basis.
Imbler (78) has done a thesis concerned with the
negative and positive factors affecting self-
concept. Small group discussion under a supportive
and secure atmosphere was used as a means of

enhancing self-concept by training discussants to work as a learning team, thus breaking down the defense mechanism of closed-mindedness that inhibits learning and creates unsatisfactory interpersonal relations. The thesis bore out the conclusion of many previous studies that the more closed-minded a person the less positive his self-concept.

Johnson (81) states in a report on "A Human Relations Training Program for Hospital Personnel" that twice as many discussants in the program found they had learned more about themselves than they had expected to. Role problems within jobs became remote when the discussants found that the group experience was unique and exciting because of the ability to self-initiate experiments and because of an atmosphere of privacy in the expression of opinions and feelings. A major reason for this enthusiasm was the manner in which the laboratory discussion method was set up. The discussion group was strictly self-directed, with no member of the training staff present during discussion. Patterns of leadership and participation were developed spontaneously.

We will examine more closely, in the next chapter, business world awareness of the necessity for developing personnel abilities in human relations. Johnson recognizes this phenomenon and wonders why concern for teaching concept and skills in human relations has not progressed widely among the very professions devoted to helping or giving service to people. How can someone help another if he cannot even understand his own self or relate to any self-concept?

Attitudes and Interpersonal Change

Affecting attitudes is a by-product of almost any discussion. However, discussion can be used as a setting allowing change of attitudes growing out of personal interaction. Fleming (46) investigated the problem-centered discussion as a technique for re-orienting the attitudes of the aged. Personal problems were related and discussed by the group, thus facilitating adjustment to their present reality. When attitude changes do occur,

adjustment to, or a wider perspective of, the
present reality is what usually has taken place.
Too often social conditioning and non-human ori-
entated training blind people to the fact that
people change, using and discarding bases of per-
ception as life and the world move on.

Watson (153) has done a synoptic review of
the literature--fifty studies--on interpersonal
change effected by discussion laboratories in human
relations. He concludes that the results most
commonly reported were:

1. Increased awareness of self in interaction.
2. Increased accuracy of perception of the
   feeling and overt behavior of others.
3. Increased openness in interpersonal
   relationships.
4. Increased acceptance of difference in
   others.
5. Decrease in extreme interpersonal need
   orientations, in the areas of control,
   inclusion and affection.
6. Increased understanding of group behavior,
   and skill as an effective, flexible group
   leader, or interdependent group member.
7. Increased self-confidence in interaction.

As is evident from the analysis thus far,
more exists in discussion than simply the communi-
cation of ideas or thoughts. Correctness of com-
municated ideas has little correlation with
correctness of living or with people interacting
with each other in mutually beneficent, construc-
tive relationships. Discussion does not consist
merely of ideas or thoughts interrelating. Flesh
and blood people are the originators of those ideas
and discussion communication theories must center
about real people--the whole person. A distinction
exists between discussion methods that have the
institutionalized concerns of people as their goal
and discussion theories which in their structural
essence are concerned with real people as they
function at their optimum, not with extrapolated,
ideational concepts.

Hill (69) has done a Comparative Study of Lecture and Discussion, in which he finds that "as a consequence of social pressure, the more the individual's attitude differs from the norm of his group, the greater the likelihood that the individual will leave the group." Now if discussion deviants gradually drift away from participation, how is any attitudinal change going to take place? Many voluntary attendance discussion programs suffer from this effect. The discussion program becomes dominated by a group norm, a strong conforming pressure. Interpersonal relationships and change become intellectual in nature. People can handle intellectual differences very well and remain the best of associates, neighbors, or friends. Differences in attitudinal structures are not handled easily, primarily because people have not learned how to approach and accept one another on a personal being level. Communication gaps arise that cannot be broached by intellectual interchange.

Parten (162), in a 1967 thesis on "discussion procedures for changing attitudes toward acceptance of self and others," perceives personality and interaction from the point of view of the discussion participant. Parten has moved beyond the position many researchers hold; nevertheless, he still maintains that one could use discussion purposely to change people. From his study he found it doubtful that discussion could affect change in the acceptance of the self and others. The attempt to effect change by the manipulation of the terms of change is like trying to teach a dog to sit by telling him "sit."

Change takes place in the continual assessment of experience and sense data. A discussion participant can expect to experience a constant barrage of intellectual, attitudinal, and emotional patterns. Change will of necessity be slow and gradual until a common denominator of awareness can be achieved among the discussion participants. Ideally, one moment's conclusion is the next moment's starting point. Relevancy becomes relative itself in an open-ended, non-directive discussion. The goal should be growth, a quality intrinsic in one's desire to Be.

CHAPTER III

APPROACHES TO GROUP DISCUSSION

The Role of Leadership

In a chapter, "Discussion Leading and
Group Training Theory," in the Industrial Training
Handbook, Barber (10) imparts the purpose of a
leader with this quote from Kahlil Gibran:

> No man can reveal to you aught but that which
> already lies asleep in the dawning of your
> knowledge. If he is indeed wise he does not
> bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but
> rather leads you to the threshold of your
> own mind.

Barber combines the practicalities of management
needs with the growth and personality needs of the
discussion participant and balances the demands of
both parties. He sees as vital discussion of
specific roles, responsibilities, and work targets
between those in authority and those below who will
have to achieve the targets, fulfill the roles,
and meet the responsibilities. Barber indirectly
challenges the professional's affectation of know-
ledge by stating that even the most perceptive
person in charge of discussion cannot always apprise
its undertones with complete accuracy. Good
industrial training discussion, he believes, "will
stimulate each member of the group to greater per-
ceptiveness and to impartial service."

The role of leadership in discussions
centered on the development of interpersonal dyna-
mics is analyzed in several studies. Anderson (41)
notes that in intercultural discussion groups
Americans rated the effectiveness of a leader by
his consideration and his ability in initiation of
structure, while those from India were only con-
cerned with a leader's considerate behavior toward
discussants. Considerate behavior seemed to be
linked more with a non-directive rather than a
directive discussion approach.

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Flint (47) sees leadership as a function of
feedback based on a discussion member's awareness
of the extent of his conformity or deviation from
the group norm of opinion. Apparently the more
"correct" one seems to be, the more likely will one
attempt leadership in a group. This is a surrepti-
tious manner of influencing the direction of
discussion via leadership and the model of the
group norm. Correctness and group viability become
values tied to norm structures.

Rowell (133), in his "Theory of Lay Leader-
ship for Adult Study Groups in the Church,"
emphasizes the leader as an agent of the church
paramountly concerned with the personal need of the
laity. Church goals are a backdrop to discussion
participants interacting with each other in a
self-actualizing manner. Again, however, adherence
to generally defined goals within an institutional
life style leads to a parochialism that must be
ultimately limiting in terms of the original
person-oriented goals.

Wood and Goldberg (157) researched the
"effects of three styles of training upon small
group effectiveness" and found that the very
presence of a trainer-leader, a perceived status
figure, created an authority problem which "inhibited
interaction, increased competitiveness and decreased
the possibilities for self-disclosure." The study
didn't deny that trainer-led discussions were
effective, but suggested that removal of trainee
dependence may result in better group performance.
The trainer then can remain outside the group and
spend his time providing feedback material so that
the group can self-evaluate its performance and map
out its own path of discovery.

A study that bears on such intangibles of
group discussion as leadership styles is The
Relationship Between Sociability and Rate of
Interaction, by Rose (132). Interaction due to
personality relationships is as important as any
social or external force acting upon the discussion
group. Rose's concern is not the discussion method
or structure but simply the variation in interaction
patterns. Recognizing that different leadership
styles affect type and rate of interaction, Rose

rotated leaders between the various experimental
groups. Style of communication affected effective-
ness of communication and finally the success of
any discussion group. The study enters the area of
human relationships at its most essential level--
the psychological differences that affect person-
ality style and communication.

Non-Manipulative Approaches

Recently, steps have been made to move
away from the blatantly manipulative uses of dis-
cussion. Batten (12) has a study out: The Non-
Directive Approach in Group and Community Work. At
least he perceives the need of people to manage
their own affairs. By enabling people "to meet
more of their own needs by themselves they can
increase their status and feeling of self-respect."
But the interests of the social or educational
agencies are still apparent in Batten's observation
that with the non-directive approach agencies can
"accomplish more with their limited resources . . ."
since ". . . no social or educational agency ever
has enough material resources to do all the work it
wants to do." Another observation is "that people
will generally look after what they provide for
themselves more carefully than what an agency
provides for them."

The non-directive approach in discussion is
one way out of the dilemma of the individual versus
the institution. In trying to develop a discussion
method that grants more freedom, however, research-
ers and workers are still constrained by previous
modes of perceiving the object of discussion.
Batten, who sees the need of freedom from control,
and manipulation, still asserts that the non-
directive worker has to provide both stimulus and
structure. He believes that the professional
discussion worker is required to "get people
thinking and go on with their thinking until they
reach some definite conclusion." And structure is
important to ensure that the conclusions are
practical and relevant to need. If people can't
think on their own, it may in large part be due to
the modus operandi of the education and social
system--the constant force-feeding of knowledge,
sense data, and already formulated conclusions.

Paulo Freire, in his Pedagogy of the
Oppressed (50): calls this force-feeding the
"banking concept of education." Those in power
maintain their dominance by "depositing" certain
beliefs that the social apparatus forces those
dominated to "withdraw" or learn.

The oppressors use their 'humanitarianism'
to preserve a profitable situation. Thus
they react almost instinctively against
any experiment in education which stimulates
the critical faculties. . . . Indeed the
interests of the oppressors lie in 'chang-
ing the consciousness of the oppressed, not
the situation which oppresses them'; for the
more the oppressed can be led to adapt to
that situation, the more easily they can
be dominated.' To achieve this end, the
oppressors use the banking concept of
education in conjunction with a paternal-
istic social action apparatus. . . .

In the non-directive discussion approach
the worker-leader is to employ a structure producing
a disciplining effect on the discussion group's
efforts to arrive at conclusions. The use of
a structure that derives in the head of the worker-
leader is a form of consciousness manipulation:
imposition of a reality upon the discussion group.
If there is to be a structural discipline in the
discussion it seems to us that even that should be
self-initiated. Any person or group serious in
intent and action in their growth and/or learning
will eventually perceive the need for structure and
discipline and will evolve and formulate their own
in keeping with the self-initiated direction.

Blake (18) uses a unique system in his
"Structural Communication" that places emphasis on
independent judgment encouraged by self-monitoring
and inner alertness. The group training exercises
were centered on case studies, open forums, struc-
tured interactions, and self-monitoring exercises.
Discussants saw for themselves how much of a grip
conditioning had on their thinking, their approach
to problems, and even their manner of listening.
An interesting principle on which the program
operated was that "nothing of professional

importance can be conveyed to people by instruction." Although the program was structured, no external guidelines existed, a fact that was disturbing to some of the participants--again, conditioning.

Human Relations--Sensitivity
Training

According to George K. Gordon (164), "one of the most distinctive educational inventions of the mid-twentieth century is known as 'human relations training' or 'sensitivity training'. . . For practical purposes they [the two terms] have become interchangeable. Regardless of the name, this type of training is an important part of the educational program of many institutions and organizations. . . . Human relations training programs generally share three common character-istics: (1) they are focused on learning about self and relationships with others; (2) the learn-ing is based on the personal experience of the learners themselves as they associate with one another during the training; (3) the learners become collaborative investigators accepting increasing responsibility for directing their own learning."

As Pigors (120,121) has noted in "Operation Springboard," at one time a common over-simplified view was that "human relations problems should be handled by specialists in the personnel department." Presently, various universal business conditions have emphasized the need to consider human re-sources. Kimball (115) notes that "an individual's personal development plan is of significance to a business in that how he views his progress or lack of it reflects in job performance. Wholesome self-development becomes reflected in increased efficiency and, thus, is of primary interest to business. The discussion study by the Pigors (121) indicates that "management development is one area where personal goals can be harmonized with organi-zational objectives if programs actually contribute to adult education rather than consisting merely in training for compliance with predetermined policies and procedures."

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Golembiewski studied (54) "Confrontation as a Training Design" and found that an exchange of "images" among individuals or organizational units led to favorable attitude changes and to a long-range program attitude change. An awareness of differences among people interacting leads to the maintenance of a flexible position in policy-making and attitude formation. A "Study of the Effectiveness of Sensitivity Training as an Inservice Teacher-Training Program in Human Relations" by Lee (166) indicates that teachers in sensitivity training manifested an increase in self-esteem and that the students of those teachers were absent from class significantly less. Greater awareness of the integrity of another's personhood results in better interrelation among people.

Dice (167) has written on the "Influence of An Educational Awareness Experience," showing that the awareness method can be used as a rationale for planning adult education programs in areas of community and resource development. A concern for integrative changes in personhood is indicated in a thesis by Shay (136) on "Self Concept Changes Among Alcoholic Patients. . . . Resulting from Participation Training in Group Discussion." By being trained in how to relate to each other as persons with common problems, adjustments were made by the patients that produced change apparent even to the subjects themselves.

Peace Corps trainers have seen the need for human relations training via discussion. Trainees have been brought to a state of increasing self-awareness by noting their personal reactions to field situations. The report by Haigh (54) shows how awareness of motives, feeling, and cultural values permits trainees to explore other patterns for handling interpersonal relationships. Development of flexibility, openness, and tolerance to frustration was a goal of a Peace Corps discussion leadership training project reported by Frandsen (49).

Slocum (138), at the University of Washington, did an evaluation study of student T-groups. Students using the T-group method exhibited greater changes in a positive manner

toward sensitivity and self awareness than did con-
trol groups following a case study method of
learning human relations. Personal experience is
far more applicable than duly digested facts.

Another report on application of the T-
group method was made by Bolman (20) concerning a
university business executive program. Laboratory
(i.e., T-group) training affected behavior and
self-perception more than the traditional approach
of lecture-discussion. Difficulty was encountered
in transferring learning from the T-group to other
parts of the program because of the use of differ-
ing learning models that questioned the validity of
the T-group findings. The study could not deny
that some change was effected in subsequent on-the-
job behavior. The change would probably have been
greater if a supportive atmosphere existed
throughout the program. It seems inconceivable
that a program would include diverse and incom-
patible learning models, yet this inconsistency
which negatively affects the learning process of
participants exists in many programs. Within what
is essentially traditional drill-fact teaching,
educators throw in some personal human contact and
call it "character building." The problem of
manipulation toward non-self-initiated ends still
looms.

T-group sessions have been termed the
"thinking man's LSD," and the same abuses noted
with LSD can be applied also to T or encounter group
sessions. Too often the session is seen as an end
in itself. The emotional catharsis of an intensive
group experience is sought after as a totally
defined experience and as an end in itself. As
the Ohio State study noted, people become addicted
to the experience.

Toffler (147) makes the observation in
Future Shock that people are collecting experiences
and are using them as status symbols in the same
manner that a previous generation collected mater-
ial goods; appearances change but the problem
remains unrecognized and unchanged. Man today
seems to want to avoid any true "encounter" with
the being of another human. He reduces himself to
the objects of his psychological mechanisms of

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avoidance and effectively trades himself off like
bubble gum cards assiduously collected to give some
meaning to his life. "I'll trade you four nervous
breakdowns for one divine ecstasy." We must learn
how to touch one another and communicate human
being to human being without any pretensions.

We feel that discussion groups oriented
toward human relations training may have something
to offer, but should not be regarded as a panacea
for problems related to a lack of awareness of (or
sensitivity to) personhood. Nor should human
relations training be seen as a means of ultimately
changing institutions. Katz and Kahn (85), in
"Organizational Change," warn readers of this major
error of confusing individual change with modifica-
tions of organizational variables. Discussions on
how to change institutions only bring about an
awareness of possible need for change but rarely
change itself. On the other hand, simply to become
more aware of the variables in interpersonal
relationships is not enough.

Awareness in itself is useless if not
extrapolated into some form of application to daily
living. However, if people change as a result of
discussion efforts and do not communicate their
change and its meaning in relation to the institu-
tional roles they play, a psychological gulf is
created separating the individual from his insti-
tutions. One of two things usually happens; either
the person opts out of the institutional arrange-
ments in his life, or he compromises and accepts
the constraint of his being, settling for his little
niche in the order of society.

The reader is directed to a book just
published for an incisive treatment of this area,
Beyond Words: The Story of Sensitivity Training
and the Encounter Movement (174). The author,
Kurt Back, is a Professor of Sociology and
Psychiatry at Duke University. His book presents
a concise history, includes interviews with all the
major figures (Bradford, Benne, Bennis, etc.), and
attempts to place the movement within appropriate
social, political, economic, scientific, and
(surprise?) religious contexts. Back deals tren-
chantly with both positive and negative aspects,

explores the difficult question of research valida-
tion thoroughly, and does not flinch from expres-
sing his own opinions in an interesting writing
style which reveals instead of concealing his own
admitted bias toward "hard science."

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CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION IN THE SERVICE OF

INSTITUTIONS

A large body of literature is concerned with research and studies of discussion directed toward some type of community, social, or educational work conducted within an institutional framework. From childhood to old age persons will come into contact with some form of discussion programs within the various institutions they live with and use to somehow order their affairs. Much of this reporting type of discussion literature, unfortunately, is useless to anyone but pedantic researchers in the institutional area actually involved in the program.

The typical institutional-set discussion is conducted with modified directed methods or limiting non-directed methods. In a modified directed method the discussion is specifically guided toward some type of goal that serves the altruistic organizer. In the limiting non-directed discussion, participants are permitted to explore the discussion topics in whatever way desired with a structuring influence being provided by some professional. No matter which way it is expressed, both methods imply consciousness control.

The power group directing the institution has a vested interest in retaining its control. Organized discussion which would lead to self-originating and self-directed growth encounters the hazards imposed by institutional aegis. At Indiana State in 1967, Dollins (35) did a study on the "effect of group discussion as a learning procedure on the adaptive behavior of adult mental retardates." The group discussed topics that were loaded with the implications of control: "Where does the adult learn when he does not go to school"? "How do you act to keep a job"? "Why is discussion fun"? "Does everyone have someone who tells him what to do"? "What does it mean to behave"? "What do we do when we behave"? "Why should we work"? These

questions are of the same type that are discussed
in secondary education classes, with the design of
setting behavior patterns "acceptable" to those in
control.

Solomon, Berzon, and Davis (141), in a 1970
study on a "Personal Growth Program for Self-
Directed Groups," face the issue of personal growth
and its process within a discussion setting very
well. But the whole program took place within the
context of adult rehabilitation, with participants
garnered from volunteers who showed interest in the
self-improvement program to their counselors. If
you have trouble getting a job, maybe you need a
better self concept. Our institution provides you
with the means. Too many professionals believe
they hold the key and that people are not capable
of initiating their own programs. People come to
believe in their own diminished capabilities when
institutions keep saying "we are the way" for
whatever need you have.

A gulf frequently exists between those who
seek to grow in whatever way they choose and the
persons who potentially could help them avoid the
pitfalls and abuses of the self-initiated learning
or growth path chosen. The professional who could
personally give of his experience is conditioned
by institutions because his subsistence depends on
them. Voluntary associations of the type which
characterized the adult education movement of the
18th and 19th centuries are impossible under
present-day conditions. Yet voluntary associations
were once an earmark of Americanism. Discussion
set-ups that would be free of manipulation would be
of the voluntary association type. Something which
once was so uniquely American, however, is today
perceived as a radical concept. Illich (77) pre-
sently propounds what is essentially voluntary
association as an alternative educational form to
our present institutional arrangements.

Alker and Kogan find that "discussions along
particular topical lines can produce significant
increases in individual conservatism. Where
normative standards defining appropriate or correct
modes of conduct emerge or are reinforced through
group discussion, the basis for enhanced

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conservatism has been established." When normative
standards do not emerge, greater risk-taking mani-
fests itself and there is a greater tolerance for
individual idiosyncrasies. Human growth requires
risks; human understanding grows from tolerance of
the multitude of personalities so different from
one's self. Very few institutional discussions of
the type we are now reviewing allow and provide for
methods of risk taking, of breaking out of habitual
patterns.

Parent Education

By far the greatest amount of institutional
discussion work, if the literature is an accurate
indicator, is done with families, especially
mothers and fathers. Since much of life for the
majority of people is concerned with child-rearing,
family discussion work is only natural. Institu-
tions that understandably offer aid, however, are
frequently guilty of fostering dependency. Even
private institutions take on a paternalistic
quality, partly because of the state laws that
govern their activities. If we follow the thread
of rationale in many institutional actions, we
come up against an establishment of values that
either has the force of law or is enforced by the
law. Institutions and their programs invariably
reflect these established values.

As much as institutional values must be
subject to constant scrutiny, the family-community
discussions have highlighted the personal aspect of
human behavior. Social workers who work in these
programs are brought into gut contact with the real
problems of real people. In his interesting book,
Parents Learn Through Discussion (9), Auerback
notes that discussion is as much an emotional
experience as an intellectual one. He believes
that certain concerns are universal and that a group
can be brought to see this. A discussion group
begins to realize that the responses of individuals
to certain characteristic stages of human develop-
ment take different forms depending on personality
and externals. Auerback makes the novel admission
that it is difficult to measure the success of
parent education discussion groups because the end

product is the mental health of children and this
is measurable only in general terms. In real
terms and not in terms of variables, the end
product of any discussion is unmeasurable.

"Objective" evaluation of parent education
programs entailing discussion is tortuously teased
out in many of the reports on these programs. For
example, Kraft (87) claims success was determined
in a program helping low-income families not
according to announced practical goals but accord-
ing to inferred therapeutic side-effects of parti-
cipation, such as self-confidence.

Parent education programs have involved
specific goals of attitudinal change, with mixed
results. Programs of this type invariably involve
professional leaders with very definite ideas of
what are proper attitudes. See Robinson and
Spaights (127), Gamble (53), Heckman (66), and
Shapiro (135).

Programs were also devised to aid parent-
child communications and to help parents avoid
problems in the home as a result of a lack of
understanding of their children. Jackson (86),
DeRosis (33), Crow (27), and Harding (61) cover
several aspects of this approach. Harding's study
interestingly notes the enthusiastic response of
the participants who took part in a one-week program
at a state park. The stimulation of the outdoors
and the mutual participation in living activities
no doubt contributed to the program's success.

Mills (167), Rabinowitz and Daniels (124),
and Endres (39) report on study discussion programs
entailing training in child rearing practices. The
programs took place under strict institutional and
professional control. Rabinowitz and Daniels, in
coping with the vagaries of low-income family
participation, learned about some cultural factors
that were not previously considered.

Alexander (1) has a data-filled evaluation
of a family service program in a New York community.
The study is self-serving and contains findings
that are the common sense, inevitable result of any
half-decent program. Members of a study discussion

group were found to significantly increase their
knowledge and to use it. This type of evaluation
adds nothing to our understanding of discussion.
But the program was publicly funded and, thus, a
report had to be made to justify public expendi-
tures. Another piece of unneeded literature was
added to the paper flood.

A similar public report fulfilling the same
need to justify public expenditures is the Report
of the Berkeley Parent Education Workshop (140).
The paper even has a "report of the coffee and
snack breaks committee" presented in all serious-
ness. The paper, signed by Max Rafferty, Super-
intendent of Public Instruction, relates nothing
about the reactions of participants or what effects
the program had on participants.

Berger (15) reports on a continuous parent
education group in New York that may lead to a
successful voluntary association. The League for
Parent Education aims at providing "an orientation
and an enriching understanding of parent-child
relationships." Other parents and friends help
each other in rearing children with no outside
institutional aid. Discussion leaders are hired
who are professionals from the various fields of
social work, psychology, and family life education.
In order to provide maximum benefit, in-depth and
varied exposure, the leader stays with a group for
only two years. Berger senses that the experience
of the League can be repeated in any community
where there is an awareness of the value of parent
education. However, if the awareness doesn't exist,
the program would have to be provided by profes-
sionals within an institutional setting funded
privately or publicly. But Berger believes that
rather than follow that approach, professionals
should serve as "catalysts to stimulate interest)
and to encourage people to do the organizing and
fund raising necessary to provide the structure."

Religious Education

Churches tend too often to use discussion
to serve what they conceive as "their" ends instead
of being way-stations giving shelter to people in

their own growth journeys. Two theses that demon-
strate the problem are by Peters (119), Role of
Small Groups in Christian Adult Education, and
Kamitsuka (168), A Conceptual Scheme for an
Adaptation of Participation Training in Adult
Education for Use in the Three Love Movement in
Japan. Peters believes that a study of small
groups throughout Christian history from the time
of Christ shows that discussion groups should have
compatible values and norms with a common purpose
or cause. In extrapolating guidelines for suc-
cessful church-related discussions Peters has only
perpetuated a common fault of Western religions:
their belief in their exclusiveness and uniqueness.
A discussion along Peters' guidelines holds promise
of very little dissension and for much organization
of action upon certain beliefs (common purpose).
Kamitsuka's history of the Three Love Movement
almost seems to apologize for the movement's
beginnings in unyielding devotion, love, and obedi-
ence to the Japanese Emperor. Discussion is a
means used within an extremely rigid educational
pattern that serves the paternalism of the state
structure which sees all Japan as one family. The
church's use of discussion may be more considerate
of the qualities of human interrelations and of
personal growth dynamics, but ultimately faces the
same dilemma of a belief structure that is invari-
ably a closed system.

A study done in a church setting by Steven-
son comparing residential and non-residential
programs concluded that the residential program was
best. A somewhat redundant conclusion in the face
of the alternatives--community or non-community.
An interesting footnote was that as a direct result
of the residential discussion participants in-
creased the percentage of personal income that was
given to the church by the participants!

Leslie's (90) Sharing Groups in the Church
points to some abuses of discussion. The leader
is just that, a leader and not a member of the
group. In the name of greater interpersonal growth
and change, the goals of the church and its
appointed agent, the leader, are advocated and
served. Leslie has perceived many of the essential
needs of participants in discussion. Of all the

discussion writers, he alone states that love is
the basis for interrelationships in group sessions.
He brings Martin Buber's I-Thou philosophy to the
discussion level, but resorts to artificial process
terms, i.e., the five stages of "the drama of
salvation in the supportive group process: the
call, conviction, grace, crucifixion, resurrection."
Although Leslie states that it takes community to
be human and that discussion groups should typify
communities in interaction, his "I-Thou" discus-
sions are constrained by his particular model of a
certain religious reality. Participants in growth
are limited to that mode of perception.

Education for Aging

Institutional programs dealing with the
aged are researched by Mason (98), Mills (105),
and Hunter (74). Mason's study demonstrates only
that the aged can use opportunities to talk to each
other in a non-habitual manner. No observable
change took place in behavior patterns, validating
the observation of the aged's preoccupation with
self, reduced investment in the environment, and
lessening of the variety of interaction with others.
Hunter's studies indicate that the best that pre-
sently designed discussion programs can do for the
aged is to prepare them for the reality of the
retirement situation. Hunter's research was
supported by federal grants and consequently
includes much data justifying the money spent. To
top it off, a federally funded university report
structured by a servant of the institution concludes
that the program was more effective with well-
educated whites and thus further study (and more
federal money) is nee ed. (If a highly educated,
white, institutional structure devises a program
that is self-serving, how can the less advantaged
benefit?)

Mills's report concludes that the aged need
to learn more about the developmental psychology of
aging, improved verbal communication skills, and
cultivation of respect for diversity. These needs
can be ascertained from any study, for we can
always benefit from continuing learning in such
areas.

Public Affairs Discussion

Another area of discussion use serving
institutional ends is public affairs education.
The Ford Foundation spent two million dollars on
"packaged" study discussion programs as a framework
for "issues" group discussion (22). For a program
in economics the goal recommended was that the focus
should be on the gross national product, a topic
fitting the "average adult concerned about his
citizenship responsibilities." That citizenship
responsibilities are somehow connected to gross
national product is a value judgment. The packaged
program worked best in the area of the arts, areas
in which the average person does not have a working
knowledge but desires to learn something about. In
the final report (52) on the Ford Foundation Fund
for Adult Education, an aim of discussion is seen
as "improving the ability of participants to make
independent judgments on critical issues." Whether
programmed discussion can lead to independent
judgment is problematic. Voicing an opinion based
on experience and making an independent judgment
based on developed wisdom are two different things.

Freedman and Power, in (51) The Few and the
Many, lambast some of the naivete of researchers
who talk about spreading public awareness of issues.
The fact is that even with universal public educa-
tion only a few people, one percent according to
Power, have a broad and undistorted knowledge of
public issues. That being the case, public affairs
discussion may lead to more obfuscation as well as
possible clarification.

Harp and Cummings found that public affairs
discussions attracted more participants in smaller
towns than in larger and middle-size cities, although
the issues discussed were of far more importance to
the larger urban areas. Discussion participants
were concerned about means to implement ideas
discussed. Harp and Cummings (62) could only lamely
conclude that "it would appear that additional
information is required as to the legitimate means
of initiating social action in a democracy." In
questions of this nature, we come down to the
nitty-gritty of political power and the possibilities
of responsible initiation of political action.

In a study made by Anderson (161) in 1947
of selected Wisconsin adult organizations and
public agencies, the point is made that discussion
aids the exercise of democratic rights by educating
the adult in how to make an intelligent choice in
voting. The governmental system is an accepted
given and the citizen is only provided information
that will enable him to vote with knowledge of why
he cast his vote the way he did. By thus manipu-
lating the ends and means of the discussion, lead-
ers can preclude freer inquiry into the nature and
composition of the power structure and the system
that brought it into being.

Police-community relations discussion
experiments are researched by Bell (14) and Lipsitt
and Steinbrunner (91). The studies give evidence
of the obvious. When the aggrieved community
meets with its antagonists within a legal power
structure in an atmosphere supportive of human
relations growth, police and community decrease the
hostility existing between them. However, when we
consider practical power plays we find a different
story. A community relations project in San
Francisco encountered stiff resistance from the
police ranks. The police unit involved in the
program and the community they worked with were
mutually able to lessen tension through human
relations understanding. However, the police unit
found itself often working at cross purposes with
the rest of the force. Forced to become a rubber
stamp for police policies, the head of the unit
eventually quit. Turner (150) gives a colorful
account of this experiment in The Police
Establishment.

Other institutional uses of discussion are
described by Mills (106), Use of Diagnostic Small
Groups in Police Recruit Selection and Training;
Zeller (159), A Short-Term Adult Program Experiment
in a Correctional Institution; Dollins (35), The
Effect of Group Discussion as a Learning Procedure
on the Adaptive Social Behavior of Educable Adult
Mental Retardates; and Dance (29), Communication
Training for Role Transformation, The Preparation
of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers for Training
Project Staff Roles. The discussion uses in the
above cases are narrowly defined to serve a specific

institutional purpose. In one manner or another
the discussant is prepared for the acceptance of
some type of functioning role in the institutional
setting.

Discussion has also been utilized to serve
government directly. A draft report (43) on a
Leadership Orientation Program stated that a pur-
pose of the program was "to prepare community
organization leaders for active participation in
determining the future role as well as goals and
objectives for the newly established Falls-of-the-
Ohio Metropolitan Council of Governments." Each of
the twelve sessions, however, was set up with
forty-five to sixty minutes for speakers and only
forty-five minutes or less for discussion on topics
about which participants had little detailed
knowledge.

The federal government has adopted discus-
sion as a technique for involving the rural
population in civil defense planning. Role playing
and success stories of other communities are used
in this "public relations" discussion program (42)
in order to get across the greater need for civil
defense preparedness. Whale's (154) Appraisal of
Process of Planning for Total Resource Development
in a Wisconsin County relates that there was more
dissimilarity than similarity between needs identi-
fied by citizens groups and those established by
the professionals orienting the groups. The
discussion participants were extensions of the
professional's pet ideas of what was the best
course of development. The professionals thought
their special body of knowledge permitted them a
greater degree of success in perception, a self
attitude that was not shared by the community
participants.

When poverty programs were a government fad
in the middle and late sixties, several programs
with heavy use of discussion were constructed.
New York University's Harlem Seminars (103,139)
were found to have low visibility because of poor
subsidizing. Irregular attendance plagued the
experiment, and to remedy this situation, the
project coordinators suggested that participants
be encouraged to enroll in the entire series and

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receive a certificate upon completion. (In other
words, the program would work better if it mimicked
the local educational form of attendance and
supplied a piece of paper, a form that miserably
failed to meet the real needs of the underprivileged.)

Project ENABLE sought to reach low income
families for family-life education discussion. This
program was successful in drawing on the strengths
of the people it was attempting to serve. The
program had 200 aides recruited from the neighbor-
hoods as well as 138 professionals. But cross-
purposes arose between the project's institutional
bias and the poverty family's distrust of institu-
tions within "the system." The parents" mistrust
was overcome because family care is a universal
concern which strikes across class lines. Studies
of ENABLE were made by Manser (97), Simulmatics
Corporation (40), and Birnbaum (17).

Somewhat similar studies in different social
areas are Priester's (122) report of a program
reaching low income young homemakers in a rural
area, Robert's (126) evaluation of methods in
getting a new farm practice adopted, and Edwards
and Ring's (37) study of a demonstration project
on fertility control. The extraordinary feature of
these programs was that their operators went to the
participants' homes and farms for personal contact
to maintain motivation and awareness. Circular
newsletters were also involved in the studies by
Robert and Priester, with good success in maintain-
ing awareness. Maintenance of awareness is diffi-
cult in Utterback (151), Beckhard (13), Menkin
(101,102), and Gutzmer (58).

One interesting work for sake of comparison
with American views of discussion in education
schemes is the 1966 proceedings of the annual
conference of the Australian Association of Adult
Education (9). The Australian report states that
self-realization depends on the membership of
groups. This belief is derived logically from the
stated fact that people need each other in order
to be themselves.

4.4

Use of Discussion Guides

Of value for the beginning student of discussion and those studying contemporary consciousness are discussion guides. Discussion guides are a needed crutch when other concise source materials are scarce, when the time necessary to train leaders in the discussion content is short, or when simple creative imagination in posing questions is of short supply. Pennsylvania State University has a number of high quality discussion guides in public issues, with readings by knowledgeable persons in the field. These guides: Latin America in the Sixties (109); United Nations (116), Modern Political Economy (65), Psychological Problems in the American Family (63), Social Influences Upon Human Behavior (44), and Recent American History 1932-1965 (100) are good for creating issue awareness.

An issue of Intercom (72) was devoted to instructing program planners on how to prepare a world affairs program. A vast amount of information was given in the form of bibliographies of speaker sources, tape and film sources, public agency materials sources, and where to go for public briefings by private and official agencies. Bibliographies of this type are of considerable aid to groups who wish to self-initiate and construct their own program. The New Jersey Community Action Training Institute put together a catalogue (117) of training materials that can serve the same purpose. Ellison's bibliography (38) of materials designed for adult discussion use provides quite a variety in choice of topic areas.

Young's book (158), The Mystery of Matter, is evidence of originality in concept. Instead of studying and discussing the present state of scientific knowledge, the reader is led through the growth of a scientific concept from its historical beginnings to its present application. Insights are gained into the conditions of growth. By emphasizing the growth and developmental process, basic issues are raised that stimulate thought and discussion.

We hope more discussion manuals will
reflect the growing realization that our present
state of affairs in any area is the result of the
dynamics of the growth process within a group.
The most current writings (e.g., Bormann, Paterson)
on discussion have already begun to recognize what
discussion should be in relation to man's ultimate
end of self-realization and transcendence. We
venture the opinion that discussion literature may
move further in this direction.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND THE MASS MEDIA

In recent years, as technology has broadened rapidly in scope, complexity, and range, it is understandable that adult educators have sought ways of linking it with discussion. Discussion has been connected with print media, computers, phonograph records, tapes, films, and slides. But perhaps the most seductive possibilities have been in regard to radio and television because of their ability to reach large numbers of people over great spaces at the same time.

The development has been called by various names but perhaps the most common is "listening group." Ohliger has attempted this definition (176):

> When a group of adults meets together on a
> regular basis to discuss radio or television
> programs for educational purposes, this
> activity is known as a listening group. It
> is usually conducted under the leadership
> of a lay person, sometimes with the assist-
> ance of supplemental printed materials and
> with arrangements for two-way communication
> [feedback] between the listeners and the
> broadcasters.

Ohliger's dissertation (110) and a con-
densation published in 1967 (111) chronicled the history of the listening group throughout the world since its first application in England through the BBC in the early 1920's. A recent article of his brings the history up to 1971 (176).

Perhaps the most significant finding in these histories is that listening groups can attract more clientele of lower economic and educational attainment than can most adult education programs. But Ohliger's work fails to come to grips with the manipulative potential in the organization of such groups. In a time of declin-ing legitimacy of the standard educational

institutions this potential will be very attractive
to those who would pursue, consciously or uncon-
sciously, the goal of controlling the lives of
others by turning the whole world into a school
with the aid of media technology. There are
already signs that this is happening.

International Uses of Mass Media
and Discussion

The problems and potential here are most
evident at present in countries outside the United
States, especially in the so-called "underdeveloped
countries." Internationally, leaders of institu-
tions are discovering that mass-media programs with
discussion follow-up constitute an effective means
of imparting information, changing attitudes and
behaviors. That group listening and discussion is
effective is demonstrated by projects in the
"underdeveloped countries" which have been
researched by Ohliger (110), Jain (169), Sitaram
(170), and Inquai (79). Group listening and
discussion have also been tried in government
programs pushing literacy education (42). The radio
has been an aid in enabling "underdeveloped coun-
tries" to popularize planning programs and make
efficient use of limited communication resources.
In the Phillipines the radio-discussion program
format has been adopted for adult education in
citizenship, personal and environmental health,
parent education, and education for a better
livelihood.

With the spreading use of television,
discussion programs have arisen using this medium
for its obvious visual advantage. A UNESCO-Senegal
project (48) found that educational television,
which to be effective requires discussion groups,
heightened awareness of social problems and as a
result might be an important factor in national
development. Because of the cost differential
between radio and television communication systems,
radio may be the predominant mass media tool in the
"underdeveloped countries."

The problem of the manipulative potential
of listening groups in "underdeveloped countries"

is best treated within the context of the overall
use of communications technology in adult education
in those countries. See, for example, the series
of exchanges still continuing between Henry Cas-
sirer and David Gueulette in the pages of Mass
Media/Adult Education, the newsletter of the Mass
Media Section of the Adult Education Association of
the U.S.A. Other writers are joining in this
exchange and the basic papers (177,178) have been
published as literature reviews by ERIC/AE.

Cassirer, who in his many years with UNESCO
as Director of the Division of the Use of Mass
Media in Out-of-School Education was undoubtedly
the single person most responsible for spreading
listening groups in these countries, writes (177):

In face of the recent population growth and
technological development, a UNESCO publi-
cation entitled The New Media: Memo to
Educational Planners concluded, 'Many more
people have to be educated for a
continually increasing span of their lives so
that they may absorb an ever-expanding and
changing body of knowledge.' To cope with
the exigencies of this revolutionary situa-
tion arising from the need to educate adults
in a constantly changing society, it has
become essential to find new methods and make
use of mass media for this purpose. The
considerable strides made in recent years in
the press, radio, film and television world
have provided increased opportunities for the
utilization of these media in various aspects
of education, i.e., out-of-school education,
literacy, rural development and family plan-
ning. At UNESCO, a division of the Depart-
ment of Mass Communication is specifically
responsible for the investigation and the
implementation of these possibilities in
Member States.

But Gueulette, who has traveled, lived, and
worked in these countries, comments (178):

UNESCO has contributed much to the general
approach to the utilization of mass media in
Third World nations and consequently has no

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doubt established the pervasive dogmatic
attitude toward bringing to these countries
highly technical, mostly unnecessary,
schemes for schooling. Beside many efforts
to industrialize and mechanize the educa-
tional processes of developing lands,
UNESCO has been energetic in the publishing
and distribution of the 'always successful
programs' and imploring other organizations
to follow their lead. UNESCO's New Educa-
tional Media in Action: Case Studies for
Planners [ed. note: the publication
Cassirer referred to is the summary volume
in this series] is typical of the sort of
material that it prints. It is full of cases
in which new media are used for the improve-
ment of the educational process. It soft
sells to the readers the various para-
phernalia that could be employed to
mechanize schools in almost any country. It
reminds me of several advertisements I saw
last year that tried to sell weapons systems
to small nations. From small arms to jet
fighters, we have what is just right for you.
UNESCO publications are full of such adver-
tisements to the developing nations naturally
under the guise of respectable research
projects. The general omission of an hypo-
thesis and the inclusion of insufferable
amounts of irrelevant data indicate, to my
satisfaction, that the project results are
nothing but window dressing to market modern
technical gadgetry.

Mass Media and Community Education

Governmental agencies and educational
television stations have been interested in the
uses of TV and radio as a means of community
education directed toward social change. Projects
in Canada have been studied by Mackie (94), and
Sim (137). Groombridge (57) has edited at UNESCO
a comparative study of ETV in Canada, Czechoslo-
vokia and Japan.

Starr (142) and Johnson (82) researched TV
experiments in Massachusetts and St. Louis.
Starr's study of the Massachusetts experiment

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reveals the difficulties entailed when putting
together programs that touch upon sensitive con-
cerns of power complexes, e.g., mayor vs. police
commissioner. The U.S. University Council on
Education for Public Responsibility initiated a
television series program in 1964 on modern urban
life that had the ambitious aim of stimulating the
formation of nationwide discussion groups. Results
were spotty, but indicated the most widespread use
ever of local panels for a nationally produced film
series shown in eighty U.S. and Canadian cities.
Miller (104) gives a colorful account of this
venture by national educational television.

A Recent Scientific Approach

One view that derives from scientific
thinking has bearing here. It is just coming to
the fore and starts with the assumption that mass
media produce a highly efficient use of human
energy in creating awareness. According to this
approach, when audio-visual presentations are
followed by discussion, participants have an even
wider base to operate from as a result of the
increased array of evoked emotional and intel-
lectual responses. The human perception input
system is heavily favored toward sight, not hearing.
Verbal communication is a most inefficient use of
energy. Writing is a worse use of energy, but the
printed word can be distributed in small quantities
cheaper than any other method.

Sources for this view include a study by
Tribus and McIrvine on "Energy and Information" in
Scientific American (149). In it the authors find
that verbal telephone conversation for one minute
involves .008 joules (energy units) per bit of
information. One minute of a radio broadcast
involves .0006 joules per bit. The projection of
one 35 mm. slide for one minute takes .02 joules
per bit; one television frame takes .00002 joules
per bit. Add to these items the fact that "the
number of neurons connected with vision is much
greater than with any of the other senses, and that
it is estimated that as much as 25 percent of the
total energy expended by the brain goes toward the
upkeep of our visual apparatus" (36). The conclu-
sion could be that the human intellectualization

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process generally is much more efficient when
stimulated by sight than by hearing. More infor-
mation can thus be assimilated for the amount of
mental energy we have to process information.

In this view human brains are best equipped
to assimilate visual images, not verbal symbols,
such as words. However, general practical know-
ledge of receiving and sending mechanisms does not
yet exist which would enable us to communicate
visually strictly via electromagnetic brain waves,
i.e., through telepathy. For interpersonal com-
munication we habitually use words as the ordinary
means. It would follow therefore, that educational
methods which use discussion for learning should
re-orient toward audio-visuals and use discussion
strictly as a means of interpersonal reaction and
growth.

The Focal Point for the Coming
Struggle

To conclude this chapter it might be well
to alert readers to the possibility that the dis-
pute over the control of the juncture between mass
media and discussion may well be the focus in what
we see as the coming struggle over which view of
man will prevail. Such radical educational critics
as Illich (77) and Reimer (125) call for the
acceptance of technology in society, but want to
put the control of that technology as much as
possible into the hands of individuals at the point
of use. This could mean, for example, that parti-
cipants in discussion groups joining together
without social pressure, could go a long way toward
controlling the output, and even the character-
istics, of media technology. Others, such as Allen
in The Electric Humanities, appear to take a
different view (31):

    Ours is indeed a time of revolution--as are
    all times. Change is the constant. Only
    by accepting change and learning to live
    with it can we hope to prevail. It is time
    to teach the present and the future as well
    as the past. It is time to start building

the classroom without walls. . . . Now
is the time to teach the total
environment.

If the reader takes only one judgment away
from studying this monograph, it is hoped he will
conclude that the juncture of mass media and dis-
cussion bears close watching and careful control
if the spirit of man is to survive.

CHAPTER VI

PITFALLS TO AVOID

The Threat of Mechanistic Values

Group discussion, in becoming task-oriented,
loses view of humanity, a view which should be
uppermost. Which is more important: task or
person? Dalkey (28), of the Rand Corporation, has
written a study of group opinion in task-oriented
discussion: The Delphi Method. The purpose of the
study was to improve procedures for formulating
group judgment, decision-making, and policy formu-
lation. Dalkey has been able to mathematically
plot out various variables in relation to the
number of participants and degree of error in group
judgment. Dalkey believes that the method can deal
with any wide range of problems, from long-term
threat assessment to technological forecasts and
evaluation of degrees of social development. His
method reflects the view of the individual as a
flesh and blood computer. Man's major value would
appear to be as a fact-machine with varying degrees
of expertness. . . . . Judgment, wisdom, and insight
are "flattering names for kinds of opinions."
Dalkey writes that "wisdom is opinion with charisma
. . . value judgments are factual statements of an
especially complex, vague, and in general much more
speculative sort than the usual descriptive inputs
to decision situations." Are these the discussion
conditions that led the government to perceive the
"reality" of its war policy for Vietnam?

Man is wrapped up in his power to manipu-
late consciousness and to socially engineer what
the individual man is to Be. Skinner (163) and his
Beyond Freedom and Dignity is becoming popular by
no mere accident. By more efficiently engineering
our physical state of being man cannot only go
beyond freedom but deny it altogether.

Too much of group discussion literature
operates on thought modes that are inconsistent
with modern needs. Margaret Mead states in a

working paper for a Michigan State University
Workshop (88):

> The whole teaching and learning continuum
> once tied in an orderly and productive
> way to the passing of generations and the
> growth of the child into a man has
> exploded in our faces. Yet even as we
> try to catch hold and patch up the
> pieces, we fail to recognize what has
> happened.

For an illustration of the application of
the time-honored assumptions of discussion, one
should read The Discussion Method in Teaching: A
Symposium (64). The book is filled with the very
concepts that have caused events to explode in our
faces. Buch.er writes that "since certain aims and
values in a college are of greater importance than
others. . . such aims and values are what any
discussion ought to subserve." The concept of any
discussion subserving any preordained value struc-
ture subverts the dignity and uniqueness of the
discussants. Buchler further comments that "the
view that no aims whatever can be specified as
guides . . . questions the very existence of
organization in learning."

Nothing in human activity is unorganized;
a time, a place, a reason exists for everything.
Only prior conditioning makes us incapable of
seeing relationships in seemingly unconnected ideas,
events, or concepts. Open-ended organization can
exist and co-exist with order, as long as we are
concerned with growth at the human level. Human
growth is not necessarily consistent with the
growing application of technological and other
mechanistic concepts. The mind is a means in our
growth as human beings; products of the mind and
their development should not be ends in themselves.

One researcher who put discussion factors
in perspective was Jacobson (160) in a thesis done
at the University of Washington in 1968: "Social
Power in Group Discussion Literature." Every
conceivable factor in group discussion was named,
categorized, and graded. He made no pretense at
knowing how to use or manage all the factors he

found; they simply were there. Still other "social chemists" might choose to manipulate these factors in ways that deprive people of their right to be free agents of their activity. A seemingly "neutral" research study might thus be used for purposes not originally contemplated.

The theorists on discussion abstract purposes and natures of discussion that have no relation to the reality situation. Warren (152), for example, in A Treasury of Techniques for Teaching Adults, states that discussion is a means "to progress from the known toward the unknown by various processes of deductive reasoning." This statement is a variant of the belief of some philosophers that use of logic leads to new knowledge. Logic clarifies a subject in depth but does not necessarily add to our body of knowledge. To say that discussion internally entails a process of deductive reasoning is very debatable when the various directions discussion can take are considered as a result of indirect and parallel mental associations which are not deductive but intuitive.

Demonstrating the Validity of Self-Evident Observations

There are various types of discussion groups, depending on the discipline, human endeavor, or group. In discussion people learn how to communicate grievances, insights, personal experiences of enlightenment, and pieces of wisdom. A commonsense observation will suffice to demonstrate the above. Yet the amount of literature that devotes itself to demonstrating the validity of self-evident observations is amazing.

One of the findings in a thesis by Heckman (66) on the "Effect of the Y-Indian Guide Movement and Group Discussion On the Attitudes that Participating Fathers Hold Toward Their Sons" was that the discussion program did not significantly affect the parental attitudes of the participating fathers. One questions whether discussion alone is going to alter significantly the nature of the father-son relationship when the discussion group consists solely of the fathers. Yet an entire research

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thesis, with the energy and time that went into
writing it, was wasted on proving scientifically
the validity of a self-evident factor of the nature
of a parent. Interestingly, the researcher con-
cluded that the fathers needed further discussion
sessions of a re-organized nature to educate them
in proper attitudes of parenthood!

Educational Chauvinism

The theorists in the University of Chicago
Discussion Symposium (175) only pay lip service to
discussants as "completely rounded personalities,"
but they actually continue to espouse discussion as
a tool of scientific, efficient, logical analysis
promoting what they believe to be authentic liberal
education.

In a book on teaching adults (121) Brown
continues this educational "chauvinism." He believes
that "discussion is good if it achieves its parti-
cular end. . . . If there is no one particular end,
a discussion is good if it achieves something of
educational value."

Training Methodology. Part 3 (148) from
the National Communicable Disease Center has a
discussion bibliography that is of note for the
emphasis that it places on "objective" methods of
communication and analysis. Bass's analysis of
leaderless group discussion is criticized because
"little has been done to evaluate the technique
quantitatively or to investigate the possibility
of making objective measures of individuals in this
situation." In a chapter on discussion in Educa-
tional Tools for Health Personnel, Wilbur (156)
tells health workers that discussion is a good
means to change attitudes, habits, and behavior of
individuals, and to communicate information. Dis-
cussion for the health worker is a short cut and an
extension of traditional methods of health educa-
tion. The self-image of the professional is that
of the most knowing, benevolent public servant.
People generally resent the condescending attitude
and this resentment prevents effective communica-
tion among equals, which in theory we are supposed
to be.

Bergevin and McKinley (16) pinpoint one old
assumption of discussion in Participation Training:
"Most people, when they are involved in learning
experiences, don't think as much about people as
they do about subjects." The writers recognize
that a number of participants have "an image of
education as receiving information or answers from
somebody else." This image further illustrates
what we have mentioned about our institutional and
social structures inculcating certain expectations
and values that do not permit a supportive atmo-
sphere of self-initiation.

Intellectual Elitism

Another book that applies contemporary
thinking on uses of discussion is Ottaway's Learn-
ing Through Group Experience (114). The book is an
account of a long-term experiment in small group
discussion that employed a method similar to the
T-group. Ottaway makes deductions from his obser-
vations of the discussion group experiment that
other theorists have not bothered to consider. He
squarely faces the problem of self-realization vs.
acceptance of authority. For him "personality
grows best under an authority which can gradually
be withdrawn. . . . The best leader, like the best
teacher, is one who works in such a way as to make
his presence unnecessary." Interestingly enough,
Ottaway believes that the only way of learning what
happens in a group is by participating in a group.
This view correlates with that of the Eastern yogis:
the way of self-liberation is not found in a book.

Following a long series of group sessions
Ottaway notes:

   Finally we begin to piece together the
   different aspects of ourselves. We find
   an actual self, still capable of develop-
   ment. We become more conscious of the ideal
   self towards which we are striving, and more
   aware of a hidden and primitive self which
   still needs to be kept under control. We
   have detected and exposed a false self,
   attempting to live an existence in fantasy
   and unreality. We have seen two extremes

'to which a man may be driven, but found no
cause for despair when we have sensed the
creative powers, and the wish to love and
receive love, which are beneath all our
strivings.

Ottaway, however, believes that group dis-
cussion work of intensive nature requires discus-
sants of better than average intelligence. He
assumes that "insight" requires superior intel-
ligence and that persons with little education and
limited powers of expression would not do well.
Ottaway is guilty of intellectual elitism in
believing that only persons of better than average
qualities can do intensive group discussion work
creditably.

In Kaplan (84), Study Discussion in the
Liberal Arts, experiments reported involved a
somewhat varied sampling of people, the majority
of whom had a university degree. Concern was not
so much directed toward greater self-awareness as
toward an increased amount of intellectual stimula-
tion both through contact with other seekers of
stimulation and the very stimulating effect of
highly charged interchanges of information. Kaplan's
criteria for a good discussion must be viewed in
light of the fact that most of the people involved
in the discussion program were also involved in
other community, intellectual, or social action
programs. These people were already expressing
their search for a ground of being in other ways.
The discussion method was perceived as one method
among a multitude of ways of learning about the
self and the world. The participants exhibited a
quality--the desire to know--that is an important
ingredient of any successful discussion. Desire
is an emotion that calls the motivation mechanism
into action. Motivation to know induces explora-
tion and experimentation with the various ways of
knowing. And, sooner or later, the person learns
that knowing is not enough; a desire for the growth
of the inner capacity of being arises.

Hill (69) has done a Comparative Study of
Lecture and Discussion Methods which exhibits a
problem similar to that of Kaplan's study: dealing
only with professional and highly educated groups.

Hill acknowledges that liberal adult education
programs such as the Great Books, Ways of Mankind,
or the Liberal Arts Program of the University of
California do not attract a cross-section of people.
Not only are the participants professional and
educated but economically established as well. Hill
asks why existing adult education programs "fail to
attract the 'blue-collar' worker, the individual
with only a grammar school education or the eco-
nomically marginal individual." If these programs
"attract participants who are for the most part
highly educated, successful and mature, can these
programs be realistically expected to have major
effects on the values, attitudes, and behavior of
these participants"? Hill, in asking this question,
doesn't admit the consequent redundancy of his own
findings in the discussion-lecture comparison
experiments--participation in discussion did not
result in attitude changes significantly greater
than those occurring from lectures and neither
method had much effect on the mean attitudes of
groups.

Parker (115) found in his study on need-
affiliation and information-seeking that perceived
information needs are low among the less educated.
Discussion programs aimed at the less advantaged
are going to face a difficult but not insurmountable
problem in creating awareness. The poor and the
oppressed do not model themselves on the white
man's or ruling class's value structure or needs
and do not follow the same reaction pattern to the
possibility of need-fulfillment.

Training as Manipulation

So-called "training programs" are the most
manipulative in their use of discussion. In an
introduction to a book on the use of small groups
in training (56), Coplin anticipates a "distinct
contribution to the engineering of social change."
He states that "resistance to change is a 'built
in' social defense system maintained by unconscious
collusions." For Coplin, discussion methods should
deal with the "pathology" in group behavior. This
view is reflected in his belief that the service
social workers give to their "clients" is improved

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by awareness of how "people in families use each other to deal with undesired aspects of themselves." (Emphasis ours.) This is Coplin's view of humanity.

A study by Thelen, Hawkes and Strattner (146) on Role Perception and Task Performance of Experimentally Composed Small Groups is laden with statistical data interrelating discussion variables regarding the group and the participant. We worry about the ultimate use of statistical studies when a statement is made that "it is not impossible that the day will come when measurement procedures will make it as easy to assess pertinent individual traits as to collect the superficial background data which is characteristic of most conferences." So we will be categorized, labeled, and quanticized for whatever use program designers dream up.

In an exposition of his CRAMP systems approach to training, Belbin (93) states that the subject of attitude formation "is important for training as a means of modifying traits, with reference especially to appreciation classes and induction training." Participation in group situations is a means for the organizing agent to subtly manipulate the discussant toward change that may be undesirable to the discussant.

An issue of American Behavioral Scientist (68) was devoted to various articles edited by Fawcett Hill that were concerned with training non-professionals for group therapy. Group discussion work is a major part of the training program. The professionals running the program believe that the discussion method must be highly structured. For sake of exposition the steps in their group cognitive map are (68):

1) Definition of terms and concepts
2) General statement of author's message (assigned reading)
3) Identification of major themes or sub-topics
4) Allocation of time
5) Discussion of major themes and sub-topics
6) Integration of material
7) Application of material

8) Evaluation of author's presentation
9) Evaluation of group and individual
   performance.

The group process is seen as a "highly technical
subject." Highly structured discussion imposed by
an outside agent serves only the agent's purpose,
which in this case is the protection and mainten-
ance of the professional role in society. Rigid
discussion structuring defeats its own purpose in
training for group therapy. The structuring
syndrome has its own built-in blinders, rendering
participants unable to devise methods of interaction
which could be more revealing of the topic under
consideration.

Dayal (30) reports on a program of organi-
zational development in India and the need for group
development within the organizational structure.
Individual problems of identity and the importance,
of individuals and groups evolving a norm of self-
consciousness about growth processes were deemed
crucial for future organizational growth.

The American concern for maximum efficiency
and most production for the dollar is reflected in
a Navy experiment researched by Johnson (83) com-
paring the lecture-discussion method and programmed
instruction. To cover the same instructional
material 14.5 hours were needed with programmed
booklets, while thirty hours were required with
lecture-discussion in the course. Logic would thus
seem to dictate to a certain type of mind that our
educational system be reoriented in this direction.
Programming imparts information, however, but does
not deal with vital human elements of knowledge,
experience, and wisdom. Programmed instruction can
teach the logical steps of deductive reasoning, but
it cannot teach the human expression of the crea-
tive free spirit.

The Tyranny of Numbers

Measurement is a quality that is impartial,
yet numbers can be manipulated to demonstrate the
validity of almost anything one wishes to believe.
Statistical research can serve, in this sense, as

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self-fulfilling prophecy. If a theory fits the
statistics we believe the theory is right, not that
the statistics may indicate something beyond
themselves. If statistics fit the theory, we sit
satisfied that we are right. Only now are we
learning from the area of physics that exceptions
to the rule may be the rule.

Discussion research is becoming very
enamored of statistics to verify hypotheses con-
cerning group dynamics. Roby (128) has done about
the finest empirical study of variables in small
group performance, a prototype in its field. But
its potential for the growth of human wisdom is
questionable. Roby does not intend his work to be
a study in techniques of operation research and
engineering or applied psychology, but other less
ethical scientists may seize upon such works to
advance their own man-destroying schemes that serve
non-human creations.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRECIPICE OF INFINITY

In group discussion people communicate individual views of reality. If discussants are talking about aspects of a common reality, why is it that disagreement arises? Study of semantics supplies a partial answer, but even when definitions are accepted, discussants will disagree on views of the commonly-defined reality. What needs to be defined and questioned is the term "reality." A more suitable use of the word to resolve misunderstanding is to talk of realities. Yet when we admit to the coexistence of multiple realities, we sometimes come to face creation with fear and trembling because we stand on the precipice of infinity.

In a little known book, Foundations of Empiricism (45), Feibleman develops profound implications for philosophy in his exposition of multiple ontologies and epistemologies. In the last several thousand years—philosophers and religious thinkers have devised enough systems so that we can now categorize them in a logical manner by their characteristics. With multiple reality systems, "reality" becomes an ambiguous term, almost useless. The mathematical concepts of relativity in physics can be applied to the relationship among reality systems. Both physics and philosophy ultimately deal with the same subject matter, the force of infinity. The works of Teilhard de Chardin, Human Energy (144) and Activation of Energy (145), slowly develop a dynamic conceptual scheme of man's increasingly complex growth that is drawn toward the "stargate" into infinity.

Growth of self is a natural instinct of man. To stop growing is to begin to die. But growth toward and onward through self-realization is a perilous journey, a journey many people are afraid to take. These fearful people develop closed selves and feel threatened by the outside world instead of relearning facts about themselves

enabling them to partake in the continuing creation
of this world with their fellows. Instead of
fearing the world and our fellows we must try to
become more loving persons, open to all experience
and suggestions, thereby perceiving the world and
creation critically but with wonderment and awe.

Toward Affective and Intellectual Self-Actualization

Earlier, we touched briefly on Carl Rogers'
discussion approach to aid human growth and, to
borrow a term from Maslow, self-actualization.
Rogers' approach, however, is heavily centered on
emotional factors as a counterbalance to the gross
manipulative abuses of the intellectual approach
in discussion. A middle ground that uses both
affective and intellectual factors in self-
actualization has not been developed. We would
like to put forth a few ideas toward such a
development.

Limitations of self are also limitations of
consciousness, but both are capable of growth.
Consciousness works hand in hand with self. The
desire to grow as a human being parallels a desire
to know the universe. The desire to know and
experience the wonderment of discovery is intrin-
sically human. Openness to experience opens one to
new mental patterns. These new patterns are as-
similated into our mental storehouse of impressions.
Our mind is continually functioning in making a
working reality model of all the information we
have assimilated.

Openness to all experience means openness
to all the varied disciplines of man's exploratory
endeavors. To prevent a narrowness of vision we
should develop the ability of random associative
thinking, or "lateral thinking" as De Bono terms it
in New Think (31, 32). The synthesis into a con-
ceptual scheme of two or more seemingly unrelated
ideas or concepts can lead one into exploration of
new possibilities of reality models. For example,
fairly recently astronomers discovered the existence
of gravitational points, "black holes," in which
gravitational collapse is a force great enough to

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convert matter into pure energy that "escapes."
Other astronomers have theorized that the quasars
are "white holes"; points which radio astronomy
has found to be unbelievably powerful transmitters
of energy for such a small mass. Astronomers now
propose the real possibility that our universe is
interacting with other universes in the exchange of
energy. The possibility is mind-boggling to say the
least. The mystics have often repeated that man is
a microcosm of the universe. And as universes
interact and exchange energy, so too do people
interact and exchange energy. In the discovery of
the universes we rediscover ourselves.

Each individual has his own particular
mastery that contributes to overall understanding,
the mental field of interpersonal communication.
Each particle of individual enlightenment passed on
to another individual becomes a possible catalyst
for insights unique to that person. Groups of
individuals who can interact at the level of
insights and enlightenment are able to piece to-
gether reality models that become the synergistic
basis for further action and enlightenment. How-
ever, groups interacting at that level must in
order to be successful exhibit feelings of love,
understanding, and acceptance.

An Ideal Discussion Group?

A discussion group modeled on these views
ideally should include people of as diverse talents
and knowledge as possible. In the midst of
increasingly specialized disciplines to make any
sense of the complex body of knowledge, the various
disciplines must be interrelated and interacting.
Increasing specialization (unending fragmentation)
is a guarantee of eventual obsolesence.

Species survival is also involved, as
Leakey, the anthropologist, has warned. Man has so
overdeveloped his cerebral activities relative to
his total nature that he stands a real chance of
extinction as a species. Discussion groups limited
to like-minded persons with parochial visions are
contrary to the instinct to grow and to be. Our
saving grace is diversity, with creative dynamic

interchange among the separate parts. The unique-
ness of individualities in touch with one another
causes a delicate tension that is a source of
energy which stimulates interchange.

Ideally a discussion group should be a
working group that either lives communally or meets
together often over an extended period of time.
Numerous discussion researchers have noted that the
longer a group works together the better the
results of the discussion. In a real sense a
discussion group should develop a sense of com-
munity. By becoming more interdependent the
individual members become less egocentric.

When a person is less egocentric, thinking
less about his own ideas, opinions, and concerns,
he is more understanding of the people around him.
Only by breaking down ego barriers can we communi-
cate on the level of Being. Egocentrism is a
blinder to Being and, consequently, an impediment
to self-actualization. However, one should not
make the common mistake of assuming the posture of
false humility and ego denigration. Nor can one
rigorously pursue the path of self-actualization if
he does not have a strong identity. Dr. Krippner,
of the New York Maimonides Dream Laboratory, has
noted (Rolling Stone [26]) that a strong ego is
characteristic of the self-actualizer. One must
have a strong mature ego in order to transcend it.
To do otherwise is to invite psychological
disorders.

Admittedly, we have been describing char-
acteristics of discussion in an ideal state that is
rarely met. But we construct ideals to give
direction to the workings of the human spirit.
Anyone can partake in consciousness-growth discus-
sion as long as his human creative spirit is open.
Even in the most oppressive atmosphere, man's
creative spirit will stir him to enact his vision.
At Auschwitz, inmates carved figurines out of hard
black bread. Anyone can create reality models that
give new meaning to the environment, whether he is
a hustler, hippie, prostitute, bookie, gambler,
show singer, cabbie, salesman, gas station attendant,
or policeman. All these varied people have learned
and assimilated from experience within their life

styles, characteristics of human nature that can be
communicated to each other and synergistically
synthesized into a model of man if they could drop
their role postures long enough in a group
discussion.

The least that can be expected of anyone in
any group discussion is an attempt at dropping the
posturing of roles. The teacher is not a teacher;
he is another human being who requires security,
warmth, and love from his fellows like anyone else.
Talk of multiple roles a person plays is dehumaniz-
ing. We are total human beings called upon by life
to work with our optimum abilities. Man is not a
composite of roles that can be manipulated like so
many chess pieces. Life gives us many chances to
transcend ourselves but too many people choose to
spend it playing out games. Discussion as dialogue
is an approach that can be used to set aside or
transcend games and role playing, to humanize
interactions and living patterns. To become more
fully human is a not often practiced art.

Is Life Itself at Stake?

The state of planetary affairs has reached
a point where the necessity of survival demands that
we ask not only "What are we"? but also "Where are
we going"? Many among us have a growing realiza-
tion that humanity has reached a stage of self-
consciousness where its future can be determined
with conscious intent. Our future holds two
diametrically opposed choices: to grant each
individual the freedom and means to realize his
Self in a spirit of creative love, or to attempt to
manipulate every single known aspect of creation
for the selfish gain of a few, controlling con-
sciousness in the process. Men and women with
many interests, including especially group discus-
sion, must seriously and jointly analyze the
direction of development in their particular areas.

We cry out for a connection between the
individual and other individuals in the collective
mode known as the institution that is honorable,
not degrading; healthy, not diseased; human, not
mechanistic. Is there any other answer but to

decrease the power of the institution in order to
increase each individual's capacity and to remove
constraints on his potential for growth? At the
same time, the ability of individuals to interact
with each other outside of _any_ institution and the
power of each individual to stand by himself out-
side the stream of others must receive greater and
more meaningful recognition. We are aware of the
paradox--Who is to provide the recognition? But
all of us must live and act within the dynamic
tension of this paradox!

        There lies our hope and our common danger.
Is it any wonder that in these times of the massive
growth of institutional power we conclude--Life
itself is at stake?

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