Book Reviews

Discussion and Group Methods: Theory and Practice. Ernest G. Bormann. New York, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969. 340 pp. $8.95.

Here's a book that traces the reasons for the present emphasis on groups and group discussion in extension and adult education. In the "good ole days" the individual could do as he darn well pleased. But, now an individual's values and beliefs are more intertwined in an urban society. He must consider how those in various groups feel and relate to him.

With this background, Bormann tries to combine communications theory and small group research (theory and practice). He begins with fundamental techniques of group discussion and ends with more complex information on how leaderless groups work and behave.

The author has extended a theory of group interaction first proposed by R. F. Bales. He includes an analysis of hundreds of case studies of leaderless groups (5-7 persons each) conducted in the Small Group Communication Seminar at the University of Minnesota.

Bormann proposes a model or theory of leaderless groups that explains how leadership, behavior expectations (roles and norms), group specializations, group decisions, and group outcomes emerge. He says there is a drive in each group toward a stable role structure or "pecking order." He argues that discussion groups don't go through a rational, step-by-step approach to solving their problems or in determining their leadership. Instead, a group proceeds (once initial tensions are reduced) through a spiral process in which it returns again and again to the same problems if still unsolved. Once a decision is reached, a group continually modifies it. He also argues that all group outcomes (such as leadership and decisions) emerge in the same way. These phenomena emerge as joint agreements as members exchange ideas with one another. He would thus argue that an extension worker must recognize these natural group forces and restrain from forcing decisions from a group that isn't ready to decide.

He presents numerous findings throughout. Key ones having implications for extension workers are:

1. Elected leaders were never followed. An election was only an easy way out of informally agreeing on a leader.
2. Women leaders in groups that were at least half men had problems. Men were unwilling to fully recognize a woman's leadership.
3. Some disagreement was more probable in highly cohesive groups, and these were the most successful.
4. No person plays precisely the same role in two different groups.

In one way, the attempt to combine theory with practical implications has led to certain weaknesses. This reviewer's initial impression of the book wasn't good. Its attempt at wide appeal resulted in a poorly constructed collection of previously written material. Several chapters (e.g., a review of statistics) would have little value for county agents or specialists.

Yet the book has strengths. First, there are several very good chapters on how to arrange for profitable discussion groups. Second, it's written in everyday, understandable language and uses good, real-life examples.

There are many other books written on groups and group dynamics, any of which are deeper and more theoretical, many of which are more practical. However, the strength of *Discussion and Group Methods* lies in its basic approach—the combining of theory with practice.

If you're looking for prescriptions on group discussions, along with some background on group theory, this may be the book. If you want only a deeper comprehension of theory, it offers some new ideas but doesn't provide an extensive review or synthesis of all group research.

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Innovation in Mass Education. David Street, ed. New York, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969. 342 pp. $9.95.

Innovation in Mass Education is a series of 12 papers by different sociologists, anthropologists, and educators. Most of the chapters report research or experiences of the authors and their colleagues. The book itself is oriented toward innovation in the more formal school setting, especially in disadvantaged urban areas. To an extension worker its value will depend on how well the reader can transfer or apply research in another educational situation to his own extension problems. It can be done, but most extension workers may find that other books and articles will do the job better. This doesn't imply that the book isn't a good one, but that it's not directed toward extension education.

The following paragraphs review some of the chapters that may have extension application.

Roberta Ash, who reports as participant-observer, tells about a sum-

mer project in a large city. This project was to stimulate the academic interests of a group of boys, both black and white, from an inner city public high school. The author concluded that the white project staff probably was changed more by the exposure to the ghetto culture than the teen-agers were by exposure to middle-class values. Later events led the author to conclude that success in projects such as this is unlikely when carried out by white middle-class staff.

Another chapter, "Group Work for Control of Behavior Problems in Secondary Schools," concluded that malperformance was the consequence of adverse school-pupil interaction. To change schools and education requires an understanding of the whole social system.

The chapter, "The Impact of Community Action Programs Upon School Systems," indicates innovations brought about by OEO and CAP programs may become permanent in educational programs. These types of programs gain visibility; they may give educators more favorable teaching conditions. They encourage lay involvement and understanding.

"The Use of Non-Professionals in Large City Systems," too, may have extension implications. The author points out that the use of nonprofessionals forces administrators to accept a larger role in the community and to cooperate more closely with lay people or the public.

Three chapters deal with slum schools and their problems and possibilities for innovation. One author points to the undesirability of moving children from school to school, especially those with lower intelligence scores.

Prominent sociologist Morris Janowitz in the final chapter on "Institution Building in Urban Education" also touches indirectly on extension problems. For example, his discussion of the impact of new media—television, programmed learning, learning machines, computers—indicates that these media will enable educators to serve specialized audiences better. The economics of paperbacks and improved duplicating and photocopying machines will give teachers more flexibility in tailoring their efforts to their audiences.

This isn't an extension book, but some chapters, such as those dealing with disadvantaged clientele, do have extension implications.

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Interpersonal Communication in the Modern Organization. Ernest G. Bormann *et al*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969. 315 pp. $6.50.

Those involved in extension activities and education should welcome this cooperative effort of four nationally recognized authorities in the field of interpersonal communication. While the ideas in this book are of special

value to those involved in administration of extension programs, there is a practical value for those who are working with small groups and voluntary organizations.

The authors try to write a down-to-earth, easily applicable treatise on communication between individuals and among groups. While they have been successful in presenting their ideas with the emphasis on the applied and practical, the book still looks like a text and will likely be read as a text. Nevertheless, a detailed table of contents and an index will help the reader individualize what he wants from this book.

The book focuses on four aspects of interpersonal communication: communication in small groups, barriers to communication, listening, and persuasion. To accomplish this, the book is divided into two parts. Part I dealing with the organization and the individual, reviews the importance of high fidelity communication and the increasing need for effective communication. Two chapters in Part I, "Improving Communications in the Group" and "Improving Communications in Organizational Meetings," have many concrete ideas to help extension workers plan better meetings and develop better leadership skills.

Part II considers communication from the individual's viewpoint with emphasis on the speaking and listening skills. In addition, several chapters are devoted to combining all the communication skills as a basis for persuasion and motivation.

The real value of this book for those involved in extension and adult educational activities is that it shows an individual how to improve his communication skills, whether in a regional meeting, a planning meeting of fellow staff members, or at the top levels of extension administration. While the authors have been successful in relating several theoretical ideas to practical situations, the book isn't easy reading for those without a background in behavioral sciences. Despite its "textbook" appearance, it has many practical ideas to help extension workers and educators look at interpersonal communication in a more analytical way.

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Planned Organizational Change: A Study in Change Dynamics.
Garth N. Jones. New York, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969. 243 pp. $6.50.

This book reports statistical information and analyses of 190 cases in which planned change took place. It is of greater significance to theoretical social scientists than to adult educators or extension agents in the field. In an oblique way, Jones admits that the change processes he studied were educational. And he's to be commended for looking to extra-classroom experiences to bring about the educational changes.

The planned change is that which occurs in an on-going organization when the client system asks the change agent to study and recommend improvements. Jones differentiates the role from that of "catalyst" and "pacemaker."

The change agent is the outside consultant, wise in the limitations and possibilities of organizational life. The catalyst is an enabler who, true to the chemical analogy, is supposed to remain unchanged by the processes he encourages. I'm skeptical about the catalyst's freedom from change. It should be axiomatic that, in the social sciences, any enabler of a process is affected by the changes in which he becomes involved. The pacemaker is a participant in the process.

Jones doesn't include changes that occur by reason of automatic processes in the surrounding environment. He is equally uninterested in violent or revolutionary change. His main concern is for the role and functions of the change agent.

Any serious student of the social sciences will find this book valuable. The raw data given and the wealth of tables, charts, and statistics offer material as a starting point for other studies, some of which are recommended in the last chapter.

Although the book spends much time on definitions, numerous other terms are denied definitions. A few of these undefined terms weaken the monograph.

Organizational effectiveness is given much attention, as are receptivity of the client system and agent performance. The text is unclear as to how judgments are made on these items, and by whom. Would another evaluator judge these items differentially? The research is so solid elsewhere that such a glaring omission stands out.

Organizational goals are graded on a trichotomy: not achieved, partly, and achieved. Changes and plans for change are judged on a dichotomy: functional or dysfunctional. Who makes these judgments? Members of the client system, the change agent, or Jones and his colleagues? What was Jones' role? He is clearly not a change agent, not a catalyst, and not a pacemaker. Would it have been better for the trichotomy and dichotomy to have been replaced by a continuum that would have given gradients of function and achievement?

Perhaps this represents the real contribution of the study: It raises more questions than it answers. It points the way, especially in the concluding chapter, for further studies recommended. As such it should be on the shelf of any social scientist who studies organizational change.

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