

Comment

T-group experiences can be valuable and memorable

By Alex Ferrey and Jim Dodge

Several UNB Psych students recently participated in a T-group experience. This is how it all came together.

Friday night, a few weeks ago, found some of us in a pretty unusual spot. Instead of trying to fight our way into the Cos for a few beer or catching a flick at one of Fredericton's well-groomed moving picture palaces we were sitting in a circle of some very nervous, ill-at-ease Psychology students at the off-campus students lounge, in Tibbits hall.

This was to be the meeting place for twelve people involved in a "Human Relations Workshop", which was to be a novel experience for all of us.

The workshop was conducted by Bob Lattimer of the National Training Institute, Truro, N.S., who has been involved with T-groups and human relations for the past dozen or so years.

It is very difficult to write words at at something you feel, but feeling was the key-note of the week-end. Most people are very wary and apprehensive at the mention of this type of experience if they are not already familiar with it. We were no different at the onset of the weekend.

We were all scared but like willing lambs to the slaughter or Psychos to the Lobotomy we tried to smile and joke about why we were there. Most of us felt ambivalent, wanting the week-end to be a meaningful learning experience while not wanting it to become too threatening.

Things started out painfully slowly. The first group exercise was designed to get people acquainted with one another in a non-verbal manner and was called "eye-balling". It consisted of walking around in a rather confined area looking at each other without talking and encountering each other visually.

In our already nervous states of tension this exercise only succeed-

edin making us more uptight.

The next step was to sit in a circle facing each other and limiting our conversation to the 'here and now'. That is no past or future experiences were allowed, only feeling experienced since the conception of the group. Needless to say there was a lot of silence; dead air. Or was it dead air??

The members of the group sat silently contemplating their feelings about each other, and about the goals of the workshop, which we decided were to be either a better understanding of ourselves or a better understanding of others and groups. The leader of the workshop remained irritatingly silent and left us painfully bearing the burden of our own inability to communicate with each other in an unstructured situation.

We gradually became aware that we were the only ones who were going to determine how much benefit we would derive from the week-end. Our feelings swayed back and forth like a pendulum, at one extreme wanting to escape from the confines of this nerve-racking psychological imprisonment and at the other extreme feeling that this was the most important learning experience we had had since arriving on campus. We constantly felt the need to withdraw and then to contribute. At times our concentration was at a peak, so that all our senses felt razor-keen.

At 9:30 P.M. when we broke up there was a definite group feeling which had developed. We all left feeling stimulated and 'high' but somewhat emotionally drained. Some of us succumbed to the suppressed urge we had had all night to "chit-chat", others floated off to various parts of Fredericton, feeling somehow very good about the evening.

Saturday morning at the amazingly early hour of 9:00 we met again at Tibbits lounge and took our places. We went through a few group exercises designed to give us a little insight into our conception of ourselves, the way we see others, as well as the way

others see us.

At the end of the morning many of us felt very discouraged at our inability to get things rolling. After a long lunch together at the mall we resumed at 2:00.

The afternoon session was miserable. Our leader threw us a few cues for discussion such as the existence of 'group trust'. Few people contributed to the discussion and there was much withdrawal. At 6:00 a tired and weary collection of individuals broke for dinner.

Saturday evening was the turning point. We were all refreshed after inter-action in smaller groups at dinner and we felt the need to finally take some risks. It was feed-back time.

One member of the group would ask for feed-back, then starting on the right of the volunteer each person would say exactly what he or she felt about the person. This is an experience that one cannot help but be stimulated and educated by. Each person had his or her turn at the judgement table and had their

personal defences as well as behavioral characteristics mirrored by the group.

People were told: "You do not express your feelings enough" or "You put yourself down too much" or "You're a very warm person", etc. The learnings at this point were wonderfully exciting, frightening, and for the most part surprising. We felt like we'd never viewed ourselves or others with such clarity and we were feeling high on each other. The power of human emotion had been released in all its force. This feed-back exercise lasted through until Sunday noon.

Sunday afternoon Bob wrapped it all up for us. We discussed what we had learned over the week-end and broke up into three groups to list our learnings and their applications to everyday life. These could be summarized briefly as 1) to be honest and receptive to others, 2) to be willing to take risks in encountering other people and 3) not to stereotype others.

Before we left Bob requested that we participate in one last exercise. This consisted of standing in a circle with our backs facing inwards. We were asked to think about the life of the group, what we had learned, and how we would apply it in future interactions. Then we turned inwards and walked towards the centre until we were touching. We put our arms around each other and looked around the circle encountering each other visually once again. Although it was faintly reminiscent of our first "eye-balling" exercise this time there was no embarrassment. We did not feel the need to smirk or look away. The feeling was one of oneness and love; love for oneself, love for the group, and love for one's fellow man. On that note we parted.

As a group we would like to thank Allan Miller of the Psychology Department for having the conviction and the insight to arrange for us all to have this valuable and memorable experience.

Married women not compelled to adopt husband's name

TORONTO (CUP) — One of the few clear things in the law relating to changes of name is that there is no obligation whatsoever upon a married woman to adopt her husband's name upon marriage. The change of name is merely a social custom.

The common law permitted a woman to retain her maiden name and the Change of Name Act does not impose the husband's surname upon a wife although it expressly permits her to adopt it, if she desires to do so, without using any of the formal provisions of the Act. Thus public or private bodies are entirely in the wrong when they insist on the use of a husband's surname by women who have never adopted it as their own.

It would seem likely that a wife who found herself confronted with public officials who take such an ill-founded attitude would be able to apply to the courts for an order to compel the officials to accept or issue documents bearing her own name.

Where problems may arise is when a woman has adopted her husband's surname at the outset of marriage and subsequently desires to revert to her own name. Lawyers who have expertise in this area are inclined to believe that the Change of Name Act, despite certain ambiguities, has not altered the common law rule that a person may adopt any name that he or she chooses, without the use of any formal procedure, as long as the change is not designed to defraud others. Thus a woman should be able to revert to her

maiden name informally, as long as the people with whom she has to deal, such as employers or creditors are prepared to make a formal change.

However, when a person refuses to make the necessary alterations in documents, since the Change of Name Act contains a provision which can be used to compel such alterations a successful application can be brought under that statute.

Unfortunately, the Act requires that a married person who brings a change of name application must also apply for a change in the name of his or her spouse, unless the parties have been living apart for five years, and the consent of the

other partner must be obtained before a formal alteration of name can take place. Since very few husbands are likely to be prepared to adopt their wife's maiden name, this provision is sufficient to deprive most married women of a remedy under the Change of Name Act.

A paper on the Change of Name Act has been submitted to the Ontario Law Reform Commission. While it deals with a number of other points, the paper's main thrust is to suggest an amendment in the Act to permit one spouse to apply for a change in his or her name without requiring the other partner to make an identical change unless this is desired.

York's president makes himself accessible

DOWNSVIEW (CUP) — Unlike most university students, those at York University now have ample opportunity to see the administration's president and even to talk to him.

York's president, John Yolton, is manning the main university information booth every Monday. "My office isn't nearly as exciting as this," he commented.

In his first day at the information booth, the president answered questions about bus routes, York's flag flying at half mast (after the death of a professor), and student housing. He chatted with students and professors who were surprised to find the president in the booth.

"I don't know if we're doing as much as we can to get information across to the community," he said. "This is one way I can help."

"I think the president should be visible," he added, "and nobody ever comes up to the ninth floor." His office is located high up in the administration building.

Yolton, a philosophy professor, is acting York administration president, filling out former president David Slater's term. Slater resigned under pressure last spring and a new president will be chosen soon. Yolton has said he is anxious to leave his present position and return to teaching.

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