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## Book Review

Cary L. Cooper (ed) *Theories of group processes*, Wiley 1975. £7.95

This is a collection of ten original papers in the psychology of groups, by a very varied set of contributors. The first is a brief introduction by Cooper himself.

Chris Argyris contributes 'Learning environment for increased effectiveness' which contains a very interesting discussion of how the theories we think we hold often do not find expression in the way we act. We try to apply our theories - we even think we are applying our theories - but in fact we are acting in contradiction to them. So *espoused* theory has to be transformed somehow into *theory-in-use* - and this is the

training problem which Argyris discusses very well.

Davil Kolb & Ronald Fry write 'Towards an applied theory of experiential learning'. This starts off very well and very promisingly, but turns into a rather confused attempt to set up rigid categories of group participants, which is not really very clear or very helpful.

G.T. Barrett-Lennard contributes a long essay: 'Process, effects and structure in intensive groups: A theoretical-descriptive analysis.' It is a bit pompous and plonking and over-elaborate at times, but actually contains quite a few useful ideas. It could be skipped without losing *too* much.

Samuel Culbert has a piece on 'Consciousness-raising: A five-stage model for social and organization change' which does not quite live up to the promise of its title, but does suggest some useful lines of thought in connecting the personal with the political. It is one of the few papers in this volume that I could have wished were longer.

Robert Blake & Jane Mouton put in 'Group and organizational team building: A theoretical model for intervening', which makes a useful distinction between five different kinds of intervention: Cathartic (focussing on emotional release); Catalytic (focussing on the reduction of ignorance as to how others are really thinking or feeling); Confrontational (focussing on the consultant's confrontation of taken-for-granted values amongst client people); Prescription-based (focussing on the introduction of new values into the situation by the consultant); and Theory-based, which is the authors' own preference. This seems to me a straight selling job for the authors' own consultancy. John Heron has pointed out that the theory-based type of intervention can be regarded as a sub-species of the catalytic type of intervention, and that Blake & Mouton leave out of account two very important types of intervention - informative intervention and supportive intervention. He has also suggested that prescriptive, informative and confronting interventions are often authoritative, while cathartic, catalytic and supportive interventions are more often facilitative; this I am not quite so sure about.

It seems highly desirable, however, for consultants to be more accurately aware of what kind of intervention they are engaging in, and what choices they have in a given situation.

Robert Golembiewski & Mark McConkie have the definitive article on 'The centrality of interpersonal trust in group processes'. This covers the concept of trust in exhaustive detail and at great length, giving no less than 184 references to further research studies. If you want to know anything about trust in groups, here it all is.

Brendan Reddy has a piece on 'Interpersonal affection and change in sensitivity training: A composition model', which goes into the whole question of group composition - should a group be homogeneous or heterogeneous, should the people be compatible or incompatible, etc. The answer seems to be that people learn more and change more heterogeneous groups, and that compatibility works best if the group

divides into two similar-sized subgroups, each of which is internally compatible, but incompatible with the other sub-group. I am not sure that nay of this information is either useful or even usable.

Martin Lakin & Philip Constanzo, of Duke University, contribute the one real lemon in the book, an essay on 'The leader and the experiential group', which manages to be pompous and conservative while apparently wishing to be open-minded and modern. It is awful to see the experiential group suffering from *ortodossia praecox* (Premature orthodoxy) already. Please don't take this essay seriously.

The final piece in the book is Richard Mann's 'Winners, losers and the search for equality in groups', which is a personal account of Mann's own experiences and feelings in and about groups, and the changes he has seen take place over 22 years. This works really well, and raises a whole host of fascinating issues. 'More and more, as the sixties wore on, group members came to act as if there were a dual menace to be confronted: (1) the bogus, punitive authority and (2) the peer who, on the one hand confronts that authority but, on the other hand, makes or her fellow members feel just as small, intimidated and vulnerable as they had felt in front of the old, discredited authority.' Anyone who has ever been in a group would find this essay interesting.

This book is a good one to get from the library, particularly if you are as interested as I am in the concept of trust, but I'm not sure it is worth buying, unless you are an academic.

**John Rowan**

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**'An open letter to Professor Yates of the University of Western Australia**

Professor Yates,

Having just seen your departmental handbook, I wanted to express my horror at the way you are running your department. There is hardly any sign in it that your study is anything to do with human beings. And when human beings are mentioned it is as objects to be manipulated. 'Environmentally induced changes in the brains of elderly rats', 'Perceptual memory for numerosness in 'nonpsychotic schizophrenics', 'Management of chronic psychiatric patients by a token reinforcement system', 'The efficacy of 'right' as a function of its relationship with reinforcement', 'Failure to reactivate the septal syndrome in rats', 'The construction of unidimensional tests', 'Double and single alternation learning by rhesus monkeys', 'The apparent length of rotating arcs under conditions of dark adaptation', and all the rest of the mechanistic bullshit.

I just have this picture of a keen young student, interested in finding out more about herself and other people, and wanting to contribute to new

knowledge about the psychology of human beings, getting your handbook, and reeling back in disgust at what she was offered. How dare you do dirt on psychology in this way?

And when you come to talk about your facilities, there is nothing about group rooms, nothing about psychodrama theatre, nothing about counselling facilities - only more and more computer facilities! Don't you see that concentrating on computers in this way makes it inevitable that your so-called psychologists will look more and more for the kind of data which suits the computer, and less and less for the kind of data which does justice to human realities, whatever they are?

I would like your department disbanded and turned over to the computers, which could spend their time finding new and better ways of designing new computers - or maybe you've had that idea already?

Yours very sincerely, **John Rowan London**

## **IT'S HAPPENING IN THE REGIONS**

Responses to our last article about too much happening in London have come from Newcastle on Tyne, Chesterfield, Oxford and Norwich. Anyone in these areas please contact:

JOAN GILBERT 45 Queens Road, Jesmond, Newcastle on Tyne.

LIZ NORMAN 55 Flaxpiece Road, Clay Cross, Derbyshire.

GWEN WRATTEN 45 Plane Tree Way Woodstock Oxford.

JILL HALL 14 Eaton Road, Norwich.

### **INSTITUTE OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS**

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Registration fee: £20 for the two days; £12 for one day. The fee includes admission to all activities except 14 May Introduction; lunch will be available each day at £2.25 a head.

Participation is limited to 150 people. Further information from and/or registration to Chairperson, Adam Jukes, South Lodge, Forest Road, Horsham, Sussex, phone 029 383 479 or leave your name and phone/address at answering service 01 794 3344.

Cheques must accompany registration and be made payable to Institute of Transactional Analysis; lunch should be booked at same time.