

tendencies toward contributing what one can toward the group as a unit are characteristic in members. Basic in the teacher and in each pupil is respect for every other individual as a person. Living that spirit, consciousness of the group grows—its opportunities, its aims, its responsibilities, and its unity.

To induce these four types of activity—class projects, individual programs for mastery, creative endeavors,

and social living—to take place vigorously, is to have a large part of a good program in guidance. To complete this program there will be associated with these four—a fifth type of activity—that developed in personal relationships of child, teacher, and parents in joint efforts to insure to the youngster his most promising program for growth and those associations essential to the overall development of the program.

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## Getting The Group Habit

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RUTH CUNNINGHAM AND ASSOCIATES

Many groups at present are experimenting with techniques for studying the "hows," "whys," and "wherefores" of group behavior. This particular article illustrates the way in which such a study may be a part of curriculum planning for boys and girls, and parents and teachers. Ruth Cunningham is assistant professor, Teachers College, Columbia University, and research associate, Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation. Associates in the experiment described in this article are Anna Elzi, teacher, Grant Junior High School; Marie Farrell, teacher, Emerson School; James Hall, supervisor of research, and Madeline Roberts, teacher, Swansea School—all of the Denver, Colorado, Public Schools. The experiment is one of a number being undertaken in the fourteen associated school centers of the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation, Teachers College, Columbia University.

*WHY DO the youngsters laugh when Billy clowns, but say it is "silly" when David does identical things?*

*Why does the group go wild on certain days and yet act meek as lambs on others?*

*Why does the group "take to" certain curriculum experiences and reject others which would seem to be equally logical for the age level and maturity of the children?*

*Why do things go less well with one group than with another even though there are fewer "problem" children?*

We have been trying to make a study of group behavior, and we have found that we have much to learn before we

can answer questions such as these.

Every teacher who has made a study of child psychology and human development knows how much these areas have to offer for better teaching. However, the help given is, in large part, in developing an understanding of individuals. No teacher can possibly make an intensive study of every child in his group or groups even though he may do much to learn more about each one. And no matter how much he may wish to work with individuals, he finds that the major portion of his time must be spent in *group* management. Moreover, he finds that a group of youngsters is something over and beyond an aggregation of thirty-five or so individuals.

## What Should We Know?

To fill adequately his position of group leader, a teacher should have some indications to answers to questions such as: *What is the structure of this group? How is it organized as to sub-groups, gangs, cliques, friendships? Who are the leaders? Who are the ones who seem always to be left out, the isolates? What sub-groups are accepted or rejected by other sub-groups or by the group as a whole? And for each question we ask why and under what circumstances?*

*How are intra-group and inter-group animosities and loyalties created? How does contagion operate—contagion of enthusiasm, of irritation, of resistance to authority, of acceptance or rejection of people, ideas, activities? How does the group react to various types of situations, to various types of leadership? How can answers to questions such as these contribute to our understanding of learning situations, of group management by the teacher, of democratic group living?*

## We Begin to Study

These are the kinds of problems which we have set out to study with a first grade group, a fourth and fifth grade group, and an eighth grade group. We decided to limit the study to few teachers and few children because we realized we would need to do a considerable amount of exploring. We felt that a few people, working intensively and with understanding, could make more significant progress than could a wider group with less opportunity for intensive work. We hope our successes and failures may make it possible for others who may wish to undertake similar

studies to proceed without the need to repeat the mistakes we know we are sure to make. We have no final results to report at this time for we are in the midst of our investigations. This is a report of some of the ways in which we have undertaken to study group living of boys and girls.

## Boys and Girls as Researchers

We decided that, from the first, we'd include the boys and girls as research associates. In each group we found a willingness to help when we explained we were interested in finding out how people can get along well in a group. We discussed what we should try to do, what the problems might be, and how we should go about solving our problems and achieving our aims.

Many of the early responses were of the "goody-goody" variety, reflecting preaching of adults or memorized codes and rules which had been taught in a moral context. It was evident that youngsters hadn't done much thinking in this area, but had learned a batch of platitudes concerning "taking turns" and "love thy neighbor," which they could produce verbally when called upon. We began to hit bed-rock when we got responses such as: "Don't punch a guy unless you gotta!" This had a ring of reality, and lent itself to a discussion of the "gotta" situations—the working codes of human relations by which youngsters operate in their group living. And, probably to a greater extent than we realized, we, as teachers, had to free ourselves of concepts of "right and wrong" in order to study objectively the group processes of youngsters. No doubt we still have a long way to go in this respect.

Parents discussed these same questions concerning aims and means in human relations of children in meetings of mothers and fathers of youngsters in these rooms. Some parents who were unable to attend meetings were asked for their opinions in individual conferences at school or during home visits made by teachers. Fellow teachers also discussed these questions.

In other words, in research language, children, parents, and teachers were asked to set goals, define problems, and state hypotheses to be tested in terms of programs for improvement. As the project progresses, they will be asked to help with evaluation. We do not see these as unique steps, which can be completed one at a time. We plan continuous revision of aims, problems, hypotheses, and evaluation. Nor do we see this as a study of "pure" psychology superimposed on a preconceived academic pattern, but as a vital part of the curriculum for boys and girls, parents and teachers. The research process itself becomes curriculum method, and the problem area provides content. Devising and testing programs to solve problems and achieve aims stated by children, parents, and teachers, becomes a project in curriculum development. This is as much a curriculum experiment as it is an experiment in group psychology of boys and girls.

#### Teachers' Research Committee

In addition to the research program which includes children, parents, and fellow teachers, we see another role to be played in intensive investigation by research observers. Constituting ourselves a committee of research workers, we are undertaking a number of in-

vestigations to supplement the project outlined above. We will, of course, use our findings as we operate as group members in the project as a whole, but we recognize that there may be some areas where the specialist and the observer have a unique role to play apart from the total participation of the whole group. It is not always possible to differentiate between the two roles, however. This is apparent when we discuss techniques such as role playing and anecdotes written by children, in which the two approaches merge.

In order to give focus to our efforts, we decided to take as our initial area of work the investigation of the acceptance and rejection patterns within a group. We have asked ourselves three questions:

1. Who are the children who are accepted and rejected, by whom, under what circumstances, and how do they feel about it?
2. Why are children accepted and rejected by various people under various circumstances?
3. What can we do about acceptance or rejection through classroom procedures, and what do patterns of acceptance and rejection mean for learning and for democratic life?

We have worked out a series of techniques and ways of working to try to find answers in each of these areas. A few of these techniques are described below.

#### Anecdotes of Group Behavior

Our major technique is observation and the major form of reporting, anecdotal records of *group* behavior. We found that it was not easy to employ this technique. Although we could apply to observation and recording much that has been developed con-

cerning writing anecdotes for individual behavior, there were new ways of looking at children in groups and new ways of observing ourselves and each other in the role of group leader. In these areas we had, and still have, much to learn. In early records, there was a good deal of what we, as teachers, asked children to do and descriptions of group activity in terms of an academic pattern. Later reports are giving greater emphasis to how the group and sub-groups react or the relation of individuals to the group, and what happens in the group as a result. We are beginning to see how boys and girls make the society in which they live. In other words, we are beginning to see the possibility for using creatively for curriculum development our increasing knowledge of how a group of children lives. We realize we have much to learn about ways of operating in this area, but the few glimmers of insight we have achieved give us a vision of the vast potentialities of such investigation.

### Studying Group Structure

One of the techniques we tried early in the project was the making of sociograms. This was very helpful, but used in the context of group study, we soon realized the limitations of this technique. It paints a black or white picture of friendship or choice of associates for certain activities, and gives no clue as to the vast realm of shades of gray which we felt must be present between the extremes of rejection and acceptance. We found from examining our own experience that there are some people we like a lot and some we don't like at all, and that there are many who are in a middle group, yet about whom

we have distinct variations of feeling. We wondered if some people might choose a few close friends and yet feel warmly toward many others in the group, while some, after choosing a few close friends, would tend to reject most of the others in the group. We know there are some who have difficulty in finding any close friends. How do they feel about the majority of people in the group? To find out more about matters such as these, we have devised an instrument we call, after Bogardus, the Classroom Social Distance Scale,<sup>1</sup> for use with boys and girls over eight years of age. It allows for a reaction, on a five-point scale, of every youngster to every other in the group. In addition to questions such as those implied above, we hope to find answers to questions such as: Do isolates tend to discriminate more or less than leaders in their acceptance-rejection responses? What are the influences of maturity, physical skill, academic achievement, socio-economic background, home environment, vitality, sex, and other factors on the discrimination values in human relations employed by boys and girls of various ages? Do accepted (or rejected) boys and girls accept more children than do the less accepted (or rejected)? How do isolates (or leaders) feel about other isolates (or leaders)? Any tendency which seems to be indicated by reactions on the scale will be checked by observation of the group, with special reference to the rigidity or fluidity of the pattern

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<sup>1</sup> A limited supply of copies of the Classroom Social Distance Scale is available without charge to those who may be interested in applying this technique and sharing their findings with us. Write, stating number of copies required, to: Ruth Cunningham, Box 120, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York 27, N. Y.

of response, and if the latter, the circumstances under which changes occur.

If we can but find a few clues to answers to problems in this area we shall feel that we are making a contribution to the understanding of group management for the creation of favorable learning situations and of democratic, happy living for boys, girls, and teachers.

### Can We Understand Each Other?

Another technique we feel may hold promise is one designed to discover the relation of self-motive to the motives of others in group situations. We are preparing a series of staged photographs showing group behavior of various types. We plan to ask children to respond to these photographs in terms of questions such as: "Why do you think they are doing that?" "What would you do if you were there?" For example, when a ten-year-old sees a picture of adults fighting or of four-year-olds fighting, does he attribute to the fighters the motives one might expect of a ten-year-old, or does he discriminate as to the motives for various types of human relations at different maturity levels? Is it possible he may recognize a variety of motives for certain types of behavior in terms of levels of maturity through which he has passed or experience he has had but not for those beyond his maturity level or experience? Is there a wide range of individual differences in ability to discriminate concerning motives? We'd like to know answers to questions such as these. We believe that the implications for curriculum content, particularly for social studies and literature, and for class management in general,

are both obvious and tremendous.<sup>2</sup>

In the same area of investigation, we find that role playing has much to offer in increasing our understanding of how children see themselves and others in group relations. To date, we have reported the role playing as anecdotes written by teachers and children, but it is possible that stenotyped records, sound recordings, or movies might provide enlightening data.

### How Much Do We Agree?

Another technique we have found meaningful with older children is the use of a Check Sheet of Opportunities in Human Relations.<sup>3</sup> This instrument presents a series of statements describing situations in group experience and asks youngsters to state on a three point scale how often, if ever, they have had each experience, and, on another three point scale, how valuable they feel the experience to be. Perhaps of more significance than the responses of youngsters alone has been a comparison of checks on the value scale of responses made by parents, teachers, and children. From what limited evidence we have to date, it would seem that the three groups vary widely in their estimate of the value of certain experiences for children of a given age. If this is true in general, it should lead us to scrutinize many of the curriculum experiences we provide for boys and girls, in terms of our theories of learning and our objectives for children of various ages.

<sup>2</sup> We shall be glad to loan, on a limited basis, materials prepared for this technique, to those who are willing to share results with us. See footnote 1 for address.

<sup>3</sup> This instrument, too, is available in limited quantity to those who are interested in using it and sharing findings with us. See footnote 1 for instructions.

Space limitations make it impossible for us to tell of the various other techniques and many avenues of exploration we are undertaking. However, perhaps one of the most significant results of this study to date is that we, as children, parents, teachers, and research

workers have come to see the importance of "getting the group habit" of thinking, of learning to study the society created by boys and girls in their groups, and of realizing implications for meaningful, happy, democratic living in our schools.

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## *Moratorium on Grade Grouping*

HOWARD A. LANE

Attention is directed to some obsolete concepts of the grouping of children in this article by Howard A. Lane, professor of education, New York University, New York City. Mr. Lane indicates that a sharp revision of many of these ideologies is an urgent need if these youngsters are to reap the benefits of poised and happy maturity and suggests that the "whom" of classroom living ranks equally, if not higher, than the "what."

"YOU SHOULD SEE JAKE." A seventh-grade teacher was speaking. "He's fourteen years old and can't read; he just got out of reform school. You'd think he never heard of arithmetic. He's afraid of all white folks. Isn't it grand that he can be in my room for a year?" When I had been revived from the shock of this display of unscientific sentimentality by a teacher with a master's degree I sought to learn more about Jake.

He had grown his first fourteen years in a rural slum in a region that provides little schooling for children of Jake's ancestry. His family had recently moved to a city in another region in quest of the higher wages of industry. Jake had followed when released from "reform school" where he had spent more than a year for petty thievery, and finding himself to be a victim of compulsory education laws he reluctantly went to school. There he found Miss Ryan who asked that this large,

unkempt, illiterate boy be in her room. Little resistance was encountered from other teachers, although some questions were raised about maintaining standards and the good name of the school.

In Jake's new school the course of study calls for detailed study of textiles in seventh grade. Jake arrived with the topic of cotton. He couldn't read about cotton, but he had planted, chopped, picked, and ginned cotton, and knew far more about it than even Miss Ryan and the author of the geography. Too, he could dictate letters to people back home who sent cotton plants and seeds, and even small bales of it. Jake had abundant information about grades and yields of cotton, and the price they had to have to get a pair of shoes and some new overalls in the fall. While Miss Ryan had no tests or other absolute proof at hand I was disposed to believe that in her room, abounding in materials and occasions for varied types of reading and genuine uses for it, Jake

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