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Students Speak

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Reactions to Class Experiences
at Buffalo State College

Dr. Abel King Fink

Buffalo State College

Buffalo, NY

A joint publication of E. H. Butler Library and
the Monroe Fordham Regional History Center

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Foreword

This is a unique book. While many professors, if not most, preserve their lifelong contribution to research and publication, few have had the foresight required to preserve their efforts in the classroom. Abel Fink is among that small group. Consequently, an entirely new generation of educators has an opportunity to examine teaching and learning from the inside, so to speak, teaching and learning guided by a philosophy clearly at the margins of past and present conceptions of what constitutes effective instruction, teaching and learning that contributed significantly to a variety of social movements that transformed American society in profound ways.

Abel Fink was at the forefront of a 1960s resurgence in “progressive pedagogy,” a different way to think about how students learn best and how professors should therefore teach. The phrase progressive pedagogy or progressive education is, in fact, linked to America’s Progressive era, broadly, the first twenty-five years of the twentieth century. This fact, however, is almost as frequently a source of confusion as it is a source of explanation. Historians of education can trace the development of two distinct philosophies of education back to America’s Progressive era, one was decidedly student-centered and the predecessor to the philosophy of Abel Fink, the other clearly subject-centered and the predecessor of what Dr. Fink refers to as traditional education. One progressive trajectory was about self-discovery and gaining intellectual leverage over school subjects through the lens of one’s own world, one’s own experiences. The other was about learning what others deemed students should know, standards-based education, to use its contemporary iteration. One was focused on creating sophisticated conceptions of how students might transform their lives and the lives of others, the other focused on the eventual occupational contribution students might make and what this would allow them to have. Even the conservative columnist David Brooks recently referred to the dominant educational

philosophy in this country as one that treats students like “self-acquiring cogs in an economic wheel.”

There were two “moments” in America’s twentieth century when it looked as if the dominant conception of what constitutes an education, that is, the provision of information students were required to know in preparation for the economic role they would one day play, might fall victim to a resurging and increasingly popular version of progressive pedagogy that was predicated on what students might be rather than what they might have. These moments were the Depression decade of the 1930s, and the tumultuous decades of the 1960s and 70s.

Historians can point to the champions of 1930s progressive pedagogy, luminaries such as John Dewey, George Counts, Harold Rugg, and many others. And they can point to those whose names are synonymous with 1960s progressive pedagogy, individuals like John Goodlad, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and many others. But it is much more difficult to point to those who actually operationalized progressive pedagogy during the 1930s and the 1960s, those, like Abel Fink, who turned it into a far-reaching educational movement because they found the courage necessary to convert theory into practice, to devote themselves to a kind of teaching that truly transformed the lives of their students.

It is certainly more than a coincidence that during these two historical moments the rapid growth of democratic pedagogy occurred simultaneously with huge democratic advances in terms of public policy. The Depression era brought us a full range of initiatives that significantly advanced the quality of life in American society, things like social security, food and drug safeguards, financial industry regulations (many of which were removed during the 1990s and 2000s, contributing to a near-repeat of the 1930s Depression in 2008), and much more. This level of democratic safeguarding was repeated in the decade of the 1960s with far-reaching civil rights legislation, desegregation, affirmative action, Medicare, and much more. Once again, a constant during these two periods was the resurgence of progressive, student-centered, democratic pedagogy of the type this book so clearly illuminates.

During his teaching career at Buffalo State College, Abel Fink flipped the table. He made student talk, rather than teacher talk, the primary vehicle for student learning. Interested readers may access videos of selected class sessions by contacting the Archives and Special Collections at E. H. Butler Library. True to form, Abel Fink's remarkable little book is made up largely of student voices. They tell the tale of a progressive educator in the trenches—one who had a profound impact on his students, and thus the world.

Paul Theobald, Ph.D.

Woods-Beals Endowed Chair in Urban and Rural Education

Buffalo State College

2010

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my former students whose thoughtful papers inspired it. Their words reveal a sincerity and willingness to expose parts of themselves that merits being shared with others, rather than just being used to determine their grades and then discarded. I believe that the power of student insights regarding classroom dynamics and how their lives are affected by their experiences in class can serve as a source of learning for others. As teachers, we gain a view of the unique perceptions of students as they undergo the educational process, which may enable us to comprehend more fully their thoughts, emotions and concerns. Students are intelligent individuals who want to learn more about themselves, expand their personal horizons, and develop interpersonal skills. The passages quoted in this book highlight some of these transformations. I hope that increasing our awareness of these factors may help us to capitalize on the untapped potential of education to significantly influence the lives of our students. My students trusted me enough to share their inner thoughts with me. Now, I am sharing these insights with you. These papers, and the students who wrote them, provided me with new worlds of discovery about what education is really all about. To all of them I am deeply grateful.

Dr. Abel King Fink

Introduction

My Personal Journey

As a child of eight, I was present at the death of my beloved grandmother. This was my first personal encounter with death and it made a great impact. Lying in bed that night, I remember thinking: “So this is what death is, we all must die, and I am determined to make an important contribution before my time arrives.” This desire to make a difference would define the shape of my life and my career as an educator. Years later, when I learned that Horace Mann, the great educator, had proclaimed “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity,” I heard the familiar echo of my childhood vow.

I must confess that I was an indifferent student in elementary and high school. These years passed with little excitement, and I was, at best, an uninterested and unmotivated student. My special interests during this period were focused on events taking place in the larger world; the Second World War was looming and I avidly studied the newspapers and magazines for news of the growing global conflict. I was also very interested in stamp collecting and the airplanes landing at the nearby airport. Unfortunately, these interests never were connected to my classroom studies. This split between my real interests and what was happening in school signaled my discontent with the education I was receiving. Looking back, I realize that being intellectually and emotionally disengaged from class activities led me to think deeply about the nature of education, and eventually to focus on understanding classroom dynamics.

I graduated from high school in 1944 with a mediocre average (my best grades were in math and science) and a general interest in flying. Considering these to be my interests, my parents and teachers urged me to enroll in a program in aeronautical engineering at New

York University. I applied myself to my studies and earned a place on the dean's list, but increasingly became discontent with my studies. A taste of the humanities in an Engineering English class -- and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945 -- brought me to the realization that engineering was not for me. I wanted to work with people, not machines, and I wanted to help humanity and prevent wars, not build warplanes. I began to sense that I had almost forgotten my childhood vow.

I transferred to a liberal arts curriculum at Brooklyn College, and began to search for what seemed to me, a more meaningful profession. At first I considered entering the clergy and began a serious study of the Bible, visited various houses of worship, and interviewed a number of clergy, but concluded that theology was not for me. As to a major, I began studying philosophy, then shifted to sociology and finally chose psychology with a special interest in social psychology. (In the community, since high school, I had been leading community and summer camp youth groups.)

Confronting graduate school, I decided to enter the field of education, believing that such a career might offer me an opportunity to apply the insights of psychology to the improvement of teaching. It was my conviction, that innovation in teaching might significantly enrich the lives of young people. I enrolled at Teachers College of Columbia University in New York City, with a focus on educational psychology.

It was discouraging when I discovered that educational psychology at Columbia seemed to focus primarily on research, learning theory, and statistics and not on the dynamics of teaching in the classroom. I also learned to my dismay that the teaching methods of some leading educational psychologists tended to be very traditional in format. My naiveté had led me to believe that educational psychologists would all be crackerjack teachers.

Nevertheless, I did encounter some excellent teachers at Columbia, including John Childs in educational philosophy, Goodwin Watson and Otto Klineberg in social psychology, and Lyman Bryson in anthropology. Two professors whose subjects really captured my

imagination, were Arthur Jersild in human development and Ernest Osborn in family relations. At the conclusion of several semesters, my focus shifted from educational psychology to human development, with an ongoing interest in group psychology. Pursuing my interest in the dynamics of classroom teaching, I enrolled in a program titled “Interdivisional Program in Group Work.” This enabled me to cobble together a wide range of courses that enhanced my understanding of group behavior, including social psychology, human development, group dynamics, and curriculum development. This cross-disciplinary program allowed me the freedom to define a doctoral project, which focused on the subject of interest in education.

My major academic influences included the writings of Carl Rogers, the father of client-centered therapy, and the teaching and writing of Arthur T. Jersild, my professor of child and adolescent psychology, who emphasized the importance of self-understanding in education. Also the classes of Kenneth F. Herrold, my advisor, that helped me to become a more effective group trainer and Stephen M. Corey, who introduced me to creative curriculum development. In addition to my work at Columbia, there was Dr. J. L. Moreno and my study of psychodrama and group therapy.

Toward the end of my third year of graduate study, and having also earned my common branches elementary teacher’s license, I took a leave of absence from Columbia on the advice of Dr. Jersild. Having come to graduate school directly from college, he noted that I was lacking in practical classroom teaching with children. This prompted me to seek a fulltime, live-in position teaching the upper elementary grades at a private Connecticut boarding school. This twenty-four hour, teacher plus houseparent, plus youth counselor opportunity, led to an in-depth three-year experience that enabled me to return with confidence to Teachers College and to write my thesis. The project was entitled, “Student Interests: Their Relevance To and Employment in Democratic Education” (15). It enabled me to synthesize my graduate studies with my direct experiences living and working with children and strongly influenced and prepared me for the next step in my career.

Teaching at Buffalo State

In September of 1956, I accepted a job at Buffalo State College, and soon found myself, assigned to teach five sections of “Introduction to Human Development.” It was then that I made what turned out to be a fateful decision. Since I couldn’t tolerate teaching the same material five times in a row, I decided to treat each class as a unique entity and to tailor classroom activities to meet the special interests of the students in each class. This was done within the framework of the stated curriculum, and with the active participation of my students. No two of my classes were ever identical. Each became a unique student-centered learning opportunity. There was one occasion when one of my classes experienced a particularly interesting role-playing session. My department chairman heard about it and requested to observe role-playing at my next class session. I clearly remember how disappointed he was when I explained to him that there would be no role-playing in the next class, because each class had its own unique activities.

My courses at Buffalo State College included content in human development, group dynamics, human relations, sociodrama/role-playing, and self and social processes. They are listed in the appendix. All were part of the program of the Department of Educational Foundations. Most of these classes ran for semesters of fifteen weeks duration, except when offered during summer sessions of three or six weeks.

This Project

Life as a full-time college instructor required that I read end-of-term student papers on the run. Grading deadlines always loomed and I seldom had the opportunity to reflect deeply on what students were writing about their classroom experiences and their personal accomplishments. Nevertheless, I kept copies of many of the most interesting papers and after I retired, took the opportunity to read and consider many of them in depth. I discovered much of substance and began to organize the most articulate statements. These efforts resulted in the development of this book. Some of the statements are more polished than others, but each reflects change and development in the life of these individuals.

My Educational Philosophy

For many, the word “education” is equated with the counting and accumulation of measurable units: How many hours, credits, courses, semesters, or years has a person been in school? How many diplomas and degrees have been accumulated? The word generally brings to mind an image of students “putting in time” in the classroom taking notes, (taking dictation) while the teacher stands before them presenting (dictating) the course content. The students’ role is to memorize the facts presented by the instructor in lectures and assignments, and eventually, to demonstrate level of learning by successfully completing a content-centered final examination. This sequence is often referred to as “Traditional Education.”

Such an approach has never enthralled me, for “putting in time” in this manner doesn’t seem to make much difference in the lives of many students. What does matter are class events that bring about significant personal growth and change in the student. In my estimation, if there is no growth and no change, education is not taking place, regardless of the total amount of time spent in a classroom.

The Role of the Instructor

In student-centered teaching, the focus is on the concerns of students, not on those of the instructor. The teacher’s role is one of creating a setting in which students can achieve significant learning. The emphasis is on students taking responsibility and assuming the initiative for their own learning. While the instructor can provide books and other reference materials, it is *the students* who have to do the reading and the exploration of resources. The instructor can provide an outline of the course content and establish ground rules as to how class discussions can be managed, but it is *the students* who have to become actively involved. An instructor can pose challenging questions, but it is the students who have to respond. A teacher can assign a term project such as a psychological diary, but it is *the students* who have to take this assignment seriously.

Perhaps the most significant thing that an instructor can do is to generate a safe environment in which students can explore learning

possibilities. For this there is no magic formula. It is almost axiomatic that when students feel safe enough to put themselves at risk, they are ready to experience significant learning.

In several of the statements in the following chapters, I, as the instructor, am given praise. In most cases I believe that I am being congratulated for my concern about the growth of my students and for allowing them to experience a student-centered opportunity. My hope is that other teachers will be encouraged to make strides in this direction.

A glance at the chapters that structure this book will reveal a focus on such matters as changes in attitude toward self and others, overcoming personal barriers to speaking up in public, learning to express and hold onto one's beliefs as well as knowing when to listen. Such skills enable the individual to fully participate in the democratic process, which I believe is of critical importance in the education of young people. Unfortunately, these matters are often neglected, ignored or even suppressed in many subject-centered classrooms.

Getting Personal

The discussion may get personal when a class concentrates on real issues in the lives of students as they relate to the subject matter. This is both fundamental and unavoidable. If significant learning is taking place, students will relate their own past and present experience to the subjects under consideration. They will stress such learning in their written work and will often share their insights with their classmates, both within and outside of class.

Some teachers believe that what transpires in the classroom should remain impersonal; that education should not engage the emotions and other aspects of students' lives. They believe that becoming personally involved and talking about personal concerns in the classroom somehow violates the students' right to privacy. I do not accept this position. It is my conviction that the very core of education entails student involvement in what happens in class. I encourage full student participation in the determination of class activities for this assures that these activities are relevant to their lives. It also serves to generate a high level of interest and increases the retention of learning after the class is concluded.

I realize that such a student-centered orientation goes in the face of traditional education, which tends to be almost entirely subject matter – centered. In this approach “the facts” are stressed and student opinions and personal involvement are discouraged, if not prohibited. Teachers often freely present their own points of view and even express their own prejudices, but this is not a privilege held out to students who sometimes get into trouble when they disagree with their teacher’s views.

This difference in educational philosophies must be confronted if we are to comprehend what is being described here. The conflict and debate between traditionalists and progressives has raged in educational circles for decades and I do not intend to pursue it further here; except to make it clear that what is being described in this book represents my own point of view which has landed me firmly on the side of the progressives.

For an extended presentation of the philosophical distinction between these two opposing philosophies, the reader is referred to L. Thomas Hopkins, *Interaction: The Democratic Process* (23). For more on the sources of my orientation, please refer to such books as Arthur T. Jersild’s *In Search of Self* (24) and *When Teachers Face Themselves* (26). For Carl Rogers’s influential views, see his *A Way Of Being* (32), *Carl Rogers On Encounter Groups* (33), and *Freedom to Learn for the 80s* (35). For comparisons with the present project, see especially, Carl Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy* (34): Chapter 9, “Student-Centered Teaching and *On Becoming A Person* (36): Chapter 15, “Student-Centered Teaching as Experienced by a Participant.” See also my own statements, “The Democratic Essence of Psychodrama” (12) and “The Case for the ‘Open’ Psychodramatic Session: A Dialogue” (11).

Education and Psychotherapy

For those who claim that getting personal in class enters the realm of psychotherapy, I maintain that the two are quite different. One major distinction between education and therapy is the way each is presented to the public. A college course is advertised in the catalog after having its content approved by the faculty. It is open to qualified students who are deemed eligible to register for the course, and it is

usually part of a larger curricular program. In addition, instructors describe the course in detail at the beginning of the semester. There are also procedures for withdrawing from a course if the student so desires. Psychotherapy on the other hand is advertised to the public by qualified therapists as consisting of therapeutic procedures that are specifically aimed at helping individuals to work out their personal and/or interpersonal problems.

A second distinction has to do with the focus of sessions. What happens in a class is limited to what is spelled out in the course outline and the material distributed by the instructor. In psychotherapy, what occurs is focused on the needs of the patient and may go off in almost any direction. In terms of how personal the proceedings become, in psychotherapy the only limits are those of the individuals involved, whereas in the class related activities, students although encouraged to participate openly, are free to set limits depending on their readiness. As to their written assignments, students are encouraged to plunge in, but how much or what they share in reports to the instructor or to other students is a matter of their own readiness.

Over time, I have found that three things can occur if this student-centered approach is successfully applied in the classroom:

1. The focus of the class goes beyond learning course content; the student becomes personally involved in the educational process. The student moves from being a passive note taker to being actively involved in what is happening. Indeed, what occurs in class, and its accomplishments, depends in large part on the extent to which the student assumes responsibility for what is happening.

2. Once engaged, the student begins to consider how what is happening in class effects the kind of person she or he is, and the way she or he thinks and behaves.

3. The student tries out new behavior outside the classroom and begins to evaluate that behavior.

Documenting Change

In a student-centered class, students are encouraged to express themselves in many ways; not only through verbal participation but through other modes of communication. Most students produced reports in prose, while others composed poetry. Some created art while others expressed themselves in dance, music, and in creative combinations of these approaches. I attempted to document class experiences by collecting student reports and other products. In some classes, I was also able to videotape classes in session. In this book, I have only been able to share written contributions.

The papers from which these statements were obtained came from classes on many different topics. Since my concern is with the process of enhancing human growth rather than that of subject matter to be learned, I have taken the liberty to cross subject-matter boundaries. This is not to suggest that course content is not important, rather to emphasize that many other matters may be of equal or greater significance. Nevertheless, course grades were based primarily on mastery of the course content.

The Psychological Diary

A fundamental concern when attempting to determine what is being accomplished in the classroom is to achieve a student's eye view of what they are experiencing. Was there a way to tune in to their reactions during the course of their studies? How did they perceive what was happening to them in class and how did this fit into their overall learning about themselves and their lives? After exploring various approaches, I arrived at the concept of the psychological diary. This was a term project in which students were asked to keep a personal diary in which they were to record their reactions to what they were experiencing in, and in relation, to class sessions. Once a month they were requested to scrutinize their diary entries, summarize the highlights and submit a typed report of what they felt comfortable to share. It was my hope that this would allow for an overview of their ongoing learning. These reports were read promptly, summarized in notes kept by the instructor and returned to students with written comments. At the close of the semester a final

report was requested which provided a summary of what they believed they had accomplished during the semester. As I have indicated, the original diaries were to be considered private and were never to be seen by the instructor. Students were asked to eliminate anything that they might consider to be too personal; hopefully, this would encourage them to be open and honest.

It was from the monthly papers and the longer and more comprehensive end- of- semester final reports that the quotations presented here have been taken. At the close of the semester, students were asked to return their final papers to the instructor, if they chose to do so. Final course letter grades were determined based on the instructor's evaluation of the quality of learning revealed.

One caveat should be added: Students may tend to "guild the lily." For this reason I have attempted to select statements that tended to be specific about their experiences. I felt that the more detail that was provided, the more certain I could be of the writer's sincerity. I cannot be absolutely certain of honesty.

A Note on Class Size

A strong feature of Buffalo State College has been its tradition of limiting class size to about 30 students in the undergraduate and graduate programs as opposed to large sections of several hundred students held in large amphitheaters. Generally my classes had an enrollment in the twenties and low thirties. Although some authors claim that effective group work can only happen in small groups, I was prepared to work with as many students as had registered for my courses.

A Note on Texts

Although each of my classes had at least one textbook to cover the content of the course, occasionally I made use of fiction and non-fiction in the form of paperback books. I found these helpful to present case studies and to develop issues and explore problems that grew out of class activities. They were inexpensive to purchase and easy to read and often generated a good deal of interest.

Handouts to Students

(Handout distributed to all students at the beginning of class)

State University College At Buffalo

Dr. Abel K. Fink

Your Responsibility in this Student-Centered Class

1. What we do in this class will depend, in large part on what you are able and willing to put into this experience. Little effort will no doubt result in little learning.
2. **Reading** is your responsibility outside of class. Only **you** can determine how much time and effort you will put into reading. Only **you** can determine what you read and how carefully you do so. But there is little doubt that what you learn in this course (and your grade), will in large part depend upon your decisions concerning reading. Is one hour of attentive reading per day too much to ask of yourself – or too little?
3. Your **Psychological diary** may be the first volume you have ever been asked to write. How much time and energy you put into it will no doubt determine in large measure what you get out of it. If you keep it conscientiously it may become one of the most significant projects you have ever undertaken. It is a unique experience, in that it 1) Is to be kept secret – only for your eyes, and 2) It gives you a chance to discuss the personal significance of your experience. Part of your time should be spent in writing your diary – and part of your time in reading and thinking about what you have written. Is one hour a day sufficient for this effort?
4. **Your participation** in class means more than your physical presence – it requires also your psychological attention. It means talking as well as listening. Some of us may have to generate a good

deal of effort in order to speak up whereas others may have to learn how to moderate our words. It is quite possible that some of us “think on our feet” and will make little progress if we merely sit and listen. Others must learn to listen before we respond – and others must concentrate on listening to what we are saying while we are saying it. You don’t have to be an expert “speaker” to gain from this class but it will help if you have at least the desire to share your experiences and thinking with the rest of us.

Note: You selected to enroll in this particular course and section. You have the freedom to leave if you do not feel comfortable. You can sometimes switch to another section, you can withdraw, you can “take” something else. If you decide to stay you should do so in the light of what I have said above. If you stay, I will do what I can to make this a productive learning experience for you.

(Handout distributed to all students in Group Dynamics and Human Relations)

State University College At Buffalo

Dr. Abel K. Fink

Some Ground Rules for Group Members

- # Try to be honest with self and others, in writing and speaking.
- # Try to say what you are thinking, even if you usually might not. Try not to block or censor your thoughts.
- # Try to explore new media of expression – nonverbal messages: (touch, music, dance.)
- # Try to free yourself through movement of your body; try to assume new postures, move around when restless, get out of your seat, stand on your head!
- # **Hic et nunc.** Try to focus on the **here and now.** Try to bring the past and the distant into the present.
- # Focus on the drawing forth of resources – from self and others. When you’ve run out of things to say or do, tune in to the struggle of others.

Let's attempt to face controversy when it appears. Repression does not eliminate pressing issues.

Stay with important thoughts or emotions, even if this means tuning out or leaving the group temporarily.

(Handout distributed to all classes)

State University College at Buffalo

Dr. Abel K. Fink

Psychological Diary

From the very beginning of the course – and until the close of this learning experience – which may continue well after the end of formal classes -- I would like you to put reactions, significant learning, puzzling questions, new insights, and so forth, in writing in a document that I shall call a psychological diary. These entries may be prompted by happenings in class or out, by your reading or reflection or by any of the many incidents of daily living. As long as they are of some importance to you and at least distantly related to the subject of this course, they have a place in your diary.

This document is meant to be confidential – for your eyes only – and should provide you with an opportunity to record your thoughts freely and without inhibition. You should strive to record your entries “while the iron is hot,” that is, when the thoughts make their appearance – whenever that may be. The dating of entries may help afterwards in helping you to become aware of the sequence of development of your thinking.

From time to time, I would like you to read over your diary with the objective of getting an overall view of its contents. If, in so doing, new generalizations appear, please feel free to record them too. Periodically, or whenever an important generalization appears, I would like you to submit to me a brief (about one page) typewritten statement of how the diary is going. These reports should serve as a direct means of communication between us in regard to your principal learning and/or reactions to the course and may enable me to suggest areas where further thought or effort might be directed.

The psychological diary should be considered to be your **term project** for the course – one that encompasses the learning experience as a whole – and should provide whatever raw data may be necessary in order for you to evaluate your learning. As a term project it should be taken seriously and given adequate time and attention. How much effort is put into it may well be related to your achievement in this course.

Attendance Regulations, Graduate & Undergraduate

Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled class sessions. Legitimate excuses will be accepted but the student is held responsible for becoming familiar with class experiences and accomplishing class assignments missed due to his/her absence.

Excessive absences (more than 6 hours per semester) may be considered adequate cause for the student to be asked to withdraw from the course.



CHAPTER I

Overview of the Experience

The attempt to look at classroom experience through the eyes of students has been both exciting and gratifying. So many students are wise in the way of the world and have much to say to those who teach them if only we will listen. Since each class is unique, as is each student, it is remarkable to discover how many reactions have a similar ring.

To begin this presentation of student reactions, let us look at some statements in which class experiences are viewed as a whole. In other words, these statements take a more global view of classes as total entities. The chapters to follow are organized in terms of specific aspects of class experience. Let us start with the comprehensive view of a particularly perceptive individual.

1. “To Give of Myself in a More Personal Way” (Group Dynamics)

In considering what I have learned from this course in Group Dynamics, so many things present themselves to mind that it is difficult to line them up in any order of importance, so I shall attempt to set down those which come to mind as I perceive them, not necessarily in any hierarchic degree.

I feel that I have learned to give of myself in a more personal way than I ever have done before. In the past I have hesitated to expose my inner feelings for fear of hurting others and of being hurt myself in return. Since observing the results in regard to myself and others I have learned that there is a new level of intimacy and mutual respect which can only be reached by the broad avenue of communicating genuine feeling to others, and that rather than be afraid of it, we should cultivate the practice as a vitalizing force in human relations.

It now seems apparent to me that there is a boundary line of defense that we must be willing to traverse if we are to develop meaningful relationships with other people. I have been too willing in the past to settle for shallow relationships. I don't think I can permit that to be the general rule any more.

I have learned that our egos too often get in the way and prohibit us from communicating, and if we can submerge our own selves and our fears into a genuine concern for others, we will find a deeper satisfaction in our own lives as the barriers to communication are permanently lowered. People do not reveal themselves readily, and I have been typical in this regard. One of the subterfuges that I have had to face in myself was the effort to cloak my feelings in technical jargon. It has been revealing to me to learn that other people see this as a refusal to give of my self, and in listening to this criticism, I have seen that it is justified to the extent that it is refusal to be personal. Since becoming convinced that being personal in a group does not mean one is a damned fool, I believe I will be more effective in my dealings with people henceforth.

One of the greatest lessons to be learned, and which I have learned from this class is that everyone feels a certain degree of insecurity or fears inadequacy, and that they resent the appearance of self-confidence in others. I think this resentment has two bases: 1. It exaggerates the observer's feelings of inadequacy, and 2. It presents itself as a false image and is recognized as such, for I think that we all recognize instinctively that there is no such thing in the human world as complete self-confidence.

I have learned that all groups will evolve their own leadership ultimately, and that this leadership can not be forcibly assumed by aggression, but must be earned by showing a genuine concern for the needs of the group and an ability to contribute meaningfully to the fulfillment of those group needs.

I have learned that where a feeling of genuine effort is concerned, group members will respond with any needed assistance to the person whom they feel is in need of help, but they will not respond with help to someone whom they feel is not being honest with them.

I have learned that there are many other ways besides verbalizing to express our feelings, and that there are times when these other forms of emotional expression may be infinitely more meaningful than mere words.

I have learned that one can make a mistake and still be accepted as a worthwhile person and not ridiculed by others – and that this feeling helps to cement the bonds of friendship within a group.

I have learned that if one is willing to listen to others, one may learn quite a bit about himself, and that others will be more willing to listen to you in return.

Finally, I think I have learned a greater respect for people in general as human beings who are sensitive to being hurt by others, and who, again speaking generally, do not enjoy seeing another hurt. It is this quality that I have observed so clearly in the group, that most of us will go out of our way to avoid hurting someone else that gives me encouragement in an age of Hitlers, Battistas, Kys and Thieus to go on being proud to call myself a member of the human race and

to be proud of myself in spite of my failings, and to give others the freedom and scope to have their limitations also and not be condemned because of them.

[Final report by the late John B. Armesto, military veteran, musician, music educator and composer, former student in EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Jan. 1970, with the permission of his family.]

2. “What We Learned” (Studies in Human Development)

You wanted us to tell you what we learned in your class. A few weeks ago I overheard someone remark that she didn't learn a thing because you didn't teach us anything. That statement really bothered me and I thought about it for a long time. I disagree with her. I learned so much in your class because you let us explore so many different aspects of life and human development. Your class was not structured with lectures and notes and a textbook, that's true. But so much of knowledge comes from within, from experience and comparison and sharing thoughts and ideas.

I grew a lot in your class. The readings you selected shed tremendous amounts of light on my life. In fact, I mailed two of the books to my sister who is an elementary school teacher in a small farming community in Central New York. I am a much more understanding and patient teacher after having taken this course. I now try to find solutions to help some of my troubled students. I no longer have problem students, but rather students with problems, and that is the greatest thing that I learned this semester.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, Dec. 13, 1989]

3. “My Thoughts” (Studies in Human Development)

Dr. Fink, the end of the semester is near,
 I'll tell you my thoughts, if you'll lend me an ear.
 It's the genre, poetry, I'll use to express,
 To explain how your course got me out of a mess.

You know my family is my main concern,
You directed me to resources that helped me to learn.
How to handle my girls in their teenage years,
And how not to make mountains out of my little fears.
I've made an attempt to communicate more,
In hopes that my girls never close that door.
Taking your course has earned me more respect
From them. . . . that's something I didn't expect.

Sheila [19] and Dibs [3] have spoken to me,
I'm more of a mother to my students, you see!
I'm looking for hidden messages they send,
I'm looking to see if I can help them to mend.
'I'm hurt, Mrs. J. I'm feeling some pain,
Please help me feel better, to be normal and sane.'
For sometimes the nurturing they need, I overlook,
Sometimes I go too much by the book.
So it's more loving I'm giving to them these days,
I'm sure I'll be rewarded in many ways!

As for myself, it's made me more aware,
That there's a lot I can do, a lot I can share.
You've given my self- image a boost,
I'm more confident now, I'm out on my roost!
And reading *Necessary Losses* (40), the book,
Has made me step back and take a good look.

Life has been very kind to me,
And as for my losses, I guess they just had to be.
My family has been so supportive, you know,
Through births and through deaths that have helped me to
 Grow!
Each change . . . each loss . . . you never forget,
And sometimes you'll do things you'll always regret.
It's all part of life, just put them away,
And try to make the best of your short stay.

The papers I wrote gave me some insight
Into what I could do to make things right.
It's not always easy to delve deep inside,
To admit to the thing you've tried to hide.
I feel better now that I have expressed,
Those feeling that I have always repressed.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, Dec. 1989]

4. “A Great Amount Going On” (Group Dynamics)

I am somewhat surprised when I look back on the last 15 weeks of this course. I realize that despite the lack of an expected structure, there was a great amount going on. While I felt frustrated by the lack of formal presentations on group dynamics, I recognize and appreciate the fact that within the actual structure of this course, I got to know more people better and in shorter time than with any other school experience. In fact, this will probably be the only course I've not wanted to see end, because of the people that I'll now have to say goodbye to; people I've come to like and respect; people that have let me glimpse who and what they are. Thank you for letting me in!

There is a ring of familiarity in there by the way, a sense of déjà vu. I recognize many kindred spirits. I guess I was surprised (though I don't know why) to see that we share so many of the same fears and heartaches; so many of your issues are or were my issues. I thought, at first, that we were so very different. I know now that there is more that binds us than separates us. Our differences are more a matter of degree than substance. What really separates us you see is our own blinders in that they keep us from really looking at each other, and our own walls and facade which keep us from really seeing each other. My own loneliness then is exposed as being quite self-imposed. I'll miss you all – remember something of me!

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 15, 1988]

5. “There is More Than One Means to Learning” (Adolescent Psychology)

By taking this course I have learned that there is more than one means to learning. It would be very easy to read a text, write a term paper, and take a final. I have survived this method of learning for the past 18 years and I suppose I could do it again. I would be in that ‘student-rut’ that I mentioned in my diary summary. However this time I was able to get out of that ‘rut.’ I realize that it is very hard for some people to learn for the sake of learning. Instead we have to see that grade, compare it to others, add to our collection of hours and collect our extra pennies every paycheck. We learn this way because this is how we have learned from the beginning. The competition begins our first year of school. I have learned that I must realize the faults of our system. I cannot feel honest and say ‘that my principal won't approve’ or ‘I don't have my tenure yet, I must be careful.’ That ‘student rut,’ I spoke of, well I feel I won't let myself get into the ‘teacher rut.’ (I am in the process of reading *Summerhill* (31), and my feelings of discontent are increasing.)

One general statement I feel I could make is that I feel that my awareness of the complexity of each individual has increased. A child can't be classified. The answers to his problems cannot be found in one book. The study of human development cannot be limited to

classroom work. We must seek all the available resources such as readings, films, music, other teachers, parents, and other children.

As I stated in my diary summary, I have learned that I must look beyond behavior and realize that there is a cause to the behavior. I also learned to be aware of generalization.

[Final evaluation, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, Aug. 26, 1971]

6. “Really Got Me Thinking About Myself” (Introduction To Human Development)

The first month of class, Human Development, has been many things to me. The first two classes I found to be very different and I admit I almost dropped the course. But after a while, when people began to talk and communicate with each other it began to become very interesting. This is about the only class I have taken that has really got me thinking about myself as a person and others as well.

It is so hard to explain what I mean on paper, but since I began taking this course I am constantly thinking and it is kind of scary. Ha Ha! This class has made me more conscientious toward others. I mean people in our own class have come forward with some of their own problems, some of them horror stories and made me realize just how lucky I have been. When you have it good your whole life you tend to take it for granted. Not any more. After one of our classes, in which a young woman told the class she was being sexually abused by her father, I went home and I thanked my parents for the way they raised me. Until that class I really did not have a whole lot written in my journal, but since then I find myself writing in it all the time. This class also helped me open up more and say what was on my mind, which was often difficult for me to do in the past.

One last thing, the person or persons who are trying to get rid of this course should have their heads examined. This is the best class I have taken in my three years at Buff State.

[First diary report, EDU 210 Introduction to Human Development, Undated]

7. “Learning About Groups” (Group Dynamics)

Much of the group, any group and its interactions still elude me. But I am willing to accept this because groups are complex, and it is not until now that I have begun to actively look at a group, its structure, its interaction and its function.

As I look back over the semester I remember the variety of feeling toward the group that I have had. And now I have a better understanding about the functions of my feelings, and how they reflect the natural process of the group’s growth as stated by Rogers (34). However, I must openly admit that in many respects the therapeutic aspects of groups remain a tad mysterious to me.

One of my objectives, as I recall, was to gain insight and skills into the function of groups for professional reasons. I believe that I have just touched upon this and that with continued reading and development I will continue to gain insight, skills, and develop into an individual who feels comfortable and confident as a group leader in a therapeutic setting.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, spring, 1989]

8. “A Lasting Impression” (Group Dynamics)

I have been writing this paper for the past two weeks. Just from that one statement I realize this course has left a lasting impression on me. With most of my courses they were totally separate from my personal life. But this one has blended with my everyday experiences. This is why I feel so good about going to class. A larger learning that I have accomplished this semester is to appreciate people and life more. I look at least twice at everything and try to take at least a moment to think about the sky, people, trees, articles, and people. We are all valuable resources whether we want to believe it or not. All of us have something to give. Dr. Fink you proved that point so well with M. the baton twirler. You made me realize that with some people they may need a little more time and that special someone to take the time to dig a little deeper for the precious gems we all possess.

Although our group had some major problems I get the feeling that we are a success. I believe almost the entire class participates in our discussions. I do not feel inhibited to speak because of what someone else might say. I look forward to any remarks. We have all come a long way. I love the feeling when people are sharing their inner thoughts with us and feel even better when I can convey my caring for them.

What will live on in me because of this experience is that everyone is very different, very unique; just like tiny snowflakes that fall from the sky; no two are alike. Each shape and size is totally different from the next one. Yet even though each snowflake has its own unique design, when they come together as a new fallen snow, it is magnificent; the beauty is breathtaking. The feelings I get from looking at it are ones of happiness and peacefulness. This is how I feel about our group. We are all very different, both physically and mentally. Yet when we finally started to work together helping, sharing and guiding each other, it was something very beautiful. We blended well and were able to be productive. When I would leave class each Monday it was only physically because the learning and good feelings carried me through till next week.

This class has afforded me the opportunity to see myself and the lives of people around me so much clearer and to be aware of the riches we all have to share with each other.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, fall, 1982]

9. “Human Relations” (EDU 528)

A little season

Of love and laughter,

Of light and life,

And pleasure and pain.

Looking back now on our semester of Tuesday nights in Bacon Hall, that which comes to mind most clearly, that which has impressed me and will remain with me a long time, was the uniqueness in

orientation, approach, and feeling of Education 528. Our classroom and its inhabitants somehow became a microcosm of the society in which we live. It was a place where we came together with our own personal packages of dilemmas and confusions and frustrations and humanity, and there bounced off of one another with our ideas; listened, got angry, understood, misunderstood, complained, and congratulated, agreed, and disagreed. The unfairness and frustration of life was with us. The prejudice and discrimination and disappointment of many lifetimes mingled there. All of our hopes and dreams and expectations for the future were very much a part of what went on in our classroom; everything that is good, bad and indifferent about human nature was right there in Room 110 from seven-thirty to ten, and became part of our consciousness and discussion. It was there that we worked within the realm of real life, and real life was what we ultimately learned of.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Dec. 1985]

10. “Knocking Down Barriers to Communication” (Group Dynamics)

I would not have believed the depth of involvement reached in our group possible, if I had not been part of it. The relationships were, and still are a process of being and growing, and so my objectivity is lost.

There are many personal and cultural handicaps forced upon us by society and family, and they, to different degrees, form a barrier between us. The task of the group was to knock down the barriers and open up communication; this was our goal but we didn't know it when we began. The barriers exist in the form of fears: fear of being forced into involvement against our will, fear of dissension and difference, fear of being hurt and hurting others, fear of being led, fear of leading, fear of exposing feelings both positive and negative, fear of expressing emotion and showing emotions, fear of loss of individuality. All of these fears could probably be boiled down into one: fear of rejection and loneliness.

Exactly how I overcame some of these fears and to what degree is impossible to know. But I did somehow, and I developed a great deal of trust, which allowed me to accept the group's individual differences. At this point, the differences were really not important except for the desire to understand the reasons behind them. I believe that others in the group went through their own processes of developing trust because I don't think I would have arrived at this point without the group's support and growth.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, July 22, 1977]

11. "Peace of Mind" (Group Dynamics)

I must admit I really am surprised at what I have found out about myself after taking this course. I actually feel as if I have gained some 'peace of mind.' In college I was involved in a sensitivity training group that left me with a rather poor impression of this type of activity and also a poor self-concept of myself. Needless to say it took a year to get back to normal, if you can call it that, but I still had a tremendous fear of this type of an activity. My purpose in taking this course was to face my fear head-on. My mind was unsettled about what had happened and it made me extremely fearful to try any sort of human relations activities with my class. Although I realize that human relations activity would be a milder form, I still had fears of what it might do to the child and I wasn't sure I could help correct any harm that might develop.

Through observation of the interaction of the group and through readings I began to realize that human growth is not a simple experience. Everyone needs upsetting situations to make them aware of themselves, the people around them and the world they live in. The one social process that I feel has been developed for me is that of 'trust.' I really needed to change my ways and I really feel I have. I have finally opened up to individuals not only in the group but also outside of the group. I can now view my past experiences with a sensitivity group as a learning situation that brought about a change and made me examine both myself and others. The only regret I have is that the course is ending. I've in a sense started a new beginning and

would like to continue it with this group. I actually feel that I did accomplish my purpose in taking this course.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 7, 1970]

12. “Unreal Happenings” (Group Dynamics)

Many things seem to happen.

People seem to come and go.

New experiences, unreal happenings,

New faces and new challenges.

Time seems to be an ever-rushing element, an uncontrollable factor.

College pressures pounce and threaten.

Teachers tend to know but just to teach.

Students fill in slots and walk to and fro in seeming emptiness.

Now and then there's the excitement of encounter and a new face becomes a new friend.

Groups grow and challenge and ask and probe and listen and find and maybe (hopefully) understand.

Black and white and finally quiet in between.

Quiet but satisfied?

Insecure and unsure,

Safe but not positive, careful but free to jump.

Group encounters: People, individuals, everyone, each and all with hang-ups and problems.

Never bliss but searching.

Always wondering yet never fully knowing.

Some answers but never fully answered.

Guidance; but indirect.

Procedures not set and resulting in dangling methods.

How can this be in such an organized society?

Shouldn't we have set rules?

After all, we've always had them before.

As a result, release, differences, freedom, spontaneity, turmoil, misunderstandings, instant judgments.

Results? Awareness of interactions and inter reactions, of self (inside and out), of others (in particular and in general).

Where does all this happen?

Everywhere.

Groups tend to take on new meanings.

Ins and outs of each become an awareness.

Life is somewhat different and new, fresh and often times exciting.

All this is helping to make even the littlest become the 'most important' at times.

Greatness is insideness.[sic]

Pretty is as is down deep.

[First paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, winter, 1970]

13. “Understanding Myself” (Human Relations)

Because I am more of a listener and observer by nature, I found this class to be interesting and informative. This class made me focus on myself and helped me to be more introspective and search for reasons for my actions and thoughts.

This three- week [summer] course is not enough time to fully understand myself or my relations with those around me. However, I’m sure that even the semester course is not enough time nor is it meant to be. It is a beginning for one to examine one’s innermost feelings and to make conscious decisions about future actions and thoughts.

For me, this course has inspired me with a desire and willingness to dig further to understand myself and how I effect those around me.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 1988]

14. “Group Dynamics, EDU 556”

I feel this course has been a most enlightening one. This judgment is due to what I have learned about the dynamics of groups, and what I have learned about myself.

It is my opinion that the objectives of the course have finally been realized, both by myself and by the majority of the group members. As I mentioned in my study, the objectives have only become tangible as the course progressed, even though they were outlined for us at the onset. The understandings, skills, and attitudes mentioned in the outline only became real as we experienced their significance.

The profound effect that the course has had on me can be seen in the change of my attitudes and concerns from the beginning to the end of the course. This change of direction was evident in my psychological diary and somewhat displayed in my reports. In essence, concern for the self and the role I must play, not only moved toward, but intermingled with concern for the group needs and group-centered roles. It has been a new realization that only through a combination of these factors can one have a successful group.

The term project was also another profitable experience in my learning due to the nature of the material that I studied. The problem of the democratic versus the autocratic structure confronted me from the outset. This philosophic consideration and how it pertained to my life and affected the behavior of the group was necessary to study and facilitated my growth as an individual functioning in a society where one is constantly confronted with these opposing forces. I feel that this study has made my awareness of these forces more acute and consequently I am more capable of perceiving the world and situations as they are. Most importantly, I feel I am more capable of making decisions without the fear of threatening consequences.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, winter 1967]

15. “Overview of Human Development” (Introduction to Human Development)

The accomplishments I have made within myself and the class this semester were ones of growth, learning, and broadening of my horizons. I feel very confident that my learning came about and was presented in a unique and special way different than it has in any other class that I have taken at Buffalo State. It was nice to have a small and informal class, very different from my class in the Communication Building, with over two hundred students. This class gave me a sense of coming back to matters filled with experience and of feeling. I must say Dr. Fink, that you gave the class a feeling of belonging, like anyone would feel in their own home. The topics we discussed in class informed me of things that I never realized or knew before. Our discussions were very up-to-date and useful to me. It was nice to have discussions that could be brought up in conversations outside the classroom.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, spring, 1989]

16. “Overview of Human Relations”

As this semester draws to a close, Human Relations has proved to be an interesting and impacting experience. As I was reading through

my journal I came across a couple of lines, which I think very much, reveal my feelings about the course. They are as follows: "Right now I don't feel totally challenged or intrigued by my other classes. It seems that the least structured of them all, Human Relations, Dr. Fink's class, has caused me to think the most. It has brought me out of myself more and has provided me with the most direction and insight, it's strange."

In class there has been considerable interaction and human relationships between diverse people with varied viewpoints and conceptions. The atmosphere was unique, relaxed and open; a sanctuary among the rigid deadline oriented graduate courses. Many times I found myself thinking of class and utilizing information received there in my daily life. Most of all, the class has touched me in a profound and sincere way. I was especially moved by the video of the former class.

I believe innovation and creativity should constantly be in flux. Sometimes it is difficult to achieve this in education. EDU 528 was constantly moving, sometimes slowly, sometimes more quickly; regardless it always had something to offer. Emotional vibrations coupled with intellectual thought proved stimulating and educational.

I was first attracted to the course after viewing the book list. I wondered how *Frankenstein* (38) and *Hiroshima* (22) would meet the criteria of an Education class; something drew me in to find out. The spark, the daring to be different, to innovate, later made me realize why this class would prove to be special. Of course it wouldn't be so without the instructor, who has the ability to make the students feel at ease.

Being in Student Personnel Administration, I can see the importance of the faculty allowing themselves to be accessible to the student, to also feel comfortable enough to draw them out of themselves.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, undated]

17. “Personal Impact” (Human Relations)

This course has been a major encyclopedia of discovering what a fully-functioning, self-actualizing human being must be. A goal for us to engage in is to continue helping with human relations. This class has provided me new meaning in life. It provided new goals and directions for me, not just in time of crisis, but in the quiet hours between, and in my professional work as well.

Learning is a highly personal matter. Thru this course, I have learned that it is not the cold, antiseptic examination of facts I once considered it to be.

‘Human Relations,’ has had more of an impact on my thinking, perceptions on life, values, and even goals that I had set for myself. Other courses such as psychology, counseling, philosophy, which also deal with relations have not the personal atmosphere to talk about personal feeling, attitudes, and prejudices.

Readings gained meaning thru our small group discussions. I believe that it is necessary for me to recognize that the only important answers are those I have within myself. For these are the only ones that will ever show up in my behavior.

I have learned that human relations are the product of beliefs, values, and convictions. People simply do not behave objectively. They behave in terms of their feelings, attitudes, and convictions even about the most scientific matters. We need a great deal more freedom to look, to try, to experiment, to explore, to talk about, and to discuss. This course offered this to me.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 6, 1986]

18. “A Support System”

As I begin to write my final paper, the word ‘final’ began to stir mixed emotions within me. A final paper meant a conclusion of class, an end of the daily discussion groups (both large and small), that I had eagerly awaited each day. Feelings of sadness came upon me.

I thought of the relationships established between and among the group members. The contributions from these RESOURCE PEOPLE seem immeasurable to me. I realize our discussion groups were examples of human relations in action! EDU 528 was a 'support system' for me these past three weeks, we listened and discussed the challenges in human relations and became more understanding of others. This group also helped me to deal with my feelings of anxiety over the engagement of my daughter this past week.

I have looked at each of these people not as another classmate, but as a 'personality' with individual needs and wants. I realized that I too had needs and wants. I learned that people DO DIFFER in what they consider important, and regardless of these differences, I respect their certain needs. And they respected mine.

Daily reading of the *New York Times* has 'opened my eyes' to a wider range and a better understanding of the human dilemmas in the world. This paper has been the start of a new beginning reading a daily newspaper besides the *Buffalo News*.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, summer, 1986]



CHAPTER II

The Classroom Environment

To enhance human growth it is essential to establish a safe environment. The instructor must have the skills to generate a situation where students feel free to experiment with new behavior and participate without inhibition.

Of course the instructor himself must feel free to experiment and this may depend on the degree of academic freedom that prevails in the institution within which he works. In my own case, I was given support and encouragement and for the most part was allowed to do what I felt I needed to do to pursue student-centered instruction.

Ideally, the instructor is knowledgeable in his subject area, of reasonable health and well-rested; relaxed and self-confident as well as creative and spontaneous. Each class being unique and therefore full of challenges, he must be ready to deal with new situations often on the spur of the moment.

Personally, my work with J. L. Moreno and his associates made me acutely aware of the role of spontaneity in ever-shifting situations and helped prepare me for my role as facilitator of student-centered instruction. See the major works of Moreno, *Who Shall Survive?* (29) and *Psychodrama, Volume One* (28).

The setting is a major factor in establishing a proper environment. I needed a permanent room in which to function. I had to fight to get a classroom of my own, for at the start I was assigned to different rooms for each class, sometimes located in different buildings. I felt I had to have a home base, and was eventually assigned a specific room (110 Bacon Hall) in which I could remain for all of my classes. Years later when Bacon Hall was renovated, I was able to redesign the room to meet my needs. Changes included the installation of a sound system over which I could play music and record sessions; comfortable wall-to-wall carpeting on which we could sit, and a small psychodrama stage, including dimmable, colored track lights, which enabled us to shut off the fluorescent light and have comfortable lighting. Also a “one-way vision” window was installed so that classes could be observed without observers disrupting class sessions. In addition, moveable chairs and tables, ample chalk and bulletin boards were added. It took many years to achieve my goal of a comfortable classroom. Many early student statements in this book were written when our classrooms were less than desirable.

After years of using this facility, I arrived to start class in September of a new year to discover that the stage and lights had been removed during the summer break without my knowledge. But classes carried on.

19. “Reactions To An Open Environment”

Although I have not found a ‘magic cure’ in your class, I have discovered a whole new world waiting for me to reach out and grab. I know I still have shortcomings to deal with, I always will, but you’ve given me some helpful hints on how to isolate and deal with them.

I would like to say I thoroughly enjoyed your class and your method of teaching. It is amazing to see how people react when given an open environment in which to work. So many people need to have everything structured so that they can do something without thinking, but that destroys the whole concept of learning. I know the things I learned in this class will always stay with me because I taught them to myself, I didn't have someone ramming them down my throat forcing me to memorize useless things.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, May 6, 1987]

20. "Trust in Self"

[From instructor's notes on student's first paper which includes quotations from that paper, dated Oct. 12, 1977.]

She's taking the course "to learn more about myself and to get myself out from behind a wall that I've built around myself as a protection against being hurt." She's known that this need for a barrier was not healthy, "but the idea of removing it is both scary and very threatening." She felt very "uncomfortable and threatened," as if she was being forced to expose a part of herself she wasn't sure she wanted to show or even admit that it existed. T. did not help. "However, the last class gave me a very good feeling, the air was cleared, "hostility was relieved" and her feelings toward T. changed from "dislike and wariness to friendliness and trust." She left "feeling exhausted but good."

[From same student's final paper:]

The experience has been so good and produced growth in many ways for me. I hope this will continue long after the actual classes have ended.

I reread my diary with the objective [of seeing] how I had grown and changed, as this was my main purpose when I started. When I began I lacked trust and self-confidence, and tended to blame others for the problems in my life. Never for a moment did I believe I would have the courage to open up and share a part of myself with the group.

As the classes progressed and my trust grew, I began to feel more confident about participating. As my participation became more frequent, I began to realize that the problems I had weren't so different from [those of] the others in the class. These feelings and problems I had made me no less important or insignificant as a person than any of the others. In our discussions I found others also lacked trust and self-confidence, but to foster these, some sharing must take place; these create and foster the trust and self-confidence to share more personal issues. It becomes a spiral which starts with self and grows hopefully to include all in the group.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 1977]

21. "Trust in the Experience"

We talked, shared, and learned. Human Relations was more than just a class. It was a place where we could discuss our thoughts and feelings openly.

I felt comfortable and at ease with my professor and with my colleagues. We generated at times, so much enthusiasm that I hoped the discussion would continue. I also felt an openness I never had before, since at times I was hesitant about speaking in the presence of others. The atmosphere amongst our selves, which was a very friendly one, made me open myself to my true feelings and inner thoughts.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 5, 1986]

22. "Trust in the Teacher"

[What did you like most about the course?] The teacher's attitudes, and how easy he is to talk to.

I'm glad you are a teacher who is so interested in everyone personally and because you are more concerned with how much we get from the course rather than the marks. Because of this attitude I think it is inevitable that we get more out of college. It need not be about psychology, but about life and people and their attitudes and philosophies.

[Final paper, EDU 210 Introduction to Human Development, Jan. 21, 1958]

23. “The Democratic Atmosphere”

I really liked the democratic atmosphere of the class. It seemed strange, maybe uncomfortable to me the first session, but by the second session I was convinced the true ‘circle’ seating and atmosphere was not a guise –this was to be a ‘circle’ class in every way. I think I was one of the first few to be excited about this method of ‘absorbing’ a course. Something was very right –I was anxious to go to class; this was not a weekly drudge into a lecture where I tried to assimilate knowledge that was meaningful to the teacher.

The atmosphere of the class provided me with something I look forward to when I take classes. Since I am a graduate student who has an M.S. and am not striving for another degree, I take courses to broaden my knowledge and to associate with others in the profession informally. Few classes provide the opportunity for basic communication among class members except on an impersonal basis. I wonder how the various members of our group ‘run’ their classes?

[Final paper, EDU 556 Group Dynamics, Jan. 17, 1968]

24. “Trust in the Group”

In order to summarize the learning experience that I have gained during the first few weeks of this course I must start with my feelings from the beginning.

I must admit that after hearing the course requirements of this class I was very leery of just how well I would be able to perform in such a situation. After being exposed to lecture after lecture in classrooms stockpiled with hundreds of students it was quite a shock to find that this class, in the midst of all the impersonally structured classes the university offers, was based primarily on people. I panicked at first, not wanting to be called upon to speak about myself in front of ‘strangers’ and I’m sure I was not alone in my feelings. Yet, as the weeks have passed the ice has been broken and it’s funny but even though I don’t know half of the people’s names in the class I feel very comfortable with them. Only in situations like this, where different people are brought together, do we realize how unlike yet

alike we all are. The class has and will continue to be an outlet for my own and everyone else's opinions, ideas, and feelings on a wide range of topics.

[Early diary report, EDU 210 Introduction to Human Development, Feb. 12, 1987]

25. "Looking Forward To Class"

I don't know exactly why, but writing this evaluation makes me feel sad. I guess to my mind it means ending an incredible three weeks! In one of my papers I told you how fast class went for me each day, now looking back at three weeks, it seems we were only together for the tiniest instant.

I looked forward to taking this course ever since last summer. It was even more than I imagined it would be. Last summer [Group Dynamics] I experienced the warmth, generosity, sensitivity and caring you give to your class. To me it was rejuvenating to be in that atmosphere that you provide so lovingly to your class. Through you I've learned more about sociodrama and psychodrama, more about people, and most of all, more about me. Thank you!

[Final report, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, July 1973]

26. "The Magic Room"

As for our wonderful 'meeting room' (I choose not to stigmatize it with classroom), the colored lights and music most definitely tended to an atmosphere conducive to a closeness; a feeling of security; a mysterious room that held magic between its walls.

A magic room

A special time

With very special people

With time to feel

And time to dream

And time to be myself.
A happy time at last for her
Feeling she can conquer
Ponytails and patent shoes
And love for all the world
A magic room
A special time
With very special people
With time to feel
And time to dream
And for time just to BE.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Aug. 3, 1973]

27. “Productive Discussions”

The class discussions were enjoyable and productive. I found two particular areas of challenge: first, to clearly express my concept on a given topic and secondly to formulate my philosophy on a matter in which I had not formerly come to grips with the problem. Tolerance and courtesy were areas in which I felt personal growth, as there were times I had to take a second thought about what I nearly blurted out.

The effectiveness of the discussions emanated from the leader who set the mood by creating a relaxed atmosphere from the beginning. The effort to learn our names added a personal tone and helped the class members to become better acquainted. Not only was the class organized in a way conducive to a good learning situation, but resources were made readily available, plus material suggested by class members was wholesomely accepted. Although there was some objection to the approach undertaken by the instructor, I regarded this [as being] a great learning experience in itself. The leader elicited and clarified our purposes and then assumed a neutral and

understanding role, which always made me feel I could express whatever I thought without having the idea derogatorily attacked. In the future, as I meet my Sunday School class, my Seventh and Eighth grade students and with my teaching staff, I trust I can utilize the methods mentioned above plus reflect the qualities of flexibility and stability (possibly a poor word; what I mean is that nothing ever shocked you) as exemplified in class. To me, I feel these are catalysts to group involvement.

[Final paper, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, Aug. 23, 1968]

28. “Closeness”

I found the classroom arrangements for our sessions quite helpful as I noted in my second report. Moving from chairs to a small circle on the rug proved useful not only in making it easier to hear and be heard, but in unifying the group because of closeness. It also encourages involvement. It is easier to forget oneself when the group sits close together than it is to get off the chair to get into action. Self-consciousness relaxes in the tighter circle. Furthermore the students are often right in the action even if they don't plan to be involved.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Aug. 1973]

29. “Class Discussion”

A few weeks ago we talked about class discussions. I've taken a few classes where discussion was the main source of learning. In high school these are sometimes beneficial, and sometimes very uncomfortable. Sometimes in high school, the class takes a group discussion as a time to 'goof off.' This makes it hard for any learning to be done. I do feel that Human Development is a great example of how group discussion should be organized. Everyone takes the class seriously, and the students are allowed to talk about anything they feel is important. There is no pressure put upon the students to speak up, or to be quiet. Each student is allowed to react in the way they feel comfortable. I don't speak out in class very often, but that does not

mean I'm not learning. I listen to other people's views, and sometimes I agree, and sometimes I disagree. The class allows me the freedom to be quiet. I don't feel like this class would be hurtful to anyone. This class doesn't put pressure on others to react in a certain way. I feel that class discussion should be conducted in this type of atmosphere. Introduction to Human Development is an excellent example of a class in which knowledge is gained from the discussion.

[Paper #3, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, May 5, 1984]

30. "I Am Able to Express My Thoughts Freely"

In Human Development I learned that I am able to express my thoughts freely. I can receive answers to my questions as well as give them. I can also say what I feel without being criticized.

I was able to say things that I never thought I would be able to say. I told of some personal family problems and my true attitude towards them, and to my surprise I was rewarded with positive consolation and not criticized as I expected.

I feel that expressing myself to people of my own age is much easier for me. I don't really know how to approach an adult on some personal problems, but I feel that a teenager would understand.

I'm not saying that every answer that I received was positive, but I welcomed the negative ones also. I spoke of my respect towards my father and was surprised at the response of being a 'MOUSE' because I could never say 'no' to him.

In this class I see that no matter who you are, from what ethnic background you are from, or your financial status everyone has problems. Maybe not of the same nature, but nevertheless they are there. Everyone can learn from one another.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, 1984]

31. “So Uniquely Different”

This class was so uniquely different from any other class I have ever taken. Most of the people took the time to really listen to each other. It was not just someone talking for their own benefit. We all had a chance to speak our minds and then get feedback from the rest of the class.

I enjoyed this class immensely. It gave so many of us a chance to get to know people we may never have met. When I first entered this class I noticed that it contained people from all different walks of life. I feel that this is what made our class so interesting. I may not agree with everything that is said in class, but at least I am willing to listen to other people’s views. Many times after listening to other sides of the story I have changed my opinions.

We have talked about so many different subjects in this class. Most of these subjects I had very little if any knowledge of. I am glad that I started watching the news and reading different newspapers. It is really better to be informed than to wonder around the world in a state of false security. Now I am not saying that I was not more content the way I used to be, but it was not real. And now that I have heard and seen what is really going on, I do not think I could ever be my old naïve self again.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, Dec. 9, 1985]

32. “Feeling Safe”

I knew M. A. felt uncomfortable after opening up the way she did, but I truly believe our group grew much closer as a result. I was challenged to share parts of myself after she took such a tremendous risk. It was the day after M. A. opened up to our group that I mustered up the courage to speak in class. It was a big step for me and it was then that I felt I belonged. I think many people felt as I did. I have come to feel safe within the group. I hope my progress continues when I interact with people outside of this room. I am proud of where I am now, as compared with where I was on ‘day one.’ I am grateful for M. A.’s openness and the role she has played in helping me work toward my goal. *[See 33, same student.]*

33. “Helping Each Other”

Don't be embarrassed or put off by what I have shared. I don't expect you to be ready to deal with what I have described. Try to understand me.

Do you feel a nudging that is calling you to deal with yourself? Feel free to approach me.

Don't be concerned about 'making' me cry. It's the way I react to feelings that are already there. I am grateful for your caring words or touch.

Don't feel your concerns are too small for me. I may be dealing with them, too. Don't be afraid of me.

Sometimes your concerns do seem trivial to me, or your methods seem roundabout. But I have to realize that if they are important to you, and I care about you, then I must listen to you. Help me to learn.

Just understand why you are doing and what you are doing, and do the same for me.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, undated]

34. “Golden Rule Approach”

Self-esteem is the key ingredient in any personality, without it he [one] cannot see himself as worthy of an education, worthy of a job, or worthy of a productive life at all. Most importantly, our children must be taught and witness people treating others as they themselves wish to be treated. This 'golden rule' approach takes time and patience to develop. Our classroom interaction this semester supports the notion in several ways. The instructor set the tone by informing us that we each had something to contribute to the group and he was willing to listen with an open mind. Here he established our value by demonstrating his interest in us. Such an attitude fosters risk-taking behaviors so necessary for the gathering of new knowledge. As people begin to comment on different issues, we witnessed how two people could disagree, but discuss their differences without hostility. No one was judged. Instead our tolerance led us to consider an

individual's background and hence the reasons behind his opinions. I did not always agree with what was said or done, but I could understand it in terms of its source. From here I was able to gauge my reaction, or to stifle it if it was truly inappropriate. Our children deserve similar experiences. They must be thinkers, not judges; listeners, not instant speakers.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 1988]

35. "The Way You Taught It"

I believe that one of the reasons I have learned so much in this class is the way you taught it. You helped the class to become at ease with each other and put us in a friendly atmosphere. You have done a good job in bringing most of the people out so they will voice their opinions. I particularly like the way you make such generalized statements in order to manipulate others to jump in and debate these issues. I noticed from the beginning how you make such absurd statements so the class will jump in and say you are wrong. One point I must make though is that you sometimes cut off a person short before they are finished speaking, I have told you in the past that I was not finished and would like to do so, but that should not be necessary. We let you finish what you are going to say so I believe you should give us the same consideration. In our second last class one of the girls brought up how you are open to criticism and I respect that, because you have shown that Professors are human too, and that they may make mistakes as everyone else does.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, May 6, 1987]

36. "Open Atmosphere"

I have attended college classes on and off since 1972 and have taken all different types of classes. Yet, I have never had the opportunity to be in a class like this before. I have been in other discussion classes before, but never in one in which so much personal feeling and emotion were involved. Also, the ability to say whatever you felt in any way you wanted to say it was very fortunate. I think that you are very

much responsible for the open atmosphere of this class. You were very straightforward with your students and as the professor, you were very effective in keeping things going. Your own personal style of conducting the class is a big factor in why it was so successful and open to discussion.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, May 13, 1987]

37. “A Rewarding Class”

Of all the classes that I have had to take or had the opportunity to take, this one was by far the most rewarding. I have learned that it is possible to voice your opinion, every time you want, even if not everyone agrees with you. It is not every day where you find classmates as honest and open as the ones that are in this particular class. It is also very seldom that you find an instructor who is willing to let you voice your opinion no matter how silly you may sound at times. I have never been disappointed with this class, and I would hope that in the future I will be able to experience this type of class again.

I could never say that I walked out of the classroom feeling I haven't learned something or experienced something about other people. This has been the greatest learning experience of my college career, and I am glad that I had the opportunity. Sure you learn by reading books, but that is only a part of what learning is all about. You can't expect to know people if all you can tell them are what happened during the second year of the civil war. In this class I learned how to associate with people, to talk to people, and to learn that everyone has a right to his/her own opinion.

There were serious discussions and not so serious ones, but all of them taught us something. I will always be able to look back at this class and say this is where I first learned to listen to others. This is the class where I got my first taste of what actual discussion is all about.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, spring, 1984]

38. “An Enjoyable Class”

This class in Human Development has been one of my most enjoyable classes that I have taken in my college career. One of the reasons I say this is the manner in which the course was carried out. By this I am speaking of the openness, and the freshness; it was very easy going. I think that most of the people in our class felt very comfortable in voicing their own opinions, even when there were conflicts or different beliefs.

I must remark about the mothers in our class. They definitely added a lot to the class. They ‘shed a new light’ on many of the issues, because through their eyes, being parents they saw things differently, I suppose often in a more realistic way.

This class made me think of my own childhood. I liked reminiscing about the way I was brought up, and the things that stand out in those years. I also like the classes that encourage the keeping of a journal or diary, because the diary makes you look at your own life, and the world around you and because it is my feelings, and I will keep it and someday in the future I will pick it up and review it, seeing how I’ve changed in my values.

[Final paper, EDU 351, Human Development: Middle Childhood, May 14, 1984]

39. “I Have Listened and I Have Learned”

‘I have listened, and I have learned.’ That is the statement that best sums up my experiences this semester in Human Development.

I am a very shy person and have been all my life. I only speak out with people I know extremely well. It is difficult for me to give speeches or talk in front of strangers. Therefore, I have become an expert listener while I am working on my ‘problem’ of shyness. This class has given much insight into myself not only through the many readings I have read, but through the conversations that flowed before, during, and after class, and the way that people actually felt comfortable with each other. Granted, some people knew each other before this class, but a lot did not. I found I could relax in this class

and many times apply what I had learned outside of the classroom. That is a true sign of learning. I did not feel the pressure to perform like so many other classes made me feel. Here I was free to learn in my own way. Because you only truly learn when you are comfortable in your environment.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, Dec. 7, 1987]



CHAPTER III

The Student's Dilemma

A student entering one of my classes generally assumed that it would be similar to previous classes that he or she had attended, regardless of warnings to the contrary. Usually, these former classes were more traditional in approach; they were instructor-centered and the student was expected to play a more or less passive role. The necessary shift in the student's role presents quite a challenge, which often complicates his/her adjustment to the new setting.

Some refer to the student-centered classroom as being "unstructured." What they really mean is that it has a different structure from that to which they are accustomed. Instead of a lecture, they are told that they are to discuss the course content. Where is the content to come from? Not from the instructor but from their own study of assigned texts and other resources as well as from their own real life experiences. In addition to listening and taking notes, they are asked to share their thoughts with their classmates and the instructor. It is the instructor's job to make these

new challenges interesting and indeed pleasurable and to encourage students to try their wings in this different setting.

Again, safety and trust must be felt as the student attempts to adjust. The instructor must be patient and ready to work with individuals as they begin to participate in class discussions and projects. He must be alert to what is happening and remain in touch with students as they indicate their concerns and dilemmas both in their written reports and their class interaction.

40. “Readiness to Change”

The class has helped me to grow more than I thought possible. I recall the first night of class hearing that there was no set reading order and that the classes would be open format. It seemed so threatening to be able to make decisions in college when I am accustomed to being told what to do. How easily we fall into the belief that the standard or traditional way is the best way of doing things! I decided to make an effort to be open-minded and ended up reading and learning because I wanted to, not because I had a test next Wednesday.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, December 13, 1989]

41. “The Sneaky Teacher”

[Earlier in the course] you mentioned you desired feedback. With a few exceptions, people in the class felt inhibitions not to ‘tell the prof what you think of him.’ As I stand back and look at the class and your role and person in it I am struck with honesty, sincerity and humanness. I’m sorry to say that to most if not all of us, you are still the teacher-figure but that seems due to our conditioning over many years rather than your actions. The night you were not in class we mentioned how much we got done – I wonder now.

There was an incident that we have not mentioned as it seemed silly, but somehow it seems significant now. Someone jokingly scouted the room for a microphone or tape recorder. We goofed around

about you planting one, but then we settled down and talked seriously. We were sure you didn't and wouldn't. Within those first sessions you had established yourself as a person who respected others too much to do anything so sneaky. How did you manage to instill this feeling?

[Final paper, Group Dynamics, Jan. 17, 1968]

42. "The Teacher's Role"

A concern about the teacher's role came forth, at times loudly, at others subtly. Remarks such as, 'I don't know what Dr. Fink wants,' 'Don't slip me a C.,' and 'We don't know what to do with the freedom we've got.' are excellent examples. Throughout the course, the trainer never really became one of the group in the minds of some, although his efforts were valiant in this respect. This, to some extent, shows up a lack of reading because in the texts, *Forces in Learning* (30) in particular, there are very explicit descriptions of what Abel's purpose is: 'He creates the basic dilemma situation, insures that the feedback model is being applied, sets standards for giving and receiving feedback, and aids in focusing and expanding generalizations. In other words, his role is one of intervening in the ongoing situation to invent, try out, and apply altered ways of behaving.'

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Jan. 12, 1968]

43. "Following One's Own Interests"

The Group Dynamics course has been a unique experience for me. The unstructured classroom situation has brought about an informal, relaxed atmosphere that has encouraged learning on the part of the individual. This type of situation was new to me but it provided a very enjoyable learning situation. It really became fun to attend class and realize how much information had penetrated into the mind. A more pressurized way of learning that can easily be found in a lecture-structured situation does not produce this desire to learn. A person could discover insights into areas that were most important and interesting to the individual. The emphasis was on what the individual wanted to learn. I found myself following my own interests in the

classroom.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Aug. 24, 1967]

44. “The Non-Verbal Student”

As I was thinking of what I would write in order to give a sense of what I had experienced in class, I decided to focus on those things that I have become aware of which will be applicable to my work as an art therapist. I don't feel that I really participated as much as some of the other members of the class and I'm afraid that I may give the impression that I was uninvolved, which was not the case. Then, I began to consider why I hadn't been as much a part of the actual dramas as some of the others. I don't feel that the problem lay with my not wanting to share, but more that I am probably less verbal than most of the others. I can recall a close friend of mine for whom every conversation is a psychodrama. She never converses, but rather she acts out the entire event with a great deal of energy and even includes sound effects. I feel that my friend would be a prime candidate for psychodrama, and that drama therapy would be very effective with her. I on the other hand tend to express myself through my art, even to the point of working out my emotions in a sketchbook. What I am saying is that some people are more oriented toward verbalizing, some toward acting, some even use facial expressions to communicate a major portion of their feelings, and some are very oriented to art.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 1975]

45. “Insecurity in a Large Group”

In the beginning of this class I stated that one of my goals was to be a better participant in group situations, especially with my peers. I feel dwarfed and inadequate when teamed with my peers. I hear their brief summaries at the beginning of a new course or group function and fear the moment when I must present mine. This fear isn't new, I remember it well from grade school when on the first day back in September, each child told the whole class how he or she spent their summer vacation. Even then I felt inadequate because our family

never went on vacation, until I was fourteen – no one asked then. (Needless to say, my students aren't forced to tell about their summer vacations or to briefly describe themselves, instead they relate their expectations for the new school year and interview each other so the 'reporter' can favorably highlight someone's life.

During the writing of this summary, I noticed that my only observations of my participation in a group were in small groups and I was always capable of that. In a large group (such as before the whole class) I remain silent unless put on the spot and forced to speak. That is the situation in both classes I am currently taking. Recently, my computer course was divided into two groups. When my small group left the classroom and we were without our instructor (authority figure) I felt so at ease that I openly and without hesitation, asked all the questions that were on my mind. The person giving the demonstration and answering all the questions was a classmate who was very knowledgeable about the computer and modems. (This is exactly what I wanted to happen in the groups in my own classroom.)

In conclusion, at school, with my peers, I haven't achieved any success. Maybe as I become more confident at my place of work, that confidence will spill over and I will be able to make some advance in the other groups of which I am a member.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 21, 1988]

46. "Empathy"

I just wish that we had been an even more responsive class, because I felt that you (Dr. Fink) had to work too hard to involve us on a number of occasions. I feel that although it is the responsibility of the leader to warm up his audience to the sessions, the problem was that of helping many of us throw off the shackles of our inhibitions. My heart went out to you on several occasions when I thought that it must have been somewhat frustrating when students held back.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Aug. 1973]

47. “A Real Growing Experience”

In reviewing my reactions to this class, I find that it was one of the most challenging of the semester. When I recall all of the topics that were covered in class discussion, in my daily journal, and in the assigned readings, I realize that this was a real growing experience not only in knowledge, but in emotion as well.

The style of teaching is unique, as similar styles are rarely attempted in most colleges. In five years of college (attending full-time) I have only experienced one other similar teaching/learning experience. For some reason, I had a difficult time getting actively involved in the class discussions. It seems like I was always learning a lot in class by listening. Sometimes, I felt intimidated to become active in the discussions with fear that I would say something really ignorant, with the result of being verbally attacked by the class (as was often the case with other class members). In actuality, however, I find that the comments or questions which I held back were mentioned by someone else only seconds later. It was a bit frustrating when I would raise my hand with an important comment only to be cut-off by a more outspoken member of the class.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Dec. 6, 1985]

48. “The Argument”

Argument is vital to society as long as it is conducted in a constructive manner, with both sides willing to listen actively, as we have accomplished in this class. I was raised to be polite and speak only when spoken to – an unfortunate attitude to carry through my life. So, I am making attempts and succeeding in some situations, to become more outspoken with strangers or mere acquaintances. I was not raised to be argumentative, which I now find to be one of my greatest faults and an area that demands much attention in my character.

My best friend, as a child was brought up by more liberal parents who taught her the art of constructive and logical argument. She was always in touch with current events, and I could always tell that she was a little bit ‘ahead of her time.’ But that ‘differentness’[sic] that

she possessed has helped her to become a very open-minded, logical, creative, and a successful fashion coordinator in New York City.

This class reminds me of her and I can see that by developing a new way of thinking (her style), I can become much more confident in dealing with all of the different people and lifestyles outside of the college world. This class refreshed my memory of a style of thinking that came to an unexplained halt when my friend moved away to California.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Dec. 6, 1985]

49. “The Importance of Sharing”

I looked forward to taking this course for the semester. While some seemed vague and confused about what was supposed to be happening, there was for me a core of familiar faces, people with whom I shared a warm openness and it was a comfortable feeling. I knew after our semester in Group Dynamics the things that N. feared the most, affective involvement, was exactly where we needed to be. It was exciting to see the change in N. and share with him as he began to express understanding that the most profound learning would take place not through a study of theory and intellectual detachment, but by actually sharing and opening oneself to others. I realize now that as I encouraged this young man who at first was totally obnoxious to me – to stay in the course, to take the risk to be open and sharing and to let it happen; I was indeed offering to him what had been given to me last semester – the awareness that by sharing myself openly and honestly and really caring about another, regardless of point of view, very positive steps in growth and understanding do take place.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 17, 1975]

50. “Humiliation: Its Effect on Class Participation”

In my first paper, I identified speaking and actively participating in class as one of my fears. You encouraged me to search for the origin of this fear and try to come to terms with it. One evening as I was

sorting through my attic, I came across a box [which] contained old report cards, class photos, and priceless art work. As I looked at the faces of my fellow classmates, most of them made me smile. Then I stared at the face of the class genius, the uneasiness in my stomach began to grow. I sat back and recalled the humiliation I, and others felt as he would ridicule us as we were called upon in class. It sounds ridiculous that this could still affect me after 15 years, but the feeling I get today brings on a rush of unpleasant memories. What puzzles me even more is that this type of ridicule still exists in graduate level courses. Very rarely does someone make a comment in class without it being followed by a negative remark or look from a fellow classmate. I think the unstructured environment of our class encourage people to be more open and free with their opinions; as for me, I still remain uncomfortable in these situations. Attempts are being made though. Last week I chose (forced myself) to do an oral presentation, the knots were there, but I actually began to enjoy myself as I got into it. It was wonderful to feel such confidence emerge.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Growth and Development, Dec. 1989]

51. “Teacher Support”

I feel one of the most important things I learned is that I have a little more confidence in myself than I ever dreamed I had. Don't get me wrong. I still have a long way to go on that road to complete self-assurance, but I've gotten a little further the last few months. One thing that helped me to realize that I was getting better was when you asked me to read my poem a second time. The first time I read my poem, I was really nervous, I thought I would shake the paper right out of my hand. My heart pounded, and at one point, I thought I would have to stop. When you asked me to read it a second time, I was much more confident and comfortable. In fact, I enjoyed the experience. The 'A' you gave me really sparked my confidence. I'm the kind of person who needs a lot of reassurance, and you gave it to me that night. Thank you!

Of all the ideas I gained from this course, I feel that 'risk taking' will stick with me the most (I hope it does). By your encouragement of risk taking, I have discovered that I can teach in front of my peers and principal without having a severe attack! I am especially pleased that I am encouraging my kindergarten children to take risks and share their ideas, thoughts, and feelings with their classmates and children from other classrooms.

I think the biggest risk I am taking and a good test of my increased confidence is the fact that I have volunteered to give a presentation to my fellow teachers in two workshops I will attend this fall. I am nervous about it, but I feel I can do it and do a good job!

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 14, 1988]

52. "Change"

At the outset of this course, I was somewhat timid in my feelings. It was strange for me to become as forward and outspoken as I soon found myself. I have never in the past acted in a 'role- playing' experimentation. And yet, finding myself in front of a group like this gave me a great deal of confidence in this area. From that point on, I felt fully at ease to comment on the things I felt strongly about.

[Final paper, EDF 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 17, 1975]

53. "Moot Hall"

If I were to say where I learned the most directly as a result of this class, I would have to say it was not in the classroom. It was over coffee at Moot Hall after class. Many of us in the class spent twice to three times the normal class period discussing what went on in class. To me this is learning. This is value in a course. I am and have been sick of the number of courses in this college that cannot enthuse discussion outside. It is here that we come to evaluate and summarize our learning.

[Final paper, ED 529, Adolescent Psychology, undated]

54. “Learning From the Heart”

After two and a half weeks of Human Relations, I realize that even though I was not ‘programmed’ with vast quantities of terms and pages of lecture notes, learning has taken place. This learning is different from what I’m used to as was evident from my difficult transition early on in the course; this form of learning from the heart, the inner self. I believe that I have gained considerable insight concerning human interaction and the very real role of prejudice in relations with others.

Initially, during the first days of class I felt confused, shy and out-of place. I looked for structure where none existed; I looked for guidance, when in actuality it was there, but more subliminal. I felt awkward facing people that I had never met before and discussing topics that were very real, yet very personal to me. How would my classmates respond to my confessions of prejudice? What would be their feelings concerning my inter-racial relationship? Fortunately, I have been met with warm feelings and mutual respect for my beliefs and those of others.

There is one area that I must describe concerning myself and prejudice, due to fear deep within myself. I felt awkward concerning a member of our class that is different. This person is just like you and me except that he possesses a physical abnormality. I hope that my awkwardness is a fear rather than a prejudice, since this estrangement from others due to appearance goes against my moral beliefs. I believe that I have conquered this ‘hill’ with the support of my classmates by making an effort to get to know this individual, yet I believe that the ‘mountain’ is still there for me to conquer. Hopefully, the close relationship that I have developed with my classmates and the intimate bonds I have enjoyed for the last three weeks have helped me to evolve into a more insightful, understanding, forgiving and loving individual and that someday that ‘mountain’ will be conquered.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 3, 1988]

55. "A Pleasant Surprise"

When I signed up for this course called Human Development, I thought it was going to be like all of my other classes I've taken. I couldn't have been more wrong. I was not a bystander in a class of teaching but an active participant in a class of learning. This course was a pleasant surprise and exceeded my expectations. Here are a few reasons why.

There was very, very little lecturing and a lot of active participation by the students. But what is also important is that we talked about events pertaining to us, the now; we didn't study some guy's life research and try to analyze but we talked and discussed pertinent events happening to us in our lives. The final line is that one got out of this course what one put into it. Unlike many courses, your grade reflects your participation and enthusiasm while learning about yourself and others.

There were times when I had no intentions of speaking but somehow I felt I must present another point of view. At this time I had outgrown my hesitation to speak in front of the class. First it was difficult to talk in front of so many students, mostly female, for the fear of their reaction to my comments. I soon found out that a male's point of view sometimes helped clarify ideas or present them in a different way. I learned how better to formulate thoughts and speak when I felt compelled to; something I could not do before.

I also experienced something of invaluable greatness. I enjoyed coming to class not just because of the interesting discussions but to see my friends and possibly make new ones. This class enabled us to step out of the role of 'student' and let us be ourselves. I met and became good friends with people with the same and different views as I have because of this class; and I thank you for creating an atmosphere conducive to this.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, May, 1984]

56. "I Felt Comfortable"

The beginning of the semester was slow. Many topics were spit forth; none were talked about in any detail. I know I was afraid to talk, and I'm sure others felt the same way. I don't know when it started, but all of the sudden our class transformed into something wonderful. Topics were brought up, opinions were stated, emotions were also mixed in. By the middle of the semester, there were not many people unwilling to talk. Each class I would sit in anticipation wondering what journey the class would embark on.

When I realized this was a discussion class, I thought at the first sign of disagreement everyone would clam up or jump down each other's throat; however, the bigger the difference, the greater the quality of the discussion. Also another feeling grew, as the semester progressed; it grew stronger and stronger. It is the feeling of respect. Even if I did not agree with what someone said, I did respect the fact that almost everyone did have an opinion. I also learned that there are many more than two sides to every discussion, argument or event in life.

I also gained confidence to give my own opinion. Usually I sit in class praying not to be called on. When a professor asks if there are any questions, I am usually too intimidated to ask. I now realize many of my classmates want to ask the same questions. I am thinking that Human Development gave me the courage to speak in other classes too. It makes me happy that I have conquered this fear.

Human Development is the first class that I truly felt comfortable in. I think the reason was because I met new people. I got to see the inside of people; the side not many of us are willing to talk about in front of strangers. I gained two new special friendships.

Finally, I want to thank you, Dr. Fink, for giving this opportunity to the class and me. It was a valuable experience for me. Many topics I talked about with friends outside of class. I was sad when you said this class is no longer going to be offered. This was one of the most beneficial classes. I learned to have more confidence. I also realized many others feel the same way I do on issues such as AIDS, homelessness and suicide. The friendships that I gained will always

remain with me.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Human Development, spring, 1989]

57. “Education for Life”

The past five weeks or so have been frustrating, confusing, and exhilarating to say the least. In addition to what I have learned in regards to the process of sociodrama and role-playing, I feel I have made the most progress in the area of personal growth. Some of it has been in connection with the content of our classes, but most of my realizations have been on a much deeper and more personal level.

The turning point for me was the night that the class divided into groups. As I am sure you know, I went with the group which labeled itself the ‘polite’ group. I felt as though an enormous burden had been taken from my shoulders. Just knowing that others in the class felt as I did has left me with a new and positive outlook on our meetings. I used to leave every Wednesday with a headache. I have not had one since that night. I now feel like I am part of a group within the class.

I had some doubts at the beginning of the semester as to how much learning was actually going to take place in EDU 557. When I thought of the concept of learning in a classroom setting, I thought mostly of books, note-taking, memorizing concepts, information, etc. I still do. But thanks to this class I have added something to that list. I now realize that the classroom can be a vital tool for the student to learn about and deal with societal relationships, personal relationships, and one’s relationship with the self. I now believe that ‘education for life’ is an important part of the classroom experience.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Oct. 9, 1984]

58. “Being Able to Choose What We Want to Discuss”

In the beginning of the semester I thought this class was going to be easy because we did not have exams but monthly reports. Now that I look back over the semester I can see that I have spent more time

and effort in writing in my diary and composing my monthly reports than I ever have preparing for an exam.

Being able to choose what we want to discuss is one of the best features of this course. Making myself discuss subjects in class and bringing up new topics to discuss has been a good experience for me. I generally do not speak up in school but thanks to this class I am slowly learning to be more talkative in a group situation.

At the start of this course, I really did not enjoy the class. It was not the topics we were covering but your 'discussion' method of teaching. Gradually, I have begun to see the benefits of your teaching method. It for one [sic] stimulates a person to create new ideas and not just to memorize. It also allows a person to form his own ideas without being influenced by the teacher's opinions.

I know our class and myself included have not been as receptive to your teaching method as we could have been. I have two suggestions that I think will help you get better responses. My first suggestion is that you start people discussing in small groups of two or three and then gradually increase the size over a period of weeks till you have the whole class as a group again. This will ease people who are reluctant to talk in front of others, into a group learning experience. My second suggestion is that you start the class off more structured. Many students are not used to thinking up new ideas because of their previous learning experiences.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, Dec. 11, 1987]



CHAPTER IV

Learning to Relate to People

We proudly state that we live in a democracy, but often seem to take this for granted when it comes to our way of treating each other. We also often assume that our schools teach us to become democratic citizens, but I suspect that we seldom examine whether this is actually happening. It is my belief that learning about democracy and experiencing the democratic process should be encouraged in every class, whatever its title.

Two of the courses I offered, Human Relations and Group Dynamics placed a special emphasis on learning the skills of participating in the democratic process; however, that process was an important component of all of my courses. Regardless of course content, I suspect that students learned most about democracy in these and other courses through experiencing democratic interaction than they did through intellectual discussion. When it comes to democratic understanding, “learning by doing” is the key element.

Some elements of the democratic process include: letting individuals and groups experience the freedom to determine what they are going to do and how they are going to do it; learning to speak up and also to listen when each is appropriate, and demanding and receiving respect when interacting with others. I trust that the reader will be able to recognize other elements of the democratic process in the following student statements.

Some observers, noting that the student-centered approach focuses on group interaction and member participation on a personal level may worry that this might cross a line between education and group psychotherapy. I have attempted to deal with this concern in the introduction. However, for some, the criticism goes further, fearing that if they are exposed to such a process in college, future teachers may even attempt to use this student-centered approach in their own classes. They don't seem to realize that this is the very rationale for having such opportunities in college. If we truly believe in teaching the democratic process, we must experience this process in such a way that it becomes a part of us. For an example of a teacher employing this approach in his own classes, see number 171 in Chapter XI, "Looking Backward."

59. "Seeing Real People"

This class has given me an underlying confidence with people I have just met, seeing them as real people with similar feelings and emotions. Having confidence to respond to them on a real human level. Seeing them like myself, not as an untouchable being that I could not possibly communicate with. I forgot that these other people had quite similar feelings and emotions and could react to my ideas and to carry on a conversation. Wednesday classes made me see people from a different perspective, as real, like me and touchable. I realized that I have more to give than I thought. It is a very warm wonderful feeling inside.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 17, 1975]

60. “Thinking and Self-confidence”

I have gained a greater knowledge, I think, not from the standpoint of cold facts, but from the standpoint of being given the opportunity to think for myself and to be able to disagree with others and thus alter my own thinking. The experience has given me confidence in myself that I never had before. I have always been afraid to voice my opinion for fear that someone would disagree, but through the experience of this course I feel that I have learned that when someone disagrees with me, it doesn't mean that you are wrong. It means that he is presenting another point of view. I have learned that I have as much right to express my opinion as anyone. I have learned that thinking for one self is most important.

In all, I think I have really learned a great deal in this course about how to think for myself, and how to express my feelings without fear that I will be condemned.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, Jan. 28, 1959]

61. “Overcoming Barriers”

The symbolism of the rainbow is the message that I have received from this class. We came together three weeks ago as thirty-two individuals with separate thoughts on human relations issues. Reading Allport [*The Nature of Prejudice* (1)], *Frankenstein* (38), and *Hiroshima* (22) encouraged us to delve deeper into the subjects of prejudice, peace, stereotypes, discrimination, etc. Reading the *New York Times* gave us an in- depth perspective on current human relations. We thought, shared, listened, and wrote about ideas that had been presented to us. Did we arrive at any conclusions? I can't speak for the class, but I know I did, I learned that open frank discussion with a group of caring people will alleviate many barriers we have put around ourselves. These barriers may keep you from fulfilling your life goals - sometimes even from defining these goals. Once the barriers have been dissipated a positive action towards helping others can be taken. Once you like yourself you can like others.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 6, 1986]

62. “Some Things Learned”

In the Human Relations realm, I have learned some ways to make these relationships better and meaningful—how to stop some of the games and make life more real. I have learned to be more aware of other peoples’ feelings and to respect their feelings, even if I don’t agree with them.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, May, 1975]

63. “Course Comparisons”

I have found the two courses, ‘Group Dynamics’ and ‘Sociodrama and Role Playing’ valuable experiences in self-awareness and human relations. If I had to do it over, or could advise future participants, I would select Sociodrama before Group Dynamics. In my opinion, the techniques learned in Sociodrama present the basics for the more personal, intense Group Dynamics.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, May 1975]

64. “Feeling Secure While Participating”

How have I grown? The answer to this question requires some degree of introspection. On September 19, I wrote in my psychological journal of my need to remove some of the apprehension of speaking out in groups of my colleagues and peers, or of my anxiety of authority. Maybe, as Thomas Harris explains in *I’m OK, You’re OK* (20), I have developed an attitude and not a feeling. That is, for most of my forty-seven years, I have been the child in most of the parent (authority) – child relationships. As Harris states, the feeling, ‘I’m not OK, you’re OK’ persists for most people throughout life. It was reassuring to read his thoughts on relationships of parent and child that most of us share.

What has been responsible for my transition? The answer is complex, there is no single event that stands to the forefront of my consciousness, but a series of activities and readings have had an impact on my self- perception. The maintaining of a psychological

journal has had a significant effect on my thinking. It has forced me to make time in a sometimes hectic daily routine to reflect on the relationships in which I have been involved. I believe that this activity forces the adult to emerge as the dominant personality figure by creating a conscious awareness.

A second factor of equal value was the involvement in group activity. During the large group activity of October 12, I developed some extremely beneficial insights both professionally and personally. During that session we established through a series of activities, the criterion on which trust and leadership could be built, something I could take back to my cooperative learning groups (success!). However, more importantly, I discovered that I could be open with groups of my peers. A great feeling! It has been truly amazing that twenty-five or thirty perfect strangers in September could develop the trust and camaraderie that we now share.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 1988]

65. “My Role in a Group”

The small group aspect of this course was also very instrumental in my understanding of myself. It is hard work to be part of a group. Our small group symbolizes our entire world away from the classroom, from our families, to all other groups I am affiliated with in my life. I never realized how much effort and understanding was needed to have a group work successfully. Our group taught me to listen and not to monopolize the main topic of the night or ideas for the group project. I found that I like to be in control and this is what caused me problems with my faculty. I felt my ideas should be everyone’s ideas. Since my faculty didn’t stop me when I was in charge of school wide activities, I took their silence to mean that they didn’t want to be involved. I was not giving them a choice; I was judging them unfairly. When we were working on our project in class, I had to step back and be an equal part of the group and compromise on the preparations. I have very high expectations of myself but I realized that perfection isn’t always the answer. It’s nice to have a highly creative project, but it is much more rewarding to feel

acceptance from my peers, rather than the alienation from the group. This has made me much more aware in my classroom regarding student interaction in group activities. I have to be aware of the student who is not overly active in a group; I need to find ways to draw all my students into the group and help them to feel accepted. I need to work on being a better listener.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 1988]

66. “My Words Have Become Softer”

When I first entered this classroom, I did not quite know what to expect. Even though there were so many unfamiliar faces, I was able to speak to the class on that very first night. I don't really have difficulty speaking in a large group and it felt good to express myself.

As the semester continued I found 'speaking my mind' was not always beneficial. Dr. Fink asked whether or not anyone had any comments throughout one evening and I found myself making statements that might hurt someone's feelings. I recall one evening when someone had read a paper (shared their feelings with the class – something I have a difficult time doing myself) I stated, 'I didn't want to hear everyone's paper.' As soon as I had completed my statement, I realized I should or could have reworded it.

I feel I deserve an A in this course because I have worked on my original objective within the classroom setting faithfully. I have also had the opportunity to evaluate my personal self by keeping my Psychological Diary and communicating within the class. I also have become more in tune with other people's feelings and my words have become 'softer.'

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 21, 1988]

67. “A Course that Evoked So Many Emotions”

Each class was a great experience for me and each session made me glad that I came that night. I never had a course that evoked so many emotions; I was frightened, I cried, I laughed.

I always prided myself in thinking that I could judge people pretty well. I found, however, that it is too easy to mislabel someone. I discovered I disliked people because of some of the roles they played in class and that I could not separate the person from the character. In part, though, I feel the person was at fault because he did not make his position clear when the acting stopped. So it was a good lesson for me not to hastily judge anyone.

I enjoyed meeting the people in class. Each one aided my learning by what they had to offer during the semester, their own personal thoughts and feelings. P. seems like a very strong, understanding person. I was very impressed that night when T. was afraid and P. very quickly was able to comfort him. It was like she had done it a hundred times before.

At the beginning of one class I said I could see no reason why T. had hurt my shoulders. I understood what he was trying to do but figured it did not help me. Later I realized that he was lifting the cross from my shoulders, thus lifting the weight of the problem. I believe he helped a lot of people by making them feel.

M. Impressed me with her kindness. The class she spent talking about her situation, I think was the best night I spent in class. I learned so much about myself. At first I wanted solutions on how: I realized that there is nothing wrong with giving and caring and felt a great sense of personal satisfaction. I learned that I am what I am because I like what I am, a loving, feeling, caring human being and it is a wonderful way to be. I think there would be a lot less trouble in this world if more people learned to care for others and took some time to show some kindness.

I enjoyed the class when everyone talked about their fears. There seemed to be a special closeness that night. The subject was treated with a bit of humor at the time, which lightened a topic that could have become heavy. I think it was during this class that made me realize that everyone has their own fears and that there is not anything wrong with being afraid. More importantly, I learned that it is very possible to get rid of those fears. Too often in our society we are taught that the strong do not show emotions. I was amazed when T.

said he was scared. Again it was a good lesson that men are capable of feeling and should show their feelings just like everyone else. To express emotions is a very healthy attitude.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec.18, 1978]

68. “Feelings Toward Others Have Changed”

When I really look for what was most valuable, I think that I would have to say that it was how my feelings towards other people, especially people I don't know very well, like the students I see every day, have changed. I truly feel that I am more sensitive to people as individuals. The group taught me to be more aware and sensitive to individual needs. My ability to write makes it difficult to convey what I feel in my heart. But I just feel differently about people. There were times I was indifferent and displayed a general lack of empathy towards people. That's wrong, because everyone has wants, needs, pressures and problems, just like me.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 1977]

69. “Communication”

Classes, lately, have caused me to analyze the concept of communication. What is good communication? Is it not making an effort to be honest with ourselves, and then sending out the kind of message that reflects that honesty? We must listen earnestly, and send back a message that we understand.

In our encounters with others we seek warmth, understanding and acceptance. The messages we receive from others affect our wellbeing, and our message affects theirs. Good communication makes us feel closer to others, and they in turn, draw closer to us.

If one feels misunderstood, and that does happen, then they may not feel like trying to understand another and communication stops or deteriorates into conflict. This is most unfortunate, but need not be harmful. It can aid one to examine her own thinking.

I would like to think that our experiences in this class, speaking and/or listening, have increased our wisdom of life experiences.

We are unique individuals, but many times we share commonalities. It can help to hear that someone else has similar problems or feelings and have found their way out of distressing dilemmas. Many times I have felt alone, only to learn through communication, that others have been there before me. It creates a kinship for my fellow man that was made possible through communication.

This course has aided my development. The interaction that I have witnessed and shared has been educational. It has caused me to do a great deal of introspection on topics that may have never arisen if not for this class. I cannot imagine life without communication and I'm grateful that at least one professor has offered each of us the opportunity to utilize it to our benefit.

[Paper #3, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, April 16, 1984]

70. "Concepts Gained"

In terms of generalities, these seem to be the concepts gained that may have changed me:

1. Many people feel self-conscious and tense about themselves in group situations. In our group especially it was comforting to know so many people shared the same feelings.

2. Sensitivity to other people's problems means caring enough to listen to what they say and truly consider what they mean and how they feel at a particular time. Awareness of others means coming outside of your own ego while retaining your own uniqueness. Dr. Fink, this is what I take from you in this course. You always seemed to care.

3. Neutral feedback is just that, neutral, not necessarily negative. In fact it may be positive. I want to especially remember this one for myself and others. Especially as a teacher, I give neutral feedback which the children most likely interpret the same as many adults do.

We all need positive responses to and positive reinforcement of ourselves. A corollary of this is that when I like someone or something I really ought to tell that person, because chances are if I don't, nobody will, and that person will never know. I can honestly say that I've done this repeatedly since the course and it usually works out great.

4. Honesty should not be feared. It is easy to misjudge what someone's reactions will be. I've found it better to tell J. what I feel, because although I've kept things from him so as not to hurt him, when I eventually told him, I found that it didn't. It only helped to make us closer. I still think that complete honesty is the best in all situations. Sometimes you do have to protect those you love. Of course you always run the risk of withholding something they ought to know. It's a difficult distinction to make, but I think, a necessary one.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, summer, 1972]

71. "Changed Attitudes Toward Classmates"

My feelings toward my classmates at the beginning of our class were along this line, I became impatient and intolerant when someone's opinion differed from mine. As the weeks went by, I made a conscious effort to replace thoughts of intolerance with thoughts of consideration for other's viewpoints. My negative feelings were being replaced with positive ones. I have learned to thoroughly enjoy this class as I learned to view my classmates as people that have thought through their feelings, as I have thought through mine, not just as those with inferior opinions. When I see someone outside of class, I feel that I know them in a personal way. This is not a common occurrence in my other classes and in my opinion should not be taken lightly.

[Final paper, EDU 202, Introduction to Human Development, fall, 1994]

72. “There Are People Behind the Veneer”

This is the only course I’ve been in other than student teaching which brought about a deeper understanding of myself and those I interact with. I entered the course wanting to understand the basic features of Group Dynamics and the techniques used in sensitivity training. I wanted to discover new things about my self. Even more important I wanted to approach people more sensitively. I feel I have achieved these objectives.

As a result of this course, I feel I won’t rush to categorize people as easily as I did before. I seem more aware that there are people behind outer veneer. I now try not to judge behavior in itself, but the motivation behind the behavior. This learning I have brought into my own classroom. Group interaction has made me more sensitive in reaching people and finding out what they really are.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 15, 1970]

73. “To Value”

BEING IN RELATIONSHIP. Got around to Carl Rogers and couldn’t put him down!

Communicating with others, digging deep and finding realness in me, and them - - -wow!

This has happened. I’ve been into others and at the same time, allowed me to be entered into; the evening when M. came from herself and let her realness rise. I felt so one with her, so much a part of her at that moment.

During the last two weeks while teaching art at East High, I’ve learned just what the valuing process is all about. I’ve seen it at work in our group, and have experienced it personally, and, wow! I feel I’ve been influential in helping my students do the same. We’ve had wonderful moments together, those kids and I, and have felt these moments keenly (joy filled and also filled with grief), and understood and enjoyed and cried, so great, so wonderful!

Oh, one last note, my diary is getting full of ‘goodies’ from our group. I’ve had various people (from our class) over to my apartment after the last two class meetings. We’ve enjoyed each other and shared and talked and laughed and really got to appreciate, to VALUE each other for what and who we are. I feel I must have all of them over, maybe a day after the holidays. Then we can think back and sort of review what we’ve been through.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, winter, 1970]

74. “Exposing Mockery”

Another incident that bothered me was when a girl read a paper specifically pointing out the two girls that were mocking the class. I am a person that has been mocked one way or another for all my life. I definitely know what it is! Even today, I experience it daily. Even through my son – he told me (at 4 yrs of age) that when he gets on his bus, some kids made fun of him. I have to explain to him how to deal with it. I know that children can be cruel but I think that that’s really sad that that has to even happen. I gave this girl all the credit in the world for what she did and it took a lot of courage! These two girls were indeed mocking out the people who spoke out. One of the girls never even faced you at the center of the class – she was always turned sideways – away from the discussion. There were many times that after I finished speaking, I could see them laughing and looking straight at me. It really didn’t bother me because I’ve learned how to ignore people like that a long time ago. But I do think it affected the class to a point. What I was disappointed about was the reaction of some of the class. They thought that it was unfair to single them out by name. However, after talking to the people that always participate in class, they seemed to agree that it was about time that somebody brought it up and stopped it. In the end, the whole experience brought about the necessary result. The girls were made aware of the situation and in the end changed their behavior and even began to get involved in some of the conversations. So the final outcome brought about an effective result. I just couldn’t believe that some people were defending them because they really were very distracting.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, May 13, 1987]

75. "Abuse"

Throughout this semester I feel that I have not only learned of the development of others, but more importantly myself. I have learned to sit back and listen to the values and standards of other people. In doing so I feel that I have become more open-minded and better able to make decisions. Many issues were addressed, for example, abortion, death, and the effects of death, acceptance of others, self-esteem, and abuse. These are very personal issues, however, many people opted to share their views. This class was very unique. People helped one another with their problems, many people cried while sharing intimate parts of their lives, and others argued about the differences between right and wrong.

When we discussed abuse, my classmates and I agreed that there was a professor who was indirectly abusive. The whole class came to the conclusion that nothing could be done about his behavior. Immediately after our class I went to his class. Much to my surprise, he was for the first time abusive to me. I had done nothing to provoke him however; he chose to throw me out of class. After this incident I was extremely upset, humiliated, and very embarrassed. I had never been thrown out of a class before, or spoken to in such an inappropriate manner. I met, in the hall, another professor who was well aware of the situation. I became convinced that I had to do something. Together we went to someone who could make a difference. I stress the word together because I never would have gone anywhere alone. It was a very ironic situation because the whole class including myself said nothing could be done. I'm very grateful to Dr. Fink because he was willing to 'go to bat for everyone' despite the fact that we weren't willing to do anything for ourselves. I learned so much from this incident. People can't sit back and wait for someone else to act for them. If something is not right we have a duty to others as well as ourselves to make a change. Being passive will never get us anywhere. I've learned that we can't conform.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, spring, 1989]

76. "Accepting Each Other"

I would like to think, and I feel I would be justified in doing so, that this course has helped each one of us in the class to become more of a real person. For some of us the learning was a silent one as we did the reading and passively participated in the class discussions. But for a nucleus of us I feel that the class had achieved its purpose, namely to make us more alert to the needs of the adolescent by making us more alert to the needs of each other via group discussions.

I only regret that you were not available after class. I would have liked to invite you for coffee to Moot Hall where I feel that the best learning really took place. It started off with a few of us [she mentions four names]. Each day our number grew [she mentions ten names]. As of two days ago we have had to use the large conference table in the back of the cafeteria. There over a cup of coffee, a one or two hour discussion was thought of as nothing. We would mull over the different things that had come up in class both from the students and from you. But in doing so, we, I, were actually having a much deeper learning. We were learning to accept each other in a way that would take a lot longer in a regular classroom situation. Thank you for loosening the ice through the classroom procedure.

I think this is the basic problem that many of the youngsters that we teach face. They do not know how to communicate to others. This summer has proved a communication breakthrough for me and every member of the 'coffee club.' We have broken down the stereotypes we had of each other. People still, for example, have quite a few odd notions about nuns. Now its up to each one of us to make the transition by providing our students with perhaps a similar learning experience, an experience in knowing themselves and others.

What better way to evaluate the course than to evaluate myself in the course? And the coffee hour was very much a part of the course and part of myself. Each one of us, and I am including myself, is leaving class with a little more paper peeled from the surface in order to expose the person beneath the surface. I, and many of the other class members, have come to know better the meaning of encounter.

[Final paper, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, Aug. 23, 1968]

77. “Models for Each Other”

We all developed relationships during the course and I believe that is what human relations is all about. We all established our relationships by spending time together, engaging in activities, like group discussions, and just by discussing issues and problems with one another. But what I consider most important, feeling comfortable and being able to express our own opinions. Besides developing our relationships and friendships in class, we were also models for each other. Our entire class became a modeling network and I think this was very useful for all of us. I noticed in class many individuals who do certain things well: many have talents, skills and qualities that I would like to develop myself. All those individuals became models for me and they helped me a great deal. I did not lose my own identity, I began to incorporate the qualities into my own style and in my own way.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, summer, 1986]



CHAPTER V

Expanding Personal Horizons

“Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!” [Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, 1854 (8)]

More than one hundred and fifty years have passed since Dickens wrote these words, in his attempt to humanize education, but even today, facts remain the principal focus of much schooling. It is less usual to stress how facts can foster the expansion of the student’s intellectual horizons.

In a student-centered class there are many opportunities to expand upon the confines of a course outline in order to facilitate the integration of factual material into the student’s life. Such efforts can

impact on his conception of himself, his relationships with others and, eventually lead to an expansion of his understanding of his place in the world. Projects like the psychological diary encourage students to explore the personal ramifications of class related activities. When class discussions range far and wide there is no telling where they may lead. A significant outcome is the expansion of one's thinking in multiple directions.

78. "Expanding Horizons"

I am finishing this course filled with optimism and hope. It is not just a course in Education; it is a course educating us on living.

I have always seen the progression of life as birth, growth, expansion, retraction, and death. How lucky are those who never retract into themselves; who are constantly expanding their horizons! I now see that I have the opportunity to be one of them.

I lost sight of what is really important as the years passed. I got caught up in material things, money, houses, and cars. I pretended that these were the things I needed to survive.

My journal shows me that what I really need is other people, ideals, hope and love. I hope I am accused of being an idealist. It is my goal.

The issue I chose to work on is woman's rights. I got tired of fighting, gave in. Well, I'm ready to fight again.

I'm elated that this unexpected renewal has taken place. Thank you, Dr. Fink. You gave me and the class the freedom to discover what we really care about. Because you haven't lost your youth or your vision, you made it possible for me to keep mine. Bravo!

[Final paper, EDU 528 Human Relations, August 6, 1986]

79. "Much More To Learn"

At the outset of this course, we were asked to define a specific goal we'd like to meet in the class, mine was 'to think about the way other

people and myself, relate to others.’ In keeping with this goal, the course was meaningful. I certainly did begin thinking over the last three weeks.

I’ve thought a lot about my religion. As an ‘a-la-carte Catholic’ (or so I’ve been accused), I believe in the basic foundations of my faith, but not in many of the practices. I’ve thought about why certain practices are difficult for me to accept. I hope to continue my learning in this area by searching for a church whose ideals more closely match my own.

So then - what did I learn? A lot about others, but mostly about myself. I learned, most importantly, that I have much more to learn! And, that the frustrations about not ‘having the answers’ and not ‘being able to change things’ won’t go away. Two comments C. made really sum up the course. They were: ‘The only thing we really have in life is NOW’ and ‘There are no answers , only attitudes.’

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 5, 1986]

80. “Enhancing Understanding”

I feel I can definitely say that I profited greatly from the experience of the last three weeks. Coming at the end of a very busy summer of graduate work, it was refreshing, enlightening, and somewhat of a rude awakening. That I could progress so far in school before realizing some of the basic processes of interaction in group situations is amazing. Perhaps this is what made the course as interesting as it was. Although each day’s class brought new learning experiences, the material for these experiences has been staring me in the face for years.

[Final paper, EDU 556 Group Dynamics, Aug. 24, 1967]

81. “The Newness and Wonder of Learning”

I have also widened my view on learning. Learning is not just a classroom activity - it is something we do in every day life. If I can try to see newness and wonder in the things I do and question beliefs

and attitudes I hold, I will be on my way to being an open minded and happy person. In class we had a wide range of discussions from drugs and abortion to children's rights. At first I was skeptical, but now I see that human development involves every aspect of life. Everything we do, say or hear makes us the people that we are. The more diversity we are exposed to, the more open minded and well rounded we become. The openness of this class has created a motivation for learning and reading I have never experienced. No one was telling me to 'read pages 1 to 40,' I read them because they sparked a desire to learn more about myself, and the world around me. I even read outside the syllabus when something in particular sparked my interest.

One of the most significant things I have taken from the class is a respect for others and a variety of opinions. The class was very diverse in its composition, both age wise and background. I went to ---- College for my undergraduate degree where most of my classmates were white, upper middle class 19 to 21 years old. I never had the chance to see how older students view the world - it was all very homogeneous and no one cared about discussion! All they cared about was whether they would get an A in the class while doing as little work as possible.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, Dec. 10, 1989]

82. "My Learning Won't Stop"

I think this class was a great learning experience for me. The majority of students will leave your class more knowledgeable in areas that were of interest to them for personal or professional reasons. What's great about this is [that] you had us create our own learning experience with some guidance and suggestions from you. Even though this format was confusing for some, I liked it.

An interesting realization I have come to regarding this class is my learning won't stop on Dec. 20. Unlike most classes, you take a final exam or hand in a paper and that's it. You have recommended so many wonderful books and articles that I look forward to reading them. Also I found many interesting books I would like to read in

the psychology and childcare sections of bookstores and libraries. Before this class I never thought to try looking in these areas for interesting reading material. Boy, have I been missing out! Well, thanks to you I have lots of super reading lined up for this summer!

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, Dec. 11, 1989]

83. “Taking Time”

As I think over the past few months in this course, there are many thoughts, feelings, and ideas that I can reflect on. I think the most important part of this course for me is that it has made me take the time to think and write down some personal thoughts and also has made me take the time to read instead of saying, 'I don't have the time.' Somehow, we can always find the time when we become interested in the topic.

One of the books that had a positive impact on me was Elkind's *The Hurried Child* (9). I have been having difficulty with some of the parents of my kindergartners this year. They feel that I'm not pushing their children fast enough. What a help it was to refer these parents to Elkind's book and have something to back up my feelings. I feel strongly about not frustrating children by making unrealistic expectations, no matter what the parents want. The book reinforced my feelings.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, Dec. 13, 1989]

84. “The Problems of Life -- Intensified”

This course has taught me as much about myself as it has about adolescence. I feel no shame in admitting this because as I said in my last paper I have discovered that the problems of adolescence are ‘the problems of life, intensified.’ My purpose in taking the course was to enable me to understand my teenaged children and to help me to help them through this period. This aim hopefully will be realized as the months go by. The readings and class discussions have reawakened problems of my own adolescence, which had been

successfully pushed to the back of my consciousness during all these years. I see myself in my daughter. I really feel that the path will be smoother now because, at least intellectually, I can place myself on both sides of the generation gap. If I had to single out one learning that was most useful it would be the importance of not attacking a person's self concept. Especially during the adolescent years when kids so often feel insecure I am going to try my best to boost their self esteem, to build up their egos, and to help them to like themselves.

[Final paper, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, Aug. 24, 1971]

85. "Dove-Tailing Learning"

It seemed as the course progressed many things seemed to dove-tail together for me. As I talked to teenagers, they told me things I didn't know. I would then encounter something in the readings which complimented this [information] and as I read further, I found more things I had never considered significant (e.g. that a car is a symbol of self) which in turn were useful in other discussions. It seemed that the regular class discussions became the introduction to [another] class which evolved at Moot [dining hall after the scheduled class]. This [group] grew in size, length and depth as time progressed. I felt that we made progress, especially when on the second last day, we invited the more liberal wing of the class to join us there, and they did.

I appreciated the suggested reading which in turn lead me to the stacks. One thing especially I gleaned from the reading was that as teachers we are not utilizing the signals the students are giving us in their daily assignments or in their art. Another area of special help was the way Jersild (25) [author of the class text] shows how psychology and religion are so compatible. Lastly, I know of no other course I've taken about which I was inclined to discuss so much with my wife.

A final observation has just dawned on me. In the process of writing this report, it occurred to me that words were coming more spontaneously than usual. Essays have always been an albatross for me. No previous paper was ever written as easily and unrestrained,

hence an unexpected bonus from the course: perhaps my essay anxiety has vanished.

[*Final paper, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, Aug. 23, 1968*]

86. “Heightened Sensitivity”

When I leave this class for the last time next week, exactly what will I be taking with me that I didn't have in September? How am I different than I was then? What do I know that I didn't know three months ago? These are the questions I asked myself this past week as I tried to prepare these final observations. I found that precise answers were difficult to come up with. I finally decided that it is not so much information that I have acquired these past weeks, but more a heightened sensitivity to things I really knew all the time, but just didn't spend a lot of time pondering. I have never thought of myself as a prejudiced person, but as the class progressed, I found my own little pockets of prejudice. Writing in my journal forced me to deal with these. The Aids issue was especially uncomfortable to me. In September I had very definite thoughts about the possibility of sending my own child to a school where an Aids victim was enrolled. I said then that I would have no qualms about attending such a school myself but didn't think I could take the responsibility for sending my own child into that situation.

I was especially concerned during the next few weeks about Allport's statement that 'prejudgments become prejudices only if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge' [*The Nature of Prejudice* (1)]. It wasn't hard to figure out where my responsibility lay in this matter. I read as many articles as I could find on the subject and watched several TV programs as well. More important I did a lot of wrestling in my own mind. Long after we had dismissed the subject in class as too touchy, I continued to try to deal with it. I honestly feel that I would now change my stand on this issue. I have to trust the new knowledge I have acquired. To do so is, after all the only hope we have. To continue to hang on to old thoughts when the light of new evidence proves them incorrect restricts our growth as intelligent human beings. There is no place for new knowledge in a closed mind.

In a broader sense, this class has brought home to me the fact that it is our ‘perception’ of reality more than reality itself that governs our lives. Each of us is a reflection of our life experiences, and since our experiences are all different, our realities are different. Maybe there is no concrete reality at all, just bits and pieces of truth that touch our lives in different ways. Only by becoming involved and concerned with one another can we hope to make progress toward understanding. I am grateful for the opportunity for dialogue and discussion that this class has provided. I am richer for the experience of looking into the ‘realities’ of my classmates. I am hopeful that I will not lose the sense of heightened sensitivity I have gained. I am just one imperfect person in an imperfect world, but that does not excuse me from making an effort.

If I cannot save the world,
Let me help one child.
If I cannot move the masses,
Let me be one man’s friend.
If I cannot write a symphony,
Let me sing a strong, brave tune.
If I cannot reach the stars,
Let me light a candle.
Lord, let me make a difference!

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Undated]

87. “Asking Myself Many Questions”

During Human Development this semester I have learned many things. I have thoroughly enjoyed the class. I can honestly say I have never been in a class where there is group discussion. Maybe that is why in the beginning I was so reluctant to speak up. I guess looking back through my years in school, I realize now that I have grown up in schools where two plus two = four and there were no questions

asked. In being in this class I have begun to ask myself many questions. Why is our society becoming one-sided? Why aren't things more controversial? Why do we all want an easy way out? Why don't we want a challenge? Why do we back away when things get rough? What are we afraid of? I have begun to wonder about the other classmates of mine who have not had the chance to be in a class as this one. Are they still just accepting the answer that is given to them without any doubt as to why it is the answer? Why are the controversial issues being pushed aside? Are the banning of books, music, the movies the answer? Do we really feel this is going to save us? I feel if this keeps happening we're all going to end up clones in society. That things are going to be this way, and soon no one will stand up for what they feel is right. What happened to all the Clara Bartons and Martin Luther Kings? Where have are rights gone? Where do we go from here, or is it too late?

[Final paper, EDU 210 Introduction to Human Development, Undated]

88. "I Was So Very Proud Today"

I was so very proud today to be part of a peace movement to alert, awaken or educate those who have for too long buried their heads in the sand.

I, for one, was not aware that the stockpile of arms in the world today provides enough firepower to destroy the world seven times over. Still, the arms race continues, the weapons multiply and become more specialized and the likelihood of their utilization grows. Countries are locked in a suicidal fear.

I cannot properly articulate the degree of patriotism that I felt today. My mind went back to 1959 through 1968. The pride I felt in marching for civil rights, the sit-ins, working for voter registration and listening to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s oration of his 'I Have a Dream' speech. Each obstacle achieved gave me the feeling that if complete success was not reached during my generation, then surely, my children would reap the fruits of my labor, the loneliness, the ridicule and the unfairness of it all.

In our effort to demonstrate in a non-violent manner, the marchers with white faces and black clothing were not to talk. The leafleteers [sic] (which included me) could explain that this is the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, however, we could not engage in an argument.

Today, if I didn't help promote better human relations, I don't know its meaning. I will always remember this class because of the moral support from so many and especially, August 6, 1986 and what it represents. I changed my thinking. I did notice that I was the only Black in my group, however, I was not a minority. I was, and am, an American who marched in order to enlighten other Americans.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug.6, 1986]

89. "Prejudice"

I believe the most valuable asset I have gained from this class is knowledge. Let me explain. I have not yet eliminated prejudice in my life but up until I took this class I wasn't even conscious of the fact that I have certain prejudices. I have attained the goal I set for myself in this class: to gain a greater insight into my own prejudices. After defining and admitting my own prejudices in small group discussions, I have begun to lessen them by decreasing the prejudgments I make about people without having the facts.

I learned that one of my most bothersome prejudices was the passing of judgment based on purely superficial characteristics of a person; basically the way they look. This was difficult for me to come to terms with, as I am a special education teacher and have always tried to offer my students unconditional acceptance. Yet when dealing with the non-handicapped population, I found myself passing judgments that were not based on fact and rarely offering unconditional acceptance. I realize now how unjust I have been and have made a conscientious effort at changing!

Not only have I gained insight into my own prejudices through small group discussion and Allport's book (1), but I have also expanded my awareness of the world around me through reading the

New York Times and *Hiroshima* (22). As I mentioned in my poem I have lived in a shell. I took the easy less troublesome route. Now I am no longer in the dark in regard to human relations issues that are happening in our world today. I no longer avoid current event topics with my husband or leave the room when he turns on CNN News.

Now that class is coming to an end I realize I have a decision to make. Will I crawl back into my shell or will I continue to keep abreast of current human relations issues? I can honestly say I feel I am a more vital part of society and will continue to seek knowledge of current issues.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 9, 1986]

90. “Learning About Prejudice”

I found our recent class discussions to be quite disturbing. I can, of course, sympathize with the blacks in South Africa who, although they constitute a majority of the population, have little say in the running of their government. The issue of racial prejudice really hit home, however, when several class members related their personal experiences. It's hard for one who has never experienced such prejudice to imagine how difficult things have been, and unfortunately still are, for blacks in the United States. I really admire their courage, persistence, and acceptance of this terrible injustice.

It seems that although progress has been made, the U.S. itself still has a long way to go in its fight for human rights and I sometimes wonder what kind of example our country has set for others. It seems contradictory for our country to condemn countries whose policies are unfair to minorities when the U.S. itself is guilty of the same crime.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 5, 1986]

91. “The Need to Involve Myself in World Problems”

Prejudice, I have learned, is the all encompassing conflict in life. Through my reading and conscious awareness of prejudice these past

few months, I've come to realize that every conflict in life, be it daily conflicts, world conflicts, individual conflicts, group conflicts, conflicts within a specific system or what have you, relate to a form of prejudice. Prejudice seems to encompass all of life. It seems to be the only topic that can relate to everything in life. Every group of people, every occupation, nationality, age, sex, religion and race are involved in prejudice of one form or another.

As a result of my growing awareness of prejudice within myself and those around me, I have become more open minded and less judgmental of others. I have learned that we must consider the experiences of others before we make any rash judgments. Every person has reasons for being the way they are. These reasons must be understood before we can understand the individual.

I've become more confident regarding the prejudices around me. There are times I feel a responsibility to share my learning with others.

I've learned, grown and become more aware of the need to involve myself in world problems. The experience in class of being able to talk to a wide variety of people from so many different walks of life has been an unique experience for me, one which very few people have in a lifetime. I am grateful for these experiences. They have made me a little better than I was and motivated me to try to become even better than what I am.

I feel that I have put much time and thought into this course. Aside from my daily log and readings, I've spent much of my time evaluating myself and the world on a daily basis. This course has helped me realize that I need to be more alert and to think about and discuss issues more thoroughly. I've spent more time thinking and becoming more aware than I ever have before. When comparing my accomplishments over the last four months to those requirements established at the beginning of the course, I feel that I deserve an A because I did fulfill all of the requirements and my learning were of great value.

[Final paper, EDU 528 Human Relations, undated]

92. “The Unlimited Supply of Information”

As I read over my diary entries for this second paper, I find that I am again confronted with the same problem as before, not being able to record all that I have learned. I find, however that this is one of the strongest points of the course, the unlimited supply of information to be learned, and I only hope that I can absorb it all. Most of the reading to date has been from, *Changing Bodies Changing Lives* (4) and I have gained a wealth of information from this source. I am working with a group of young adolescents at this time, and any question they could possibly ask has been answered in this fabulous book. I really wish that I had had it when I was younger and facing these same problems and questions.

One of the influences, which have facilitated my learning thus far, has been the openness of our class. I have never before taken a course where the students so freely express their opinions, and discuss their families, backgrounds and problems. It is more like a group of friends trying to help each other than a classroom of strangers. I find that I have learned much more in this setting already than I possibly could have in a ‘traditional’ class situation.

I find that in these past few weeks I have learned more about human development than I knew existed. I especially enjoy the fact that we can learn about the subject while helping other people with their problems, thus hopefully enriching their lives, and I hope that this will continue.

[Second paper, EDU 351, Human Development, April 6, 1984]

93. “Lack of Solutions”

In reading many of the articles I noticed that one particular element stuck out the most. That was the lack of solution. Perhaps this was one point that you were making, that since once we recognize the problems and that we are in a great sense to blame, we can begin to make preparations for change.

[Final paper, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, undated]

94. “Guilty”

The verdict is out – GUILTY!

What I’ve been guilty of is becoming too comfortable in my suburban, middle class home with my husband and well-adjusted children. I used to use the term ‘sheltered’ to describe myself, when I actually meant unwilling to be disturbed by unpleasant occurrences in the world outside of my little cocoon. I was afraid to read the newspapers too much or watch the news on T.V., for fear of becoming too upset and losing too much sleep worrying over the problems of the world. I was unconsciously segregating myself from the rest of the world, using the excuse of the demands of my family.

Well, I’ve learned plenty from this class. I’ve learned to grow up and become part of the human race. I’ve learned not to be afraid to take risks and touch others and let myself be touched by them too. I’ve lost a lot of sleep in the process, and you know, I feel much better for it! Being sheltered is not where I want to be!

In reading Elie Wiesel’s book *Night* (44) I was shocked by the hideous suffering and death of such a great number of Jews at the hands of the Nazis. We all need to listen and care about the past for the sake of the future. From the book *Black Like Me* (19) by John Howard Griffin, I’ve learned how important it is to put oneself in another’s place to really understand what they’re experiencing. In our smaller group, I expressed surprise when one of the black students said she always initially looks to see how many other blacks are in the class with her. She answered, ‘well, wouldn’t you if you walked into a class of black students?’ I will never forget that lesson: look through the other person’s eyes to understand them fully.

Through the book, *One Child* by Torey Hayden (21) I’ve learned about the power of love, and especially the need for it in the classroom. Sheila was stereotyped ‘crazy’ when in actuality her actions were due to the utter lack of love and dignity brought forth from neglect. I understood the extreme ‘terror’ a child, who never learned to trust anyone, felt with each new experience. The author was able to see past labels, and armed with love, discovered the sweet, gifted girl Sheila really was.

Probably the book that touched me the most was *Hiroshima* (22) by John Hersey. To see how these innocent people were affected by the atrocities of nuclear warfare made me realize that the field of Human Relations is of utmost importance. We need to learn to get along with each other and to believe that peace is possible.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 2, 1988]

95. “Respecting Other’s Opinions”

Introduction to Human Development with Dr. Fink is the class I have taken in the spring of 1987. The choice I made to take this class was a good one. I have learned much about life and have seen new insight into myself, which I was never aware of before.

When I came into this class, I did not know what to expect. There was a six to one ratio of women to men, which at first was quite uncomfortable. As the class progressed, and as I got to know some of these people, I started to really enjoy being there. I never thought that I would say this, but I actually looked forward to being there every other day at ten o’clock. To be able to voice my own views as well as listen to others on such domestic issues was very educational. After hearing all of the different opinions on such issues as raising children, role models, drug abuse, and so on, I have come to respect other people’s opinions although I may disagree with them. Before entering this class I used to think I was right, they were wrong, and that was that. In this class I have listened to others and started to understand why these people came up with such diametrically opposed views. Knowing the reasoning and motivation of people can help a person to respect his other opinion while still not agreeing with it. Also, by hearing other points of view on certain subjects, I have come to reinforce my own. The reason for this is that I have listened to many other points of view, understood why they said what they did, but still holding on to my own because I do not agree with them.

One important point that was made clear to me in these past four months is that the world is not perfect and I am not the only person

with problems in my life. When we discussed the topic of abuse and incest, I was really moved. I was stunned when X read her paper to the class on her uncle molesting her for ten years. That will probably be one of the most memorable things I will remember about this class. I believe it really opened my eyes to so many horrible problems our society has. I was naïve in the past to such things because I never knew about this happening to someone that I was acquainted with. I understand now why my sister can be so protective of her children. I think in the future that I will be more suspicious of others when it comes to my children. I will not be as gullible and trusting as I have been in the past with others.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, May 6, 1987]

96. “Good and Productive Growth”

What finer things can be said about a course, than, through this course and all that it has been (and is), I have changed. I have grown in ways that feel good and productive to me.

I am more informed, and I am more aware. And, important to me, I feel more oneness with the earth and the human family.

Today, because of EDU 528 we had an opportunity to participate in a Hiroshima Day Nuclear disarmament demonstration. This was the culmination of three weeks of introspective exploration of peace, inner and outer. Investigating in new ways; ‘my relationship to peace,’ how I and We might effect peace and ‘getting in touch with my own center of inner peace.’

Today’s involvement was a peak experience for me, in learning and self- realization. I am proud and grateful to have been a part of this ‘life giving’ statement that was made today in Buffalo, New York.

It seems superfluous somehow to say that John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* (22) was important to today’s experience. It was both a catalyst and a valuable document of emotional and informational material. It was an integral part of the experience.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 6, 1986]

97. “I’ve Learned How To Learn”

If I had to give a summary statement of what I learned in college it would be ‘I’ve learned how to learn.’ Of everything that I’ve been taught and ‘had to learn’ for classes and/or exams, the most beneficial would be in our class entitled ‘Human Development’. The method Dr. Fink has incorporated into this course was in fact, a great learning device. To sit for fifty minutes every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and have information poured at me that really interests me and made me think – now that’s learning! It’s learning about one’s self and how we relate to others and to society along with learning about people, society, and even the members of the class. I’ve learned to be open minded and to listen and even though I didn’t agree about certain topics or practices I feel that I’ve learned to accept opinions that are different than mine and now say, ‘I don’t agree with you, but I see where you’re coming from and I respect your opinion.’ I could never do that before this semester.

I’ve learned that having high self-esteem is also very important to one’s being. I’m more comfortable with who I am and I think that’s important, not only to me but to how I view other people.

I’ve learned to really appreciate life and treasure all that I can about it . . . This is the first time that I was in a class situation of this sort, I didn’t participate in the discussions all the time but the times I did I believe they were important for the discussion.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Human Development, May 9, 1984]

98. “Speaking in Public”

As I look back on this semester, first of all I cannot believe that it is over. I feel that it has been a beneficial learning experience in this Human Development class and that I have reached my potential.

The first thing that comes to mind when I think about how the time has passed is my first paper. Out of everything that I have learned this semester, I believe that speaking in front of others has been my greatest achievement. Even after everything was said and done about my paper in class, I continued my achievement in the

world outside of this classroom. I have found that I am trying to become more verbal in my other classes and even in public. The most extreme case thus far is that I have signed up to take a class called 'Experiences in Speech' next September. This, I feel will give me a chance to develop more to my potential and continue my learning. I realize that this semester has not made me a professional in speaking in front of others but it gave me a basis for the next step involved. In other words, I have learned to overcome my fears and I am willing to work at improving myself.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Human Development, May 9, 1989]

99. "I Don't Know Everything"

Last week in our small group meeting, I learned something about myself and about human relations that may seem trivial, but in fact, has changed my outlook on life. This great revelation is that I don't know everything. As reasonable and rational as they may be, my 'answers' to the questions we have in life are not absolute truths. They merely represent my perspective, and my ideas about questions we have no answers to and probably never will have. Hand in hand with this is the understanding that anyone else's beliefs need to be respected in light of their perspective whether or not they seem reasonable from my own point of view.

I now see that the search for truth in my life may be something other than the answers to unanswerable questions, and that possibly searching for truth itself may not be a way of finding meaning in life. I do know that becoming aware of the different perspectives of others has helped me to understand my own perspective. I'm learning more and more the value of others as resources to other worlds outside of my own. If each of us individually can be thought of as a book unique in ideas, knowledge, and experience, than collectively we can be thought of as a library bringing together all of our different worlds to a better understanding of the differences and the commonalities of man.

Our individuality can be contrasted to a picture of a world where everyone is exactly alike; not a very interesting picture. Once we get beyond our differences though, I believe there is a universal oneness or wholeness, which unites mankind and possibly all of nature. Call it what you will: God, Love, or simply the essence of life itself. This life essence exists in the here and now. In a sense, yesterday and tomorrow are not even real, for life exists only at the moment.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, Aug. 5, 1986]

100. “There Is No One Answer”

I think this course began with many good ideas and I feel this course has many good potentials. One of the most important of these is the exchange of ideas. Each member of the class has the opportunity to express his views. In too many classes only one opinion is ever expressed, that of the professor. I feel this exchange of ideas is the strongest asset of this course.

Another important point in any social science or humanities course is that there is no one answer to all, in all situations. The important point is not to look for a universal answer, but first to examine one's own views and re-evaluate them. This can be done through research and listening to others. The exchange of ideas promotes one to re-examine his feeling and views. This must be a constant process. The material this course offered was excellent and unlimited. There were many good articles read which raised thought-provoking questions. Between material read outside of class and the discussions in class one was introduced to new material and new outlooks on age-old problems. Though the class came to no conclusions, I feel the most important point was discussions and individual answers.

Many widely varied points, questions and suggestions were raised. There were several topics covered in depth, instead of only one or two; another positive aspect of the course.

[Final paper, EDU 321, Drug Education for Teachers, Dec. 11, 1975]



CHAPTER VI

Self-Revelation

One of the most interesting processes in human development is that by which we develop our understanding of who we are and how we relate to others. It can be slow and painful and generally entails many problems along the way. Self-understanding provides guideposts that enable us to make significant decisions in our lives. There are many points in this process at which outside assistance is useful if not essential, but often that help is not available. A major regret in my own life is that I didn't get the guidance I could have benefited from, at crucial turning points in my formative years. I suspect it is more through luck than intelligent planning that got me moving in the right direction.

Self-understanding can be enhanced by the encouragement of self-scrutiny, and the provision of positive feedback from one's peer and others. I have employed the psychological diary as a tool in furthering self-scrutiny, and have encouraged feedback by the facilitation of social interaction. There appears to be a reciprocal relation between the revelation of oneself and reception of feedback from others.

Unfortunately, some individuals refuse to utilize the opportunity for self-understanding and assume an attitude of “I know myself.” Such a defensive posture, the refusal to open-up and allow others to see personal aspects, may cut off the possibility of receiving helpful feedback. (See number 127, this chapter below.)

In the Introduction, I mentioned Professor Arthur T. Jersild’s emphasis on the important role of self-revelation in the educational setting (24). Carl Rogers too, as he extended his thinking about client-centered therapy, began to explore student-centered teaching, and to spell out its focus on self-revelation. I often recommended that students consult Roger’s chapter titled, “Student-Centered Teaching,” Chapter IX, in his *Client-Centered Therapy* (34) to better understand what we would be doing in class.

101. “Self-Unfolding”

I live

I struggle

I try to make sense of my world

I experience life with emotion, intellect, and soul

I share

I feel so alone at times.

Did I hear you say you feel these things also?

We peel the layers one by one

Some of us do it easily and readily-

The first few layers at least!

Others of us find even the first

Layers are difficult to remove.

How many layers do we have?
What possesses us to hold onto them so tightly?
Is it fear of letting our “secrets” out?
They lurk within us all
But by holding on to them like prized possessions,
They continue to grow . . .
And maybe even control our lives!
Dare to Risk . . . Dare to be Human.

My greatest learning experience in this class has been the realization that although at times we are so different, we all are bonded together by many shared feelings and problems.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations August 6, 1986]

102. “Looking at Unresolved Problems”

As this semester comes to a close it is interesting to reflect on the various topics we have explored through our readings and our class discussions. I’m sure that each of us has grown in some dimension throughout the semester, some more than others. In looking back, I found that it was more difficult for me (at least it appeared to me) than for others, to discuss topics freely and openly. I have attempted to remedy that through communications with you by means of my papers. This, for me, was a real growth experience! I have never put myself in this position. I have cautiously avoided the many unresolved problems in my life, never approaching many of them until this past semester. Many of these feelings I may have never attempted to come to grips with, had it not been for EDU 540.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, December 13, 1989]

103. “Relearning at Another Level”

Perhaps the most significant learning was actually a re-learning at another level. Briefly stated, the lesson involves the internalization of the fact that everyone is not like me nor do they see the world through my eyes. Cognitively this was learned a long time ago. In EDU 528 this was re-learned at the affective, feeling level. This was a difficult learning for me and I’m not sure if I have even ‘finished the chapter’ yet.

Along with this learning comes the concept of tolerance, or more accurately, the concept of acceptance. Again, I am not referring to an intellectual understanding, but rather an understanding on an emotional level. Accepting differences in viewpoint is easier said than done. I learned that perhaps I am not as tolerant or accepting of difference as I thought I was or gave myself credit for being. This is a difficult lesson to learn at this level.

My prior learning tells me that all that I learned in EDU 528 will not be obvious to me for some time. Generally I become aware of my actual learning weeks or months after the actual learning experience. Because of this, I prefer to leave this ‘report’ on my learning open-ended. I will simply close this report with the following phrase, ‘to be continued.’

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, summer, 1983]

104. “Like A Retreat”

Taking your course was like taking a retreat. I was able to get away from learning things for my professor’s sake (grade’s sake) and ponder those things that truly interested me. I was always interested in human development, drama, communication, and self-examination.

Your courses have given me some useful tools with which to pursue these interests.

[Final paper, EDU 690 Individual student project, on Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 17, 1980]

105. “Support When Revealing”

I feel there has been a gradual growing together of our group. There are those with whom I feel very close, but there are also some I look at each week and wonder if they are new members or visitors! So if I thought that I was inhibited and a non-participator, at least I think I came out of myself enough that I have found several people that can relate to me and I too can relate to them. It is a wonderful feeling to feel that you have the support of others when you reveal yourself. Now I feel that I can lend support as well as feel supported. It's also a great feeling when people thank you for revealing yourself as many times they find that it helps them in their problems. This is what a couple of people said to me after I was protagonist.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec.15, 1975]

106. “Self-Analysis”

What has this group dynamics class taught me? The people in my class, my diary, the various readings, and the videotapes have touched my life in ways that affected my personal and professional life. I have been challenged this semester and in the future to always analyze my self and my role in groups.

In my personal life I have kept a diary that has been a mirror into my inner self and helped me to study my feelings. It is in my writings that I discovered how I have really evolved this semester into much more of a social person. Through the class discussions, I came to the realization that all people feel loneliness and the fear of rejection. I found out that I was using these as excuses to not socialize. For the first time in the three years that I lived in A., I attended three social events that I have previously declined. I went to a church social, my sister's faculty Christmas party, and my faculty holiday gathering. I even attended a play with my fellow classmates. I had a wonderful time just getting to know people. I tried to be myself. I think that was what made these events so enjoyable.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 14, 1988]

107. “The Beauty of Self-Discovery”

The class has helped me to grow more than I thought possible. I recall the first night of class hearing that there is no set reading order and that the classes would be open format. It seemed so threatening to be able to make decisions in college when I am accustomed to being told what to do. How easily we fall into the belief that the standard or traditional way is the best way of doing things! I decided to make an effort to be open-minded and ended up reading and learning because I wanted to, not because I had a test next Wednesday.

Probably the most important thing I have learned is the beauty of self-discovery and exploration. I know that the initial pain in facing unpleasant things within the self diminishes as insights are gained. The book *Necessary Losses* (42) has been very helpful in my search for self-identity through my past. What is even more important is that I recognize the fact that self-discovery and analysis is an integral part of life that cannot end when my classes end. I have learned the importance of self-analysis through all aspects of my life. Also, the journal I have kept has given me the inspiration to rekindle my love for poetry and writing. I had stopped keeping a journal due to some personal problems a few years ago, I was not able to face my own feelings. Now I realize that only through facing emotions can you deal with them. I hope my poetry samples have given you an idea of the insight I am working hard to develop.

[See number 108 below, by the same student.]

108. “I Want My Life to Be Extraordinary”

I want very much for my life to be extraordinary. At times I am very frightened that I will wake up an old woman and my life will have meant little to me or others. I want desperately to find goals for my life and the right path to achieve them. Right now is probably the most confusing my life has ever been. I know that I want to get my PhD in counseling. My problem is in justifying attending college for another four years to my parents. Just once I would like to be supported in my efforts. One would think that a family would be overjoyed to see their eldest daughter achieve

such a goal. Not my family. They would just as soon see me as a secretary even though I would be miserable, at least I would be making money immediately. This is the first time I put these feelings down on paper and I find myself crying as I face the reality. I do not feel the way most children feel about their parents. I wonder sometimes if I even love them. It is hard to love and honor someone who finds fault in everything you do. Sometimes I feel that I have to prove myself to myself because I am the only person who cares.

Freedom . . .

Spread your golden wings

And fly me from this land of confusion.

Take me upon the mountain's top

Where the air is pure Love,

And the winds bring the joyful warmth

Of true unbridled peace.

Freedom . . .

Unlock the chains of the molten metallic thorns

From the hopes of my mind,

And let me fly,

To the land of tranquil seas and serene skies.

Freedom . . .

I need you.

Release me from the painful injuries

Of crucifixion of self,

And fly me on the wings of salvation

Where I can feel the

Freedom . . .

To truly live.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, Dec. 10, 1989]

109. "Questioning"

For me, the best lesson that I learned from taking this class, is questioning. Because I was given the chance, I'm now questioning more situations in my life. What I mean by that is instead of letting others decide for me I'm now questioning myself whether I want that or not. I needed that. I'm trying to work on acting on that questioning. One of the first classes, when talking about the journals, we discussed how we should question and be honest with ourselves with the answers. I have been doing exactly that. I've found that I was scared to ask myself those questions and find out the answers. I'm finding the less I pretend with myself, the stronger I am in public either with one person or more. I think that through questioning I'm able to understand things more. I keep asking myself questions until I understand. The growth that I had through this makes me feel wonderful. One of my objectives in taking this class was to feel more comfortable in front of a group and not feel that my opinion is that of a child. I am progressing toward that. My thoughts are getting clearer so that is giving me the confidence to speak out.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 21, 1988]

110. "Journey into Self"

I think that one of the things about this course that amazed me the most was the way in which a group of strangers could grow to be so close. It was a rare experience. After only a few weeks with the group, I felt at ease relating my most intimate secrets. Better yet, I found that such honesty was rewarding. Rather than being scorned, I was helped.

In one of my earlier entries in my psychological diary, I absent-mindedly called the class a 'trip.' Actually, that is an interesting mistake because the class was, to be sure, a journey. It was a long walk to all sorts

of places; I learned many things, which I've needed to know for so long.

The class helped me to realize that I have ways of behaving, in thought as well as action, that are self-defeating. Some of these actions are easier to detect than others. They all function in the same way as habits. They have been repeated so many times that their original cause has been forgotten. Usually, the reason for reacting with that type of behavior no longer exists, and yet, I act that way. Much like wearing a coat in the summer time. By keeping a watch for these sorts of actions in my psychological diary, I am able to pick them up more objectively and then can adopt some means of eliminating them.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 8, 1980]

111. "A Good, Hard Look at My Self"

This class forced me to take a good, hard look at myself, my career, my life, my family, my upbringing and my personal view of the world. It allowed me to reflect upon many aspects of my life and taught me to question what I have done and why. I did a great deal of reflective thinking as we had our class discussions and because of them, I feel that I have become a better person, teacher, wife, friend, and daughter. I feel I have come to accept my shortcomings and learn to deal with them instead of always setting such high, unattainable goals for myself.

I felt a great deal of personal growth in these two areas: the question of whether or not to stay home with my baby, and being raised in a family that did not have open lines of communication about sexuality. After listening to the opinions of the women in class about their babies and whether they stayed home, I have come to the conclusion that staying home at least for a couple of years is best. My husband and I came to this solution after a great deal of discussion and soul-searching and we are happy with our decision.

The evening we watched "The Good Mother" was the first time I had faced the pain of being raised in a family where sex was taboo. I know now where all of my sexual hang-ups are rooted, and facing this pain was a milestone for me. I guess the greatest lesson that I can learn from the movie is to be open and honest as I can be with my children. Being

afraid of telling my parents when I'm in trouble or being afraid to ask them questions about my sexual identity is no way to grow up. I vow to talk candidly with my children and communicate with them on a daily basis so that a wall does not build between us.

[Final paper, EDU 540, Studies in Human Development, Dec. 13, 1989]

112. "Learning to Say 'No'"

In the beginning of this semester, I was not sure what to expect from this course. I have always thought of my self as open to new experiences and happy with my life. After some introduction the first night of class, I was handed an index card and asked to write down my personal objectives. Keeping in mind I was 'happy with my life.' I decided on something vague like improving my methods of meeting people and making friends. Sounded good at the time, however after several classes, I began to realize there was much more to this class. With the help of lecture, small group discussions and my diary I started to slowly clarify that objective.

In rereading my entries in my diary I noticed written more than once how often I did for others and ignored myself. I was surprised at the amount of time that is spent helping family and friends (repairing items, wallpapering, or painting) and my hidden frustration in not doing what I had wanted. What slowly became apparent to me is not knowing how to say no, in fear I might disappoint others, and at the same time cheating myself. My new objective, is to find a happy medium between doing for others and doing for me...

In conclusion, my objectives did change as well as learning to say 'no' more often. Sharing thoughts and past life experiences with friends, future students or peers is an area I can improve on. I believe that 'knowing is half the battle.' I have gained the skills to acknowledge characteristics I want to change as well as the functions of group dynamics. I have learned a few things about myself, how I interact with others and most importantly that I like myself. There is always room for improvement.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, fall, 1988]

113. “Respect for Self”

I want to feel more respected by my faculty. My enthusiasm often acts against me. I am a threat to my peers. This was my main objective that I wrote in September. As I was writing this objective, I immediately wanted to rewrite it. We all want to be accepted by our peers but I stated that as a need. I feel now, as a teacher, that acceptance should not have been a priority. I needed first of all to respect myself as an individual and a professional. When I stopped worrying about being accepted, I started to realize that I was accepted and respected. I am working with different personalities. I was the problem. I put too much emphasis on what my faculty thought of me. Since my main concern became my students and not trying to please the faculty and administration, I have found peace of mind that I didn't have three months ago. I look at people differently. I can attribute many of my feelings to Carl Rogers' book, *Freedom to Learn for the 80's* (35). His book is reassuring me as a teacher. I found myself on many of his pages.

The video, 'Showing Emotions in a Group' (16) is what made me think back to my childhood to better examine why I feared testing. Expressing in words the revelation I received when I took that trip back to my childhood school days was very informative and sad. That was the most rewarding aspect of the course for me. After that I had a better perspective on my faculty, my family, and myself. This is the first course that I have ever taken in which I feel that I know the other students in the class. I could sit next to any student and feel comfortable. Thank you for being instrumental in ending my long awaited Master's Degree with a positive high.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 1988]

114. “There Are Three Loves for Me”

I look at the first few entries in my journal and laugh. It's funny to think something started in such a half-hearted way could have led me to so many interesting places.

If I've learned anything, I've learned about myself. I used to be an angry young man. Through journaling and attending ACOA meetings

(Adult Children of Alcoholics), which I have joined this last October, I stepped into myself and looked very closely at those things that caused my pain. I taught myself forgiveness.

When Bad Things Happen to Good People (27) helped me to realize that I am not alone and my misfortunes are really nothing compared with those that others have suffered. I can't really understand joy unless and until I have experienced enough sorrow to humble me. I learned faith.

There are three loves for me. I have two. Spiritual love is a personal thing for me; from it I gain strength. Fraternal love is the straw that stirs my drink. In all meetings, greetings and interactions, I hope to possess the spirit of brotherhood. Romantic Love will come when I am ready for it. When I have reached enough people with fraternity in my handshake and spirituality in my heart, can romance be too hard to find? I have learned hope.

I spoke up in class. I am going to stay with my ACOA groups (there is no growth without some pain). I am going to continue with school. I have experienced friendship.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, no date]

115. "Fear, Loneliness and Self-Expression"

SING LOUDER

In this paper I will illustrate my personal learning as to why I feel the need to be a very social member of the groups that I associate with. I use the word social, to mean friendly, companionable, outgoing, the sharing of thoughts, ideas and feelings by way of a humorous outlook. This is a sincere learning on my part that evolved from self-exploration and inner struggle generated by this course.

I started my exploration by listening to my classmates. I kept finding a similar recurring theme in their words, poems, writings, and other creations. The theme is one of fear of disclosing one's inner self because of the possible rejection and accompanying feelings of loneliness. My classmates fear revealing their unique individual realities, such as their feelings, thoughts, and ideas. This is the very self-expression I enjoy giving

and receiving in life. I questioned myself a great deal to find the areas I have in common with my classmates, so I could learn from them, my group, and our classroom discussions. The best learning I do in life is that which I learn about myself and in relation to myself. This time I learned that I fear the same things as my classmates; fear of rejection and loneliness, however, I do not fear disclosure.

As my quest for learning continued, by way of my journal writing, I found my most devastating moments are all related to loneliness. When I feel lonely I also feel unloved and misunderstood. Loneliness feels like an emotional aching hunger to fill a large dark void with an emotional life-sustaining ingredient; a difficult feeling to express without use of a vocal or visual representation. It hurts in such a way that I will do anything not to experience it.

It is ironic to me that my classmates fear that they will be rejected and suffer loneliness for expressing their inner realities. I fear my inner realities will never be heard and I will be judged on my outer ones. I guess that is why all my life I have driven myself to sing louder, speak up more and have a positive and humorous outlook. I have rarely displayed more than one of my works of art at a time. I guess I feel they are more physical representative of me and I also fear their rejection no matter how beautiful they are. I guess that I want people to know me for what I really am, for I like myself, and I hope that they will too. I know that I have a great deal to do in improving myself, and I will continue working with great effort. Don't judge me with the visual standards in classic Greek and Roman godlike sculptures; judge me on my heart. Then if you still choose to inflict that feeling of loneliness on me, I will bare it easier. For I know that 'I am my best art work of art,' in constant progress of improvement, in search of the best me I can be. Like all art works, no matter how priceless, not everyone will appreciate them, but that will not change their beauty nor irreplaceable value.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, fall, 1988]

116. “The Psychological Diary”

The psychological diary was the most rewarding piece I have ever written. Through my undergraduate education at Buffalo State and as a former reporter of the Tonawanda News, I am proud to call myself a professional writer. Yet, I have never recorded anything that has had such a personal impact and therapeutic value on my mental wellbeing as this document.

The true value of this course, and the tool we call the diary, is that it forces one to go inside oneself and dig for the innermost truth. I have found myself spending hours asking such basic questions as what I am doing here and just what purpose do I serve? I cannot say that the diary has honestly answered these questions, but it has given me new insights and ways of interpreting my life that I never thought possible.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, fall, 1978]

117. “The Idea of Self-Evaluation”

This has been a very unique, stimulating and challenging course. I believe in the days to come there will be manifestations of it being perpetually productive. Originally, I spurned the idea of self-evaluation, however, I now regard it as a pleasurable opportunity to reflect on the various merits and values I received from the course.

The first lift I was given in the course was to discover there was no lengthy essay, but in its place was a psychological diary. The former I have always loathed; the latter was hailed with delight. For the past four or five years I have endeavored to record something daily, however this experience revealed I have been only skimming the surface. The particular area, which I have always skirted, was that of myself. I feared it was egotistical and unscholarly to write in the first person. It soon became evident that in order to understand adolescence, it was necessary to consider one's own experiences. The diary became a place for rehashing class discussions, re-evaluating one's thinking and consolidating one's philosophy about certain issues such as problems of identity, morals, and religion. The assurance of privacy was most beneficial in that it permitted self-expression.

A final observation has just dawned on me. In the process of writing this report, it occurred to me that words were coming more spontaneously than usual. Essays have always been an albatross to me. No previous paper was ever written as easily and unrestrained, hence an unexpected bonus from the course: perhaps my essay anxiety has vanished.

[Final paper, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, Aug. 23, 1968]

118. “Revealing Personal Feelings”

Personally I am glad of the opportunities I had for becoming involved and would welcome other similar courses in the future. My eyes have been opened to many of my problems, but furthermore I have become more determined to take advantage of experiences, which will broaden my outlook and make me more objective. Seeing things from another point of view – even through the eyes of an auxiliary – has indeed been therapeutic. It has opened my own narrowly focused eyes.

I no longer feel reticent to reveal my personal feelings. I feel that I have much greater control of my emotions and have benefited from opportunities to express them and not fear them. I certainly think that I was loosening up and becoming much freer and spontaneous as we moved along during the third week of class. The audience hasn't been totally obliterated for me, but it is not the problem that it was at the beginning of this experience. Perhaps what I really should be saying is that my own imagination and feelings aren't the problems that they were at the start. Now all I have to do is carry this attitude on into everyday experiences.

You asked me in report #2 whether or not I enjoyed my roles as leader in church and school. I must say that I do enjoy them but at times I have been hindered by the attitude of seriousness about them. What should be enjoyable at times has been tedious and tiring because I've been too serious and haven't permitted myself the freedom of enjoying the activities, as I ought. The most frequent criticism offered to me in life is my seriousness and my obvious suppression of the lighter side of things. This three-week experience has helped open my eyes to the truth

of this criticism. I have indeed been my worst enemy in worrying so much about what others will think or say if I don't take a serious approach. There is a time for everything. I'm no longer going to rob myself of the lighter side of life as I have in the past. Obviously my ulcers have been self-inflicted. Now they'll have to be healed by a positive attitude – self administered.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Aug. 1973]

119. “What Have I Learned from Keeping this Diary?”

When I first entered Ed. 529 I was presented with a whole new method of learning, new and bewildering to me because I had never experienced a situation like this one before. ‘What is this guy trying to prove?’ I asked myself. ‘What can I possibly learn by keeping this diary he is talking about?’

Being somewhat skeptical at first, I decided to give myself a chance at this new experience. So I kept the diary up-to-date, incorporating into it many of my innermost thoughts and feelings about those subjects that really interested me. In each diary summary I tried to convey those feelings but at first I found it very difficult to do so. I was presented with so many interesting materials day by day that I found it hard to choose the most interesting ones to discuss and also keep my diary brief. Also, at first I didn't get too personal in my reports. It's always been quite difficult for me to express my personal feelings for fear of being criticized or intimidated. After I began to realize that these reports were mainly for our own use and our own good, I did start being more personal,

Exactly what have I learned from keeping this diary? First and foremost I have learned to look at myself as an individual, someone unlike anyone else in this whole world. Therefore, most of my attitudes and beliefs will be unlike anyone else's. I have also learned that by being asked to write my own feelings, I am learning what kind of person I am, what I have made of myself and what my family and society have helped make me.

[Final paper, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, summer, 1971]

120. “Putting My Life Together”

When I really look for what was most valuable, I think that I would have to say that it was how my feelings toward other people, especially people I don't know very well, like the students I see every day, have changed. I truly feel that I am more sensitive to people as individuals. The group taught me to be more aware and sensitive to individual needs. My ability to write makes it difficult to convey what I feel in my heart. But I just feel differently about people. There were times I was indifferent and displayed a general lack of empathy towards people. That's wrong, because everyone has wants, needs, pressures and problems, just like me.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 1977]

121. “Personal Growth and Insight”

When I was mulling over this paper and what I have gained from my contact with this group, it is not the academic insight that stands out, it is the personal growth and insights that keep coming to mind and I am impelled to explore. I find it interesting that I focused on ‘intellectual’ (safe, non- threatening, distant) aspects of the group in all my other papers. Now that the end is here I feel compelled to share my personal insights, to look at myself, not to look outward to the group for answers, insights, and solutions, explanations.

I have felt the need to create a mask that may help me to process much of this, and which when shared, will impart information to others about me that perhaps they can relate to. In this process I may instill hope, share what appears to be a relatively universal feeling and belief of self in the group, and give forth information about myself. In many respects this mask comes about by C.'s sharing about insecurity and placing me in the group of the self-assured and secure. I know that this is a front I give, this has been shared with me before but I have never felt compelled to confront myself, my mask, and risk the insecurity of presenting myself to the outside world without the security that it offers. Nor am I completely willing to do so now. Today I am willing to realize that I am not congruent, that I have not offered an honest picture of myself to others. In the context of this group today, it saddens me that

I have been incongruent throughout the semester. I now realize that I have lost many opportunities for friendships because of this. Although I am sure that this mask has served a very vital purpose in my life outside of the group, if we were to continue beyond this semester this mask would only serve to isolate me further from the group. For me, herein lies the corrective recapitulation of primary family group and development of social skills. Although our group never goes to a serious therapeutic function, what C. shared helped me took at my satisfactions and dissatisfactions in relations and my part in them, and in the process I have gained some socials insights and social skills.

At this stage of my life this may perhaps be the most beneficial thing I have gained from the group. Within the group I have picked up bits and pieces of more desirable behavior, various people that I admire for various reasons; usually those that add balance to my nature; the more playful, lighthearted, flexible. From the group I have gained a friend who I admire for many reasons and who I recognize as someone who has used the group for significant personal gains. My admiration sets forth a desire to learn from her.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, spring, 1989]

122. “The Complexities of Being Real”

This past class overwhelmed me with one particular feeling – it was different from the others where my emotions were mixed and jumbled up. Now I felt singly and totally a huge sense of disappointment. I recognized it as something I had refused to face, way back in the beginning. I remembered that class when you tried to help me share with others. You thought I had something to contribute, but I did not, would not; is it really possible that I could not?

This past class I heard something inside me say loud and clear, ‘I really let you down; I DISAPPOINTED YOU !’ But I wasn’t ready, I really wasn’t ready; but I kept on saying, ‘but when are you ready?’ Is it something that you learn – like once you know your numbers you can go on to add and subtract?

Or is it that ‘risk’ we’ve been talking about, toying with, tossing around with a knowing ‘I understand;’ the risk that we generously allow others to take but dare not allow ourselves. We, I, coyly withdraw behind a sensitivity I claimed to have, a mask or a façade. ‘I am sensitive’ I said, but when? Where, in me, was the sensitivity I had asked others for when I did not allow J. to be what he was willing and able to be in the group? That was not enough for me and like a clod I pursued it, trampling over his feelings; never realizing my unforgivable ignorance until much later. He has those feelings that I very prettily talk about, and he was trying to share them – once again, I saw that I had been a disappointment, and even worse, helped to discourage that frail seed of trust and openness growing in J. when he needed support and care most of all.

I thanked T. at the end of the last class, but I must extend my appreciation to the entire class for a very enlightening lesson of myself. It was not geared toward me, I was not the entire focus of the drama and I am glad for that as well (but something very big, very significant rose in me even though I was not pleased with what I was made to see in me.) How many times have I done to others what I had done to J.? How often do I fail to listen to what other people are sharing? How much of a contradiction am I to myself? (For the first time, I was able to see as well as experience the effects of psychodrama and even though I ‘knew’ what it was all about, I was amazed, fascinated at a simple process involving multiple feelings and images, creating tension and frustrations to be worked through, as well as new awareness, new questions, new avenues to explore.)

Where am I now? I can see myself so clearly at times and yet I feel more and more of a mystery. I can really feel that I understand certain things and can talk about them, but what about reality? What about how I behave, how I am in spite of my ‘understanding’ and ‘knowledge’? What is holding me back? I have surprised myself, not in a happy way either. What has happened to the [person, herself] who would at least take the risk of not being understood or accepted, instead of just talk about it and acknowledge that a ‘risk’ does exist? I see myself as intellectualizing and superficial, almost making it through a whole semester without being ‘touched’; but I have been, almost in spite of myself and now I must learn where I go from here. I am my own disappointment. I have

suspected my weaknesses and would not deal with them, particularly because I refused to believe that that person out there in that class was not me; was not who I wanted her to be. I chose to ignore her instead of work with her; I couldn't even role-play her effectively. Have I become that much of a stranger to myself, or have I gotten that much more aware of me and the complexities of being 'real?'

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 1979]

123. "The Psychological Diary As Motivator"

The most advantageous aspect of the psychological diary was the fact that I was forced to become an active participant in the course while doing the homework it required. I could not just sit back in class and take notes or occasionally contribute verbally to discussions when I felt so inclined. Instead, I had to attempt to analyze the group process as it was taking place. I also was encouraged to evaluate my own position in the group.

The diary was instrumental in stimulating me to think about the readings as I was doing them. I had to try to see the relationship between the theoretical things that I was reading about and the application of them as seen in our own class situation. The book *Inside a Sensitivity Group* (43) helped me to objectively view our group by drawing the parallels to the group in the book.

By making recordings in my diary daily, I was made aware of the operation of groups in my personal life situations. Since the diary was in the back of my mind at most times, I became sensitive to many interesting occurrences in the groups in which I participate socially.

I think by not limiting the nature of the diary, the professor encouraged me to make this course a part of my life, rather than just something I thought about for a particular portion of the day. As I have said, the diary made me see the relevance of Group Dynamics in class periods and during the breaks, in my readings, and in my leisure time activities.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, summer, 1967]

124. “An Opportunity For In-Depth Thinking”

This class has been a wonderful opportunity for me to do some in-depth thinking that I would not otherwise have made the time for. It has given me the chance to explore my feelings, my relationships; my reactions to other people. Keeping a psychological diary—actually committing my most personal feelings, and experiences to paper —has proven to be a valuable asset in gaining insights into my actions and thoughts. As I have come to understand why I act the way I do, I find myself able to break old patterns and try out new, more constructive behaviors.

Throughout the semester, I have tried to use my diary to examine the way I act and feel. When I have a strong reaction to someone or to some experience, I try to dissect that event and discover what it was that affected me so, and why I felt the way I did. This has been extremely helpful in understanding myself in relation to other people, as well as in relation to my own past.

I have found the class discussions to be informative and thought-provoking. Not only have they provided me with subject matter to examine in my diary, they have made me perceive the other students as individuals, as people like myself, with feelings, problems, values and expectations. This in turn, has helped me to become more sensitive to people in general.

It seems strange to think about getting a grade in what, to me, has been an opportunity to grow. If you were to ask me, instead, to rate my degree of learning from this course, I would say it was excellent. No other course I have ever taken has been as valuable to me, as a person, as this one. The best person to teach a child is one who has learned how to develop an understanding of people and of oneself. This is the kind of person who can help a child enjoy school – and life. I feel this course has helped me to become more like that kind of person.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Introduction to Human Development, undated]

125. “Perfect Timing”

The timing of this experience for me was perfect. I was at the point where I was ready to examine myself and interested in changing what I

was not happy with. I am not an island. I am part of this group and part of a much larger group – the human race. I cannot help myself without opening doors to others. To open doors I must give part of myself. I must be open and honest and able to express my feelings and ideas and sensitive to different ideas and feelings of others.

This experience (the nature of the course, all the people in the class and in particular certain individuals, and you Dr. Fink) has really helped me to change what I was putting into and getting out of life. Life is too short to wait even a day to know what your potential is and get and give as much as possible,

I couldn't help but wonder on the last day of class how many people would walk- out of class just as they walked in 3 weeks earlier. I hope nobody! The degree of change certainly varied, but I hope everyone left with a concern, interest and awareness that they didn't arrive with.

Taking criticism is hard for anyone. Some, however, show more of an open mind to that kind of help. I'm more open to comments and criticism than I was 3 weeks ago. I'm finding a whole new wonderful world in touch –both feeling more comfortable in showing and receiving a hug or a kiss. In the group this was already comfortable for some.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, July 24, 1972]

126. “Getting in Touch With Myself”

I have found this class in Human Development to be a very unique learning experience because it is dedicated toward personal growth. While writing my diary, I have found security, assurance and insight into myself because the diary made me analyze my life. Now I find myself quite often, turning to my diary whenever I have a question or when I need to think things over more clearly. Writing ideas down helps me explore possible solutions or changes. I seem to get ‘in touch’ with myself. It is exciting and challenging to begin to learn about one's self. If we remain open and sensitive to our growth then we will never stop growing and learning.

Life is a daily challenge and it can even be exciting if we develop the right attitude.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Human Development, spring, 1984]

127. "I Know Myself"

You keep saying that deeper analysis is needed. Deeper analysis of what? What's in the diary or me?

I know myself. I know how I react in different situations, what makes me comfortable or happy, what upsets or angers me.

I did not take a graduate education course to 'see myself more clearly.' If I wanted that I would see a psychiatrist.

As I said in another paper, there are many things that the class will never know about me or see in me. I refuse to let an impersonal group of people know things.

People I do care about, my friends, co-workers are the ones who will influence me, the ones I care to listen to, to please, to be myself with. These are the people who can give me the reason or motivation to make any changes.

Right now I am feeling angry. Angry with myself for starting out my graduate school with a class that I feel has wasted my time.

At this moment I should be very concerned about a mark. A low mark is no way to begin. But I don't care. I'm not going to fill this paper with a lot of lovely and nice things for you to read, just to please or impress you.

If I have learned anything about Group Dynamics this year it will be from the readings not from the class.

I'm not trying to be smart with this, just honest.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, undated]



CHAPTER VII

Sociodrama and Role-Playing in the Classroom

I first heard of “psychodrama” in a class in abnormal psychology at Brooklyn College in about 1948. The professor, a student of J. L. Moreno M.D., the inventor of psychodrama, informed us that Moreno was presenting weekly psychodramatic sessions to the public at his studio in Manhattan. I jumped at this opportunity, and began to attend regularly. Soon I was taking formal classes at the Moreno Institute and attending workshops at Beacon, N.Y., and eventually was participating in and presenting sessions at annual conventions of the Society for Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama. I gained certification as a TEP, (Trainer, Educator and Practitioner) from the Board of Examiners in Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry, in 1977 and in 1996 was honored by being presented with the J. L. Moreno Lifetime Achievement Award by the ASGP&G.

A new and exciting dimension is introduced into the classroom when psychodramatic devices such as sociodrama and role-playing

are utilized. What makes them distinctive is that in addition to talk, dramatic action is employed. Rather than describing events in words, the situation is enacted as if on a theater stage. In psychodrama, a person is invited to set the scene, and then populate it with members of the group who are asked to help to dramatize the situation. Ordinarily, the person who is describing the situation, the protagonist, is asked to play himself and to select members of the group to become (role- play) the part of others who are present. A series of scenes are developed to explore a problem or issue that is defined by the participants. The scene can then be revised, replayed and/or analyzed cooperatively by the players and the audience who have observed the action. Whereas sociodrama represents a sequence of scenes that explore a shared social situation or problem, psychodrama is a dramatic sequence focused on a particular person and his or her life. It is the function of the director (instructor) to produce the drama, thereby enabling the participants to achieve insights into the individual or personal problems being explored. In the classroom, it is role-playing and sociodrama that are generally employed. Psychodrama rarely emerges and only when the group gives its consent. It does so only to pursue individual issues that arise in the course of the dramatic action, and only with the permission of the protagonist.

There are many techniques utilized in psychodramatic action, among which are role reversal, doubling, the mirror, and the magic shop (See number 134 below). These techniques are amply described in the assigned literature and are explored in detail in classroom enactments.

I utilized sociodrama and role-playing in my regular courses when it seemed appropriate. When Sociodrama/Role Playing in Education, (EDU 428g, EDU557) and later Group Dynamics in Education (EDU 556) were accepted into the college program, the use of these approaches became more frequent. For a description of one student's view of a semester in EDU 557, see Paul Smokowski's article, "The Anatomy of a Psychodrama Class" (39). For a more detailed description of sociodrama, see Sternberg & Garcia, *Sociodrama: Who's In Your Shoes?* (40) and Shaftel and Shaftel, *Role Playing in the Curriculum*

(37). For some of my own thoughts, see Fink, “The Case for the ‘Open’ Psychodrama Session: A Dialogue” (11).

It is difficult to describe in words what a class utilizing role- playing and/or sociodrama might be like. The following statements may give the reader a taste, but almost all participants agree that to understand the processes, you may have to experience them yourself. This difficulty motivated our efforts to videotape actual class sessions in the college television studios. Several of these tapes are available in the Archives of the Butler Library at Buffalo State College (See Appendix 1). For some comments on the videotaping experience, see Chapter VIII.

127. “Overview”

I was very much impressed with the way in which the techniques used in sociodrama, psychodrama and role- playing facilitated opening up, sharing of feelings, looking at the other side of the coin, and developing empathy. I found that when I became involved in an authentic situation that dealt with strong feelings, I experienced new insights and understandings. Doubling and role reversal helped me express sensitivity for another’s feelings and greater empathy. The various approaches seemed to help me learn about myself as well as the other person, it would turn out to be a real exercise in understanding. I found many times in the supportive sharing that I was really listening, with no judgments, and sharing myself more openly than ever before. I honestly felt a little bit of me in each of these people, and a little bit of them in me, and a great sense of unity in our sharing.

I’ve learned that to become an integrated person we must be able to share our joys and our sorrows, our deepest feelings and frustrations. We must live with and through others, sharing, leaning upon, supporting and exchanging our weaknesses and strengths –then we can become whole with and through others. I have come to see how the techniques we’ve used in this course have helped many of us, including myself, to do just that – or at least get the process started.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role- playing, Dec. 1975]

129. “A Unique Experience”

When I first heard about this course from a friend, I thought it would be the kind of course that I would enjoy primarily from the point of a creative expression type of course and one in which the interaction primarily depended upon the class. Since I am a post -master’s student, this sounded exactly like what I was looking for. Actually, it has been just what was described to me, but so much more. One cannot fully explain to someone else what they will be experiencing, for it has to be first hand to really appreciate and understand the full value. This has been a unique experience for me in that I have never taken a course of this nature that depends solely upon the emotional and psychological input; not only that, but upon the personal involvement of each person in the class.

I had the opportunity of being a protagonist a couple of weeks ago. Now there is the experience of a lifetime! And to think that it took me all this fall to work up to it! This was a totally uplifting experience for me. I was comfortable in this role as I now understand the process and I was really ready to participate with my whole being. I was ready to reveal myself and wanted help very badly. Aside from the fact that my problem seems irresolvable at this time, this psychodrama made a tremendous psychological impact on me. I went home from class that evening completely exhilarated, and for the first time in three months, I did not feel tired, nor did I for the next two mornings and two evenings. It felt like a complete personality change. I felt like my old self with fewer problems and I was happy and bubbly once again. I certainly think it was a psychological lift that I underwent – must be like therapy! This sort of feeling has never happened to me before.

I think one of the best feelings I’ve had as a result of taking this course is the great measure I’ve been able to use it in education. I started out by explaining role- playing to my twenty-nine fifth graders. We did some simple role- playing initially and they were very exited about it and often asked for more. I have given them a lot of opportunity to explore in this area. I also tried a role reversal with them and this too worked very successfully; with me and the child with whom I reversed roles, benefiting tremendously. The technique

that I find most interesting and one I feel that I always will be able to use, is the Magic Shop. That one really went over big with my class. They literally beg me to go shopping with them every day. I was so moved when one of my bright students wanted to shop for a 'nice thought.' The tremendous importance of instilling good values to these children couldn't be imparted at a more impressionable time.

I have also found a value for this among my own colleagues in education. I have shared my many feelings and some of the techniques. This has generated enthusiasm among them for trying some of these techniques and I have helped them also as I am enthusiastic about all that I have learned. I feel that it is time for more educators to be aware of these new methods, which can bring about more student involvement in learning. The children as well as the educators can become more involved in more productive levels of human relationship and interpersonal understanding. It is a great way to promote greater spontaneity and creativity on the part of all who become involved.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 15, 1975]

130. "The Indescribable"

I have found this course is, in a way, more difficult to write about than Group Dynamics. I approach it on a different level. And have found that oftentimes, notes are ineffective in recording my experiences within the class. I probably would have been more successful had I brought a cassette recorder to class. Some of the things that took place within the group, and myself, were beyond the realm of words. They were more like an indescribable, ever changing shape that was felt rather than seen. They were intangibles that couldn't be isolated and captured and confined on the pages of my psychological diary. There are some passages in music, art, and literature that can occasionally replicate that feeling within the "experience," but those take place only rarely. Some of the events that took place in class were like rapidly changing winds in a dark, unknown desert. They would move about swirlingly [sic], constantly changing their temperatures. There were warm breezes and icy, sharp-

toothed cold winds; some gusts were balmy and soothing; others, parchingly [sic] hot. All these temperamental winds spun and writhed around in our classes.

The class brought things out of me, which I never knew that I possessed. I learned to care for others, people that I didn't really KNOW. I grew to be concerned for them and felt a desire to help them arise deep inside me. On the day when C. was struggling with herself, I felt so much for her. I wanted to take her hand and help lead her away from that fog of confusion which surrounded her. Her feeling better made me feel much better too.

I suppose that it's too late to think of this now, but it would have been fun to do some videotaping in our class. We would have learned a lot from viewing them, and so would future classes. The problem was that we didn't realize our freedom to give input to the class until it was too late. Most of us have become so regimented by our prior experiences with school that we were unable to take advantage of our present situation, much like a prisoner with loosened chains who 'forgets' to escape.

I want to thank you for making the course so worthwhile, and for caring so much for everyone in the class. It's been the most important course that I've taken in all my years of school. (Quite a statement, isn't it?) It's helped me immeasurably.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 8, 1980]

131. "Impact of the Drama"

I have found that there is a bond within the group that makes me sad to see it end. That bond, I feel, is forged with the sharing and caring and understanding that we all have found in each other through the dramas in class.

The height of emotion that can be felt in a drama was not real to me until last week when we had the drama about the twenty-two caliber killings. I found that I could really feel like the white cop who was wrongly accused of not trying to find the killer. I was very disturbed when I got home and it took me a couple of days to calm

that strange anxiety I felt when I got home. I think that drama is a powerful tool bringing out emotions and developing relationships. At the outset of the course I would not have said that this would be so. I have described the transition that I went through in a past paper but I know that the transition is not working toward an end but is a continuum of development that will continue long after this course has ended and will pass on to others as I go on in my life and in my career.

[Final paper, EDU 428g Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 1975]

132. “Impact of Class”

I was very much impressed with the way in which the techniques used in sociodrama, psychodrama and role playing facilitated opening up, sharing of feelings, looking at the other side of the coin, and developing empathy. I found that when I became involved in an authentic situation that dealt with strong feelings I experienced new insights and understandings. Doubling and role reversal helped me express sensitivity for another’s feelings and greater empathy. The various approaches seemed to help me learn about myself as well as the other person – it would turn out to be a real exercise in understanding. I found many times in the supportive sharing that I was really listening with no judgments, and sharing myself more openly than ever before. I honestly felt a little bit of me in each of these people, and a little bit of them in me, and a great sense of unity in our sharing.

I’ve learned that to become an integrated person, we must be able to share our joys and sorrows, our deepest feelings and frustrations. We must live with and through others, sharing, leaning upon, supporting and exchanging our weaknesses and strengths – then we can become whole with and through others. I have come to see how the techniques we’ve used in this course have helped many of us, including myself, to do just that – or at least get the process started.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 17, 1975]

133. "It Has Touched My Life"

Let us see how my thoughts unfold encompassing this class. Actually it has been more than a class, it has been a spontaneous experience with a salt and peppering of pre-thought-out planning. I was afraid to begin and now afraid it's all ending. I want more. It has touched my life, encouraging growth. Somehow I was pulled into it not totally understanding its mechanics, but totally captured by its personality. Each evening was given my full attention, if not reflected orally, emotionally, intellectually. I'm not sure why dramas are so magnetic but I feel it. As soon as a drama begins my being is drawn into it. I can't help but move physically close to the interaction. I'm not now meant to be the protagonist. I've tried and the role didn't seem to fit. I know I'm not afraid so it must not be the position I need at this time. I've attempted doubling but that was only successful without words in my own world. It felt comfortable filling auxiliary positions, especially those of children. This totally captured me, surrounded me. The Magic Shop is within me, forever open for trade. I thank you especially for this technique for there is a permanent place for it along my path to be utilized when needed.

I acknowledge the democratic process of this experience with great respect. I admire the respect shown each student, each person and the patience required in allowing each to choose his own position in class. I believe this is crucial for all real growth to take place, and its interesting to note that although I didn't want anyone to push me, I noticed myself attempting to push others. I must learn to be more patient, more democratic in my own participation. Forcing one to take that step is showing a great lack of respect for that person's uniqueness, that which makes them special. You know what, that quality of respect is an inherent part of any drama, sociodrama or psychodrama. Could it be that this safety, this willingness to accept anyone or anyone's interpretation of a position; could this be the dramatic force that draws me to the center? Drama is a safe place to be at any level of involvement. I hadn't realized this until this very moment. Maybe acceptance is the KEY. I feel a need to be close, to communicate clearer. Again in retrospect, I've been encouraging a friend to come to class and experience the class with me. Could it be

that I in essence wanted to experience a deeper communication with her, developing a closer friendship through this experience? A spiritual blending – that is what occurs during drama, an encounter of people at a significant level, more subtle, more powerful, more dynamic; a deeper touching, a deeper understanding of yourself and others.

I want to allow myself to unfold creatively, to allow my natural spontaneity to bubble unhampered by emotional tightness or fear. Drama assists me in accomplishing this and again I say, hats off to drama, I've truly enjoyed you!

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 11, 1978]

134. “The Magic Shop”

I found the Magic Shop inside of me, as I pondered a gift for Thee. In this wondrous shop I see anything that my mind can imagine. I love to browse even when my interest is not to trade, as I find it enlightening to see anything and everything can be. The concept of the Magic Shop is the best present I've yet accepted. What could be more exciting – the shop open to all, rich or poor, short or tall. Anything can be gotten – all our needs fulfilled. All one must do is to decide what one would truly want, establish a fair trade and (as the name implies) like magic it's yours. All it takes guys and gals is guts, yes guts my friends, guts to go through with one's trade. I will always carry my shop with me and utilize it effectively.

As I walk closer to the shop I notice a sign painted neatly above the door with blue letters on a bright yellow background. It reads: 'Five steps for Magic Shopping - #1. Decide what you want, #2. Establish a fair trade (shop keeper is here to assist you), #3. Move into action, #4. Without toil comes spoil, #5. Enjoy.' Now the real test begins, do I dare go shopping?

I was sharing my thoughts about the Magic Shop with a friend. Her response to this was, 'Boy, your professor must have a vivid imagination to think up and encourage others to visualize a Magic Shop.' For some reason I felt a bit threatened by the comment and

proceeded quickly to say, 'It's not make believe, the Magic Shop is real!' She began to smile and said, 'Do you believe that?' I proceeded to explain that the birthplace of any reality begins with a thought, an idea or plan and without this spark to ignite the process, nothing would ever be. A Magic Shop is a label for a system, a process that one must go through to accomplish anything in life. For whatever one desires one must do or give something in fair exchange to accomplish that specific reality. My friend, the reality of magic shopping is.

[Personal reflection #3, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 4, 1978]

135. "This Class"

I enjoy the class very much, mainly because it is so different from anything that has confronted me. From the beginning I was struck by the sheer strength of my classmates. They have more courage than I could ever have imagined, in front of a group of strangers.

This helps me greatly, for the three hours spent in the classroom many more are used outside concentrating on what has taken place and how I would or should react if faced with the same set of circumstances. In this regard the class serves as training for life.

I am grateful to this class, it has helped me see behind the lines and beyond what is only surface conversation, and has rekindled a form of imagination and fantasy that I have not felt since I was a child of eleven years old. Here we talk about things like magic shops where you can get or get rid of anything you want.

This class, I must admit, has brought a much-needed ray of sunshine into my life.

For all the good times, laughs and happy moments, my basic belief about life has not changed. I see the world on the whole as being a cruel tragedy. Therefore I could not accept any form of conversation or thought that did not deal with hard reality; until after six weeks of taking Sociodrama and Role-playing, I do not want to mislead anyone, I still have a long way to go but I am now besieged by thoughts that I have not pondered since I was a child. I find it a

tremendous pleasure to deal in fantasy and creativity. I feel as though for many years I have shut myself off from a whole world of perception.

The purpose of this class, in my opinion, was for individuals to get a better understanding of the roles we all play in society and to incorporate some of the things we learned to make us happier and more at peace with our selves in fulfilling the responsibilities of these roles. This is exactly what I have done.

The marvel of this class is that it forced me to confront my own difficulties and personality. I am the type of man who, when he has a problem, usually does not discuss it with anyone, I do not even admit it to myself. I subconsciously try to ignore it, not allowing myself to even think about it in rational terms. This class, along with Group Dynamics, forced me to come to terms with this problem. The result is that I do not let my emotions strangle me anymore, I deal with them; therefore I am in better touch with myself. I no longer am prey to a black cloud of emotional drain that in the past always seemed to be hanging over me.

In reviewing this class I can only say that I had an experience that I consider of the greatest value, for our Role Playing and Sociodrama helped in bringing one to be at peace with himself!!!

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, fall, 1978]

136. "Satisfaction"

As we approach the last class of the semester, I feel different about us as a group – there is a sense of accomplishment about ‘us’ – what it is that we have accomplished is hard to say – it is very individual and unique to each and every one of us. Yet, more evidently, the texture of our group has changed. We have become sturdier, closer; we have woven a ‘tight knit’ blanket of warmth and strength around us.

It has never been more obvious (to me) than it was at our last session where D. shared feelings about her brother with us. How honored, how wonderful, to be told ‘come on in, I trust you, I need you. I want you to know.’ And I really wanted to make it good for her

– I didn't want her to be sorry she started all that with us. For a while I forgot about me and how I can't seem to double effectively or role-play adequately. I really wanted D. to know that I understand, that I can identify with her. The next thing I knew, I was involved in the drama and she was saying that I was right, that was how she felt, how it was. It made me feel very good to see that we could help, that I could extend myself to her, and best of all, I wasn't preoccupied with being right or wrong. I wanted her to know that I was with her and that I care, and we can and will work it out. Maybe it happened because it was D.; we've shared many similar feelings during the course of this semester. Maybe because it hasn't been easy for her to open up in this class, yet she's really been trying, and it was exciting and heartwarming to see it happen for her, as well as it was for me to 'get close' and maybe help her through a personal difficulty.

I felt good, because of D's trust in us and the courage we knew it took her for her to be a protagonist. I felt good because we were with her, we were one, and we were sensitive to what was going on. I even felt good about me because I was actively trying, and I felt a part of everything, and I contributed. I felt good because everything we talked about materialized, and all the feelings of reluctance, trust, sincerity, concern and openness; the difficulty and work that it took us to pass through the abstract to the 'here and now' finally became real. It took so much and very long for us but we made it to the point where it became natural to us. It was right because we were ready, we cared and were sure of each other, no longer wary of being 'hurt' or 'put down' or concerned with being silly or dumb. It happened and it was good because it was genuine.

Ironically, it even seems right that it did take all of these months for it to happen. How else could we know or appreciate the anatomy of that moment and all of its magic?

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Dec. 1979]

137. “Playing a Person in History”

The last paper I submitted brought a suggestion from Dr. Fink that I get involved in a sociodrama from history or in a social studies problem we may have today. The suggestion came after my refusal to get involved in a very personal situation in class. I did have the chance, thanks to Dr. Fink of playing a person in history. I wouldn't have volunteered but Dr. Fink called on me and since I did have a germ of an idea in my mind because of the suggestion on my paper. When Dr. Fink mentioned a historical character, my mind went to someone I could act out or double believably. Since I felt comfortable with the image of Dolly Madison and enjoyed everything I had read about her; perhaps this is why I thought of her first. In my mind I kept thinking I must be believable and these people must always think of me as Dolly Madison. I felt it was necessary to prove to Dr. Fink that I am able to participate in or become the most active member of a sociodrama because of the problem I had in class a few days before. I enjoyed doing the Dolly Madison act more than almost anything I have done in the classroom situation in years. I believe the incident really taught me a lesson on the effectiveness of sociodrama in the classroom situation. I would use this method of instruction in any and every area possible. To involve the student as much as possible is the most effective way of teaching. The sociodrama is the most effective way of involvement. I will be teaching in the primary grades and have thought of many places to use this method. Children love to pretend to be someone or something else and what better way to thank sociodrama?

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, undated]

138. “A Non-Verbal Experience”

On the second last day of class we had a non-verbal sociodrama in which almost all of the class took part. As we walked to the music and held hands I noticed one boy who just couldn't get rid of his inhibitions long enough to take part. He is the same boy I could not act out the sociodrama with in the beginning of our class. It just came to me to try to help him if I could, and so it seemed natural to go over

and take his hand. He held on for dear life and was trembling while he sat with his hand in mine. It was a change for me because three weeks ago I would not have done such a thing, but more important I would not have wanted to do such a thing.

The people in the class are really together as far as wanting to help one another and lend support whenever possible. The experiences will carry over in my personal life and in my classroom. I am still an undergraduate but I have been assisting in primary at a Williamsville school. I am getting my degree by going nights and summers. I have a family to take care of and with my homework at home and my school, I am kept very busy. I would like to have time to digest this class and really think about it each day as it happened. I didn't have the time I would have liked, but I took time each day just before going to sleep to rehash the entire class. One thing I did realize is that I want to go further with the same type of self-inspection.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, undated]

139. "The Methods Were Democratic"

The sociodramatic and psychodramatic methods that were used were democratic because they gave all class members a chance to participate. Our group and our leader tried to utilize all of the human resources in the guidance of common action that justified the democratic policy. No problem was too great or too small but was given individual attention. The group, the leader and the resources that were used have given me strength as well as educational values.

[Final paper, EDU 426g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, undated]



CHAPTER VIII

Videotaping Classes

The reader may wonder what the classes described in this book might have looked like. A fortunate set of circumstances allowed me the opportunity to videotape several sessions of classes in Group Dynamics and Sociodrama & Role Playing. Interested readers can view some of these video programs at the Archives of Butler Library on campus. These classes were recorded during the late 1960s and early 1970s and several tapes have recently been transferred to the DVD format (See Appendix 1). It should be noted that each class was unique as was each session and therefore although they portray real spontaneous action, the tapes provide only a sample of class interaction.

This taping process had the support of the Educational Foundations Department and the Director of the Communication Center and his television production staff. A grant from the State University Research Foundation enabled the purchase of additional television tape. Entire classes of some twenty-five students were held in the television studio, and there taped by our experienced television crew.

With the production details such as cameras, lighting, and audio provided, I was free to conduct the classes in the television studio just as if we were in our regular classroom and in general the students adjusted well to this different setting. Some televised classes chose to return to the studio afterwards to view the tapes they had made. (See numbers one forty-nine and one fifty in this chapter.) Eventually about two-dozen tapes were edited into programs with the assistance of several students who had played central roles in these particular sessions. The students shown on the tapes were required to provide written permission for their images to be retained. Unfortunately several programs had to be discarded because such permission was not granted.

Some of these programs were distributed for educational purposes on a restricted basis and were made available in the college library for viewing by students. For a list of the television programs that were retained, see the Appendix. For a representative program, view “The Essence of Encounter: The Signs of Love” (13).

140. “Reacting to Viewing Tape”

Seeing the movie and tapes in class was helpful to me. The class was warmed up and ready to discuss and then participate actively. I was really surprised while watching the tape we made last summer, how the same feelings I had while making the tape came welling up in me. I had tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat. I was truly amazed at how deeply I had come to care for those classmates. (Many of whom I still see and still hear from.)

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, July 1973]

141. “Reviewing Tapes”

The tapes and movies were entertaining, interesting and gave me a better insight of sociodramas, role playing, etc. I especially enjoyed reviewing our own videotape (even though I wasn’t a ‘star’) because it gave me that chance to sit back and see objectively just what we did and the techniques that we employed.

[Final student paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Aug. 3, 1973]

142. “Films and Videotapes”

The films and video-tapes were both interesting and informative. In every case I found that there were either some new techniques or approaches which I was able to grasp, or the material sparked action and discussion. I found myself readily identifying with a protagonist – as in the case of the rejected student or an auxiliary on each occasion. It seems logical to me that these methods have been employed because the problems were specific enough to be grasped quickly, and broad enough to captivate and involve many class members. I just wish that we had been an even more responsive class.

Using the available television studio and equipment proved enlightening and stimulating. Those who became participants were able to see themselves through their own eyes rather than through the comments of others – although these were quite helpful when given. I never realized before how often I sit with my head down in a pensive mood. This became quite evident on the tape. I’ll have to aim at being less pensive and more active.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Aug. 1973]

143. “Seeing Oneself on Videotape”

The next experience came while taping a happening for Dr. Fink. Little by little the sociodrama went from one subject to another, from one person to a group and then from one group to another. I enjoyed the subjects but did not feel compelled to enter any of the sub-plots of the drama. Near the end I started to get deeply involved and I felt myself getting emotionally stirred up. I was hearing people and in particular one teacher talking about a little boy in her class who was smelly and she was telling us how she rejected him. I know how she felt but all I could think of was about the little boy with all his problems in his home life and to have the problems he had in school. I felt like crying for the poor boy. I spoke out before I had a chance

even to check myself and put myself under control. The next day we viewed the tape and I couldn't believe my eyes. I saw myself and I knew the emotion I had felt and yet all I could see when I looked at me on the tape was a mask. I couldn't believe that I could look calm and unemotional when I felt so emotionally charged. I had felt like crying, almost was at the point of tears in fact and yet here was this person on the screen looking so blah. Even my voice was so calm and nonchalant that I didn't know it was the person so involved the day before. The one key word was mask. I looked and acted like a masked person, I wonder how often I do that?

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, undated]

144. "The Television Experience"

The television experience was one of the most meaningful ones since I was directly or indirectly involved at all times. I feel that the situation did much to bring to the surface many problems which we had to face before becoming a group; personal insecurities, aggressiveness, fear, expectations, exploring of each other's personalities, emotions, to mention a few. It also indicated that we do not say or project our ideas in the manner we think we do; we mislead each other because we cannot make our ideas known in a clear, recognizable way.

After the situation was over, the videotape gave us a chance to examine exactly what took place with an opportunity to see ourselves as others see us. Also it allowed us to observe others individually and according to our group roles. This rare vantage point affords an opportunity to observe group interaction, and personal effectiveness. I feel its main value to the group lies in the fact that we can develop faster into a cohesive productive unit when we analyze and criticize from this vantage point in an atmosphere of objectivity. It gives us a chance to act as observer, a group observing itself in action. So often the real situation is submerged in the intricacies of personal interpretations and feeling rather than what actually occurred.

The democratic method is disconcerting. It pushes the responsibility of learning directly upon the participants. Success or

failure of an individual and/or group can be attributed only to the individual and/or group.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, undated]

145. “Feedback”

It is in class discussion that I realized I had a great need in my life for feedback. I recalled writing many letters this year in which I shared my feelings with people I thought would be interested. I never received any response from any of my letters. In class, I shared every paper and poem that I wrote. I waited for responses or feedback. I hoped that even if people didn't respond they would be invited to share their feelings. I wanted the group to open up, become closer, move to a deeper level.

It was only after seeing the feedback tapes that I realized how really starved I was for feedback, personally as well as in class. The tapes gave me a new insight into why people may not respond to my sharing myself. I might be catching people off-guard. Sometimes people are not ready to move beyond the superficial to a deeper level. Another reason may be that people really don't know how to respond. As a result, I called my friends that I really cared about and asked if they received my letters. I was very pleased that I did because it was then that we had a deeper discussion. In class, I decided that I had shared with everyone and it was OK if they did not want to respond. The tapes made me feel more comfortable with the idea that if I really want feedback I may sometimes have to ask for it. In addition, I realized that I only need feedback from those who are close to me.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 14, 1988]

146. “The Taping Experience”

The TV experience provided an excellent means of checking one's observing. I was fascinated to notice that having been in a group observing, seeing a playback of part of the session that I had tried very hard to observe objectively then subjectively, I found I often saw

and felt the same way the second time. This gave me more confidence in observing groups. It was interesting to notice that others had different feelings and observations than I and stuck to them after the playback. Try as we will I guess all individuals see things differently. I wonder if it is because we want to see them 'our' way or if our subconscious influences us some way? I do think having the first, a middle, and a near end session televised and taped would be informative; although taping all sessions might prove worthwhile, it seems impractical time wise.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Jan. 17, 1968]

147. "The Television Experiment"

The Television Experiment is one I will not forget. The roles that the members of the group and I played in the discussion of these two days, gave us a chance to see our reactions to the various situations that developed and, thereby, evaluate more fully, what had taken place. Certainly, television, as well as the regular tapes, can play a tremendous part in showing the various roles played by members; the techniques used; as well as the values of group interaction.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Aug. 23, 1967]

148. "Viewing Tapes"

I also took the opportunity to view and listen to two videos in the library. A sociodrama 'Do Opposites Attract,' reminded me 'IT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY, BUT HOW YOU SAY IT.'

The other tape on feedback, 'Exploring One's Effect on the Group' was helpful to me to view 'others' as they expressed an uneasiness in discussing their own personal lives with others. I could relate to this, for when I was younger I felt the same way. I feel that my own personal growth through various experiences has helped me to change and share a more personal relationship with 'others.' A particular statement very meaningful to me in the video was: 'LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART, INSTEAD OF YOUR EARS.' A

good message to remember.

[Final paper, EDU 528, Human Relations, summer, 1986]

149. "Script"

The taping of class sessions was a significant event for many members of a class being recorded. Seeing one self in action often brought important insights. It allowed students to view themselves in action thus enabling them to see larger issues that they were encountering in their lives. As indicated above in the introduction to this chapter, some taped class sessions with the participants permission, were edited into programs that were retained and employed in other classes as well as the class that was taped. The following excerpt is from my introduction to a video program entitled "The Context of Individual Behavior in a Group," which featured the young woman who wrote number 150 below after she viewed herself on tape.

When an individual becomes a part of a small group, he brings with him, into that group, his entire life experience. More specifically, the major challenges and dilemmas of his life may find expression within the microcosm of the small group.

In this sequence, selected from the spontaneous action of a training group, we shall focus on the behavior of one young woman. As we watch her in action, we shall attempt to understand her behavior in the context of her wider life experience. This young person is on the threshold of breaking away from the patterns of living to which she has been accustomed during her earlier years. She is in the process of striking out on her own. During the course of this small group experience, her greatest challenge was to come to terms with a permissive situation, one that enabled her to explore the dimensions of her new found autonomy. With traditional restraints absent, she was enabled to speak and act freely; however, her acute sensitivity to the feelings of other, limited her actions. She tried to tell others, especially those who blocked her, exactly how she felt, but they seemed unable to understand her. She was then prompted to leave the frustrating group situation.

150. “A Miniature Portrayal of Things I Was Going Through”

This is a group dynamics class that I was a member of last semester. I entered into this course not knowing quite what to expect.

However, soon enough things began to happen, a lot of significant things that have a great deal to do with my life. Actually, the way I acted in the group was a miniature portrayal of the things I was going through in my larger existence. Some of the problems I was encountering, and the methods I attempted to employ in solving them have been captured in this film of one of our typical class meetings.

The first thing that caught my interest in the class was that there was no formal structure present. Instead the Prof. told us at the first meeting to do what we wanted with the course. Needless to say, the democratic atmosphere that ensued was profoundly different from the formal structure, which I had previously encountered, in my educational situations. This democratic structure was my prime concern throughout the semester.

As the meetings progressed, I made the decision to play the game of the new structure. I was no longer going to be a passive observer but a democratic participant. If I was to wholehearted pursue this path I wouldn't let myself be bullied by all the old forces working to block me. If I was truly to be on my own and work this problem through, I was bound to have problems of people blocking my progress, problems of controlling my emotions, and most importantly, the problem of communication with others. This film depicts the reality of these problems.

[Student reaction to viewing a television tape in which she appeared. Undated]



CHAPTER IX

Creative Expression

When we want students to share their thoughts and experiences, we often expect them, or even require them to do so in written prose. But given the opportunity to be creative and utilize any medium with which they feel comfortable, other forms of presentations will appear. Art students often submitted visual products, ranging from sketches or stick figures, through drawings and paintings, to collages and sculpture. Some produced macramé while others created large banners. Individuals who were musically inclined wrote songs, some of which were taught to their classmates, encouraging them to sing as a group. Still others brought instruments to class and provided musical performances.

Poetry was frequently employed. Poems ranged from short pieces, sometimes just a collection of words, to lengthy many- page documents. One student submitted all of her reactions in the form of poetry. Whereas some poems were quite objective, others were highly personal. Some looked upon human existence on a broad scale,

while others had a very specific focus. Here are some examples of individual poems, others may be found as part of larger statements presented in other chapters.

151. “Down & Up”

Vacillation

Agitation

Aggravation

Feelings felt, but seldom shown

Unresolved

Shaken up

Irritated

Feelings have I

Intense? Too much intensity? Feelings too painful?

But it is I

Can I change this way

The way that I am left after a storm?

Confused

Ineffective

Not me

But it is I

Sometimes the storm is only a rumble.

But always the feelings are there

Uncreative

Dull

Weak

Words I hate

Feelings I have

If I am what I feel

And I hate what I feel

Do I then too hate what I am?

When I am the powerless nothing?

But no I am not “a nothing”

I am a person. I am me!

On the other side I can feel alive, sunshine

Beauty Music Dancing Friendship Love

Exciting I want be

Up I want to feel

Naturally exciting

A natural high

No poison to send me up or pull me down

If I am down I can only go up

If I am up I will live each beautiful moment there

I cannot always show the feelings

Nor

Change the way I feel after the storms

For I know they are there

They are me

They are painful

They are the down

They must happen!

And I will let them happen and take the responsibility

But when I go UP

WATCH OUT!!

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, May, 1975]

152. "The Grade"

If you can put a value on learning how to care about someone

If you can put a value on realizing what it means to really share

If you can put a value on knowing that you can truly be yourself

If you can put a value on letting yourself to be truly exposed

If you can put a value on realizing the true meaning of empathy and understanding

If you can put a value on loving your fellow man for what he truly is

THEN

It would take all the days of my life to express what that true value is

For I may not even know yet, nor may I know for many years to come

How these days, these people, these feelings will effect myself and the

Millions I may touch.

BUT

I do know in the long run

It is better to give, to express, to feel, to care, to love, to touch

THAN

To let your life pass by wondering

If it is better not to give, nor express, nor feel, nor care, nor love,

NOR TOUCH

[Paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Aug. 1974]

153. “The Probe”

Abel is the probe that stirs the fire,
He is the one who sets the sparks in motion,
The group kindles to respond to his desire
And yet, the group has not let out emotion.

The fire swells and seems to put out some heat,
But quickly shrinks to glowing embers.
Another poke, another stir, he cannot retreat,
He adds more fuel, he stirs the members.

Slowly he sees the fire start to build,
But alas he must wait another week to know
If the fire will glow or has been chilled
By the group who will not sit by the glow.

Abel seems frustrated by the fire that sits
Quietly around the room, rather than massing
Closer together in the center of the glowing pits
Made up of red light, with green passing.

Abel is the probe that stirs the fire,
He is the one who has the desire,
To have the group experience itself well,
Before the semester ends, time will tell.

[Paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, undated]

154. “The Center of the Storm”

& at the center
of the storm
Abel
Seeming to do
Nothing at all
While mushrooms rise
& giants fall.

with one eye red
the other green
he stirs, like
minestrone soup,
the mad ingredients
of the group.
& supper done,
he wipes his grin
on his compassion napkin.

[Observations of a faculty observer of EDU 556, Group Dynamics, undated]



CHAPTER X

External Applications

Perhaps the dream of all teachers is to have learning that occurs in the classroom carry over into “real life” outside. It is my belief that when what happens in class is relevant to the life of the student that such a carryover will frequently take place. Although much that occurs in class is focused on the here and now, references to outside life sometimes appear in student papers. See also Chapter Eleven, “Looking Back.” which includes references of former students to their lives after class.

155. “A Wish”

I do believe this course, TAUGHT IN THIS MANNER, would be of help to all involved in education – teachers, administrators, supervisors and board of education members. It’s about time we started to communicate and have faith in each other as human beings, listen to each other, reason together and practice what we preach.

I've been pleased to apply some of my 'absorbed' learning in my classroom and especially with the small group of children I worked with on my term project. I felt I could be a member of the 'circle' without having children lose respect; the respect changed from respect for an authority figure to respect for another person. It's nice to be 'one of the gang.' Some of these same children were functioning well in an authority-centered group in other classes at the same time I was trying to have a more democratic group structure. I don't think this is bad. I rather think it a good experience since in later life they will have to function in many kinds of groups. I do hope they remember the successes and less tension of our democratic group [and] when in positions to try them will do so. This sounds like I'm reaching for the moon but I can't help but wish it!

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Jan. 17, 1968]

156. "Circle of Chairs"

We were having some human relations problems in my classroom. The pupils were not cooperating and I was becoming frustrated. I pushed my lesson plans aside and we all put our chairs in a circle. (I sat on one of their chairs.) I told the children my feelings and encouraged each of them in turn, to tell their feelings about our class and how we could improve it. Most of the students couldn't believe what we were doing! Most of them, when they realized that it was all right to express their opinions, did so. While we were still in the circle, I asked what they thought of what we had just done. Many stated that they thought it was great—no teacher had ever done this with them before and asked their feelings. They never thought a teacher would let them do that. (I felt this was a democratic experience as you had stated in your article (11).) Their behavior and work improved and my frustration lessened. It was a great experience for me as it brought me closer to my students as human beings.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, May, 1975]

157. “In the Car”

After the last class I decided and told my husband that whenever he is the least bit intoxicated, I am driving home. It is something I can personally do to try to decrease the number of deaths that occur on the highway due to drunk drivers. This weekend, although I was a bit tired and it would have been easier to sit in the passenger seat, I drove from T. to Buffalo.

[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, May, 1975]

158. “Informal Discussion”

Due to the influences of Education 556, we pushed the desks back and all sat in a circle on the floor. Some preferred to sit inside the circle. In discussing a weekly newspaper I found that they were more free in their conversations and they did not hold me in awe as much as if they were in their seats and I was sitting in front of the class. They discussed the newspaper back and forth and at one time I thought I was Dr. Fink, a person there just to keep things rolling smoothly, going in the direction the group wanted to go. They liked it too. Some were lying on their stomachs reading and discussing. Others grew tired and returned to their desks. They were participating in their own way and were more attentive in doing so. Since then in my reading groups two or three children lie on the floor when we are reading and get up only when they have to write something. I find myself being much more lenient since we have been doing these experiments in group dynamics. I feel they are learning more. They talk more freely to me about problems at home or at school. We seem to be examining why our behavior is what it is at times and what we can do about our moods and attitudes toward others.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, undated]

159. “Student Responsibility”

In my professional life, as a fifth grade teacher, I have come a long way. I have always wanted my class to somehow become a team and

work together, learning to respect and learn from each other. I decided in order to meet this goal I must provide opportunities for this to take place. Earlier in the semester, my students and I turned our class into a zoo, complete with clay animals and straw on the floor. The students were very proud of their zoo display at open house. That was just the beginning. More recently, I designed a social studies unit in which the students are responsible for researching and presenting the learning to the class. They can do this report in drawing or writing. Right now my class is rehearsing a Christmas play. The play has really brought the class together. Doing class projects is becoming easier for me. I have had to let go of my class, stop being the performer, and give my students more responsibility for learning. It is in the group projects that students learn the life-long skills of getting along with others, respecting others, and compromising. I am now doing some reading on cooperative learning. I plan to implement this concept later this year.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 14, 1988]

160. “Classroom Groups”

My work is that of a fourth grade teacher. I have formed groups in my class this year. I think that both my students and I (particularly I) have learned a great deal from the experience. My weaknesses as a leader/teacher were magnified, so just like a scientist I had the opportunity to study and analyze them more closely. The students were given ample time to work together, something they all look forward to doing, and to work things out together. They got a sense of how important cooperation is within a group because they just couldn't ‘sail’ if they didn't all pull together. They got immediate feedback for their effort, another plus in driving the message of ‘cooperation’ home. I feel that they are better preparing themselves for life where cooperation, not competition, is what gets things done.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 21, 1988]

161. “Demanding Respect”

My learning experience will not end today. I have gained confidence and possess a better attitude towards others and myself.

I think when I start teaching again in September I will demand respect for myself. I was afraid I would hurt the kids (they're disturbed) but I was the one who ended up getting walked all over. Now, I not only feel better, but I have the strength to do something about it. It all comes from within and something in me says 'enough is enough!'

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, Aug. 3, 1973.]

162. “Trusting Others to Make Decisions”

The book [*Freedom to Learn in the 80s*, by Carl Rogers (35)] gave me great insights and food for thought concerning my professional life providing ample topics and several great discussions. Providing my students with a warm accepting atmosphere is a long, term effort. Giving them 'Freedom to Learn' has always been very scary to me. I know that I don't trust others to make what I think are the best decisions for them. But I have honestly been trying to allow more choices to let them be more autonomous in the classroom. It's been very hard standing by and watching my son make decisions that I disagreed with, but I've been trying to apply Roger's philosophy in settings outside of school.

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 15, 1988]

163. “Self-Concept”

What have I learned about Adolescent Psychology by taking this course? I have learned first of all, that the study of human development is a very complex study. There is no one answer, no one theory, or one way of learning such a subject. In this course we were given the freedom to seek our own interests. One of my interests was 'self concept.' As you know this was an important part of my diary. What a child thinks of himself will determine how he behaves.

I am a Physical Education instructor in an elementary school. One of my objectives is to help the child discover movement. Through movement a child can express feelings, discover, create, and become more efficient. How the child moves will affect his body image. A child can form a negative image in life very early. Looking back, I can see how my classes may help increase the child's negative body image. When you play a game there is a loser, when you race there is a loser, when two teams compete there is a loser, when you take a physical fitness test there is someone on the bottom, and when you choose teams there are some leftovers. The problem is, that the losers are often the same individuals. How many times must a child be faced with the fact that he has lost again when he has walked out of the gym class? What does all this do for the child's self-concept? The child will begin to see himself as a failure. His own body will become a source of failure. The child's natural instinct to move and play will be repressed. All in all the answer is sad; the self-concept will begin to be negative. 'Why do kids dislike gym as they get older?' is often a question of Physical Educators. I feel I may have one answer; a child cannot continue to find success in play if his own unique physical abilities are not accepted. Therefore, I am personally setting a goal for myself: to help develop a positive self-concept instead of the negative. I am already in the process of individualizing my curriculum. I thought it was individualized last year but I have realized that there is much more that can be done. My study of self-concept has helped me see my role as an educator a little better. It is significant because it is affecting me personally.

[Final paper, EDU 529, Adolescent Psychology, Aug. 26, 1971]

164. "Teacher Support"

I feel one of the most important things I learned is that I have a little more confidence in myself than I ever dreamed I had. Don't get me wrong, I still have a long way to go on that road to complete self-assurance, but I've gotten a little further the last few months. One thing that helped me realize that I was getting better was when you asked me to read my poem a second time. The first time I read my

poem, I was really nervous, I thought I would shake the paper right out of my hand. My heart pounded, and at one point, I thought I would have to stop. When you asked me to read it a second time, I was much more confident and comfortable. In fact, I enjoyed the experience. The 'A' you gave me really sparked my confidence. I'm the kind of person who needs lots of reassurance, and you gave it to me that night. Thank you!

Of all the ideas I gained from the course, I feel that 'risk taking' will stick with me the most (I hope it does). By your encouragement of risk taking, I have discovered that I can teach in front of my peers and principal without having a severe attack! I am especially pleased that I am encouraging my Kindergarten children to take risks and share their ideas, thoughts, and feelings with their classmates and children from other classrooms.

I think the biggest risk I am taking and a good test of my increased confidence is the fact that I volunteered to give a presentation to my fellow teachers at two workshops I will attend this fall. I am nervous about it, but I feel I can do it and do a good job!

[Final paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec.14, 1988]

165. "Change on the Outside"

If part of the learning process is growth, then this class is a success. I have become a more open person at school and at social affairs. I have experienced a more enjoyable relationship with others because of this. I have also developed a greater ability to face problems and to put them in their proper perspective. I feel this could be viewed as understanding some of the therapeutic qualities of group participation.

I have found that my understanding of classes at school has subtly increased. I think I am more aware of the basic qualities of the various groups. This I believe has helped me to enjoy the groups and the groups to enjoy me more.

This year I have had several students ask if they could attend my class instead of their study hall. I feel this is one of the best

compliments a teacher could get. This never occurred last year. I believe, although I cannot say for certain, that my teaching has improved because of this course.

[Final student paper, EDU 556, Group Dynamics, Dec. 23, 1970]

166. “Change Agent”

This semester has been one of growth, pain, anger and triumph. Many things happened this semester to make it a very successful one. On a personal level I grew and flourished more than any other time in my life. Overall one of the main reasons all of this happened was because of our class. Many discussions we had in class made me rethink my values and ideas.

One particular incident that happened recently made me draw on the wisdom of the entire class and brought out strength I never thought I had. I was pledging a sorority for almost ten weeks and had three days left to go. Then an incident occurred that made me wonder if what they were doing was really right and could I be a part of what they would do in the future? I realized what they were doing was abusive and wrong. I thought long and hard about everything in class and decided I couldn't be a part of it any longer. For once in my life I stuck up for what I believed in and didn't back down. I de-pledged my sorority. To me that was the end of it, but people in the sorority were willing to stick up for me, and what I believed in. My big sister fought for me, and the sorority made a permanent change in their practices. I feel that change came about because of me, and what I believed in. I am very proud of the fact.

It was very hard for me to tell people my feelings. I am usually very closed off about my feelings unless somebody says something that hits home to me. I took some risks in this class, one's I wouldn't normally take for fear somebody would laugh or stare at me. In the long run, this class helped me very much.

[Final paper, EDU 210, Human Development, May 5, 1989]

167. “Incorporating Role-Playing”

Looking back on this semester, I found this class to be very useful in my professional and personal development. Professionally, I found the skills I learned in this course to be an asset to my role as a teacher. I have been incorporating more and more role-playing into the prevention workshops that I teach for the after-school program at the Native American Center. At first I thought that like myself (I was projecting a little here), that the children that I work with would be reluctant to take such a risk with role-playing. The first few times I tried some activities it was tough getting volunteers but as time passed and the youth realized that there was no risk involved, they began participating more and more. I believe the groups I work with have become closer because of role-playing. This could probably be traced to the assumption that when a group experiences something traumatic together and survives, it binds them to each other. Role-playing was a big risk for these youth and realizing that their peers would support them and value the insight that the role-playing provided was a big confidence builder for many youth. It is terrible, but I believe many of them come from backgrounds where no one cares about what they have to say and for a brief moment in the workshop they have center stage. I can see that I have started a trend in some of them. The best thing is that they seem to whine less about having to sit through the workshop and I feel better knowing that as they are laughing at their friend's role-playing antics that they are also absorbing the preventive message that I am trying to get across.

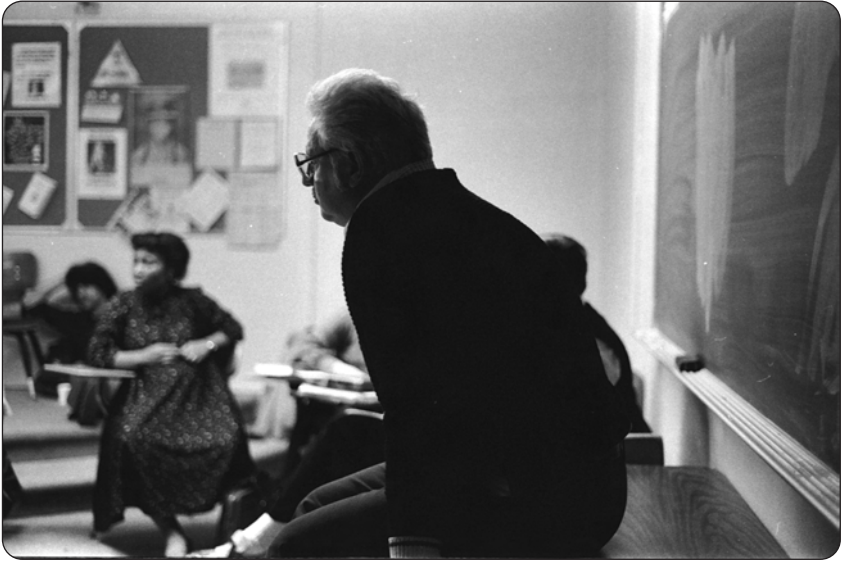
[Final paper, EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, May 3, 1995]

168. “No Longer Afraid to Express My Feeling”

As a result of this course, I have gained strength and knowledge. I have used role-playing in my home with my own children, the results of course brought more understanding and fun into our home. I am able to tell the people in my life that mean so much to me, how much I love them. I know that this is a great achievement because I have never been able to tell or express my love to anyone. I can now tell my husband things, I am not afraid to share my feelings with him. As

a result of this course, our home is happier because I have made a great change in my life. Before taking this course I was content with my life. I had no reason or intention to change it. I could never see my faults until it was too late. This class made me rethink many, many things. I felt open and free for the first time in my life. I am not afraid to express my feelings.

[Final paper, EDU 428g, Sociodrama and Role Playing, undated]



CHAPTER XI

Looking Back

A comment that I have heard many times which seems to have something of the truth in it, is that for better or for worse, students do not forget my student-centered classes. Of course there is no way of validating this without asking the hundreds of students who attended my classes over almost forty years. However, from time to time, former students appear and questions arise, about what they have remembered about the classes that they had attended, and what impact these experiences might have had on their lives. Several former students responded to my request to put their thoughts in writing. Here are some of these responses.

169. “Forty Years Later”

I first met Dr. Abel King Fink in 1959, as an education freshman at Buffalo State College.

After four years at a very staid and conservative High School, I was quite shocked at what was in store for me as I entered his classroom.

I was by no means an exceptional student, but was profoundly and deeply touched by what I saw. Instead of the room being filled with the usual ego of the professor, the room was filled with openness, understanding, interest in the student, and patience. Dr. Fink asked all of us to move our chairs and sit in a circle. He then proceeded to ask us what we thought on different subjects. He didn't even jump down our throats when we said something foolish. There was no intimidation or fear, only introspection and understanding.

This was a real breath of fresh air. I absorbed the atmosphere completely. It began a long and joyful intellectual quest for me; An attempt to find the true nature of things as best I could understand them; To explore my own ideas and thoughts, and not simply accept what I was told; In other words to grow up and think for myself.

Forty years later, I find myself a retired vice-president of an insurance company. In my forty- year career, I managed many offices and many employees. I always tried hard to promote and solicit individual points of view. I found that in encouraging others' view points, that I also promoted happier, healthier fellow workers. I even found that often these workers became more personally successful, and contributed more meaningfully to the company welfare.

The feedback I got from many fellow employees was that they valued this open approach, over the usual business goal oriented dictates that had been the norm. I attributed this business success to my early formative days with Dr. Fink. His entry into my life and what he taught made me a happier person. One teacher and educator can make a difference in many lives.

[Letter from former student of Human Development, William D. Sheldon, a retired insurance executive, dated November 2000]

170. “How Unconventional It Was”

A while back, I came across the enclosed photos [taken in class]. It was such a happy thing to discover, what with recently meeting you

again after all the time that has passed since I (fortunately) signed up for your classes.

I believe I took two of your classes. One was on group process and the other on psychodrama – two of the best classes in my academic life. I say that because they were unforgettable. I've received two academic degrees but can I recall the teachers, the lectures? Only a few who were genuinely interesting, made learning fun and exciting so that you didn't want to miss class and were genuinely interested in their students. I think you rank up there with my eighth grade English teacher whom I loved to pieces. She was the first to introduce short stories to me and I still make opportunities to visit her grave.

At the time I was taking your class I recall how unconventional it was. Instead of the traditional sitting on chairs with the teachers giving us information that we wrote down in notebooks to study and then regurgitate it back in the form of a test, it was a totally different approach and as a teacher myself now I can look back on your teaching style and say how different yet appropriate it was. During the psychodrama class, I recall the little stage in the front and how skillfully and gently you guided us to explore our own issues on that stage only after we felt confident that our feelings would be treated tenderly and with utmost care. I recall one student (female) who was still upset with her parents, both professionals, who wouldn't (or couldn't) spend time reading stories or books to her in spite of her constantly begging them to. She got on the stage, someone took the part of the parent and she let them know how she still carried this hurt and anger. I still think about her sometimes. I understand her – how things that happened in childhood stay with you the rest of your life. You move on with your life but the wounds are often still there.

I want to thank you for those classes!

[Letter from former student Sophie Knab of ED 556, Group Dynamics and EDU 557, Sociodrama and Role Playing, dated June 2, 2008. Mrs. Knab is a Nursing instructor at Niagara Community College and an authority on Polish culture.]

171. “Someone Was Actually Practicing the Socratic Method”

Reflection: My Experience With Abel Fink: Being Introduced to a Pedagogy that Nurtured Authentic Learning.

They say that everyone gets a chance to have one or two great teachers in their lifetime. While I had some excellent, even pretty good instructors and professors, Abel met the criterion for being outstanding and unique. I was one of the fortunate ones who stumbled into Abel Fink’s universe during my graduate years at Buffalo State. I never asked any of my contemporaries if they had any experience with him or what they knew about him. My moment of potluck occurred though when I registered for Sociodrama & Role Playing in 1968. I knew that I was interested in the course subject and its possible connection with my own teaching which leaned toward theater arts and ways to explore conflict resolution with my students in win-win ways, and since there hadn’t been any professors whose teaching style was unappealing to me at the college, I was prepared to treat and accept the instructor as a ‘what ever it is, it is’ experience.

Needless to say, I liked my semester with Dr. Fink. Actually, it was more than liked. I loved Abel’s philosophy of pedagogy, so much so that I eventually signed up for his Group Dynamics the next year (1969) and Adolescent Psychology (in 1970). In these latter instances, I went in with my eyes open. I knew I wanted to soak up more of this open-ended approach that was the bedrock of Abel’s approach. Here was the craft of teaching that existed heretofore only in my imagination. Abel practiced – lived – the very methodology I wanted to be able to embed into my own teaching style.

The historical model that was handed down to me was based on the teacher being the producer of knowledge while the students acted as passive consumers of that knowledge. I yearned for models that would facilitate my ability to teach from a paradigm that nurtured problem solving, that motivated students to take ownership of their learning and become managers of their time as learners. I wanted to instill a habit of internalized self-direction through the skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation for my students.

I came away from Abel's classes with a rich sense of having been introduced to a wholly different way of approaching teaching. Here was Abel, on the one hand, giving away most all the authority of the teacher to the student; the student, on the other hand, was required to make important decisions with such empowerment. Would I be authentic and dig deep into the subject of the course or would I fake it, take advantage of the freedom to make choices and not take complete responsibility? Some chose to see Abel as so *laissez-faire* that they missed his point entirely. They couldn't step out of the traditional model of producer-consumer. They wanted the teacher to tell them what to do, how to get that A.

I felt I had been handed a gift. Someone was actually practicing the Socratic method. Someone challenged me to do my own thinking and learning. Someone gave me permissions to take responsibility for the direction and management of my own depth of inquiry.

Those lofty ideals of learning and teaching weren't just being mentioned as methods, but were actually a palpable characteristic in the life of Abel's classes. I used to laugh when I would be in some method's class in which the instructor alluded to discovery learning and its merits only to return to rigid lecturing, direct teaching, producer/consumer pedagogy. Occasionally, an instructor might apologize for not having the time to really put into practice these learner-centered approaches that Abel did so comfortably and with consistent dedication.

It needs to be mentioned, too, that Abel was a man who had nothing to prove to his students. He was confident of his own accomplishment and comfortable with the learning model that he practiced. He wasn't anxious about what the student was supposed to digest by way of a predetermined curriculum. He wasn't interested in jamming some 'knowledge' down our throats, calling that learning. He was completely committed to the student arriving at those principles and concepts on his own.

Ultimately this became an indispensable model in my own teaching, a career that spanned 42 years, nineteen of which were spent teaching gifted and talented elementary children. In that latter

assignment, I was the language arts specialist wherein I tapped into those models that were embedded in my memory muscle from my course work with Abel. Most of all, those courses with Abel instilled in me a compassion for the learner's need to discover and manage his own goals, depth and excitement of his own search for knowledge and meaning.

[Letter from Joseph Malkiewicz, former student in EDU. 529, Adolescent Psychology, EDU. 556, Group Dynamics and EDU 557, Sociodrama/Role Playing, dated Aug. 29, 2008, He is a retired language arts specialist, who taught gifted and talented children in the Kenmore-Tonawanda school system.]

172. “A General Overview”

I was fortunate to have met some fine folks during those years at Buffalo State College. While the curriculum demanded much of its students, the professors presented material in such a way that was both understandable and pleasant.

Abel's “Sociodrama and Role Playing” was a class I always looked forward to. It was an opportunity to expand my perception of minds that were often quite different. I have found those experiences most helpful, not only in my role as a caregiver in the Western New York Veterans Administration Health Care System but in all walks of life.

There's a lot to be said for someone who can facilitate learning by creating a delightful atmosphere. Thanks for those memories Abel.

[Letter from Ralph Sirianni, former student of Sociodrama and Role Playing, dated, Nov. 2008. Mr. Sirianni is a Military Veteran, a professional Creative Arts Therapist and well-known artist in Western New York.]

173. “Reflections of a Freshman Elementary Education Major of Dr. Abel K Fink's 1957 Growth and Development Course Experience”

During the winter of 1956-57, my senior year at Buffalo Bennett High School, I was recruited to play basketball by the head basketball coach at Buffalo State Teachers College located in Buffalo, New York. Being

offered an opportunity to participate in competitive sports at the intercollegiate level was very exciting and important for me and my evolving identity. Furthermore, I was the first in my third generation Italian-American immigrant family to pursue a degree in higher education.

After receiving an acceptance letter from the Office of Admissions, I registered during the fall semester of 1957 and soon found myself entering the freshman year of college academic, athletic, and social life. I barely had my feet on the ground during the first week of classes when I “walked through the door” of “Human Growth and Development,” an introductory level psychology course that was required of all students majoring in elementary education.

I should have recognized from the moment I entered our classroom that the experience I was about to begin was going to be unique and challenging, to say the least. Was I prepared to meet the challenge, I asked myself? As I discovered through the sixteen weeks of the semester, this course contributed steadily to a deeper discovery of myself and clearer understanding of the importance of human growth and development as a critical foundation of education...teaching and learning.

My first decision of many to come was quite basic. Deciding where in the pre-arranged circle of seats I should sit was daunting. How strange it was to actually see everyone’s face before me around the circle, which included that of Dr. Abel K. Fink. After all, during my previous four-years of high school, I had seen only the backs of heads in the traditional row-by-row seating arrangements.

Particularly revealing, however, was the format of our class meetings which revolved around student-student; professor-student discourse. Course meetings were devoted to discussions aimed at nurturing self discovery as a means of linking our evolving knowledge base of human growth and development to our own childhood and adolescent experiences and vice versa.

Needless to say, my early shyness, reluctance, lack of self confidence and fear of sharing my protected, though not well understood values, emotions, and opinions, yielded to more openly

shared and analyzed interactions with my classmates. As our class sessions progressed, with Dr. Fink's gentle and non-judgmental guidance, we learned to trust one another. We became less fearful and better at verbalizing our life stories and experiences, as well as more receptive and insightful listeners to those described by others. We became less inclined to cast judgment on the experiences of others and more inclined to reflect more compassionately and insightfully. We came to appreciate the complexity of human growth and development principles, as well as our own unique and diverse growth and developmental processes.

By no means, were this course and the revelations that it helped produce for me and my classmates simple and without its challenges moments. Areas of student sensitivity and vulnerability were recognized and respected by Dr. Fink as he expertly assisted our class in managing potentially embarrassing and hurtful interpretations that were expressed during our intriguing and interactive class sessions.

Through the many years since completing my elementary education degree I have reflected often on the form and function of my early growth and development course experience and the instructional leadership so effectively employed by Dr. Fink. Its impact led me to integrate many of its methodological elements and practices during my more than 40 year career as a professional educator at the elementary, secondary and higher education levels. I have made a conscious effort throughout my career as an instructional leader to employ a model of instruction that nurtures community-learning within the classroom environment, i.e., planning and providing rich opportunities for students to actualize their self and social discovery while building conceptual frameworks that were relevant to their lives and future careers.

Undoubtedly, I have good reason to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Fink for his creative effort and gifts. He ably fostered a community learning environment that drew upon the rich resources that students brought to our class; as a means of constructing and associating knowledge with their life experiences. In this case, an eternity to come in human growth and development.

[Letter from former student of Human Development, Carmen James Iannaccone, Ed. D. Emeritus Professor of Exceptional Education, Buffalo State College, dated August 3, 2009]

174. “Recollections of Human Relations Class”

There are indelible moments in life that remain in clear memory due to their significance. During the summer of 1983, a wrong guess regarding the name of a classroom building at Buffalo State College and the subsequent opening of a solid door serves as one of those moments for me.

Behind the door were mostly female graduate students sitting on the floor directing attention to a robust, gray haired individual sitting on a table with bare feet in a lotus position. As the elective class I was seeking in mathematics would likely not have assumed such a configuration, I apologized for the interruption and stated, “This is not the class I am looking for.” The reply from the man on the table was “How do you know?” I found the question strange, perhaps a little discomfoting, yet my delayed blank stare was followed by an invitation to come and join the group. A brief exchange informed me that the class was a study of human relations and it would count as a graduate level elective. Sounding a bit more interesting than the math class, I stayed.

Little did I know that my persona derived from formative years in a conservative, Appalachian environment was about to change forever. Professor Abel Fink was a person unlike any I had ever encountered in my life. A liberal, non-judgmental, sincere, and gentle being, his approach to teaching via open dialogue, self assessment and analysis while attracting a diverse population of students was new to me. From day to day, I did not know where the class was headed. I’m not sure anyone did. By the end of each class, it was very clear where we had been and why we had traveled the path that we did.

I remember many things from that class. The attractive woman who for the first time in her life felt comfortable enough to tell the story of her birth with six fingers on one hand that had since been

cosmetically corrected through surgery. Something about Abel Fink's approach and his way of leading the flock enabled her to confide a truth hidden for many years. Tears of happiness as we hugged her made a real impact on everyone.

There was a reserved musician that became confident enough to not only perform his first ever trombone solo, but to do an impromptu musical composition and interpretation of each member's perceived personality. Each of us was the object of a unique performance.

I remember very differing opinions on issues and topics sometimes initiated by Dr. Fink and sometimes derived from initial general conversations. The reinforcement to constantly ask questions, understand other's positions, accept different ideas while still holding values of our own, and the ability to evolve in our humanity were all hallmarks of the experience in Dr. Fink's human relations class.

There was the student who did not say much of anything for several classes. Another student questioned her noticeable silence. She responded that she did not feel comfortable because her opinions, values and feelings were not in concert with others in the class. I remember Abel Fink gently re-assuring her that every person was a valuable member of the class and that she was welcome to participate. We were all moved to encourage her to share her views. It took a while, yet she slowly came out of her shell. Many of her feelings were contrary to the majority of others'. When she expressed thoughts, I and perhaps others were uncomfortable and even internally disagreeable with her perspectives, yet they were discussed in a civilized atmosphere unlike the singularly opinionated closed-door fashion of my childhood. This seemed new to most participants in the class. By the end of the class, I believe that there was actually compassion between this reserved, conservative student and the rest of us even though there was never agreement on philosophy.

The closing act of Abel Fink's class was an outright shock that I took some time in getting over. During an end of class conversation, I casually mentioned needing to find an apartment for the upcoming semester. Abel replied, "Why don't you consider living at my house?"

I almost choked. I still had not matured beyond thinking that professors were next to God in authority and approachability. Here before me was one of my professors asking me if I wanted to live in his house! He suggested an interview with his wife that evening to see if there was agreement and compatibility.

That evening I walked up to the large house on Parkside Avenue with a virtual forest of overgrown shrubs, grass and trees surrounding it. All other houses on the block were well manicured. I was surprised how much like an actual interview it was. Questions from across the spectrum abounded. When it was discovered that I was technically handy, I was offered free room as long as I mowed the lawn, trimmed the shrubs, shoveled snow, fixed a few things now and then and walked the dog, George, who Abel insisted was a human in a dog's body. Wow! And Dr. Fink let it be known that I should call him Abel. This was almost too much to handle.

I am not sure if they know to this day, yet I might well have not finished my graduate program at Buffalo State if not for the opportunity that the Fink's graciously gave me. I didn't have anywhere near the resources to continue if it had not been for their generosity. Why did they welcome strangers like me into their home . . .to live? I learned of others before me; students, refugees, and friends. Was this strange or what?

Personally attending entertainment and social event at a synagogue via Abel's donation of event tickets to me was beyond reality. Me, a backwoods country Episcopalian, sitting in a Jewish temple? It was almost too much to fathom.

Because of Abel Fink and that chance meeting leading to having him as a mentor, I learned that families are different; people are different, that the world presents many possibilities, that everyone has difficulties, that humans are imperfect. That the world is small and that being a human being is not easy.

A little over ten months with Abel Fink soon passed and I was now on my way to places and experiences that might never have happened if not for him and his class.

A half dozen jobs, several states and sixteen years later, I returned to Buffalo State as a faculty member. To this day, I remember the lessons of Abel Fink, and Buffalo State College and feel a tingle inside almost every day when I get to return the favor to new generations of young people. Getting e-mails from my students studying in foreign lands, seeing the once timid first year student cross the stage at graduation, counseling the student having problems with life, hearing of my first student being accepted in a doctoral program, and helping the mid-life individuals desiring a change of occupation, it is all very rewarding.

Thank you Abel Fink and Buffalo State.

[Letter from former student of Group Dynamics and Human Relations, summer, 1983 Clark W. Greene, dated October 4, 2009. He is at present a Lecturer in Technology at Buffalo State College.]

Afterword

The quotations presented in this book, have been selected from the papers of several hundred students that I read and reread over a period of years. There are many other papers that remain to be read that might be equally revealing. I suspect that those that I have selected represent a sample, not necessarily a representative sample, of what my students had to say. I believe that these statements provide evidence that students are alert, intelligent and concerned about the way they are treated in the classroom. Also they indicate that many students appreciate the opportunity to take an active participatory role and can grow in many ways in a nurturing educational environment.

As I stated in the introduction, my personal professional journey started when I became aware that what I was experiencing in school was quite foreign to my inner interests and needs. I felt that I was cast in the role of a passive onlooker and that I was never encouraged to play an active role in what was going on. I therefore exerted just enough effort to get through. My teachers seemed to have had their own agenda that did not include an active role for me in generating class activities. I was in effect, alienated from the process that was meant to educate me. It was not until I was in my junior year in engineering school, that I realized that I was engaged in studies that had little connection to my interests. It was then that I assumed the initiative to change my direction and focus on discovering what I really wanted to do. At that point, I took control of my studies and my life.

I don't know how many other young people, past and present, have had similar experiences in school and felt the same frustration that I did, but I suspect that there were and are many. As a professor I set out to generate the kind of classroom environment that I would

have wanted to have in my own schooling. In this way, I hoped to enhance the education of others. I complete this project with the hope that I may have achieved this objective.

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Appendix 1: Videotapes of the Group Process

“A Gift From the Magic Shop” (1970)

A demonstration of the “magic shop” and other psychodramatic techniques enables a member of the group to explore his role as a husband.

“An Encounter With Blindness” (1969)

A group learns to empathize with a blind student by virtue of an exercise that enables them to share the experience of blindness.

“Being Oneself In a Group” (1967)

A young art teacher challenges a group of her peers to accept her unique attitudes and group behavior.

“Do Opposites Attract?” (1968)

Two group members displaying dissimilar verbal and non-verbal communication patterns encounter each other in an attempt to explore the question of the title.

“Essence of Encounter: The Signs of Love” (1970)*

The group explores commonalities of emotions and discovers that ties of love exist among them that bind them together.

“Exploring One’s Effect On a Group” (1972)*

When a member shares significant personal information, she may require adequate feedback from the group to support and encourage her future participation.

“Exploring One’s Place in a Group” (1972)

A person’s feelings of being rejected by the group, prompts a non-verbal study of the group’s sociometry.

“Generation Gap” (1972)*

A sociodrama in which representatives of ‘youth’ and ‘parents’ explore contemporary patterns of sexual behavior and their religio-ethical contexts.

“Jesus in Buffalo, An Axiodrama: A Trilogy” (1973)

“In the Streets” The moral dilemma of responding to a request for alms.

“In The Home” Setting and enforcing rules for admittance to one’s home.

“In The School” The dilemma of helping a child who is ‘personally obnoxious.’

“Persistence of Childhood Self-Images” (1972)

A sequence of intimate sharing in which individuals indicate how early sibling, peer group and family influences molded the self-images which they brought with them into the present.

“Self-Concepts” (1972)*

An attempt to have members of a small group share positive comments about each other leads to a thoughtful consideration of the members’ needs to downgrade themselves due to their over concern regarding perceived personal shortcomings..

“Sharing Feelings” (1972)

The on-going group experience has led to an open expression of emotion on the part of the protagonist. The group helps her to see that her readiness to share her feelings has caused many other persons to become more open, a painful but nevertheless beneficial development for all.

“Situational Test as Warm-Up” (1972)

A group exercise demonstrating the situational test inadvertently serves to warm-up a male protagonist to a personal concern.

“The Context of Individual Behavior in a Group” (1967)

A segment of group behavior in which a member is prompted to leave the session is followed up by an interview of that person by the leader and another group member as to the meaning of that event.

“Warm-Up to Psychodrama” (1969)

Through the use of the auxiliary chair, mirror, double and role reversal techniques, a group is enabled to encounter one of its members whose group role some describe as antagonistic.

* *Available as DVDs*

Appendix 2:

Courses Taught by Dr. Abel King Fink at Buffalo State College, 1956-1995

EDU 151 - Human Growth and Development

“Problems and methods of studying human behavior; hereditary and environmental factors influencing behavior; physical and motor development; mental development and learning; providing for individual differences; evaluating human growth and development; directed observations.”

EDU 152, EDU 154 - Human Growth and Development: Focus on Adolescence

“Emotional development and learning; motivation; personal and social growth; effect of home, school and community; personality development; directed observation” (page 163 of the College Catalog, 1956-1963).

EDU 103, EDU 153 - Human Development: Conception to Adolescence

EDU 201 - Society and Education

“A general introduction to the field of education, including social foundations, historical foundations, philosophical foundations, professional foundations and current events” (Instructor’s letter to students. 1957-1963).

EDU 202 - Child Development/ Education

EDU 210 - Introduction to Human Development

EDU 321 - Drug Education for Teachers***EDU 351 - Human Development: Middle Childhood****EDU 518 - Advanced Human Development****EDU 528 - Human Relations**

Discussion of inter-group problems relating to race, sex, religion, national origin etc., dividing and integrating factors affecting communications and understanding between individuals and within/ between groups.

EDU 529 - Adolescent Psychology**EDU 540 - Studies in Human Development****EDU 556 Group Dynamics in Education***

“Theory and practice of group procedures in the school; development of understandings, skills and attitudes conducive to successful group leadership and participation; group study and evaluation; the school group in its sociological, psychological and philosophical setting. Laboratory experiences. Elective. Credit; Three semester hours” (Graduate Catalog).

AMP (Applied Mental Hygiene)

Extension course in Wilson, New York, 1961.

EDU 428g*

Open to both undergraduate and graduate students, later renumbered, EDU 557.

EDU 557 - Sociodrama and Role Playing in Education*

Theory and practice of sociodramatic principles and techniques in the educational setting. Laboratory experience.

EDU 630 - Self Processes in Human Development and Education

“Consideration of self theories as they relate to child and adolescent development, emphasis on educational implications. Exploration of self techniques applicable in child guidance and learning” (Graduate Catalog, 1982-1984).

EDU 685 - Social Processes in Human Development and Education

“Consideration of processes whereby human beings from infancy through adulthood internalize cultural values/patterns and adopt social roles/behaviors. Special emphasis on teaching/learning applications, and basic approaches for guiding optimum social/moral development in educational settings; consideration of prevention, diagnosis and treatments of social disabilities” (Graduate Catalog, 1982 – 1984).

** Introduced into the curriculum by Dr. Fink*