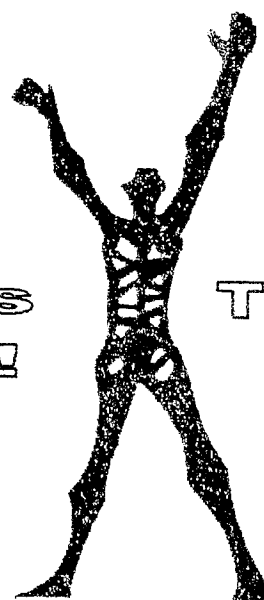# Jets Core Curriculum

What Every Jet Needs to Know

Life is Good !

The Past Is Approved!

The Future is Open!
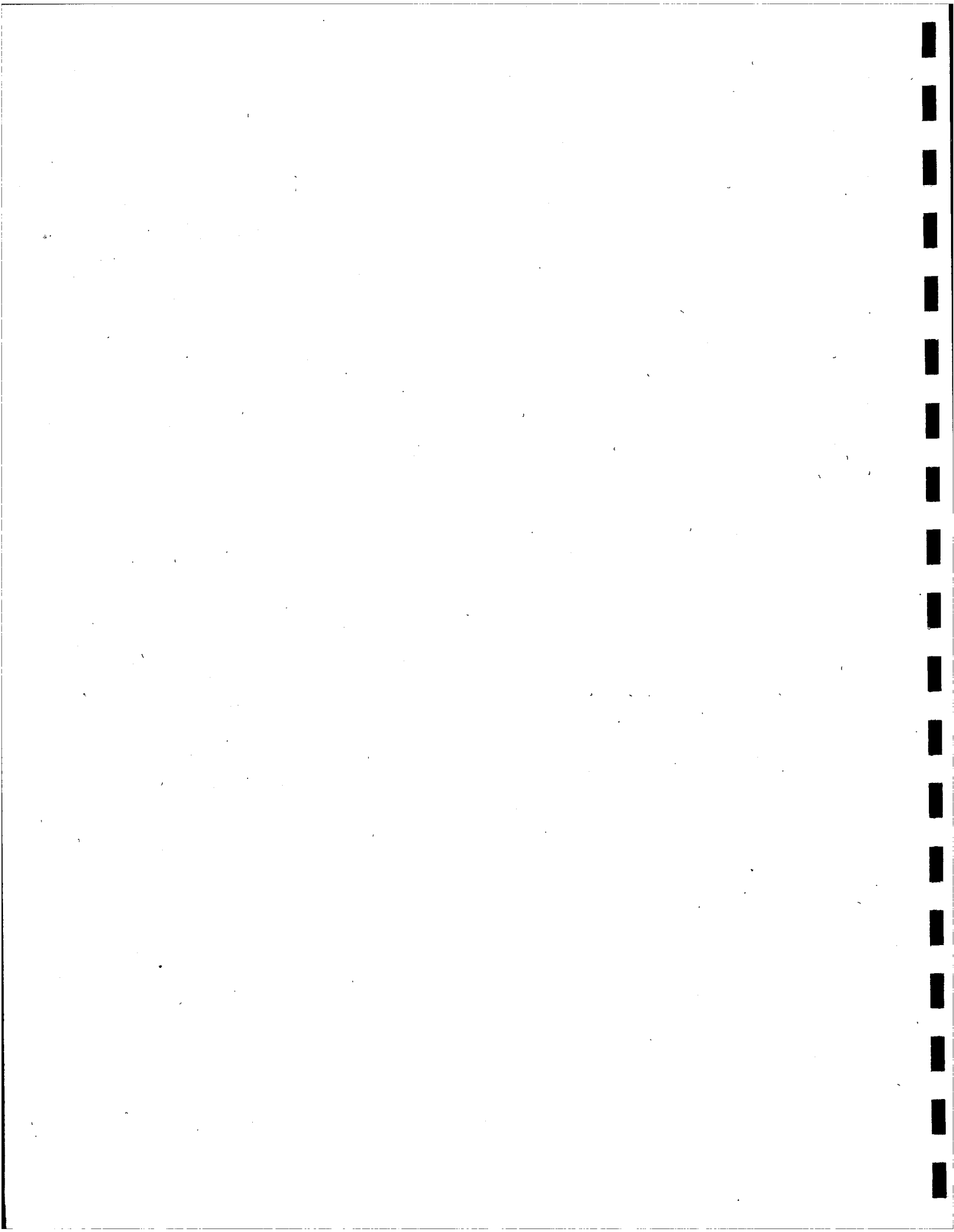
I'm The Greatest!

JETS

An Urban, Faith-Based Outreach
To
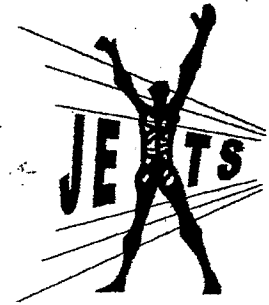## Youth and Children

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WHO ARE THE CENTRAL CITY JETS ?

AN URBAN PROGRAM

When you hear the words "inner city" or "inner-urban" what images come to mind? If you are like many Americans, you will associate these words with lots of children, baggy pants, backward caps, welfare, crime, gangs, etc., etc., etc.

Does the fact that these are stereotypical images mean that they are not true? The answer to that is, No. There is truth in the stereotypes. That is why they exist. However, we must remember that these dominant negative images of a large segment of our American population are overblown because they are nourished by a powerful catalyst for most of our bad dreams: fear. Therefore, in all our efforts to respond we will want to avoid giving these negative stereotypes and images any added power. *The Central City Jets* is a kind of club that aims to address the needs of children and youth for positive images that will help them make sense of their life experience.

When we look carefully at the gang culture that has emerged in America in the last few decades, we can learn a lot about the unmet needs of urban children and youth. Movies like *"Colors"* or *"Boyz N the Hood"* describe how urban youth seek to meet their own basic needs. They form communities that provide:

- a sense of family and belonging
- symbols of belonging
- economic gain
- rites of passage
- meaningful activity
- a sense of purpose for living.

There is nothing wrong with any of these needs. Every human being needs the same things. The gang culture is an attempt to meet them but it is powered by negative images of the self as being without worth in this society, the world as a hostile place and life as basically meaningless. The *Central City Jets* program is an effort to provide a more positive alternative for children and youth to meet these needs than what they find out in the streets. *Jets* is an urban religious education outreach program which is based on an educational concept called "Imaginal Education," which seeks to replace these negative images with positive ones and thereby change destructive behaviors into creative ones.

HISTORY OF THE JETS

When most persons are asked what the word "*jet*" brings to mind, they say two things: 1) a high-flying, high-speed aircraft and 2) the movie West Side Story. Both of these are good reasons for selecting the name *Jet*s for our program for inner-city youth. A *Jet* is someone with self-determination who can go places and do things. A Jet has vision and room to fly. A *Jet* is not a victim. A *Jet* is free. Not only are *Jets* strong individuals, they are also part of a group, a type of family with meaningful symbols and opportunities to care and be cared for.

The concept of Imaginal Education and the original *Jets* program were both developed by the Ecumenical Institute in the 1960's as a response to the riots that tore through Chicago and other parts of America following the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Jets* was part of a comprehensive Human Development Project being run in a 16 square block area on the west side of Chicago, which came to be called Fifth City *(Annual Report of the Ecumenical Institute, 1968).*

The Ecumenical Institute (later called the Institute of Cultural Affairs) was teaching an Imaginal Education course. Several people in Oklahoma City had gained exposure to the concept and had taken the course. Among them were Rev. Orra G. Compton, Doris Compton and Dr. MacKenzie Thompson.

In approximately 1974, Orra and Doris Compton, a Methodist ministering couple were serving at Christ United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City. Christ Church was in what was known as a *transitional* neighborhood which meant it was in the midst of White flight. At the time the Comptons served there, the church was still predominantly White, but the community in which it was located was predominantly Black and the church was struggling with its outreach priorities.

Mrs. Compton tells the story of being at the church one day when about seven neighborhood children of varying ages approached her asking if they could organize some kind of club at the church. They wanted something to do and something to belong to. Mrs. Compton gave it some thought and went back to them later with an explanation of the type of club she would be interested in organizing, one that would be "dedicated to doing something that would make life better for us all" *(D. Compton, Interview)*. The children agreed that would be fine.

After about a month of prayer and thought, Mrs. Compton decided to use the Imaginal Education that she had learned at a training program for church leaders in Chicago and adopted the name "*Jets*" from the Fifth City Human Development Project that was then operating on Chicago's west side. She wrote a letter to each of the children inviting them to an organizational meeting at the church, and, amazingly, at the appointed date and time, all seven showed up. Their ages ranged from 6 to 13.

They met once a week after school and the group grew rapidly and dramatically. Soon they had three groups (age divided), each meeting one day a week.

Using the Imaginal Education approach, Mrs. Compton and her volunteer helpers wrote their own curriculum and found it to be so effective they decided to do an 8-week summer program, which they called the Summer Academy. The first Academy was held at Christ Church with adult volunteers and some youth hired through a government summer job program.

In spite of many difficulties with the first program in which Rev. Compton reported losing 15 pounds during that 2-month period *(O. Compton, Interview)*, the curriculum carried the program and it was deemed a success.

At the same time, Skyline Urban Ministry was running a summer camp program for inner city children, but was somewhat dissatisfied with its effectiveness for the children they were serving *(Thompson, Interview)*. A Skyline staff member taught in the first Summer Academy as a way to investigate the program as an alternative. She was impressed and Skyline signed on.

During the next 12 months a team of volunteers worked to write curriculum. The following summer there were four different urban United Methodist locations: Christ UMC, Second Avenue UMC, Epworth UMC and McKee Community Center *(Thompson, Interview)*.

As of the writing of this paper, the ***Oklahoma City Jets*** are 20 years old and still going. Although several ***Jets*** programs were started around the world following the Fifth City model (probably at least 15), the Central City Jets of Oklahoma City is the only one that still survives. This survival is due to the commitment of Skyline Urban Ministry.

WHAT IS IMAGINAL EDUCATION?

Imaginal Education was developed in an effort to practically apply the leading insights of current educational philosophy to the task of the church in effective outreach in its communities. Kenneth Boulding's book, *The Image*, Jerome Bruner's *The Process of Education* and Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* were foundational to the work.
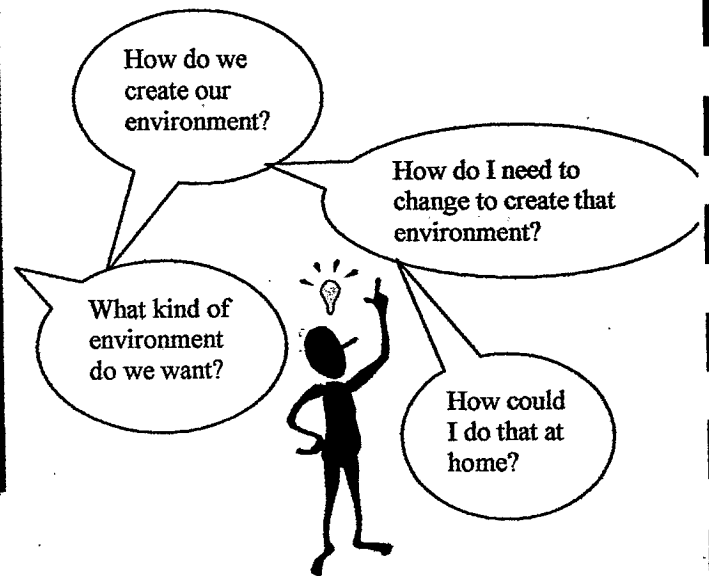
IMAGE CHANGE WORKSHEET

BEHAVIOR	IMAGE	MESSAGE

Boulding's insight was that human behavior is determined by the images we carry in our minds. He states that an image is "what I believe to be true: my subjective knowledge. It is the image that largely governs my behavior". *(Boulding, 6)*. He goes on to postulate that the strategy for changing a person's behavior is to change the images out of which that person operates *(Boulding 6)*. The basic presuppositions of Imaginal Education are drawn from Boulding's work. They are:

1. All people operate out of images.
2. Images govern our behavior.
3. Images are created by messages that can be designed and communicated
4. Images can be changed, and
5. Changed images lead to changed behavior
   (Seagren 1).

IMAGE CHANGE WORKSHEET

BEHAVIOR	IMAGE	MESSAGE
fighting	I live in a hostile environment	In Jets we create our own environment

How do we create our environment?

How do I need to change to create that environment?

What kind of environment do we want?

How could I do that at home?

When applying the principals of imaginal education to behavioral change, you might use the process described above. It is usually easy to identify the behavior that is unacceptable or disruptive to your teaching environment. That is because you have an ideal picture of the teaching environment you want. It is good to keep in mind that the children also have an ideal environment in mind, even though they may not be particularly conscious of it. Their behavior patterns are often a response to the environment they assume and in which they are trying to get their needs met.

This is why it is good to help them objectify their ideal environment (and yours) by creating a contract very early in your group life. Start by asking, "What kind of community or environment do we want to live in?" They will tell you (in their own words) that they want it to be peaceful, safe, respectful, and orderly. List those elements of the desired community environment on the board or on a piece of butcher paper. Make sure everyone has contributed. Discuss them a little. Which elements are most important? Why? You may even do a little role playing, acting out the desirable environment vs. the undesirable environment.

Then talk about behavior. How do we need to behave in order to create this desirable environment? Jets is a good place to practice influencing your environment.

Using this method, Jets get some new ideas about behavior (our rational objective). I.e., together we can create our own environment the way we want it to be. However, we must all agree to certain changes in our behavior in order to achieve this environment. Some behaviors contribute to the desired environment, others detract. Perhaps this will lead to some rules of behavior upon which we might all agree.

Furthermore, the children experience the process of creatively visioning the desired environment and the excitement of knowing it is possible to make that vision into reality (our experiential aim). They have experienced the thrill of experiencing a vitally important reality: *"We can change the situation if we move with determination (Jets song)."*

Freire's work is relevant because of his analysis of oppressor-oppressed societies and how no one is truly free in such a society. Surely the vast majority of nations are made up of these dynamics. Freire's basic assumption in the book is that the purpose of education is freedom and the definition of freedom is the ability to act in the world in such a way as to change it, improving the experience of life for the individual and for the society as a whole at the same time *(Freire 12-13)*.

Therefore, Imaginal Education must not only work to transform negative and debilitating images, but provide basic skills for effective action in the world. These include not only reading and writing, but research, critical thinking, planning, and self-discipline.

Jerome Bruner in <u>The Process of Education</u> stresses four themes in effective education. First, structure must be central to learning. Second, anything can be taught to anyone at any age in some form. Third, intuitive thinking is key. Fourth, interest is the best stimulus to learning.

Bruner explains how people learn and are able to use what they learn. As his title suggests, the emphasis is on teaching the structure of a subject. Structure is central to learning.

If you really want someone to learn something, you as the teacher must thoroughly understand it so that you can present it in such a way that the students can understand the essence of it — its structure -- and can therefore relate it to everything else they already know. A good illustration of this is that the basic structure of mathematics is pattern and its usefulness is in problem solving. Mathematics is the study of patterns that recur in the universe. Once a person understands that, he can be a mathematician in the sense that he can relate that concept to life because he can observe patterns and use them to solve problems. This may not make him good at numbers, but it may help him be a better musician or a better leader. Consider the following Illustration.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics is the art of recognizing patterns, or regularities in the universe that allows us to live a useful and joyous life. The better mankind understands these patterns, the more capable he is of solving problems, ranging all the way from counting the money, to building great bridges, to sending a rocketship to Mars, and who knows what else?

Example: Day follows night.
2 plus 2 equals 4
Carrots grow from carrot seeds.

Mathematics is the art of classifying a problem, -- naming it, in order to solve it, and then figuring out what needs to be done to solve it.

Example: I have four (4) friends visiting me. My mother asks if we would like an apple? "Yes, we would," we reply. She tells us that there are apples in a bowl and apples in the refrigerator. We only find two (2) in each place. Two (2) plus two (2) equals four (4). What is the problem that we have? How could we solve that problem?

Possible answers: - Send a friend home
- Let one friend do without.
- I do without

This idea of learning to relate ideas to daily life is very important to the effective teaching of anything. In the section of this paper on the Theological Response of Imaginal Education, it will be applied to the religious content of the Jets curriculum.

Another point that Bruner emphasizes strongly and has influenced Imaginal Education is the need for students to learn how to utilize their intuition, make educated guesses, and act on a hunch in order to really put their education to the best use *(Bruner 20)*. In a small book entitled, Go For It!: 25 Faith-Building Adventures for Groups, by Walt Marcum, in a section entitle, "Teaching for Thinking", Mr. Marcum points out that in many educational settings, (Christian and otherwise) we "don't encourage or challenge youth to think. We expect certain 'correct' answers." The illustration is the little boy who is daydreaming in Sunday School when he hears his name called by the teacher. Not knowing what the question is, he simply answers, "Jesus", knowing that most of the time that is a pretty good answer for most Sunday School questions.

In our society there are no pat answers for most of the problems we face. If there were, there would be no more problems. What we need are children who will grow up understanding some of the basic principles of faith, creativity, visioning, teamwork, and strategic thinking so that they can successfully tackle some of the problems they will face in their lives and as part of a larger society. And, as all good inventors know, you have to be willing to fail. Sometimes a hunch may be wrong, but sometimes it leads to the brand new approach that will finally work to solve a stubborn problem.

In order to appreciate fully the extent to which Freire and Bruner have contributed to Imaginal Education, a reading of the books would be in order. Suffice it to say that their work is part and parcel of the Imaginal Education approach and will be included in the rest of this paper.

THE VICTIM IMAGE

So, what is the basic image that we are trying to change through the Jets program? Early in its research an effective community methods, the Ecumenical Institute was in a serious dialogue with residents on Chicago's West Side ghetto. Together they had identified three underlying problems that were fundamental to the perpetuation of ghettos: 1) the self-depreciation that has resulted from generations of racism, 2) the absence of local structures whereby the benefits of the modern world can reach the inner city, and 3) the lack of means for ghetto residents to participate in the decision-making processes and social activity by which their destinies are determined. Of these three, the first was determined to be "by far the most basic" *(Hearings 6)*.
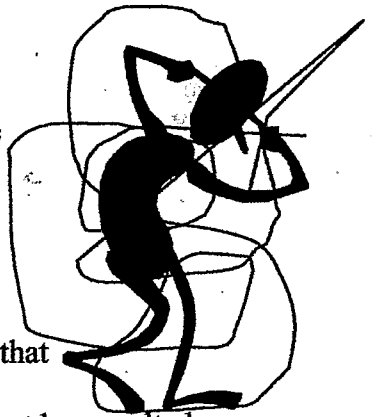
The work that the Ecumenical Institute was doing was in a totally Black area of Chicago in the 1960's. This context affected the language used to articulate the insights it generated. However, the "victim" is an image that can be appropriated by anyone as a result of experiences of personal or social injustice or abuse. It is NOT a function of race.

> The problem in the ghetto that underlies every other problem is not social inequity. It is not lack of jobs or inadequate income. It is not a matter of rights and liberties. It is not second-rate education and social forms. Change all this tomorrow and the real issue is still not touched. The primordial problem in the black inner city is psychological and internal. Every man and every people operate out of a primordial self-image. The American Negro has an interior image, a self-talk, an operating principle, a spring of action, and a self-understanding that tells him that he is a second-rate human being. All the benevolent, upgrading gifts – public or private – will not alter this state. The American Negro, who is moving to the city ghettos in increasing numbers sees himself as white man sees him. To use crude language, he sees himself as "nigger." He lives and acts out of

> that metaphor. The deprived Negro senses after himself as a sub-
> citizen, doomed to a ghetto existence, the victim of social forces
> beyond his control, incapable of altering his inhuman condition.
> He can only quiescently submit to his fate or wildly strike out
> like an irrational animal trapped in a corner of history. The
> victim image of the black man is the first and fundamental
> problem in the central city *(Hearings 7)*.

There are many different reasons why a person will come to see him or herself as a victim. The victim image comes from experiences of having been victimized. All persons who have been victimized and have thereby come to accept the image of themselves as a victim (sexual abuse victims, battered woman, neglected children, etc.) can be helped by effective Imaginal Education.

According to Boulding, the way to change an image is to impact it with a meaningful message. A meaningful message is one that can impact an existing image *(Boulding 7)*. For example, if you tell a girl who already believes she is beautiful that she is beautiful, you will impact her existing image by confirming it. The impact will be minimal, however, because it causes no change, so it is not a very meaningful message. If you tell her that she is ugly, and no one else has ever told her that before, that message will be likely to have no impact at all simply because she will reject it. Therefore, it would be a meaningless message. However, if enough people tell her that she is ugly and treat her like she is ugly, she will eventually accept the message and it will have become a very meaningful message, causing a radical change in her self-image and in her behavior.

A fundamental element of Imaginal Education is the choice of new messages with which to profoundly impact an existing image and cause "revolutionary change" *(Boulding 8)*.

What are the positive images that can radically alter the behavior of the victim? In its report to the Subcommittee on Government Research after the 1968 riots, the Ecumenical Institute stated its conclusion as follows:

> Reformulation of the black inner city rests upon Imaginal Education . . . . It involves, first of all, de-programming the mind-set described earlier as the victim image. Secondly, there must be a re-programming with images of possibility, adequacy, and dignity. In brief, Imaginal Education endeavors to explode and expand the imagination to provide new tools whereby the individual can reconstruct an image of self significance in relation to his actual situation which will release his unique creativity into history. Imaginal Education aims at motivating free, intelligent, responsible involvement in society *(Hearings, 17)*.

Those who behave as victims tend to see the world as hostile. God as irrelevant, if not evil, and themselves as marginal or outside of where life is really happening.

Imaginal Education is as much as anything a philosophy of education. It is an intent to send meaningful messages, or messages that are capable of impact, to alter a debilitating image which is causing unhealthy behavior. Furthermore, the primary negative image that we want to attack is that of the victim.

In order to understand fully the messages that we want to send, we must first understand the negative image that we want to change.

A Victim is a person with a particular story or outlook that is directed in three ways: towards him or herself, toward the world, and towards God. If the concept of God is foreign or undeveloped, there is still a relationship to or an attitude towards the dynamics of life that are beyond the individual's control . . . what may simply be considered "the way life is." Persons who education seeks to acknowledge and affirm the depth realities with which these young people are dealing – the realities of social rejection, isolation, family collapse and community

disintegration. Otherwise we would participate in creating a schizophrenic split between real life and the abstractions of our religious language. Children become aware of the realities of death and finitude at an earlier age now than in the past. Community and family violence, graphic media pictures, and experiences of abandonment and loss are not uncommon. Most students in the Oklahoma City public media and high schools have witnessed, loss a friend to, or otherwise been personally affected by murder, suicide or other on-campus violence.

A Victim sees himself as powerless and unable to affect either his own internal or external environment. In fact, it is important to realize that many people are in fact in situations where it is extremely difficult to affect their external environment. That is because powerful forms of social oppression do exist, including racism, sexism, child abuse, sexual abuse, and a myriad of other ways in which certain persons are made and kept powerless in our society in order that other persons can maintain power. In America, power is commonly seen to mean power over others, which causes many abused and victimized persons to seek to abuse and victimize those who are even less powerful than themselves. At the bottom of the power pyramid, of course, are children.

While the external situation is a harsh reality at times, we must remember that the key to affecting it lies in the internal environment. The goal of Imaginal Education is to transform the individual who has internalized the Victim Image into a person who is spiritually (internally) free.

Social injustice must be addressed, and the Gospel is very specific about that. If there are those who are oppressed in any society, there are those who are oppressing them. Freire has pointed out that there are ways to approach such a problem, two of which don't change anything.

First, you can try to convert the oppressor to be less oppressive or to stop. This results in "false generosity" which leaves the power to act in the hands of the oppressor. Second, without a change in the internal image of the oppressed person, the only model for freedom that they have is to become an oppressor themselves *(Freire 29-30)*. You might say that to the victim, the only other game in town appears to be the victimizer. This would account for the fact that so many abused children grow up to become abusing adults.

However, the third approach is to radically transform the image of what freedom is so that those who are oppressed are able to exercise spiritual power first in rising above the oppressor-system to realize that the real task of changing an unjust system requires that they, the oppressed, "liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" *(Freire 28)*. This is what Jesus meant when he instructed us to love our enemies and to do good to those who spitefully use us *(Luke 6:36)*. Otherwise, history is just a constant movement of oppressed people overthrowing oppressive people, merely changing roles but never changing the systems of social organization.

The whole point of this is to simply say that the internal image must be changed first, and that is the goal and philosophy of Imaginal Education: to change the internal image that says, "I am a Victim" to one that says, "I am free."

THE THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE OF IMAGINAL EDUCATION

You can make a surface comparison of Imaginal Education to what the advertising industry does in America. By sending psychologically powerful images to people on a regular and repeated basis we can be, and are, manipulated through images to behave in a desired way. Certainly the advertisers have grasped the power of images and they do affect the way we behave. However, seen only in this light, it is only another form of manipulation and oppression.
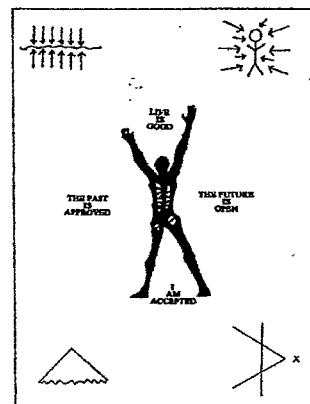
This means that the content of the messages we decide to send makes all the difference as to the power and integrity of the program.

The content of the Imaginal Education program, as used in the Central City Jets is found in the Gospel, broken down to its basic structure and translated into images that can be understood in the context of 20th Century experience. This is why the Central City Jets program is religious education/outreach, rather than a social program. Imaginal Education uses the Gospel as its content and delivers it through the use of imaginal methods.
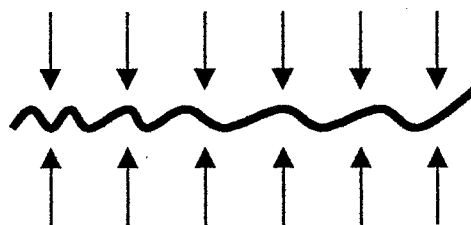
In order for a new image to have power, it must make sense to the receiver. It must connect in a meaningful way with the receiver's experience of reality. If, for example, I try to tell you, "The moon is really bright red", you will be resistant to that message because it is inconsistent with your experience. However, if you have had experiences in which you have learned that things are not always as they appear to be, you may remain open to the possibility of

a bright red moon. If that image is confirmed later by other, more convincing messages such as might come from a scientist, for example, who could explain to you why it appears yellow but is in reality red. Similarly, if you say to a child who has never heard of Jesus and who has not experienced unconditional love, "Jesus loves you," that child will have no idea what you are talking about.

For this reason, Imaginal Education hods that the new image (Freedom) which is taught by the Gospel of Jesus, must be presented in such a way that it connects with the experience of the student. I will illustrate by laying out the theology of the Jets program in imaginal terms.

Jets curriculum uses four key concepts in the imaginal teaching of the Gospel. They are God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Church. We borrow the insights of four 20th Century theologians who have helped to demythologize these terms and connect them with everyday life experience in such a way that even a child can understand what we mean by them.

GOD

$$\downarrow \quad \downarrow \quad \downarrow \quad \downarrow \quad \downarrow \quad \downarrow$$
$$\sim\sim\sim\sim\sim\sim\sim\sim$$
$$\uparrow \quad \uparrow \quad \uparrow \quad \uparrow \quad \uparrow \quad \uparrow$$

In the visual image above, we see a picture of the way life is experienced by human beings. We see that we are beings who are both driven into life and limited in our responses to those drives. Rudolf Bultmann in his essay entitled, "The Crisis of Belief", clearly articulated this experience *(Bultmann, Essays Theological and Philosophical)*. The up arrows indicate our basic drives into life. The down arrows indicate our basic drives are limited. We are born yearning for the basic needs of life and we are constantly driven to achieve them.

The first up arrow represents our efforts to secure our future. Yet, the truth of the matter is that even though we <u>must</u> participate in these activities at some level (our lives depend upon food and shelter), we know that ultimately we cannot be secure. The reality of drive-by shootings has graphically illustrated to every child in or near the "'hood" the limits of our ability to provide for our own welfare: A parent is in prison, a brother or friend hospitalized for a gunshot wound or dead from an overdose of drugs. Everyone has lost something at some time in spite of their best efforts to get and care for it. This is the way life is. And this is the life experience to which our religious education must be relevant.

The second arrow represents the long for meaning and pleasure in life. The third arrow is our desire for love and the avoidance of loneliness. The fourth arrow is the "thirst for knowledge". We want to be knowledgeable and competent. The fifth arrow is our impulse to meaningful action and work. The last arrow represents our hope of being able to do what is right. Bultamann refers to the "idea of duty". The drive towards feeling we have done the best we can. We want to feel good about ourselves *(Bultmann 3-4)*.

We should see that the needs that are listed on page two of this paper – belonging, economic security, meaningful work and a sense of purpose or vocation – are the creative efforts of our urban youth and children to respond to these drives. But, their efforts are driven by negative images and made without the benefit of vital, life-related religious symbols.

The down arrows signify the way in which these drives are thwarted by our mortality and our finitude. Our mortality and the consciousness of our struggle is central to being human. In the book <u>Educating Christians</u>, it is pointed out that "we live in the midst of paradox: We are finite, yet our actions influence the future. The struggle of living is knowing how to exist between finitude and hope in the future" *(Seymour, Crain & Crockett 28)*. We want security, but

life is not secure. We want meaning, but things don't always make sense. We want love and belonging, but we are ultimately alone. We want knowledge, but there is too much to learn. We want to do something significant with our lives, but we feel that our one life is insignificant. We want to do what is right, but we end up feeling guilty.

The wiggly line that runs between the arrows in our picture represents the place where we human beings find ourselves. We are caught between our infinite longing and our limiting reality. Without eyes of faith, life in this paradox may seem meaningless and hopeless.

Bultmann has clearly articulated the situation within which we live. And it is when human beings, including children, acknowledge the frustration and contradictory dynamics that make up our experience that they come to wonder about the nature of God. God created us. God created the world. At some time in each of our human lives we will have looked up to the sky, shook our fist and demanded: "God, are you there? What kind of a God are you?"

What does it mean to take a faith relationship to the unseen power that is called the creator of my life? It means to be able to say:

LIFE IS GOOD !!!

. . . and mean it.

It means that we can be conscious of the activity of God in our lives in this experience and call it good. Why not call it bad? Because we have decided to believe and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. We decide to have faith.

CHRIST

Our experiential understanding of Jesus Christ comes from a sermon preached by Paul Tillich, entitled "You Are Accepted" in which Tillich describes the experience of grace as the moment at which we truly experience the coming of Christ into our lives.

Tillich equates sin with any act of thought that tends to separate us from God *(Tillich 154)*. So, it is at the moment when we are also most aware of our unlovable, sinful or separated state that we are most able to experience the radical and unconditional love of God that is Grace. Tillich makes a strong argument for the depth of that separation in all of our lives as he describes the separation between us and others, us and ourselves and between us and God.
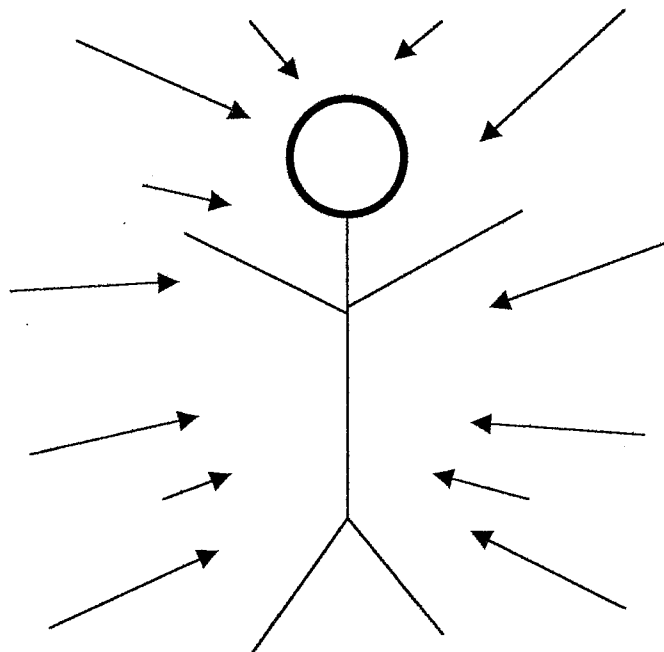
The arrows that are pointing towards the figure in this illustration can be titled whatever comes out of your life that causes you to realize the depth of your own separation from yourself and others and, therefore, God: lies, theft, adultery, addiction, breakdowns, failures, pride,

egotism, etc. etc. etc. and add your own realization of the hopelessness of your ever being able to make yourself into a really different person.

Tillich uses the experience of Paul to illustrate:

> 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,'
> says Paul in the same letter in which he describes the
> unimaginable power of separation and self-destruction
> within society and the individual soul. He does not say
> these words because sentimental interests demand a
> happy ending for everything tragic. He says them
> because they describe the most overwhelming and
> determining experience of his life. In the picture of Jesus
> as the Christ, which appeared to him at the moment of his
> greatest separation from other men, from himself and
> God, he found himself accepted in spite of his being
> rejected. And when he found that he was accepted, he
> was able to accept himself and to be reconciled to others.
> The moment in which grace struck him and overwhelmed
> him, he was reunited with that to which he belonged, and
> from which he was estranged in utter strangeness
> *(Tillich, 160-161)*.

The implications for this understanding of Grace are enormous for a religious education environment in which our aim is release for those who are held captive by the story of their victimization. First, we must never minimize the condition of another person's life by saying "there, there, things are not as bad as they seem." We must in love encourage persons to be able to face reality honestly because unless we recognize the depth of our separation, we cannot appreciate the radicality of Grace and thus cannot be transformed by it.

It is very important for us to notice that what is transformed is not the externalities of our lives, but the way we see and interpret them. This experience of grace creates a completely opposite awareness in us than that of separation. Suddenly, we become aware of our unity *(Tillich 162)*. We are filled with love instead of loathing and fear, are set free from the internal

bonds that have held us back – our own guilt, shame and self-hatred – and see that through the power of our new awareness, we are in fact, free. Our image is transformed.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

To be free in the spirit means to be free to act in obedience to God. Thus, transforming our external situation now becomes a real possibility for the first time. What does a free human being look like? It is one who is guided by the Holy Spirit and is obedient to that guidance.

This is to follow the implications of having experienced grace. It changes us. We have a new outlook on life and even though it is unconditional, it can and should lead to a change in the way we live.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer did a great deal of work developing the concept of Christian freedom. The primary image we use in Imaginal Education in the Jets program comes from Bonhoeffer's book, <u>Ethics</u> in the chapter "History and Good" in a subsection entitled, "Freedom".

The primary insight in this section of his writing is that Christian or spiritual freedom manifests itself as the action of the responsible man. He helpfully separates for us the freedom that is what he calls "arbitrary self-will" from freedom that constitutes obedience to God's will with "open eyes and a joyous heart" *(Bonhoeffer 248-252).*

In church, we sing

> "I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing . . .
> I'm gonna shout when the Spirit says shout . . .
> I'm gonna pray when the Spirit says pray . . .
> And obey the spirit of the Lord."
> *(African American Spiritual)*

This is a simple example of freedom in relationship to obedience. But Bonhoeffer helps us see that obedience is more than the expression of emotions, it is responsible action in the world. The person who has been spiritually freed through grace can become a responsible person.

In the following section of the same chapter, Bonhoeffer also connects the concept of vocation to that of freedom and responsibility saying that the true place of responsibility is in the exercise of vocation *(Bonhoeffer 254)*. This is a theme we follow closely in the Jets, teaching that there is a purpose or vocation for every life and that fulfillment is found in acting out that purpose.

Bonhoeffer's model for responsibility is pictured as follows:

Responsibility
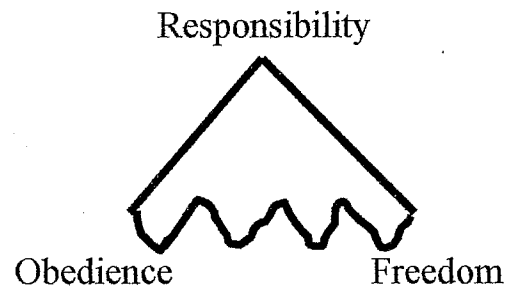
Obedience   Freedom

Responsibility is actualized in the tension between freedom and obedience – freedom from all those things that have bound us in the past in order that we may hear and obey God's voice. Bonhoeffer puts it like this:

> The [one] who acts in the freedom of his own most personal responsibility is precisely the [one] who sees his action finally committed to the guidance of God. The free deed knows itself in the end as the deed of God; the decision knows itself in the end as the deed of God; the decision knows itself as guidance; the free venture knows itself as divine necessity. It is in the free abandonment of knowledge of his own good that a [person] performs the good of God *(Bonhoeffer 49)*.

So, the ability to make responsible decisions and to take responsibility for one's decisions, accepting the consequences that they may incur, are intrinsic to the exercise of faith. Decision-making skills are heavily stressed in the Jets program.

THE CHURCH

Finally, the last theological idea that we must address is our understanding of the Church. Here we will draw from H. Richard Niebuhr's paper, "The Responsibility of the Church for Society", particularly the section entitled "The Church as Social Pioneer."

This model for the Church is bold, daring and adventurous. These qualities capture the imagination of young people and beckon them to cooperative action in an effort to impact the world and make it a better place to live. To be God's responsive people, creating a New World that will be less oppressive that the old and more in alignment with Divine law.

The word 'pioneer' is itself a powerful word image that has a place in American mythology. However, in the Jets program we want to capture its effective imagery – that of the courageous and bold leader who forges a new path —and avoid its pitfalls – that of the rugged individualist who basically does his own thing.

In fact, Niebuhr uses the term 'pioneer' to mean "representational responsibility" *(Niebuhr 131)*. It is responsible action on behalf of others. He takes the Church as a dynamic in society, differentiating it from the institutional church, saying;

> In this representational sense the Church is that part of human society, and that element in each particular society, which moves toward God, which as the priest acting for all men worships Him, which believes and trusts in Him on behalf of all, which is first to obey Him when it becomes aware of a new aspect of His will *(Niebuhr 131).*

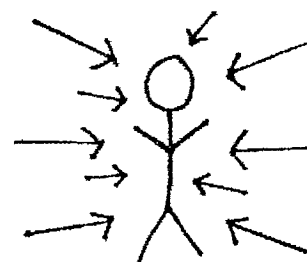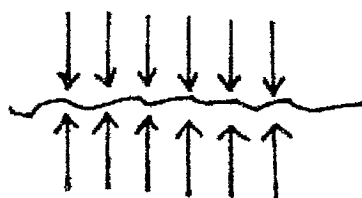Our visual image for this model of the Church is:
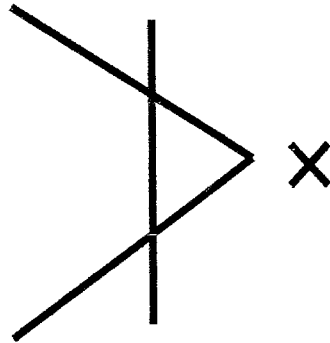
The picture represents the wedge of history moving into the future. The vertical line separates the past from the future and represents the present. The "X" represents the Church as those people who are "sensitive and responsive" *(Niebuhr 130)* to God's guidance, acting responsively on behalf of humankind to co-create with God a new earth. Here we must stress that all people belong to God. God loves all equally and unconditionally, regardless of whether they exercise their responsibility for the world or not. However, God needs free and obedient people who will work creatively to alter the structures of this world to create a more just order of society, where fewer and fewer people will be marginalized and victimized, where more and more people will exercise good stewardship over the earth and otherwise make the world a better place for God's children to live.

This model of Church calls for other kinds of skills such as the ability to look critically at society from the standpoint of faith, or possibility, and to act strategically. Thus, critical and intuitive thinking, brainstorming and strategic planning are some of the skills that the Imaginal Education model emphasizes. The Bible tells us that "all things are possible through Christ who strengthens me." *(Philippians 4:13)*. Freire writes, "This world to which [we relate] is not a

static and closed order, a given reality which man must accept and to which he must adjust; rather, it is a problem to be worked on and solved" *(Freire 13).*

In our theological work, we have searched for the basic structure of the Gospel, to which all of life can be related and which will help any person make sense out of life through the eyes of faith. Bruner says that the most effective way to teach any subject is to grasp its structure in such a way that it can show you how things are related *(Bruner 7).* That is what this theological groundwork is intended to do.

Our imaginal picture of the gospel recognizes the central structure of the gospel message, which is teachable to any age, invites intuitive thinking and creates a response to the needs of our world is illustrated on the following page.

LIFE
IS
GOOD

THE PAST
IS
APPROVED

THE FUTURE
IS
OPEN

I
AM
ACCEPTED

Responsibility

Freedom

Obedience

X
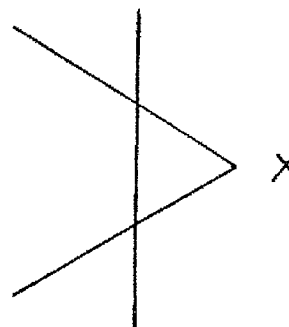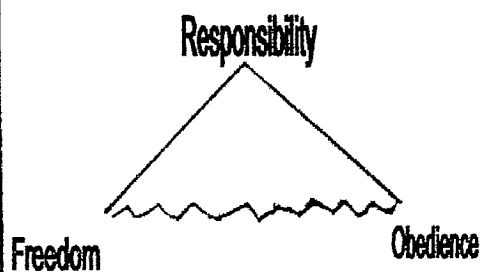
Our image of what it means to be a *Jet*, expressed in religious language, is to become a person of faith who is free by Grace, desiring to serve God and humankind, and willing to act in obedience to God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit on behalf of the world.

> There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" *(Richard Shaull in the forward to Pedagogy of the Oppressed, page 15).*

Our philosophy of education and our theology merge. Paul spoke these words to the church in Galatia:

> For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" *(Galatians 6:13-14).*

THE CURRICULUM STRATEGY

There are five basic teaching strategies employed by Imaginal Education. They are: 1) Expanding the context of the student, 2) Stimulating the imagination, 3) Beckoning participation, 4) Encouraging critical thinking, and 5)Touching the deeps *(Seagren 48-49)*.

Expanding the context.

We all operate in a context that is our frame of reference for who we are and how we fit into the universe at different levels. Our picture of this looks like this:
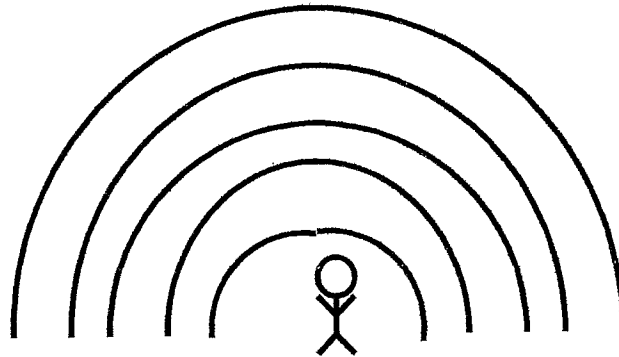
As infants, our first sphere of awareness is ourselves. Then, we become aware of our family, our family's friends, our neighborhood, our city or town, our nation, the globe and finally the entire universe. Our ability to act responsibly increases along with our contextual awareness. We often talk about our context being history-long and worldwide. This connection to the broadest possible perspective of time, space and relationships enables students to maintain an optimistic, yet, realistic attitude about the future. This concept is based on Jerome Bruner's idea that the most attractive way to motivate students to be interested in any subject is to relate it to life situations *(Bruner, 31)*. A broad context creates the broadest set of relevant relationships.

Stimulating the intuition

In all teaching situations, our goal is to encourage the student to look at problems from as many perspectives as possible in order to encourage analytic and intuitive thinking and stimulate creative options. Bruner made this observation:

> "Intuitive thinking, the training of hunches, is a much-neglected and essential feature of productive thinking . . . in everyday life. The shrewd guess, the fertile hypothesis, the courageous leap to a tentative conclusion – these are the most valuable coins of the thinker at work, whatever the line of work. Can school children be led to master this gift?" (Bruner, 13-14)

In Imaginal Education curriculum, we put a great deal of emphasis on problem solving. Our goal is not to teach a particular set of behaviors, but to teach thinking skills that allow the students themselves to discern appropriate behaviors for various settings. Imaginal Education teaches a 5-step process which includes the ability to "observe, judge, weigh-up, decide and act" (Bonhoeffer 248). We want them to become conscious of their own decision-making skills and options through critical thinking and the exercise of intuition.

Beckoning participation.

At every point Imaginal Education seeks to connect the subject matter being taught is the life experience and interest of the students. Many Imaginal Methods used in the curriculum are also called participatory methods. We use a basic 4-level conversation model to encourage participation and teach reflective thinking. We use a brainstorming-gestalt workshop model that always starts with the ideas and insights of the students in planning almost anything. These methods will be addressed in the section entitled Imaginal Methods. The children are encouraged to participate in setting goals, rules and consequences, anticipating events and

appropriate behaviors, reflecting on shared experiences, planning future events, designing décor, and at every other imaginable opportunity.

This requires that each child be treated with a high degree of respect. Every tentative effort to participate must be honored. Their ideas should be dealt with seriously even if they are ultimately not utilized and each child should always be treated as an intelligent, creative individual.

Critical Thinking

> ". . . every human being, no matter how 'ignorant' or submerged in the 'culture of silence' he may be, is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his own perception of that reality and deal critically with it" *(Freire 13).*

Critical thinking and intuition are most effective in tension with one another, like obedience and freedom. Based on Freire's insight, one tool of Imaginal Education is contradictional analysis, which teaches the ability to discern the underlying contradictions in a problematic situation and the creation of options for solving the problem rather than constantly reacting to its symptoms.

Touching the deeps

Touching the deeps means that we want to constantly raise the question, "How is this information or experience connecting with the central issues of life? How does this take into account the realities of my life experience?" Ultimately, it is our aim to teach these students how to live in their own deeps – able to connect all their experience to the framework of faith and the

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activity of God such that they can constantly create the meaning of their lives. This is the dimension of the guidance of the Spirit. It is our awareness that the ultimate context we want to live and work from is that of faith in God and sensitivity to God's voice in our individual lives. Each child has a unique contribution to make. We want each one to so value the unique, divine creation that he or she is, that they are ever learning to listen and respond to that voice of the Spirit within as their ultimate guide.

ROTATING CURRICULUM THEMES

The *Central City Jets* use a 5-year rotating curriculum. Its themes are 1) Keepers of the Earth, 2) Builders of the City, 3) Culture Bearers, 4) Problem Solvers, and 5) PeaceMakers.

These five themes are drawn from a critical analysis of the major contradictions that are facing us globally. These might be what H. Richard Niebuhr would call the "sins of our society" *(Niebuhr 131).* They are degradation of the planet, individualism, racism, reactionism and the violent resolution of conflict.
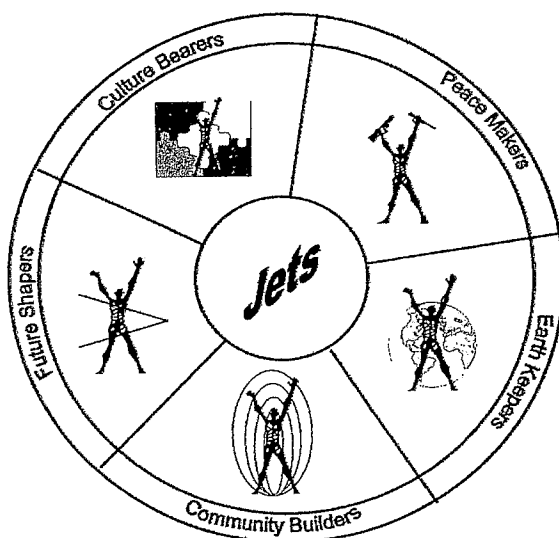
In each of these 5 curriculum emphases, we are attempting to put the children on the constructive side of a major social problem. For a child to see themselves as having the personal power to help in creating solutions to these issues and to experience themselves as actively involved in implementing their solutions creates self-esteem, wins the positive attention of the community, and influences the image of self as powerful rather than powerless in very significant ways. For example, during Community Builders curriculum emphasis, the Jets create an actual community from the ground up. They build a house for themselves out of appliance boxes. They beautify that house both inside and out. Then they join their houses into neighborhood and the neighborhoods into a city. From there it is easy to discuss and create the economic, cultural and political dimensions of the city based on the felt needs of the children to distribute resources, create a common history of who they are and what they stand for, and to organize themselves into some sort of structure that is capable of making decisions for the common good. While all this creation is going on, they are interfacing with the structures of their own city by visiting a city council meeting, hearing from guest speakers in various roles of community interface, etc.

Each of these curriculum themes is written and available in different documents. *COMMUNITY BUILDERS.* Every level of basic community is in collapse today. This includes the family, the church, and the school. By practicing being Community Builders, Jets can grasp that they can be catalysts for positive change.

PEACE MAKERS. Violence is a means of problem-solving that creates suffering and loss. Peace Makers are those who can solve problems and work through conflict without hurting each other.

EARTH KEEPERS. The planet we live on is in danger due to the fact that the human race is not taking good care of her. As Earth Keepers, we can experience changing our habits to be better care-takers of our Earth home.

CULTURE BEARERS. The world is full of different races, religions and cultures of people. Too often these races, cultures and religions are engaged in power struggles, each trying to put down the other in order to elevate itself. As Culture Bearers we ask why God has created all this diversity and attempt to be ourselves in the best way possible.

FUTURE SHAPERS. It is difficult to find good role models and people who are willing to be leaders today. As Future Shapers, we can not only discern what a better future might be like, be we can learn to be effective leaders so that others will also want to help build a better world.

In a properly operating Jets program, all five of these positive social images are to be taught all the time, each summer provides an immersion experience into one of them.

FOUR ARENAS OF EDUCATION

Within each curriculum module, which runs for a year each, we seek to address four arenas of each child's life (see pages 36 & 37).

PSYCHOLOGICAL – It is in the midst of the world and its situations and contradictions that each person must answer the question of who am I? This level seeks to enable the child to develop a positive self-image of their own greatness and uniqueness. Here we hope to encourage the positive image, "I am not a victim of my environment. I can discover and decide who I will be." The preservation we wish to avoid is that of individualism which seeks to do its own thing regardless of its consequences or context.

RELATIONAL – Each child shows up in relationship in space and time. All curriculum seeks to address the relationship question of <u>Where am I?</u> We must place the children globally and locally so that they can learn to see where and how they fit into the largest possible picture. Our goal is to develop social awareness, allowing the possibility of relating to any situation in which they may find themselves. The new image is "I am an important part of my world." The perversion we wish to avoid is conformity that implies no creative decision-making.

VOCATIONAL – In the midst of discerning who they are and where they show up, we want to bring to consciousness the life-long question of vocation, <u>What do I?</u> Our goal at this level is to release each individual to take appropriate, creative and responsible and effective action in his or her situation. The new image is "I can change history." The perversion we want to avoid is ungrounded, perpetual motion activism that leads to burn-out and ineffective busy-ness.

INTELLECTUAL – This level of the curriculum seeks to address the skills and knowledge needed to function in this world. The question we want to raise here is "What do I need to know?" The goal is to develop skills – basic skills, decision-making, planning, and leadership skills. The new image is: "I can learn whatever I need to know." The perversion to avoid is intellectualism that is simply learning without ever using that knowledge creatively.

FOUR ARENAS OF EDUCATON
To involve the total child

ARENA	GOAL	NEW IMAGE	PERVERSION
PSYCHOLOGICAL Who Am I? The solitary dimension, Feeling, contemplative, Meditative: The Interior	To develop a self-image of greatness and uniqueness	I'm The Greatest!	Individualism
RELATIONAL Where am I? Relationship to the universe, **nation,** community, family to history and to the future.	To develop social Awareness, allowing us to Relate to any situation in Which we find ourselves.	I Live in The universe!	Conformism
VOCATIONAL What do I? Life-style, life purpose.	Releasing an individual to Live his/her life and to Choose his/her life-style.	I can Change The situation!	Busy-ness
INTELLECTUAL What need I? The skills and knowledge Without which a person Cannot function in this Society.	To develop skills; Decision-making, Planning, leadership, Basic skills.	I can Learn what I need to know!	Intellectualism

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The Central City Jets

ADDRESSING THE EXISTENTIAL QUESTION

WHO AM I?	WHAT DO I?	WHAT NEED I?
The image that a person has of himself determines his participation in life. Who am I? Where did I come from and where am I now? Am I important?	What will I do with the life that I have on my hands? What do I want my life to count for? How will it be significant? Will I be a part of society's problem, or part of its solution? Will I live for myself or for God?	What are the necessary tools for living the lifestyle I choose? What skills do I need? What do I need to be learning and experiencing to equip me for a significant life?
- My life is a gift from God, thus it is good. I am a unique and unrepeatable, creative caring person. I was born, I will live an unknown length of time, and I will die.		- Reflective skills – ability to think rationally - A depth understanding about life. - Value-determination skills - A positive self-image - Decision-making skills
- I show up on planet Earth at a particular time in history, and in a particular place on the globe.	- I can bend history. - I can affect change. - I can participate in caring for myself and for all creation. - I can be a sign of possibility. - I can create the future. - I can relieve suffering wherever I encounter it. - I can continue the work that Christ began.	- A broad understanding of the world I live in - Communication skills - A sustaining faith in the Creator and His long-range purpose for mankind
- I will live my life within a complex system of relationships: family, community, global and also will be dependent on plant life, animal life, universal laws, etc.		- Physical well-being - Self-discipline - Ability to analyze a situation, set goals, remove blocks and experience success - Commitment
- As a human, I am God's greatest creation, entrusted by God to care for this world.		- Occupational skills - Social skills
PRODUCES	PRODUCES	PRODUCES
- Wonder that I live at all - Reverence for all life - Dependence upon God - At-one-ness with the human family - Freedom to choose my response to life - A sense that the world needs me	- INTENTIONALITY about my life - A life purpose - A sense of responsibility - A sense of global brotherhood - A context for determining behavior, right from wrong - Harmony with God	- People who can be effective co-workers with God as God works to redeem mankind

We always remember that our aim in Imaginal Education is to teach young people to integrate the truth of the Gospel with the reality of their experience in order that they can create meaning and direction for their lives.

"Sometimes meaning is in the form of story, sometimes in a concept, and at the edge of language, as image . . . . Images are pre-linguistic, coming from flashes of insight, but not yet formed into a story or concept" *(Seymour, Crain & Crockett 26-28)*.

Images are closest to our decision-making. They filter the stories and they impact experiences and concepts with which we are presented and then our images.

THE NEW IMAGE

There are four key messages that we want to send throughout all the curriculum. They are as listed on the Arenas of Education Chart, "I'm the Greatest", "I live in the universe", "I can change the situation", and "I can learn what I need to know."

I'M THE GREATEST

> *"I'm the greatest, you're the greatest*
> *That's the way life is*
> *When you know it and you show it*
> *You are free to live."*
> (Jet's song)

This faith-image radically conflicts with the existing self-image of many people. Most of us create our self-image from the mirror we see of ourselves in the eyes and feedback of others. That is why the primary source for sending messages that support this image is the teacher and the other students in the program.

The story "*The Rabbi's Gift*", which can be found in the foreword of The Different Drum by M. Scott Peck, illustrates this truth. In that story a monastery is dying

slowly as the aging monks lose their sense of purpose and mission. However, after they are informed by an ascetic old wise man in the desert that one of them in the monastery is the Messiah, they begin to see each other in a radically different light. This leads then to each of them seeing themselves in a different light when the feedback and mirroring changes as they start to treat each other with extraordinary respect. The message that one of them was the Messiah so impacted the self-image of each that the hopelessness and dark sense of doom was replaced with joy for living and love for one another. The monastery was transformed.

This reality calls for a highly intentional teaching style. A teacher must embody the stance of unconditional love toward each student, rejecting, when necessary, unacceptable behavior, but never rejecting the child. Further,, the teacher must find creative ways to instill this same sense of extraordinary respect of the Jets for one another.

This is particularly challenging with children who have poor self-esteem. They often attempt to get the teacher to validate their worthlessness by behaving in unacceptable ways in order to be rejected, i.e., ejected from the program. However, it is the policy of the Jets never to expel a student from the program. We always leave the decision with the child by saying, "That particular behavior is not acceptable in the Jets. Please go home or step out and think about it. When you are ready to change that behavior, we will be very happy to have you come back." So, the decision is the child's. If he/she wants to be a Jet and accept the behavioral limitations associated with that, great. If not, that is also great and the teacher will respect the decision of the child while holding the limits of the program.

A teacher must be willing to pray earnestly over each child. Behind every "bad" behavior is a positive intent. The imaginal strategy is to identify the image behind the unacceptable behavior and the positive intent the behavior is seeking. If these things can be successfully identified, then the child can be bombarded with messages that are intended to impact the negative image, and alternative ways to achieve the goal of the behavior can be reinforced. For example, if a child acts out to get attention, it is possible to decide to intentionally pay a lot of attention to that child immediately each day before he or she resorts to misbehavior in order to get it and deal with the acting out with as little fanfare as possible.

In a recent sermon by Rev. Kirby Caldwell at Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, he told his congregation, "You may not know who your daddy is. You may never have seen your mama. You may have been dropped off on your grandma's doorstep the day you were born. It doesn't matter. God intended you to be here or you wouldn't be here. And He has a unique purpose and reason He wants you to be here. You are here because God wants you here for some reason" (paraphrased).

I LIVE IN THE UNIVERSE

> *I love the city.*
> *I love the planet Earth.*
> *I love this day and time.*
> *I love the universe.*
> *I am always ready to see this world of ours.*
> *I tell you, man, I like it here?*
> *I tell you, man, I like it here?*
> (Jet's song)

The first response of the filtering system of our young inner city residents who have been isolated from the rest of the world is to reject this image because it conflicts with the old one which says, "I live in the 'hood."

Much is invested in the image of where one is located in the world. The 'hood as primary context requires and rewards one type of behavior and values which the child is already skilled at and has learned to survive with. The idea of expanding that spatial context radically challenges the social framework, implying different behaviors and values with which the inner-city child may be unfamiliar and fearful.

So, this image will be vigorously resisted. That is why experience is the primary teaching tool in Imaginal Education. The mode through which the old image was learned was experience, and experience will be the most powerful tool with which to challenge it.

Therefore, the most effective way to teach "I live in the universe" is to take a ride on the space shuttle to the moon and look back at the Earth. Then, take an odyssey around the world visiting other countries. Help the young people reflect on that experience, talk about it and process it until they begin to see the implications of it for themselves. Even the toughest resistance can be seriously shaken by such an approach. (While taking a ride on the space shuttle may prove difficult to arrange, it has happened that a major airline took the Jets for a ride around Oklahoma City so they could look down on their city from a radically different perspective. There are many ways for the creative teacher to present the globe to students.)

I CAN CHANGE THE SITUATION

Thunder, thunder, thunderation
We're the present generation.
We can change the situation
We can move with determination.
(Jets' song)

Again we look to experiential curriculum to send the meaningful messages that will empower a new image. We remember that the image of "I can change my situation" is completely opposite the Victim image. Words will never convince a Victim that he/she has power. Only experience will work.

A fundamental part of the Jets curriculum is action skills. We teach methods of planning, group action and effective teamwork. Every curriculum unit must contain this planning and acting process in an activity that will positively impact the community in which the program is taking place. Using the workshop method of brainstorm and gestalt, the children themselves can identify needs in their community, analyze the underlying contradiction that allows that need to exist, and create a plan for addressing it. With assistance they can learn to make a timeline and assignments, hold each other accountable to commitments and work together to accomplish something significant.

The teacher must never let his or her own image of these "poor victimized children" limit their creativity as they approach this process. The teacher must believe that, in fact, all things are possible.

Nothing builds self-esteem like the ability to set and meet goals. The satisfaction of accomplishment is more powerful than all the classroom lessons in the world.

I CAN LEARN WHAT I NEED TO KNOW

> *See what's needed. See what's needed.*
> *Make a plan. Make a plan.*
> *We can order chaos, We can order chaos.*
> *Yes, we can. Yes, we can.*
>
> (Jets' song)

In the midst of the action process described above, this image also gets addressed. As the Jets set out to do anything significant in their community, they will have to research their resources. They may have to learn who their city council representative is, a little about zoning laws, who lives in their community, where the nearest police station is, etc. etc.

The Victim image tells them that they must depend on others for their basic needs to be met and that they are too young, too ignorant, too poor, too Black, too female, too weak to do anything with their own lives. The power of positive experiences of motivated accomplishment will reverse these lies and reveal to them the truth of a life of faith: they can become "men and women of iron" able to accomplish anything through the freedom and obedience of faith.

Curriculum cannot be a static thing. It is flexible and creative while strictly adhering to the goals and objectives of Imaginal Education. The teacher is the key.

A teacher must be willing and able to embody the images associated with faith: Life is good. I am accepted, the past is approved and the future is open. This is an affirmation of life, self, and history.

The teacher must be intentional at all times, remembering that teaching is going from the time the first student walks in the door until the last one leaves. Your words, your gestures, your facial expressions, what and how you eat, what you wear – all these

things teach. Therefore, the teacher must be disciplined and consistent, able to show up and follow-through with the program.

While there is curriculum in the files that is re-used from year to year, it must always be adapted and injected with fresh creativity and new curriculum sources should be found for different aspects of the program. Any curriculum can be worked in and adapted to the Imaginal Education approach. There is an inexhaustible supply of curricula being written to address self-esteem, Bible study or children and a lot of other things that can and should be included in the Jets curriculum. The key is to analyze the Rational Objective and Existential Aim of each year, unit and session, so that the curriculum that is re-used, selected, or written will be directly focused at those objectives and aims.

LESSON PLANNING

All curriculum planning involves goal setting and Imaginal Education is no exception. While the goals of the program are already set, each teacher must know what his own objectives and aims are for the lessons so that the teaching period can be carefully focussed towards those goals. To do this, we use two types of goals: Rational Objectives and Existential Aims.

As the name implies, the **Rational Objective** is what you want the Jets to *know* or *learn* at the end of the teaching period or experience, i.e., they will know the five parts of a workshop, or they will know the story of Abraham and Sarah. This is the new information you want them to get into their heads.

The Existential Aim is a little more subtle. It has to do with the *experience* of the student and how it relates to the lesson. For instance, in teaching workshop leadership, the existential aim may be to experience affirmation or success as a workshop leader. With the story of Abraham and Sarah, it may be to remember or re-experience a time when something 'impossible' happened to them or someone they knew and/or to be excited or awed by the possibility of the impossible happening as a result of our obedience to God. It might also be something as simple as to have fun or get excited. The existential aim helps the teacher think through the relationship of the cognitive material being presented to the life-experience of the students. Dr. Joseph Crockett, at a recent seminar on Strengthening the Black Sunday School commented that 'just saying 'Jesus' is not enough anymore. You have to answer the question of what that has to do with my life."

In addition to the aims and objectives, each teacher must think through the teaching period from the moment the first child walks through the door until the last one leaves. The lesson can be imaged as a teaching encounter more than simply a lesson. Using the Lesson Planning worksheet on pages 47 and 48, a comprehensive approach to the plan can be taken. Plan activities, the time each activity will require, materials needed, décor and music, teaching style and the mood of the session. Notice that there is no place to plan the image you want to communicate. That is because these images are already in place and should be communicated constantly in every encounter, either formal or informal, with the children.

LESSON PLANNING WORKSHEET				
Rational Objective:		Existential Aim:		
OPENING	BODY OF LESSON			CLOSING
	I	II	III	
Time:				

LESSON PLANNING – DETAIL SHEET	
Songs / Rituals	Room Arrangement
Materials needed	Teaching Style
Décor / music	Mood of lesson

Even though the curriculum is already prepared, the lesson planning form should be used to internalize the flow and to create personal commitment towards the lesson.

IMAGINAL METHODS

Freire says that "just as the oppressor, in order to oppress, needs a theory of oppressive action, so the oppressed (victim), in order to become free, also needs a theory of action" *(Freire 185).*

The theory of action for the Jets is the necessity to respond freely to God's will for each life and society as a whole. To this truth, Imaginal Education also adds that to go with the theory of action, one must be equipped with methods so that our action can be effective.

In the appendices of this paper there will be added the imaginal methods to which this paper has referred. This material includes:

- Reflective Conversation method
- Workshop method
- Contradictional Analysis
- Action planning
- Procedures for gridding your community
- Planning a workday
- Planning a celebration

These methods are essential to the Imaginal Education approach because they teach even the young child how to think and act as a person of faith and to take transforming action on his or her situation. They undergird and reinforce the attitude of optimism and hopefulness that comes from believing that change is possible and that I can influence my own situation.

CONCLUSION

Imaginal Education is the education of images. It is a highly intentional effort to send meaningful messages to students that will impact their existing negative images and radically alter them. The positive images we want to build are based on the teachings of Jesus.

"Life is good." This is the fundamental statement of faith and implies a decision to trust the Creator. "I am accepted." That which created the universe and the planet Earth also created me to be just who I should be. I am what I am supposed to be. "The past is approved." History is simply what has transpired to bring us to where we are today. It is full of pain and glory, successes and hard lessons, but it is all in the past. It is my heritage and because I know that I am good, I know that in some way, it has been good, too. "The future is open." I can make decisions. I am not doomed to any kind of future that is predetermined because of my past. I can dream about the future, make a plan and actualize it. If it doesn't go according to my plan, I can trust that the same creative power that created me is also guiding me now.

The aim of *Jets* is not to rescue disadvantaged children from their situation. The aim is not to provide substitute parents or to keep off the streets and out of trouble.

The aim of the Central City Jets is to enable every young person to see and affirm the reality of their situation through the eyes of faith and take responsibility for their own future.

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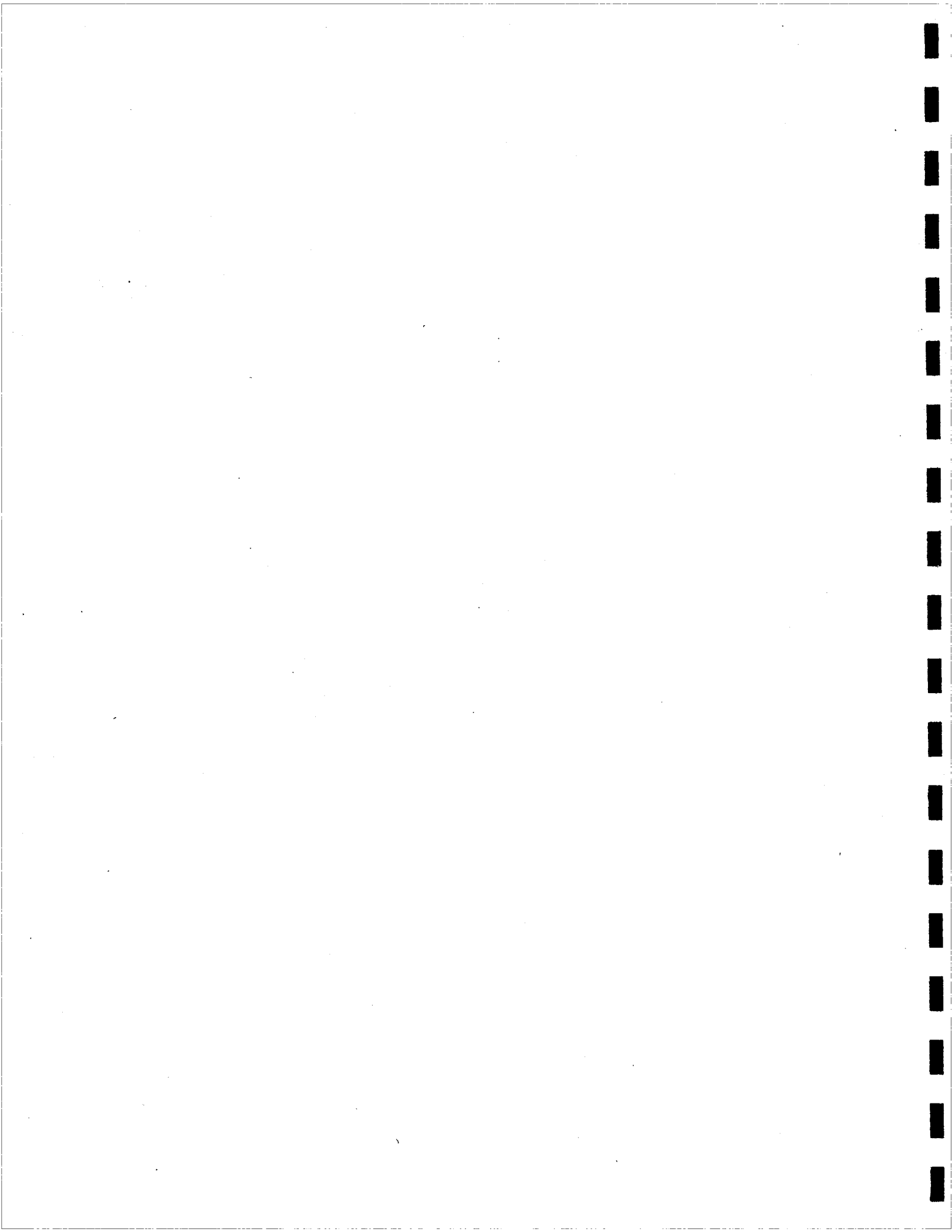
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IMAGINAL METHODS

TOOLS FOR IMAGE CHANGE

Appendix

DISCUSSION METHOD OVERIEW

OPENING
Welcome
Context

RATIONAL OBJECTIVE
What does the group need to learn about?
What new idea or information do you hope they'll get?

EXPERIENTIAL AIM
What the group needs to experience during the conversation
i.e. excitement, struggle, fun

Objective

GETTING THE FACTS
Focus Attention

Ask questions that focus on the 5 senses: What people see, hear, touch, smell, taste.

What is the objective picture, story, experience, etc.

Reflective

EMOTIONS, FEELINGS ASSOCIATIONS

How did people respond to the object?

How does it make them feel?

What past associations do they have?

Interpretive

VALUES, MEANING, PURPOSE

Ask about what the object means.

Ask about symbolism or significance.

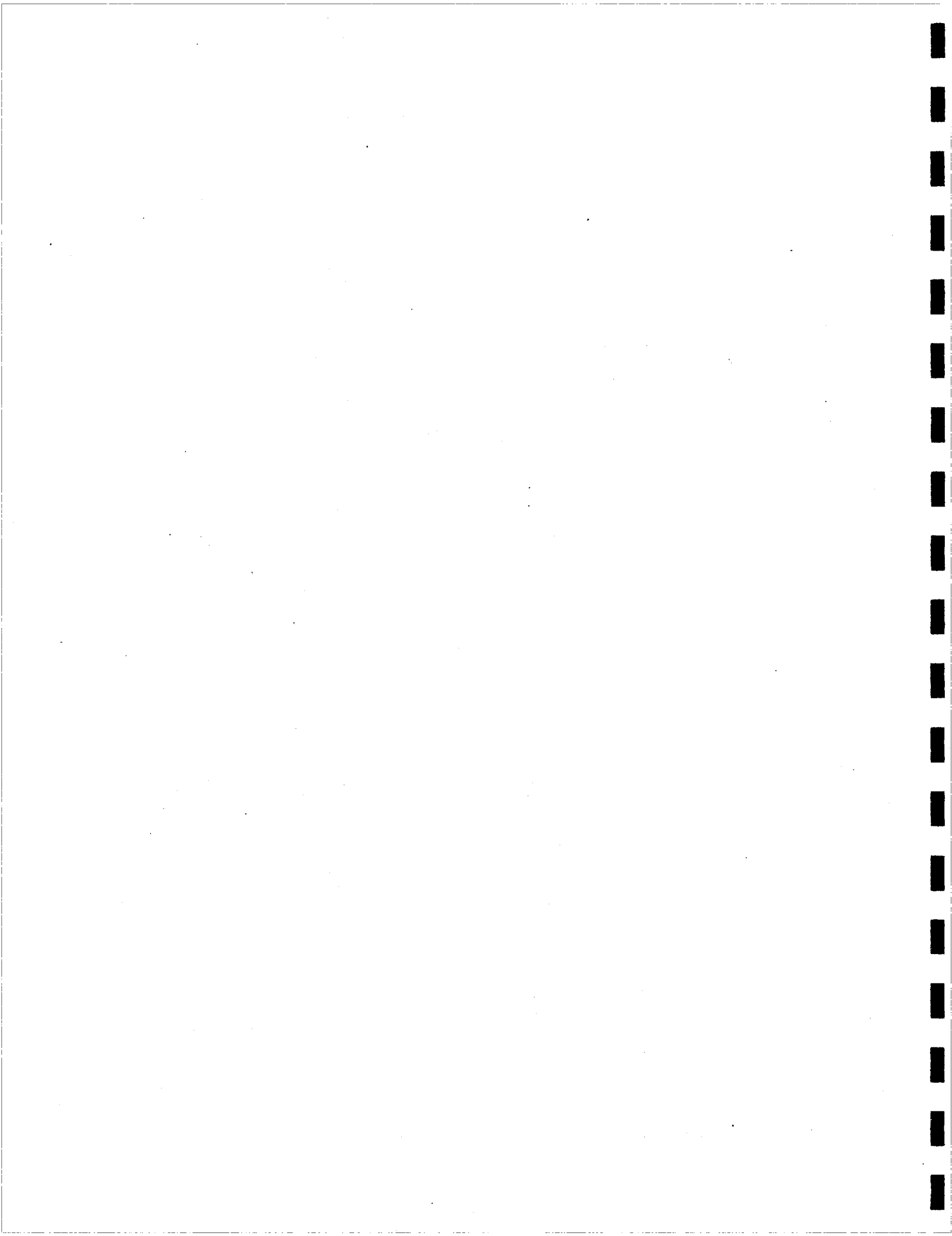What is the message of the object?

Decisional

FUTURE RESOLVES

Ask questions that allow people to decide their relationship and their response to the object.

How are they going to use the message of the object?

CLOSING
Comments
Reflections

The Institute of Cultural Affairs

HELPFUL HINTS

Each discussion is tailor-made for best results. Questions have to be relevant to the subject and the group. It is important to prepare questions in advance. Here are some recommendations for the best kind of questions to use in a group discussion.

1. Specific questions get better results.
2. Ask for specific examples and illustrations in answers.
3. Ask open-ended questions that cannot be answered with "yes" or "no"

Objective

What scenes do you remember?

What colors?

What words/phrases?

How many people were there?

What events?

Reflective

What was your first response?

Where do you remember the group reacting?

Where were you excited, frustrated?

Where did you laugh?

What was sad?

What experience in your life came to mind?

Interpretive

What was this movie (?) about?

What were the most significant events?

Why was this an important story (film, painting, etc.)

What does this have to say to people today?

If you could be someone in the story, who would you be? Why?

Decisional

What will you say about his event (film, etc.) to others who were not here?

How might this cause you to change something in the future?

What title would you give this day (film, etc.)
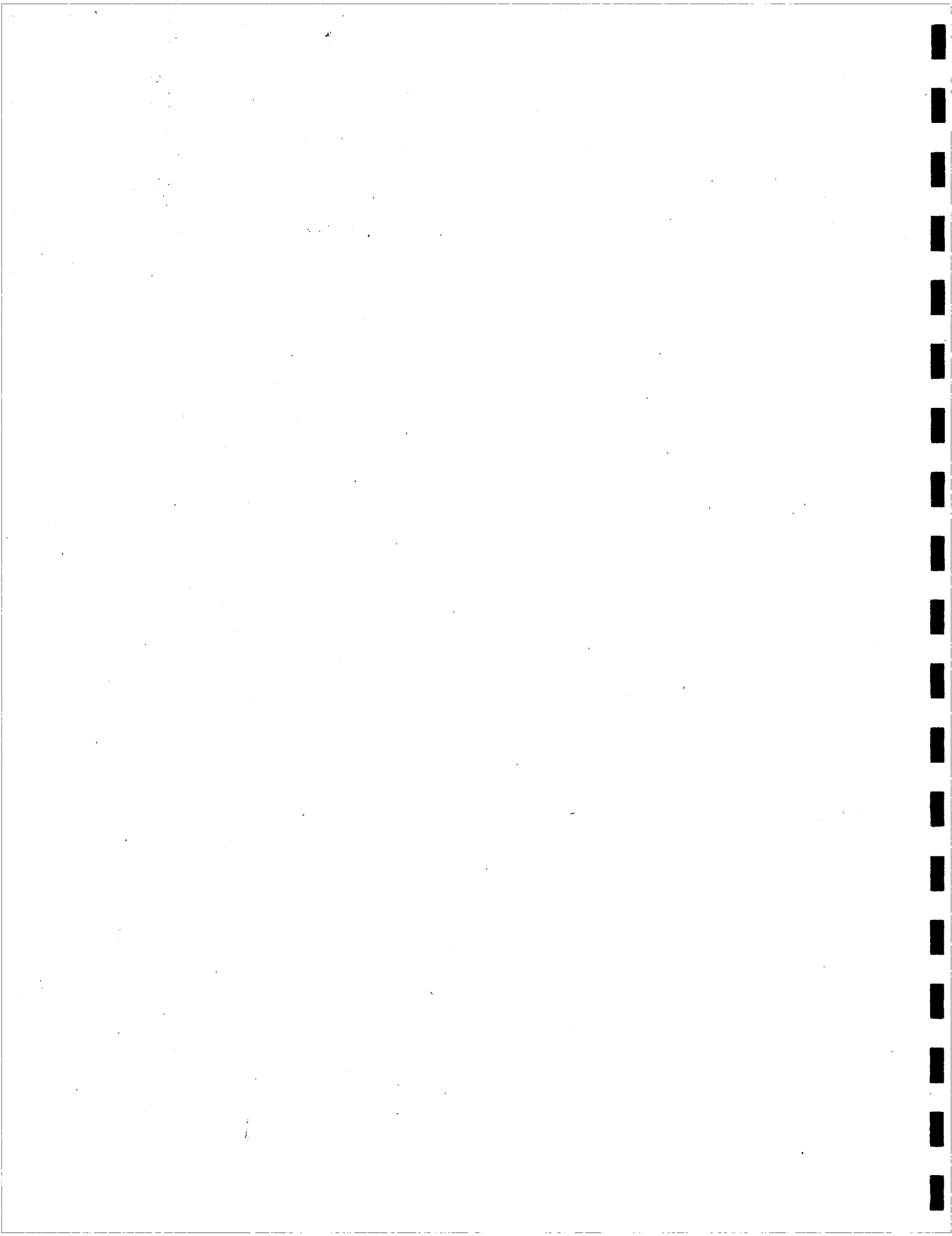
TOPIC:

OPENING

RATIONAL OBJECTIVE(S)

EXPERIENTIAL AIMS

CLOSING

OBJECTIVE

Reflective

Interpretive

Decisional
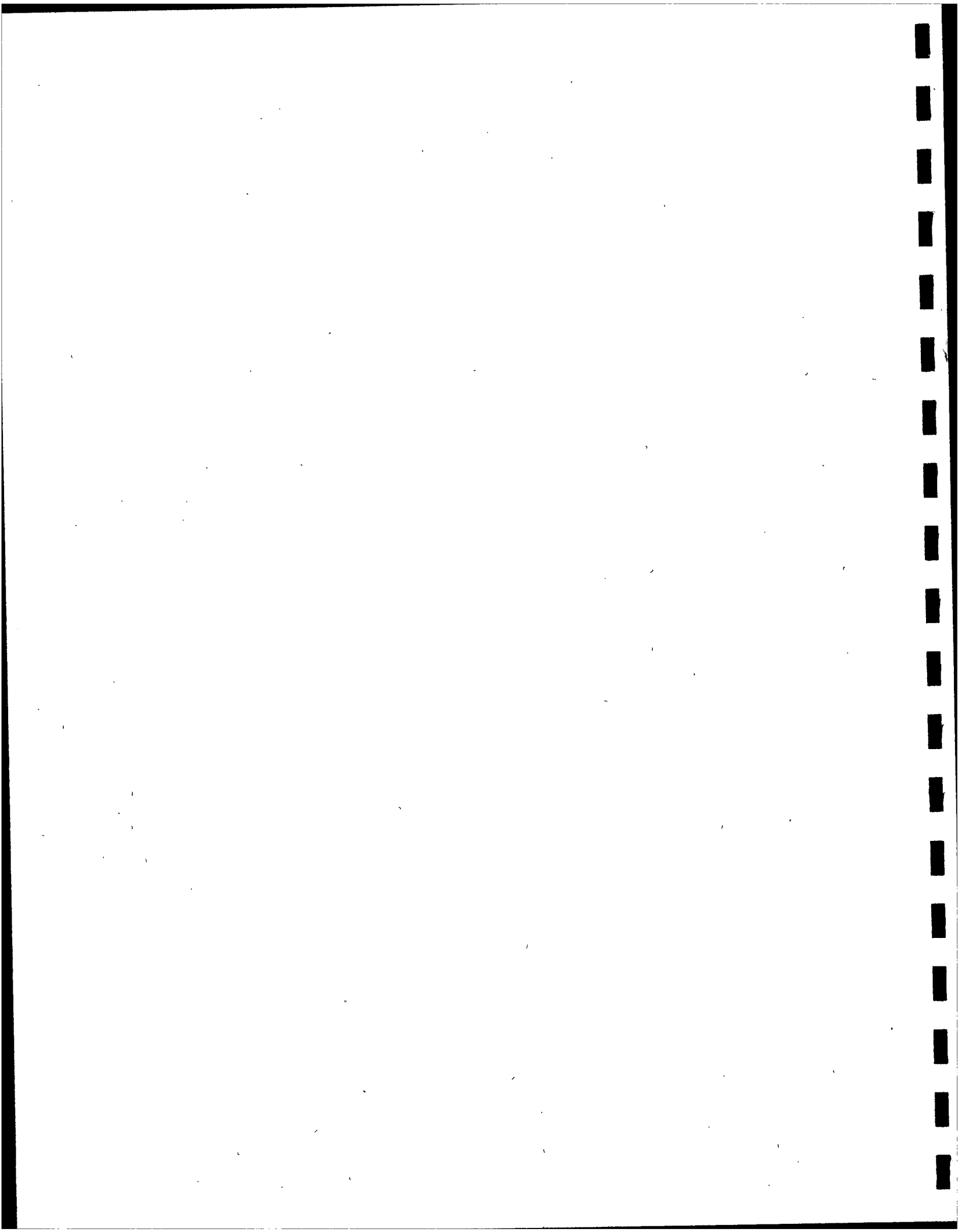
WORKSHOP METHOD OVERVIEW

Focus Question

Focus Question

RATIONAL OBJECTIVE: What the group hopes to produce in this workshop.

EXPERIENTIAL AIM: What they need to experience with each other.

CONTEXT
Setting the Stage

1. Highlight the focus question.
2. Explain the product or outcome.
3. Outline the process and the time you plan to spend.

BRAINSTORM
Generating New Ideas

1. Brainstorm Individually
2. Select your best ideas.
3. Brainstorm as a group.(share ideas)

ORGANIZE
Group the ideas

1. Form pairs intuitively
2. Develop clusters of related ideas.
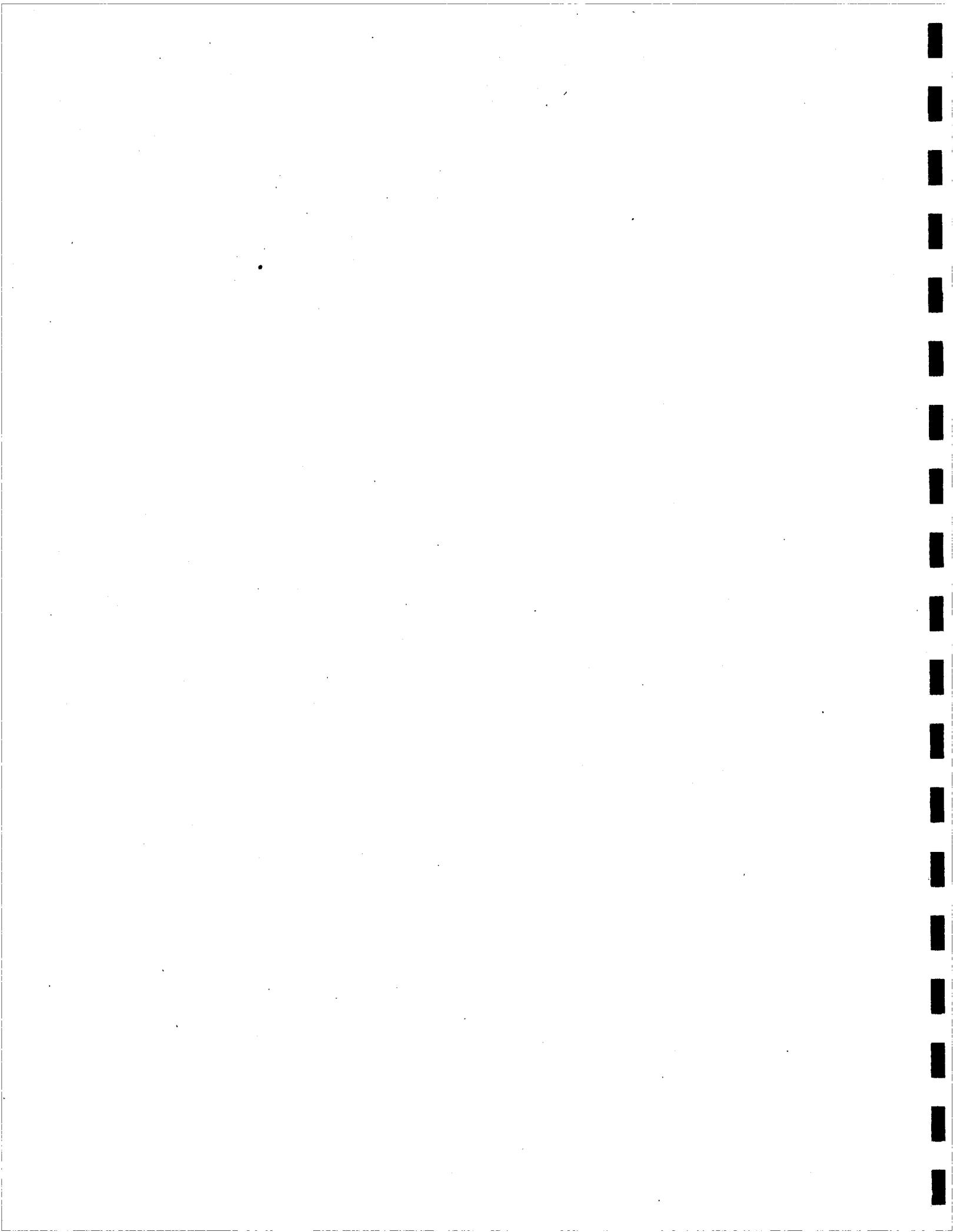3. Relate the extras to a group.

NAME
Creating a Consensus

1. Discern the focus of each cluster.
2. Discuss for clarity & insights
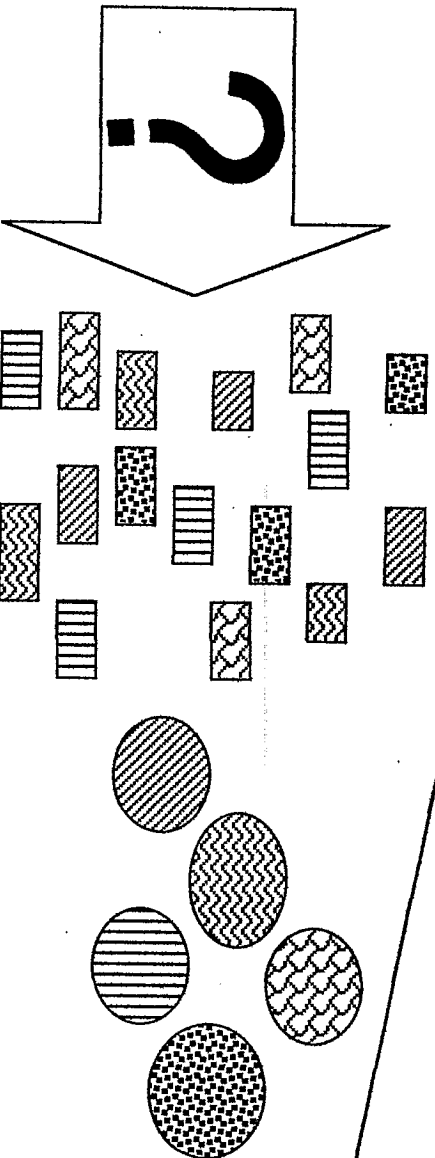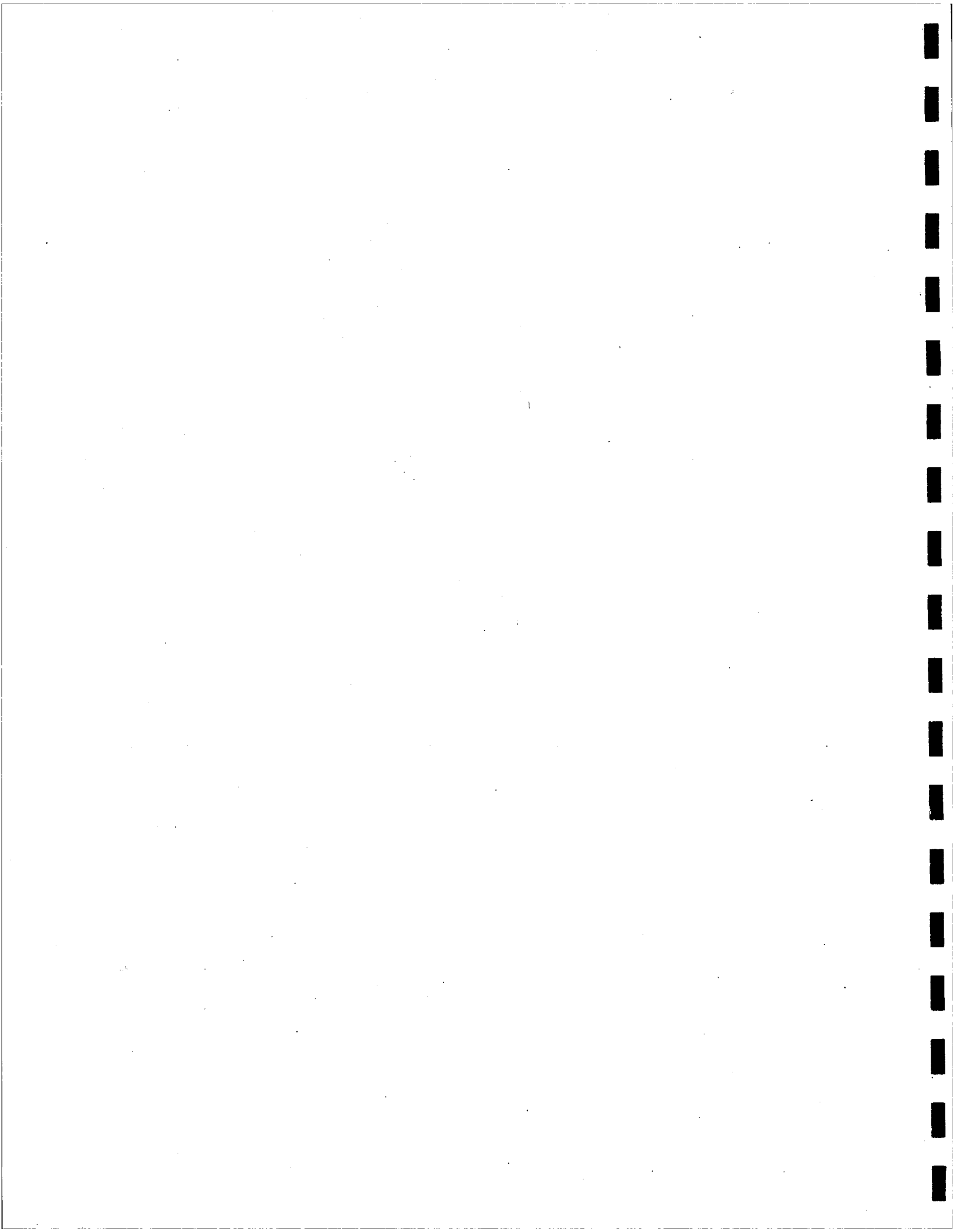3. Name each cluster.

REFLECT
Confirming the consensus.

1. Create a design to hold the consensus
2. Use the 4 level discussion method on the workshop itself.
3. Discuss next steps.
4.

WORKSHOP METHOD FLOW

?

CONTEXT   BRAINSTORM   ORGANIZE   NAME   REFLECT

ACTION PLANNING OVERVIEW

2. What is our current situation?

3. What is our motivation?

1. What is the victory?
(Our task or accomplishment)

4. Appropriate Actions

5. Calendar of Actions, costs & assignments.