A summary of Godby’s paper read before the residents large group

Reflective Resident Groups—Dialogue Groups are a part of helping you to understand yourself in small, median and large groups. Small groups function to provide insight for the individual into themselves as they build relationships in the group. The small group often reproduces family dynamics, which is no wonder in that they are size of many families. What happens to group dynamics when we increase the group size to 20 or 30 or even 100 members? Pat De Maré sees the median and large group as humanizing society as distinct from the small group whose focus is more on socializing the individual.

Can we move away from the dynamics of the family and discuss issues of wider concern, concerns that Pat de Maré calls outsight? That is how do matters outside of ourselves make us who we are? These forces often compel us as strongly as our own id. What are these forces you might ask? They are issues like gender, politics, social class, ideologies, and faith. For instance what does it mean to be a woman at your institution? What role does ethnic, racial or international identity play in your experience? What about social class? Are there any poor among us? What sub-groups are you a part of? And how do these subgroups relate to one another?

In the median group there is an opportunity to develop the art of acting in concert with others for the common good. How do we go about developing a passion for the state, a community of citizens, as distinct from love of family? Those who study LG refer to the development of impersonal fellowship rather than personal friendship, a culture of togetherness and amity, transforming the chaos of mindlessness and hate into more human communion.

The size of a median group, often 20-40 people, can lead to frustration and even hatred, which ironically fuels dialogue and a sense of community for those who can stick with the process. To think and develop the art of dialogue in the median or large group requires practice and discipline. Pat de Maré never tired of extolling the virtues of these groups and argued that the only solution to mass violence was mass dialogue. In participating in the median group we hope to help you develop professional artistry. Artistry is needed when answers are unclear and there are many sides to an issue.
Learning to think in the context of uncertainty and chaos can enable you to become a reflective practitioner.