Published in the Journal of Bahá'í Studies Vol. 7, number 4 (1996)


# Improved Access to Intelligent Responses Using the Baha'i Model of Consultation: Two Exploratory Small-Sample Studies[1]*

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***Abstract***

Two studies were conducted to measure the improvement in accessing intelligent responses through the use of consultation. In the first study, eight subjects were given three sets of tasks to. be completed as individuals. The hypotheses concerned use of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS). Three sets of scores were recorded: individual-scores earned by each one working independently; composite—the combined best answers from the individual work; and group scores—those earned by the decision reached through consultation. Comparisons were made between the composite and the group scores. The group did not perform any better in recall of knowledge of a general nature beyond the composite or combined results of its individual members. Improvement was seen in the areas of identifying relationships and practical judgment. The greatest gain was found in the WAIS subtest of comprehension. The group score of these subjects was two standard deviations above the composite score, which represented a change from the 71.5th percentile to the 99.4th percentile based on the normative population. A second study was conducted to measure the difference between a group that consulted on a task, as compared to individuals with similar background, training, and motivation who performed the same task as individuals. There was a clear advantage shown by consultation as compared to individual results. These results indicate that people consulting together can access intelligent responses superior to that attained through individual effort. The studies suggest several areas of inquiry for further investigation.

***Résumé***

Deux études ont été effectuées, lesquelles visaient à mesurer l'obtention de réponses plus intelligentes résultant du recours à la consultation. Dans la première étude, on a demandé à huit sujets d'effectuer trois séries de tâches de façon individuelle. Pour les hypothèses, l'Échelle d'Intelligence de Wechsler pour adultes (communément désignée WAIS) était utilisée. Trois séries de scores ont été compiles: scores individuels, soit le score que chaque sujet obtenait en procédant seul; scores composites, soit la combinaison des meilleures réponses obtenues à titre individuel; scores de groupe, soit la réponse obtenue par la consultation. On a comparé ensuite entre eux les scores composites et ceux de groupe. Au chapitre de la mémoire des connaissances générales, les résultats de groupe n'étaient pas meilleurs que les résultats composites au combines des membres individuels composant le groupe. On a toutefois note une amélioration pour ce qui est de l'identification des rapports et du jugement pratique. L'amélioration la plus notable concernait le subtest de compréhension du WAIS. Pour ce subtest, le score de groupe était supérieur de deux déviations standard par rapport au score composite, ce qui représentait un changement du rang-centile de 71,5 à 99,4 base sur la population normative. La deuxième étude avait pour but de mesurer la différence entre les résultats d'un groupe qui consultait au sujet d'une tache et ceux d'individus qui, bien qu'ayant des antécédents, une formation et une motivation semblables, effectuaient la même tâche de façon individuelle. On a noté un avantage marque pour les résultats

[1] This article first appeared as an appendix in John E. Kolstoe, *Developing Genius* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1995).

de la consultation par rapport aux résultats individuels. Cette différence indique que les personnes qui consultent ensemble parviennent à des réponses plus intelligentes que celles qui travaillent de façon individuelle. Les deux études suggèrent plusieurs éléments pouvant faire l'objet d'une étude plus approfondie.

***Resumen***
Se llevaron a cabo dos estudios para determinar la mejoría en darle entrada a respuestas inteligentes mediante el uso de la consultación. En el primero, a ocho individuos se les dieron tres series de tareas a completarse en calidad de individuos. Las hipótesis trataban sabre el tema de la Escala de Inteligencia Adulta Weschler (EIA W). Se anotaron tres series de puntos: el individuo, los puntos ganados par cada uno trabajando independientemente, compuesto, las mejores respuestas combinadas del esfuerza individual, y puntos logrados par el grupo mediante la consultación. Se hicieron comparaciones entre el compuesto individual y el grupo consultivo. El grupo no demostró adelanto en conocimientos de índole general más allá del resultado compuesto o combinado de las miembros individuales. Se vio mejoría en los sectores que identificaban vínculos y juicios pragmáticos. El mayor adelanto se observó en el subexamen EIAW sobre Comprensión. El puntaje par grupo de estos individuos fue de dos desviaciones comunes par encima del puntaje del individuo en compuesto, elevándolo del percentil 71.5 al percentil 99.4 referente a la población normativa. El segundo estudio se llevó a cabo para medir la diferencia entre un grupo que efectuó consulta sabre una tarea en comparación a individuos de antecedentes, entrenamientos y motivaciones similares que realizaron la misma tarea coma individuos. La consultación demostró clara ventaja al compararse con las resultados del individuo. Estos resultados indican que cuando las personas se unen en consultación pueden lograr respuestas inteligentes superiores a las obtenidas mediante el esfuerzo individual. Los estudios sugieren varios sectores merecedores de mayor estudio.

## Introduction

Bahá'u'lláh said that "consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding" (*Tablets* l68). Bahá'í have frequently experienced this illumination in Spiritual Assemblies, committees, and informal discussions. Decisions or insights that evolve during discussion are often far superior to any of the initial contributions. This improvement occurs during consultation and seems to be the direct result of consultation.[2] When there is an overall effectiveness greater than the sum of the individual contributions, it is called synergy. These studies take a closer look at the emergence of synergy produced during consultation.

During the past three decades, there has been much research on synergy centered around educational learning models, creativity and imagination, and workforce productivity. The references at the end of this article list the more significant of these studies.

The two hypotheses of the first study were:

- Synergy would be experienced from consultation, that is, people who consult are able to produce better results than those same people achieved as individuals;
- It is possible to measure the gain experienced from consultation.

[2] "Bahá'í consultation can be defined as a process for producing a change in order to accomplish some definite purpose. This involves a sharing and interaction of thoughts and feelings in a spirit of love and harmony" (Kolstoe, *Consultation: A Universal Lamp of Guidance* 9). This definition was based on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explication, cited in *Bahá'í Administration* 21–23.

## Method

In the first study, the subjects had no known previous experience with Bahá'í consultation. There were eight subjects, four male and four female, ranging in age from eighteen to thirty-five. They lived in the village of Newtok in western Alaska. Six of them were Yup'ik Eskimos who had lived there all their lives. One Caucasian subject was the spouse of one of the Yup'iks, and the other Caucasian was a school teacher in his third year in the village. They all knew each other well and had mutual respect, but they had no previous experience with the Bahá'í model of consultation. All had at least a high-school education.

Thirteen volunteers had been recruited. Five of the volunteers did not participate because they had other commitments on the day of the study. Subjects met for an all-clay session on a Saturday. ft must be emphasized that because of the small sample, these results are suggestive rather than conclusive.

Five steps were involved:

1. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) (see D. Wechsler, *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale)* was given to each subject during a two-week period prior to the day of the group session. The WAIS is an individually administered adult intelligence test, which consists of eleven subtests. Four of the subtests were used for the study. All subjects had been given the WAIS prior to the group session.[3] Raw scores on all subtests are converted to scaled scores, which range from 0 to 19, with a mean of 10 and standard deviation of 3.

   A word is appropriate concerning the use of the 1955 version of the WAIS and the fact that cultural bias has been associated with this instrument. Current normative data were not required. The normative data were used only as a constant against which to measure change. The older version was used for practical considerations. Comparisons were made between the group and the individual members of that same group without inferences related to the normative population. Since external comparisons were not made, neither the use of the older version nor the cultural bias are relevant. Any anomalies of an older edition or cultural bias are constant in the measurement of change.
2. A warm-up exercise incorporating certain features of brainstorming[4] was provided so subjects could have a positive experience in generating ideas.
3. Instructions were given in the process, principles, and methods of consultation. Since the Bahá'í model of consultation was new to them, the principles were paraphrased.[5]
4. The Subarctic Survival Situation was presented for practice. [NOTE: The warm-up and practice consultation were included both to provide a positive experience in seeing that new ideas could be generated, that is, to enable the groups to experience synergy, as well as to allow them to practice and become comfortable with the process of working together. They were not tested against the hypotheses.]
5. Four of the WAIS subtests were re-administered to the group as a whole, and they consulted on each question.

Three sets of data were collected:

Individual—Individual responses to the questions on the WAIS on all eleven subtests;

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[3] Full-scale IQ scores ranged from 89 to 105.

[4] The technique used was similar to that described by Rawlinson, *Creative Thinking and Brainstorming* 47.

[5] Adapted from *Bahá'í Administration* 21–22.

Composite—Combined individual answers. The best individual answers from each question were combined to provided composites. This is the sum of the parts;

Group—Subjects consulted on the answers for four of the subtests of the WAIS. Answers given after consultation were compared to the composite answers. These scores were used as the whole to compare with the sum of the parts in order to test the hypotheses.

***Warm-Up***

The first activity was a warm-up. Each person was given a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. They were shown an empty egg carton and told to list all the things they could think of for which an egg carton could be used. When they finished, the papers were collected and the answers were tabulated. The eight subjects listed a total of thirty-seven uses. Many uses were listed by more than one person for a total of seventeen different ideas.

**Table 1. Tally of Uses for an Egg Carton Recorded by Individual Subjects**

| Number of ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Subjects | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 |

Next, the group was given instructions in consultation. The principles found in the Bahá'í writings were paraphrased and summarized as shown in the appendix. Since this material was new to all participants, much time was spent in discussing these principles item by item. Many examples were used to illustrate the principles.

The group was then given an egg carton and told to consult in order to find as many different ways for using the egg carton as they could. As a group, they found twenty-six different uses for the egg cartons. All seventeen of the different responses made by individuals were mentioned, plus nine new uses that no one had previously stated.

Even though the exercise was for the purpose of warm-up, it provided results that are worth noting. For instance, the first group had more than three times as many ideas (26) than the subject with the highest number (7) working independently. That was an increase of nineteen (271%). Nine new uses were recorded that had not been listed by any one individual. That is an increase of 53% compared to the combined efforts (17) of the independent work. Since this was not the focus of the study, there were no control groups, and no conclusions were drawn. However, the data does make one wonder what generated the additional responses.

**Table 2. Tally of Uses for an Egg Carton Thought of by the Group as Compared to Individual Responses**

| | Individuals | | Composite | Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Lowest | Highest | | |
| Number of Uses | 2 | 7 | 17 | 26 |

***Consultation Practice***

A survival situation was introduced. The subjects were told as a group that they had been in a plane crash in Canada. There were fifteen different items for them to consider for their survival.[6] These were to be ranked in order from the most important (1) to least important (15). Standards had been established by the Canadian para-rescue specialists.

The project was divided into two parts: First, each subject ranked the items independently. Second, after the subjects made their individual rankings, the group consulted on the items and reached consensus as a group as to how each item should be ranked.[7] The subjects were not informed of the experts' judgment until after working on this ranking as a group.

Scores were the sum of the numerical differences in the positions of the items on each subject's list, compared to the experts' list. Complete agreement would produce a score of zero. A reverse ranking would produce a score of 112, which would be maximum disagreement. Even though this was used as a warmup rather than to test the hypotheses, random samples were taken by drawing numbers from a box, merely to see if the responses were something other than random. The mean score for the random ranking was 69.

All scores were tabulated both as total scores and average variations. The variations were determined by dividing each total score by 15. A score of 2 would indicate that on the average the responses were off by two places. That is, if the experts put something as 5th, a ranking of either the 3rd or the 7th position would be off by two places. The lower the score, the better the results matched the experts' judgment.

Table 3 shows the scores. The "group" score (22) is the result of consultation. The "S" scores are those achieved by individual subjects. The mean of the S scores was 53.6. Even the best individual score (34 by S-1) was not nearly as good as that from consultation. The published average (47) (in *Subarctic Survival Situation*) was based on 1,228 participants from 244 teams.[8]

**Table 3. Tally of First Study Responses Ranking Survival Items in the *Subarctic Survival Situation***

| | | Total Score | Average Variation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group Score** | | 22.0 | 1.5 |
| S - 1 | | 34.0 | 2.3 |
| S-2 | | 44.0 | 2.9 |
| S-3 | | 52.0 | 3.5 |
| S-4 | | 53.0 | 3.5 |
| S-5 | | 54.0 | 3.6 |
| S-6 | | 58.0 | 3.9 |
| S-7 | | 64.0 | 4.3 |
| S-8 | | 70.0 | 4.7 |
| **Mean** | | 53.6 | 3.6 |
| **Published Average** | | 47.0 | 3.2 |
| **Random** | Lowest | 58.0 | 3.9 |
| | Mean | 69.0 | 4.6 |
| | Highest | 80.0 | 5.3 |

[6] The items were: a magnetic compass, a gallon can of maple syrup, a sleeping bag per person, a bottle of water purification tablets, 20'x20' piece of heavy-duty canvas, 13 wood matches, 250' of 1/4" braided 50 lb. test nylon rope, a functional four-battery flashlight, 3 pairs of snowshoes, a fifth of Bacardi rum (151 proof), a safety razor shaving kit with mirror, a wind-up alarm clock, a hand ax, an aircraft inner tube, and a book entitled *Northern Star Navigation*.

[7] At times, discussion got emotional, suggesting the task was being taken seriously.

[8] *Subarctic Survival Situation, Leader's Guide* 21.

The group had not been informed of the "correct" answers until the group task was completed. This minimized practice effect. No one subject did as well as the group did in consultation (22). Even the best score (34 by S-1) was 55% further from the experts' list as was the group score. The average was about a 2½ times greater difference. The poorest score (70 by S-8) was more than three times greater difference. A high degree of synergy is suggested. The *Subarctic Survival Situation* was used to provide practice in the use of consultation for decision making, not to test the hypotheses. Once again, the results were worth noting even though no inferences should be drawn because there were no controls, and this exercise was not the focus of the study.

***Intelligent Responses***

Only the six Eskimos were used for this part of the project, since some of them felt more at ease speaking in their native Yup'ik for critical thinking. They were all bilingual, and they had the choice of consulting either in English or their native tongue. Four subtests were selected for consultation: information, comprehension, similarities, and vocabulary. Composite scores were derived by combining the best individual answers of each subject on each subtest. The group scores were derived from the answers by consensus through consultation.

The information subtest measures how much is known of a general nature. Questions were asked such as, "How tall is the average American woman?" A scaled score of 11 was earned for both the composite and group tabulations.

The vocabulary test lists words in increasing order of difficulty. The subjects were asked the meanings of the words on the list. The composite scaled score was 9, and the group scaled score was 10. There was a change from the 39.8$^{th}$ percentile to the 50$^{th}$ percentile.[9]

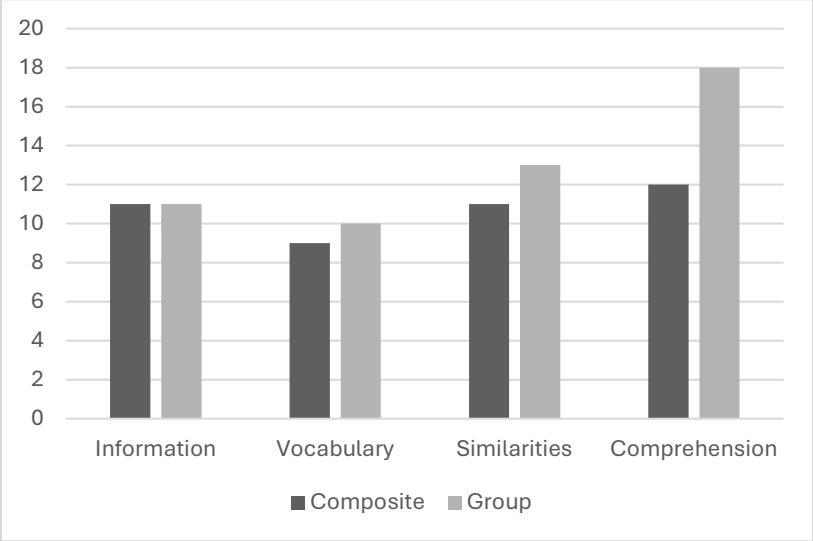
The similarities test compares two generally known items to determine how well the subject can see relationships. Questions were asked such as, "In what way are a dog and a lion alike?" In this subtest, the composite scaled score was 11. The group scaled score was 13. This was a change from the 60.8$^{th}$ percentile to the 82.3$^{rd}$ percentile.

The comprehension subtest has been called a "test of practical wisdom." It measures an understanding of how and why things work and the best thing to do in a given situation. Questions were asked such as, "What is the thing to do if you are the first person in a theater to see smoke and fire?" The subjects' composite scaled score was 12. When they consulted, they scored two standard deviations higher. The group score was 18, which was an increase of six and only one point short of the maximum possible. This was a change from the 71.5$^{th}$ percentile to the 99.4$^{th}$ percentile.

The graph below shows comparative results in terms of scaled scores.

[9] Both the information and the vocabulary subtests showed a slight increase in raw scores, but the results were not significant. No items scored correctly by an individual were missed by the group.

**Graph 1. WAIS Scaled Scores**




**Discussion**

On the WAIS subtest of information, the group did not show a gain as a result of consultation over the combined best answers of the subjects. Both scaled scores were 11, which is in the average range compared to the normative group.

The composite scaled score for the vocabulary test was 9, and the group scaled score was 10, both of these are in the average range of the nonnative group.

Both the information and the vocabulary subtests deal with things that are known, but do not require critical thinking. Little or no improvement was seen, that is, the whole was not greater than the sum of the parts either in terms of access to the kind of information sought in the test or in terms of the number of words which could be defined accurately.

In both the similarities and comprehension subtests, the group had substantially better results after consultation than the results obtained by individual endeavors or the composite thereof. This indicates synergy. The group had improved responses when they consulted.

In the similarities test, the composite score (11) placed this group in the average range. The group scaled score (13) is a standard score gain of 2 (that is 2/3 of a standard deviation), which indicates that synergy was experienced when they consulted.

The greatest evidence of synergy was in the comprehension subtest. There was a gain of 6 standard score points (two standard deviations), from a composite scaled score of 12 to the group scaled score of 18. The composite score was the same as those in the 71.5th percentile of the normative population. The synergistic gain produced a score similar to that earned by individuals in the 99.4$^{th}$ percentile of the normative population.

Critical thinking is not a factor of either the information or the vocabulary subtests. One can conclude that consultation did not increase the amount of information for this group beyond the total pool of information which the individuals had before consulting, that is, the total was not greater than the sum of the parts. Critical thinking is a factor in both the similarities and the comprehension subtests. The results of the two subtests suggest that even though no additional information is gained, consultation does improve the use to which the information is put.

The fact that no appreciable gain was noted for the information and vocabulary subtests acted as an accidental control It counters concern that the gain experienced in the other two subtests can be attributed to test–retest or rehearsal.

## Second Study

The second study replicated a part of the first, but focused on the differences between a decision obtained through consultation as compared to the results of individuals with similar background and training performing the same task individually.

The hypothesis investigated was: "People who consult as a group on a given task perform better than people who receive the same instructions and practice, but work as individuals." Five steps were involved:

1. An initial testing was administered for the same *Subarctic Survival Situation* as used in the first study;
2. A warm-up exercise was given similar to the one in the first study;
3. Instructions were given in the process, principles, and methods of consultation; since some of the subjects were unfamiliar with the Bahá'í model of consultation, the principles were paraphrased in a manner similar to the first study;
4. When the instructions on the consultation model were concluded, a practice exercise was given;
5. The *Subarctic Survival Situation* was re-administered with one half of the group working as individuals and the other half reaching decisions through consultation.

## Method

### *Subjects*

Eight volunteers were recruited, ages 15-30. They included five males and three females. All were either high school or college students. Subjects met for an all-day session on a Saturday on the Anchorage campus of the University of Alaska. Six had prior experience with Bahá'í consultation. Two had no prior experience with this model.

### *Initial Situation Administration*

To establish a base score, all members of the group were given the *Subarctic Survival Situation* to complete as individuals, in a manner similar to the first study.

### *Warm-Up*

After the initial testing, the group was given a warm-up exercise. An ordinary pencil was used instead of an egg carton. The number of uses generated by the individuals ranged from 5 to 11. Next, the entire group discussed possible uses. This resulted in 17 uses.

This was followed by a discussion about the source of those responses generated by the group, but not by individuals.

### *Instructions*

Next, there was an item-by-item discussion of the elements of consultation as paraphrased in the appendix. These elements were amplified by examples and illustrations.

The group was then divided into two groups, with four individuals in each group. They were balanced by age, sex, and prior experience with consultation.

They were then given a practice exercise using the principles just discussed. The problem concerned grizzly bears that have been electrocuted because of their attacking electrical transformers in wilderness areas. Chain-link fences have not stopped them. Only males have been involved, which suggests they perceive the transformers as competing males in their territory. The two groups were asked to devise a system which would: (1) not add more than $100 to the cost of the transformer, (2) prevent death and injury to the bear, (3) be effective in cold and hot weather, and (4) be ecologically neutral. After active and lively discussion, each group presented their results to the other. One group had four possible solutions that could be adapted to slightly different circumstances.

This was followed by an analysis of the process. The group discussed what they had experienced relative to the dynamics of consultation as both a source of generating and of refining ideas.

### *Re-administration*

The last step was the re-administration of the *Subarctic Survival Situation*. There had been no previous discussion of the answers from the experts. One group of four was sent to a different room and asked to perform the assignment as individuals with no discussion. The other group remained in the room and completed their ranking by consulting and reaching consensus conclusions. This provided four sets of scores: initial performance, re-administration by individual, re-administration as a group, and that from six random samples which were derived by drawing numbers from a box.

### *Discussion*

The average score on the initial administration was 51.3. After the instruction on consultation, the four who did the retest as individuals had an average score of 43.3. This improvement may be attributed to many factors, including rehearsal, having had more time to think about their responses, and having had a positive experience during the time preceding the re-administration since all subjects seemed to be enjoying the activity. No conclusions can be drawn with certainty, but the results suggest areas worthy of inquiry.

The group using consultation earned a score of 25. The difference between the average score earned by the individuals' re-administration of the exercise (43.3) and the score of the group that cons11ltecl on the items can be attributed to synergy. Even the best individual retest score (32) was off considerably from the group score, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Comparison of Second Study Responses Ranking Survival Items in the *Subarctic Survival Situation***

| | | | Retest | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Random | Pretest | Individual | Group |
| | 58 | 36 | 32 | 25 |
| | 62 | 44 | 44 | |
| | 63 | 47 | 45 | |
| | 70 | 52 | 52 | |
| | 78 | 54 | | |
| | 80 | 56 | | |
| | | 56 | | |
| | | 58 | | |
| | | 63 | | |
| **Average Total** | 68.5 | 51.3 | 43.3 | 25 |
| **Average Variation** | 4.6 | 3.4 | 2.9 | 1.7 |

There is evidence that a benefit results from the use of consultation.

An observation worth noting is that all those working as individuals completed their tasks in less than half the time it took the group to consult. The time difference is worth further investigation, as it could have implications concerning when *not* to use consultation, namely, when rapid response time is critical, a speedy decision may be more important than the best one.

## Conclusions

These small-group pilot studies both showed synergy, that is, there was a positive gain through consultation in that the whole was greater than the sum of the parts.

The two hypotheses under investigation for the first study were:

1. **Synergy would be experienced from consultation, that is, people who consult are able to produce better results than those same people achieved as individuals.** The first hypothesis was demonstrated. The group achieved results superior to those achieved by the same subjects as individuals.
2. It **is possible to measure the gain experienced from consultation.** Again, the hypothesis was demonstrated-a measurable gain was detected.

The second study investigated the hypothesis:

**People who consult as a group on a given task perform better than people who receive the same instructions and practice, but work as individuals.**

Again, the hypothesis was demonstrated. People consulting performed better than those working as individuals who had received the same instructions.

The evidence suggests that consultation is conducive to synergy, giving greater access to intelligent responses compared to individual efforts. These small-sample, pilot studies raise intriguing questions. No inferences can be made concerning the factors that affect synergy, such as the nature of the groups, the Bahá'í model of consultation as a decision-making tool, or the nature of the subject under discussion. Further investigation is warranted to confirm synergy and identify those factors which influence its presence, including attitudes, cognitive thinking styles,

experience, cultural difference, the role of unity, and the emotional content of the subject matter. What are the factors that influence the course of consultation? What factors foster or impede the occurrence of synergy?

A major component may have to do with interplay intelligence, or what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá referred to as the five inner powers, which he compared to the five physical senses: imagination, thought (or reasoning), comprehension, memory, and the common faculty (the integrative ability to combine data from inner sources and the physical senses into new and meaningful patterns) (*Some Answered Questions* 210–11). Just as the physical senses have dozens of submodalities, so, too, there are many facets of each of these components. The relationship among the elements of intelligence as well as their impact on the process of consultation provide fertile ground for investigation. It is timely to initiate a new era of investigation, to discover how various components interact and are augmented in consultative situations. This would not only be highly illuminating but also have enormous implications in the building of the world order of Bahá’u’lláh.

## Appendix

## Improving Thinking Using Consultation

The following material was given to the group and discussed with them as the model of consultation[10] to be used. In this type of group decision-making, the attitudes of those taking part and the conditions of the meeting are at least as important as procedures, methods, or techniques. Attitudes and conditions create an atmosphere conducive to synergy.

### *Attitude*

Motive—everyone must be working for the same thing without hidden motives.
Spirit—enthusiasm and a positive outlook aid in finding good solutions.
Detachment—preconceived answers must be put aside.
Eagerness—everyone must seek the special answers the group can produce.
Modesty—modesty aids consultation; feelings of superiority undermine it.
Patience—patience and grace under stress allow the best answers to develop.
Service—an attitude of service gives priority to the group above self.

### *Conditions*

Unity—harmony and respect for one another are essential. This means putting aside personal differences and having genuine concern for each other.
Focus—all must seek the best results and concentrate on the same thing.

### *Procedures*

Devotion—all must be devoted to serving the best interests of the group.
Courtesy—all discussion must be crowned with courtesy.
Dignity—respect for themselves and the value of their work is needed.
Care—ideas need to be presented carefully and duties carried out faithfully.

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[10] Adapted from *Bahá’í Administration* 21–22. This model is used by Bahá’ís in their decision-making deliberations.

Moderation—thoughts must be expressed clearly and strongly so as to be easily understood; however, the purpose is to inform, not to persuade. Different points of view expressed properly lead to harmony and away from bickering.

### *Making the Decisions*

Decisions involve a three-step process. During this process, different points of view are freely given. "The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 87). Ideas must clash. Personalities should never clash. Judgments are suspended until discussion is complete.

Understanding—there must be a grasp of the problem, project, or situation and what is to be accomplished. This means finding and weighing relevant facts; knowing their background; and considering the implications.

Deciding—when discussion seems complete, a trial solution is offered. If all agree, this becomes the decision. If not, it is changed until consensus or a majority vote settles the issue. It is not a compromise. It is a matter of finding the best solution.

Implementing—carrying out the decision is a part of the process. It makes no difference how anyone voted. A decision is the decision of the group. All must work toward its success. There is no minority opinion; no opposition view. The group can allow for needed changes as the plan unfolds.

When everyone tries to fulfill the above attitudes, conditions, and procedures, synergy is most likely to be experienced. Synergy helps any group reach the best possible decision of which it is capable.

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