

Group Counseling and Therapy

Over the last 25 years group counseling has become a preferred mode of treatment in resolving interpersonal difficulties. Group experience has also been used by people who are not experiencing specific problems to work on personal development. Group experiences have existed in various forms throughout history, but only recently have they been recognized as relevant and respected forms of counseling. Much of what people believe about themselves comes from feedback from interactions with others. However, everyday interactions do not allow people to check the reactions of others as they can in group counseling. By analyzing their behaviors in a group, people can see how they act in everyday life. The group is a microcosm of society, and the same characteristics displayed in the real world will emerge in the group.

In group counseling, the group is more than a collection of people. The members share some common attitudes and values, accept one another, and maintain an interaction. Cartwright and Zander (1968) defined the characteristics necessary to form a group. They wrote that a group was composed of people who engaged in frequent interactions, defined themselves as group members, were considered by others as belonging to the group, shared norms concerning common interests, participated in a system of interlocking roles, identified with one another, found the group rewarding, pursued interdependent goals, and had a collective perception of their unity. A synthesis of the definitions of groups could be: "an aggregate of people can be identified as a group when the group members see themselves and are seen by others as psychologically interdependent and interactive in the pursuit of a shared goal" (Dagley, Gazda, & Pistole, 1986).

Most groups start as just a collection of people because the members do not begin with the group characteristics. The more the characteristics of the group develop, the stronger the group will become. The group will pass through several stages of development in that process.

Types of Groups

Modern group work developed from diverse origins. J. A. Pratt used a class method for assisting tubercular patients in dealing with their common problem.

J. L. Moreno worked with children and adults in developing an active approach called psychodrama, which provided stimulation that is still continued today. Alfred Adler used group-guidance methods with families (G. Gazda, 1982). During the 1930s, Slavson in New York developed small, intensive, psychoanalytically oriented therapy groups. In the early 1940s Moreno founded the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, and Slavson formed the American Group Psychotherapy Association. Following World War II social psychologists were actively involved in studying groups. Much of this research focused on effective functioning of democratic organizations. The collection of these research studies formed the basis of group dynamics and led to the interest in the human-relations movement of the 1960s. During this postwar period there was emphasis on teaching about groups by having individuals involved in the experience discuss what they were learning about themselves.

During the 1950s and 1960s there were two approaches to group experience. One approach involved T-groups, or sensitivity groups often conducted in laboratory training (see below). Another approach focused on the intellectual aspect of the individual and was represented by the psychoanalytic group (G. Gazda, 1982). The encounter-group movement was instrumental in merging the emotions and intellect into the full process of personal change. Today all of the types of experience are available. The groups differ in terms of goals, techniques, the role of the leader, and the membership involved in the group.

Encounter Groups

Encounter groups are person-growth groups offering an intense experience designed to help relatively healthy clients gain closer contact with themselves and others. The group activities are used to teach the members about growth and development as well as help them achieve these goals. Most people join the group intending to explore themselves and realize their full potentials. There is an emphasis on expressing their feelings, being spontaneous, and engaging in new behaviors as a part of the learning process. Numerous nonverbal techniques such as touching and sensory-awakening exercises are used in the process. Encounter groups are usually time-limited, and the members are encouraged to become increasingly aware of their feelings and to risk experimenting with behavior that might not feel appropriate to their roles. There are various types of encounter groups, but each has a focus on personal growth of the participants (Corey & Corey, 1987).

T-Groups

T-groups are laboratory training experiences that emphasize human-relations skills for successful functioning and organization. The emphasis is on learning by doing in an environment in which new behaviors are encouraged and analyzed and decisions can be made or problems resolved. These groups tend to be task oriented and to focus on specific organizational problems. T-groups emphasize group process more than personal growth, although

- members are taught to observe their own process and develop leadership (Corey & Corey, 1987).

Group Therapy

Therapists working with a small number of clients with a common problem assume a role similar to the one they play in individual therapy. They also find that the group offers support, caring, and consultation that are not available in individual therapy. In addition, within the group, members can practice new skills and apply their knowledge, so that more of the working-through process occurs in the group and not just on the outside. Group therapy is of a relatively long duration, aimed at correcting the specific emotional or behavioral disorders of the participants. The goals vary from solving relatively minor problems to reorganizing members' personality structures. As the group members work on specific symptoms and problems, some attention is focused on unconscious factors as well as their past behaviors.

Group Counseling

Group counseling differs from group therapy by dealing with more conscious problems that are not aimed at major personality reconstruction. It is aimed at resolution of specific short-term issues and frequently focuses on educational, vocational, social, or personal problems. Counselors establish a climate for group development and facilitate the members' interaction. They may use a variety of methods, both verbal and nonverbal, to assist the members in understanding themselves and the situations in which they live.

Group Dynamics

Cartwright and Zander (1968) defined group dynamics as a "field of inquiry dedicated to the advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the laws of their development, and their interactions with other groups, and larger institutions" (p. 19). Considerable research has been conducted into the nature of group behavior. This information is used to prepare group leaders so they will understand what occurs during the life of the group. According to Knowles and Knowles (1959), the group "is always moving, doing something, changing, becoming, interacting, and reacting" (p. 12). Therefore, another definition of group dynamics is the interplay of internal and external forces affecting the group's behavior and movement. The group counselor needs to be aware of group dynamics to better understand the members' interaction in a specific group. Most books on group dynamics include materials on goals, structure, norms, cohesiveness, members' roles, and leadership.

Goals

Most counseling groups begin with an established goal focusing on some topic such as vocational, education, social, or personal issues. The group may deal

with self-improvement, growth, improved communication, or a change in behavior. No matter what the goal, the group will become more effective in achieving it if subsidiary goals are established by consensus of the members. Although the group may begin with a general objective, the members usually evolve the meaningful goals for the group.

Goal setting evolves from the group's interaction and members' decisions about what they want to achieve. If a group has difficulty establishing clear goals, it will have more difficulty becoming a cohesive unit and will find the group experience less attractive, leading to a less effective interaction. Napier and Gershenfeld (1973) suggest that the goals reside "in the minds of individuals, as they think of themselves as a group or a unit" (p. 194).

Structure

A group's structure is seen in the patterns and interrelationships of its members (Lust, 1984). The group must establish a workable structure of interaction that will permit it to move toward its understood goals. An effective group structure changes through the life stages of the group because different interactions are necessary at the different stages.

At one time groups were described as structured or unstructured. That is not an accurate form of description, because all groups have structure. The intent was to indicate whether the counselor established a structure for the group or consciously refrained from doing so. Obviously if the leader does not establish something, the group will evolve its own interactional structure. Group leaders' participation in the structure can be seen in their definition of goals, their response to group expectations, and their defining of the basic rules and procedures for the group. Those actions will establish how the members interact, at least during the early stage of the group.

Research has indicated that structure is an important part of the group's early development. When counselors, in preparing members to start a group, clarify group goals, identify client behaviors, and explain the process, the members tend to focus on the group work more quickly (Bednar, Melnick, & Kaul, 1974). Pretraining for members in using positive and negative interpersonal feedback helps the group engage in higher levels of group process and reach higher levels of cohesiveness (Rose & Bednar, 1980). Structuring through topic training given at the group's developmental stage enhances both the process and outcome of group therapy (Kivlighan, McGovern, & Corazzini, 1984). By having clarity in the group goals and helping members establish a method of interaction in the early stages of counseling, the leader will push members to interact more appropriately and focus on moving toward their goal.

Norms

The rules for group behavior are described as its *norms*. Some of these rules are stated by the counselor: arrive on time, don't talk about group discussions outside, no hitting in the group. Other acceptable behaviors become established through spoken or less formal methods of communication. The counselor's

stated ground rules serve as a preliminary basis for the group's normative system. But it is only when these rules become a part of the group members' internalized sense of operating procedures that they are truly the norms of behavior. After these norms have been established, there is usually group pressure on members to conform to them. Members are expected to behave in certain ways for the good of all in the group. Although the norms are important in the group's development and effectiveness, the counselor must be aware of pressures that could be detrimental to individuals or the full group.

Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness or a sense of bonding together into a unit is important to any group. The more a member is attracted to the group, the more he or she will actively participate in attaining the group's goals. There needs to be a strong sense of commonality in a group for the members to accomplish their tasks. A group's cohesiveness, or collective identity, is built on its acceptance of common goals and norms, so that members perceive it as important to belong to the group.

Group Membership

The effectiveness of the group is a function of the leader's ability, the quality of the relationships among the group members, and the interaction between the leader and the members. Membership roles and behaviors have been a major focus in the area of group dynamics.

The roles that individual members use in the group are not chosen randomly but are a product of four major influences: (1) the members' expectations of themselves and others, (2) personality factors, (3) the characteristics of the leader, and (4) the characteristics of the group. Aspects of these four areas produce the actual behavior of the individual group member. The members' expectations of themselves and others are influenced by past experiences and their role in society. Members entering a group usually attempt to behave in a fashion they feel appropriate to their social status. In other words, they try to fulfill their perceptions of their social role.

The member's underlying personality traits are another important factor in his or her interaction in the group. We would expect the dominant personality traits that an individual brings to the group to have both overt and covert impacts on other group members. It is that assumption that leads counselors to select members for groups. Those included in the group should have personal styles that interact beneficially for all members. It is important not to include a member who would be detrimental to group functioning because the reaction of others would also be detrimental to that individual.

The personality of counselors obviously affects the behaviors they will use in conducting groups. Their personal characteristics and style of leadership will also influence the roles that individual members adopt. One of the chief factors affecting the behavior of members is their concern with the internal and external prestige of the group. If they feel that they are valued members

of the group they will participate and become more involved. Conversely, with greater external orientation, they are less interested in acceptance of other members.

There is also an issue of homogeneity or heterogeneity in the composition of the group. Should the group examine one problem or be composed of one gender or one age group; or should it have different types of people with different problems? Research has indicated that heterogeneous members encourage a wide range of group roles and that homogeneous groups may act to restrict the roles that are used. Homogeneous group members are more likely to use roles that are concerned with the social atmosphere of the group. If the members are to form a group with a therapeutic atmosphere, they need to establish norms for group behavior, which is more easily accomplished with a homogeneous membership.

Many writers in the field have developed lists of roles and group behavior. Most of the lists have the same set of behaviors with different names to describe them. These lists stem from two early descriptions of membership roles. Benne and Sheats (1948) described three classifications: individual roles, group task roles, and group building and maintenance roles. A set of more specific roles was defined by Bales (1951), who classified roles into two areas: instrumental, or task, roles and social/emotional, or expressive, roles (Table 6-1).

Benne and Sheats' building and maintenance roles act to collect individuals into a group and then to maintain group cohesiveness. These roles include the facilitator or encourager, who encourages a feeling of friendship and security in the group; the gatekeeper or expeditor, who keeps the group operating within its norms; the goal setter, who pushes for a definition of the outcome; the harmonizer, who strives to mediate differences between group members; the promoter, who suggests alternatives; the group observer, who provides feedback to the group; and the follower, who swings with the group wherever it goes. These roles focus on the social/emotional atmosphere of the group and help develop a feeling of cohesiveness.

Once the social/emotional atmosphere of the group has been established, task roles become more important. The task may be specific, such as a plan of action for the group, or more subjective, such as personal tasks for each member in resolving his or her particular difficulty. Group task roles include the initiator/energizer, who prods for action from the group and confronts it for lack of action; the information or opinion seeker, who wants cognitive or affective information to be clarified; the information or opinion giver, who wants to provide his or her thoughts to others; the elaborator or coordinator, who tries to ensure that the ideas expressed are workable; the evaluator, who serves as a judge in terms of how close the group is to resolving the task and its level of quality in achieving the goals; and the procedural technician, who keeps the group operating on acceptable norms toward the achievement of its goals. The conduct of these roles often produces conflict in a group, but this conflict is necessary for the members' individual growth. If the group is not developing these roles, it will not progress beyond a stage of cohesion. Members will like one another, but they will not reach their individual or collective goals.

TABLE 6.1 Classification of Roles Within a Group

Task roles	Social/emotional roles	
	Positive	Negative
1. Provides orientation, information	7. Provides help, status	10. Shows passive resistance, disagrees
2. Gives opinions, evaluates and analyzes group data	8. Facilitates tension reduction	11. Creates tension, seeks help, withdraws
3. Directs and suggests	9. Shows understanding and compliance	12. Acts aggressive, antagonistic
4. Seeks information		
5. Seeks direction or action		
6. Encourages evaluation and analysis of group data and experiences		

Source: Based on Bales (1951).

Benne and Sheats defined some negative social/emotional roles as individual roles because they are counterproductive to the positive outcome of the group. These roles have been characterized as self-serving rather than group oriented. Individuals who act as blockers, recognition seekers, self-confessors, dominators, or monopolists do so in an attempt to fulfill individual needs. It is important that such individuals not be excluded from the group, because their personal needs are such that they may have difficulty in interpersonal relations. Their presence, however, will make a smooth operation of the group difficult.

Bales (1951) categorized membership roles as either task or social/emotional (see Table 6-1). Bales believed that a group moved in a cyclical motion between the task and social/emotional atmospheres. When the group works on a task, it creates at least some tension for the members, and when the tension mounts, it must be reduced. At that time roles come into play that act to reduce the tension and restore a more cohesive social balance within the group. Bales believed that a group must go through this cycle to be productive. If the group remains in a social/emotional atmosphere, it will not make progress toward the task. On the other hand, if it focuses only on the task, tension will be produced to such a degree that the group will disintegrate. A close examination of the Bales and Benne and Sheats classifications reveals that they are very compatible and are effective descriptions of member's role behaviors.

Leadership

The success of any group endeavor is highly dependent on the leadership. Although most counselors and writers agree with such a statement, leadership is one of the more complex concepts to understand or describe. Dagley, Gazda, and Pistole (1986) conclude that "leadership refers to the interactive influence of the leader's position, functions, traits, and style on group members, individually and collectively." Garetz and Fix (1972) suggest that counselors base their approach on four principles of leadership: (1) practically applying a solid theory of group dynamics, (2) encouraging maximum group self-direction, (3)

showing high respect for the group members by being emotionally honest with them, and (4) serving as a behavioral model. What characteristics should counselors model?

Personal Characteristics. Although many people believe that the personal characteristics of the leader are the most important determinants of group outcomes, it is difficult to achieve agreement on the list of traits of effective leadership, let alone on a particular personality type. Over the years numerous research studies have attempted to determine the personality traits of effective group leaders. However, Luft (1984) writes that "the search for special characteristics in the personality of the leader has failed to yield convincing results" (p. 118). Berger (1974) discusses the impact of the counselor's personality on the group and emphasizes the integrated use of the total person for constructive therapeutic purposes. The total person includes physical behaviors and sensations, emotional states, reactions to self and others, cognitive awareness, and all other thoughts or feelings, which are referred to as intuitive. The way counselors use their personality is a reflection of a whole life history as well as a professional technique. Their use of self involves what they do as well as who they are.

Leadership Functions. Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) identify four leadership functions: emotional stimulation, caring, attribution of meaning, and executive duties. These dimensions were derived from their research on leadership in encounter groups; they suggest, however, that these dimensions are capable of discriminating among leaders from highly varied theoretical orientations to group counseling.

Emotional stimulation involves emphasizing that members should reveal their feelings, personal attitudes, and values; should participate frequently as members; and should draw attention to themselves. The leader emphasizes release of emotions by taking risks and expressing anger, warmth, and love. The leader stimulates the members and places a high value on personal confrontation as a primary condition to learning. Leaders who are high on stimulation are generally described as charismatic.

The function of caring involves protecting; offering friendship, love, or affection; inviting members to seek feedback; and providing support, praise, and encouragement. The leader expresses acceptance, genuineness, and concern for the group members.

The function of attributing meaning involves cognitive techniques. The leader gives the members concepts so they can understand what is happening as well as ideas for how to change. Leaders high on meaning attribution understand that how people are feeling is a major goal in their behavior change. Some leaders use interpretations that emphasize cognitive recognition of the group climate or ask the group to reflect on its behavior. Others direct attention to individual behavior and request similar information about interpersonal issues.

The executive function involves setting goals, suggesting rules or norms, setting limits, managing time, and otherwise interceding. Leaders invite, ques-

tion, and suggest procedures for a person or the group. Counselors who are high on the executive function emphasize the expression of emotion through suggestion rather than demonstration. They function like movie directors, stopping the action and focusing on a particular behavior of an individual or the group. This behavior is intended to help members learn about particular cues, emotions, or personal behaviors. The executive behavior is directed toward directing the group as a social system achieving its goals.

Lieberman and his colleagues (1973) evaluated the four basic dimensions of behavior in relation to group outcome. They concluded that the most effective leadership styles were displayed by counselors who were moderate in the amount of stimulation, high in caring, and moderate in expression of executive functions and who utilized meaning attribution. Conversely, less effective leaders use either very high or very low stimulation, are low in caring, and provide little attribution of meaning.

Leadership at Various Stages. Dugo and Beck (1984) describe four leadership roles, which may be used by group members, not just the group counselor. They use the term *leader* for a person who has influence in determining the group's direction. The four major roles identified by Dugo and Beck are the task leader, the emotional leader, the scapegoat leader, and the defiant leader.

The task leader is the person from whom the group members seek help and direction. Early in the life of the group, the counselor generally fills this role. Later in the group process, however, members may assume task leadership. A member could be considered an emotional leader if he or she expresses concerns to other members or the counselor. These concerns usually focus on the emotional needs of that person but also serve to stimulate awareness of emotional needs in other members. A member assumes a scapegoat-leadership role by engaging in more self-disclosing behaviors than other members. Other members make that person the scapegoat by rejecting him or her or by pressuring the person to assume the role of deviant member. A member may assume a defiant-leadership role by resisting the help offered by the counselor or by more openly disagreeing with the counselor or other group members. These different leadership roles will be involved at different levels of development in the group's life stages.

Stages of a Group

Many social scientists have described the changes in the life of a group. The described stages vary according to the type of group being studied, the goal of the group, and the professional interest of the leader. Developmental stages have been identified in learning groups (Lacoursiere, 1974; Mills, 1964; Thelen & Dickerman, 1949); training groups (Dunphy, 1968; R. D. Mann, 1966, 1971; Miles, 1953); and counseling and therapy groups (Beck, 1981; Bonney, 1974; Brabender, 1985; L. M. Gazda, 1972; Heckel, Holmes, & Rosecrans, 1971;

MacKenzie & Livesley, 1986; Mahler, 1969; J. Mann, 1953; Martin & Hill, 1974; Shambaugh & Kanter, 1969; Whitaker & Lieberman, 1964).

Although the descriptions come from observation of a few groups and there are variations, certain basic patterns of development occur within most groups. Five stages are generally described: the initiation of the group, a conflict stage, the development of cohesiveness, productive behaviors, and termination. The organization of this section follows that structure, with an initial subsection on preparation for the group.

Preparing for the Group

Leaders' decisions before beginning a group are as important as their behaviors in the group. Decisions must be made regarding the size of the group, the process of selection, whether the group will be closed to new members, and the duration of the group.

Size. Although not based on research, a consensus of scholars suggests that the ideal size for group counseling is seven to eight members, with a range of from five to ten. If the group is much smaller, it ceases to operate as a group, and individuals feel awkward at being involved in individual counseling within a group setting. Too many members would not provide adequate time for working through individual problems, and as the group size increases, it is more difficult for less active members to express their ideas. One or two individuals may drop out during the early stages of the group; therefore leaders often begin with a slightly larger group than is ideal.

Selection. Careful selection of members will increase the chances of a successful group experience. The counselor should understand as much as possible about each member and, therefore, should review the history of the individual's family background, childhood, and adolescence and all aspects of his or her presenting problems. The intake meeting should also focus on the individual's stated goals so that both the counselor and the client are aware of some proposed personal changes. There is a great deal of anxiety in the early group meetings, and the relationship developed with the counselor will help members cope with this fear until they begin establishing relationships with other members.

Another questions for the counselor during the selection process is whether the group should be homogeneous or heterogeneous. That is, should it focus on one problem area and be made up of one sex, socioeconomic level, or age group? Or should there be varying elements within the group?

Homogeneous groups tend to become cohesive more quickly, offering more immediate support to members and providing more rapid symptomatic relief. However, homogeneous groups are more likely to remain at a superficial level and be less effective in changing the members' behavior. If the leader decides to select a heterogeneous group, clear understanding of the personal-
of the individuals will be helpful in organiz-

Melnick and Woods (1976) suggest using compatibility rather than homogeneity. Compatibility would focus on personal attraction, cooperation, and productive interaction among the members. The authors suggest avoiding extreme heterogeneity to ensure a warm interaction while creating confrontations sufficient to provide alternative behavior modes.

Open versus Closed Groups. Before beginning the group the counselor must determine whether it will be an open or a closed group. A closed group will not add new members, and it may meet for a predetermined number of sessions or until the group decides to terminate. An open group replaces members as they leave the group, so that it continues to function without a predetermined conclusion. The advantage of a closed group includes the stable population and time limits; however, difficulties may occur as members decide to drop out or move. An advantage for the open group is that members have new individuals with whom to interact and from whom to receive feedback; however, the new members are not aware of the content that has been discussed or the functioning of the group.

Moreland (1985) notes that new members in an open group can isolate themselves by deciding to interact only with other new members, thus establishing themselves as an out-group within the group. He also reports that newcomers tend to begin with a pessimistic outlook, to interact with other new members primarily, and to perceive discrimination where there is none. However, these biases fade in time. He also acknowledges that some oldtimers in groups may act out biases to the behaviors of newcomers. The counselor's decision usually depends on the desire to have either changing group membership or a specific time limit.

Duration. One aspect of a group's duration involves the amount of time in each session. Usually some time is allotted for members to warm up to personal communication and then work through some of the major themes in the session before reaching closure. The folklore around conducting groups suggests that it is difficult to become personally involved and productive in less than 90 minutes to two hours. Therefore, most groups meet for about two hours. Even so, it is possible to have group counseling in one-hour sessions.

Another aspect of duration involves the number of times to meet each week. Most groups meet once a week, although some intensive groups meet two to five times. A final aspect of duration concerns how many times a closed group will meet. A cognitive, topic-oriented group may run 10 to 12 meetings, and some encounter, self-awareness groups are also short in duration. There is no set number of meetings, but it takes time for a group to move through the stages to become productive if the goals involve more personal insight and change.

Preparation Interview. Yalom (1975) suggests that the preparation interview be used to help clients recognize and work through misconceptions and unrealistic beliefs or expectations about group counseling. The counselor may help members participate more effectively by outlining a structure or some con-

cepts about the group's behavior. The interview should focus on clarifying the client's role expectations, clarifying the counseling process, and providing video or audio models of desired client behaviors. Bednar and his associates (1974) recommended that a full explanation and description of the value of the expected behavior precede the vicarious learning situation. Cognitive learning should also precede such audio or video presentations.

Initiating the Group

During the first stage of the group, members get to know one another but reveal only their safer or more public information. They tend to describe previous experience that has been told before rather than personally relevant material. Members follow the usual social code of behavior with strangers, and from this socially appropriate behavior they begin to formulate an idea of the role each expects to play in the group. They often wonder if they will be liked and respected or rejected by the other group members, and they must deal with their social relationships in the group. They wonder what is expected, how much of themselves to reveal, and what type of commitment must be made to the other members.

People often behave almost entirely in terms of transference when they first meet new people. They project their unconscious fantasy objects onto one another and try to manipulate them accordingly. The members approach the situation by repeating old patterns of behaviors with new individuals, and this becomes the focus of future interactions.

The primary task in this first stage is to resolve the issue of engagement and detachment. The collection of people cannot emerge as a viable social system until they achieve this task. The realization that others have similar problems and experiences is the main mechanism for the development of engagement (MacKenzie & Livesley, 1984). The group needs to clearly identify the external boundaries between itself and the rest of the world. This stage establishes an identity of belonging to a separate group of people. The boundaries between individual members need to become blurred, so that members can stress their similarities. The demarcation of the external boundary combined with an experience of similarity indicates that they have become an established group and that the first task has been achieved.

The Undifferentiated Mass. At first the group is an undifferentiated mass, and an individual member selects one or two others for attention. Since all members are having a similar experience, the group is rather tenuous. At first there is an opportunity for the members to play their favorite roles; however, more reality soon begins to intrude into their perceptions of one another. Since the leader is known to all members, they can have a shared fantasy about him or her, and it is through this process that a new reality is formed that permits the members to confront one another. The members try to keep the leader differentiated from the other members as a remedy for their confusion, wanting the leader to rescue them with enough direction to reduce their stress. A differentiated leader does not necessarily produce differentiations among the

members. Groups often struggle with this process until there is a type of revolt against the leader that will bring out the differences in the members' attitudes toward the leader. However, the group cannot confront the leader as long as it perceives itself as a mass.

Watkins (1984) considers some of the unconscious aspects of communication. In particular, he describes transitional, derivative content, which is a communication among the group members that is symbolic of personal issues, disguised and indirect, and is used in a purposeful manner to test the group. For example, he describes an incident in the early stage of counseling in which a member discussed a woman in the neighborhood having been raped and other members became identified with this theme. This type of communication may be a disguised presentation of trust issues that the group members are feeling at this time. Although the example occurred in this first stage, the counselor should be alert for similar indirect presentation throughout the group process. Watkins discusses four interventions that counselors can use. They can remain quiet to permit the group to move at its own pace, but silence cannot be overused because of the danger of stagnation or superficiality. They can use reflective intervention to reflect a feeling related to a theme, but it should not exceed the group's level of awareness or readiness. If interpretation is used, it should be with extreme caution and with tentatively phrased statements so as not to create defensiveness in the members. Refocusing is an intervention that shifts the group's attention to another topic that involves a theme behind the transitional material. The purpose of this technique is to help the members refocus on their intended purpose at this time in the group. This intervention requires considerable inference, intuition, and appropriate timing.

Leadership Roles in the Initiation Stage. Dugo and Beck identify an emotional leader as important in the initial stage in providing expression to the members' concerns and questioning the task leader and the other members. The task leader is often the counselor during the initial stage, because the members have come to the group to get help from him or her. The task for this first stage involves the members' getting to know one another and their abilities to work in the group. The task leader (counselor) must help them begin the process of bonding with one another as well as with him or her. The other group members, including the emotional leader, help play a role in developing a feeling of closeness among the members.

The counselor's role during this initial stage is to reduce the threat to members and allow them further self-exploration. Counselors are encouraged to provide a relationship characterized by genuineness, positive regard for the members, and empathic understanding. The counselor will be instrumental in helping the members set goals, including process goals, general group goals, and individual goals. Process goals involve how the group will function, including the self-exploration and interpersonal interactions of the members. The more specific and operational the goals are, the more value they will have for the group. Effective development of the group requires that the members share an image of the group. Discussing their goals is one way for members to be involved in the process of achieving a common identity.

Engagement in the Process. For the group to move forward and for members to achieve self-understanding and eventually change their behaviors, they must become involved in the process. The process involves the group in providing a facilitative relationship in which all members feel safe enough to explore themselves. The exploration and interpersonal feedback from other members will lead to a greater degree of self-understanding as well as a better understanding of the environment. The counselor encourages self-exploration as a major goal in the initial stage but keeps in mind the different levels of self-exploration of each member.

At this stage there is not much cohesion in the group. It is a group of individuals having little or no sense of shared identity. The members have their own private ideas and feel isolated from one another. The only justification for calling these people a group is that they meet regularly with a counselor, who is the primary person with whom they relate. Some members will try to establish a structure by assuming their own type of leadership. As members respond to their conceptions of the group, they will offend others, and it is not unusual that there is a "fight-or-flight" theme in the group. The fight mood involves aggressive attitudes, while flight is psychologically moving away from an unknown danger. At the conclusion of this stage the group members are generally disillusioned and confused. Their preconceived ideas have been inadequate, and they tend to withdraw from complex issues and suppress their personal feelings.

The Stage of Conflict and Confrontation

Conflict and confrontation occur because the members are dissatisfied with the operation of the group. After an initial acquaintance time, they are frustrated in their attempts to evolve new patterns of behavior and work toward group goals. The task of the group is to recognize that differences exist among the members. The recognition of differences generally leads to a challenge of previous functions, and confrontation and conflict develop (MacKenzie & Livesley, 1984).

The counselor is perceived as a frustrating figure, because he or she does not fit the stereotype and tell members what to do. Some members will try to force a leader to be more active, while others will respond with open hostility or silence. Considering the unrealistic attitudes that members often have toward their leader, their frustration and hostility are inevitable. Although the members' frustration is first directed at the leader, it soon extends to one another. Differences between the members' real selves and their stereotypical images in the group may lead to conflict. Members challenge one another's reactions and insist on their own rights. There is a time in the group when there may be some suspension of the usual social mores and appropriate social behavior. Responses may lead to hurt feelings if they are taken personally rather than as part of the process of moving through this stage. Seldom does the whole group attack the counselor. Generally, individuals and subgroups defend the counselor. Considerable counterdependency and independence arise from this stage.

Members' Leadership Roles. During this stage a scapegoat leader may become prominent. This member may be more self-disclosing than others and

thus model and mirror the conflict in relationship building. The other members may put negative pressure on this person and even convey rejection. During this stage the emotional leader is crucial in accepting and integrating the scapegoat leader into the group. The emotional leader does not attack others but is free to enter the dialogue in a focused and less negative way. These two leaders can be instrumental in forming a solution to the conflict and establishing a bond. The task leader is usually the counselor and the one who can intervene in the conflict. When the counselor is the task leader, his or her role is to identify the conflict and hostility, take the role of a referee identifying fair play, uncover stresses, and help members establish constructive interactions (Dugo & Beck, 1984).

A member may emerge as the defiant leader. When the counselor tries to help this person, he or she may ask for help but resist any therapeutic nurturance. This behavior may lead the counselor to feel either uncaring or impotent. If the counselor and group members are unable to resolve this dilemma, it will injure their chances of becoming effective. The best solution to this situation involves helping such defiant leaders become more specific about their needs and accepting them while they move toward greater clarity and willingness to modify the norms in an appropriate way (Dugo & Beck, 1984). Counselors also need to become more open about their limitations, serving as a model for all group members to explore their own weaknesses.

Resistance. Conflict and confrontation are demonstrations of the members' resistance to the topic, other members, or the leader. Misunderstanding of the goals and procedures or avoiding work in an effort to get more structure from the leader are other forms of resistance. Counseling groups that focus on self-disclosure, self-understanding, and behavior change are apt to face more resistance than those that are more cognitive or task-oriented.

In many groups this second stage may not emerge early or may be avoided completely unless group members have enough commitment to the group to risk a confrontation. The conflict frequently occurs in only one session, but some groups may continue with individuals in conflict for longer periods. Without working through this phase of group development to establish appropriate norms of behavior, groups can develop only a superficial level of cohesiveness. It is in the process of working through their differences of opinion that group members are able to accept one another as real persons rather than stereotyped images and to establish appropriate norms for behavior.

The Stage of Cohesiveness

Following a period of conflict, the group begins developing feelings of cohesiveness, with an increase of mutual trust and group morale. Cohesiveness refers to the level of "groupness," "we-ness," or solidarity. At times there may be a difference between an individual's level of cohesiveness and that of the total group.

During this stage the group will experience intimacy and explore its implications. This process can occur as members understand themselves and others

in depth, since "intimacy" without mutual self-knowledge is only a facade (MacKenzie & Livesley, 1984). The members are in a here-and-now relationship with one another. The emotional leader can model the strain that group members feel between the wish for deeper bonds with others and the wish to deny this need. The emotional leader may seek acknowledgment of a special bond with the counselor. This allows the counselor to become involved in the group in a more human relationship, not only with the emotional leader but also with the entire group. The scapegoat leader's role at this time may be to openly acknowledge caring for the task leader.

Commitment to the Process. In addition to complying with the norms established by the counselor and establishing their own norms at this stage, the members must be personally committed to the counseling process for any real behavior change to occur. Kelman (1963) wrote that the members' commitment to counseling took place through identification with the counselor and with the group. Successful individual changes depend largely on an association, however temporary, of those individuals involved in the group. Identification with one another leads to a commitment to work together.

Members come to accept the group and one another's idiosyncrasies, and they respond more readily to subtle cues. Rather than giving a flat acceptance or rejection, members indicate tentative agreement or disagreement. By virtue of the members' mutual acceptance, desire to maintain the group, and establishment of group norms, they become a unique social system with its own values and internal arrangements. Although cohesiveness is an important precondition for productive work in group counseling, it is not by itself a curative factor. Many counselors believe that when the group has reached this stage, they are successful, and they permit the group process to stagnate. Yalom (1975) suggests that only when all emotions can be expressed and worked through does the group become cohesive enough to be mature and productive.

The group may regress or enter a second stage of group conflict, which arouses hostilities that have not been completely resolved. Many of these conflicts center on dependency or counterdependency. Defiant leadership emerges in a member who is experiencing some fear, hostility, or ambivalence about participating in mutuality. Often, the person is defiant by presenting counterdependency behavior yet wants to maintain some dependency on the counselor. The defiant leader may well be mirroring the feelings of other group members. It is important for the counselor to accept the limits of the group's ability to change someone who is not ready. The counselor must accept the defiant leader's need to act independently without punishing him or her.

The real test for the group is its ability to move out of this stage and become an instrument of action directed toward individual goals. The members may find it difficult to move beyond this stage, in which they enjoy one another but do not really accomplish anything. Where the bonds are genuine and strong, a remarkable amount of cohesiveness develops, and group members give the mutual, evaluative support necessary for successful behavior change. As some members discover that other members are insightful and productive, they attempt to follow their lead.

The Stage of Productiveness

After the group achieves some stability in its patterns of behavior, a long working process begins. Because they are deeply committed to the group, members may reveal more of themselves and their problems in living. In fact, individual goals may be redefined at this point.

The transition to this phase is signaled by a shift from the excitement of interpersonal closeness to an awareness that such involvement, if it is continued, must be combined with a sense of interpersonal responsibility. The task of this stage is to develop such responsibility by conceptualizing an appreciation of the fundamental uniqueness of each member rather than increasing the sense of intimacy.

At this time the members function as a group. In the beginning the group was dependent on the leader, but now members have developed some effective leadership skills and a pattern of distributive leadership in which realistic individual roles are maintained. The roles of leadership are assumed by many members, and the counselor serves as only one source of leadership.

The group structure becomes functional, and the norms of behavior are useful rather than maintained simply for the sake of rules. The counselor and members remain aware of the structural patterns of behavior they have developed, and they give constant attention to the work process. The group directs itself to members as objects, since their subjective interpersonal relations have been established. Members view individual behaviors with greater objectivity and show greater ease in making decisions and more flexibility in controlling group processes. Despite this movement, groups frequently regress from constructive behavior and may revert to a lower level of functioning before they regenerate into a productive stage.

Corrective Emotional Experience. For lasting behavior changes to occur, the member must undergo what Kelman (1963) called "corrective emotional experiences." These experiences are based on the manifestations in the group of the members' distorted, self-defeating, and troubling attitudes that also occur in their real-life relationships. The corrective experience can occur when members experience feelings and attitudes in the group situation as intensely as they do under usual circumstances. The difference between the group setting and the life situations is that in the group the individual is simultaneously encouraged to examine the feelings as they are occurring. The counselor and other members help the individual see his or her attitudes in their true light, recognize that they are distorted and self-defeating, and gain some understanding into their origins. As the person experiences the feelings, it is more than an intellectual exercise. This type of experience can be the basis for new insight into the attitudes and behaviors that are used in interpersonal relationships and the result of those behaviors. The new insights should lead to more realistic attitudes and behaviors.

The group influences members to overcome resistances and allow themselves to experience some threatening feelings at the same time they are being felt. Davies and Kuypers (1985) report that during the productive stage members increase their feedback to one another and that feedback is mainly

positive. It is the influence of the members that makes group counseling more effective than individual counseling for some people.

Insight is not sufficient. To be productive an individual must change behavior in daily life outside the group. Although new behaviors are tested within the group, the real payoff occurs from generalizing these behaviors to outside life.

Termination

Termination is an important part of the group process when members make a transition from the group to their daily lives and put their new learning into practice. This is easier when the counselor emphasizes the importance of taking action and making changes in attitudes and behaviors. The group members have given one another a good start and an incentive to continue the learning process after the group ends. During this stage the members may focus on ways of working through what they have learned when they no longer have the group situation for support.

The leader and members eventually deal with the ending of this temporary social system. During the termination stage the group must direct its attention to the external boundary of the group. Members frequently review the history of the group and recall critical incidents, and declare that the group has been a personally important and lasting experience. For many members termination is accompanied by a feeling of loss and separation, an analog of death (MacKenzie & Livesley, 1984).

The counselor must consider three forms of termination: that of the unsuccessful client, that of the successful client, and that of the entire group (Yalom, 1975). The unsuccessful member may leave early or remain in a closed group to the end without really making attitude or behavior changes. Very little is written about clients who continue through a closed group to termination and yet do not make changes. Most of the literature focuses on people who prematurely leave an open group. McGee, Schuman, and Racusen (1972) described three forms of premature termination. The first type involves the member's avoidance of dealing with the importance of the loss. The person may separate by denying or repressing and using a letter or phone call to the counselor. This type of separation usually occurs during the early stages of the group when there is an insufficient level of cohesiveness. A second type of termination is considered a "flight into health." The client has achieved some self-exploration and some understanding and has started experimental behavior changes. The person may feel no need to continue in the group. It is difficult to discourage an individual from termination; however, when the member has not successfully made the generalization to outside life, termination may be premature. A third level of termination occurs when a member has successfully developed insight and made some behavior changes and is now unwilling to proceed further. Such clients may feel that they will make future behavior changes on their own.

Terminating successful members from the group is an extended and comprehensive process. It involves their openly acknowledging what the group has meant and how they will function without it. The other group members should

also acknowledge what the departing person has meant to them and how they will feel about functioning without him or her. The procedure may begin with the individual making some indication of an intent to leave the group. This is followed by a discussion of the client's plan and its implications for the individual and group members. The member attends his or her last meeting, and the aspect of finality forces the terminating member and the other group members to examine the concept of loss. The group members usually discuss the termination and its implications during the next few sessions.

In a closed group, the last meeting is fixed in advance. The members approach the last meetings by spending some effort generating new interpretations of problems, noting successful events, and examining the group's failures. It is common for clients to express their wish to have had a closer relationship with the counselor, and there is often pressure on the counselor to affirm the extraordinary quality of the group.

In their research into the developmental stages of a group, Davies and Kuypers (1985) reported a definite termination phase in which the members' behavior changes. There is an increase in the frequency of feedback at this point, with most of it being positive. In fact, their study reports that the amount of feedback tends to increase over the lifetime of the group and that the feedback tends to be more positive over time. However, frustration, insecurity, and anger sometimes emerge in the last sessions. Some of these feelings may have been unexpressed or dealt with through the group's sessions, but anxiety and hostility also serve as distancing devices for a separation. People frequently withdraw by first expressing their negative feelings and then their positive feelings. Although the group did not accomplish as much as the members had hoped, they generally express that knowing one another has been significant and confirm that their choice to be in the group was a good one.

Summary

Counseling provides many types of group experiences. Although counselors may conduct encounter groups or training groups, most will focus on group counseling and therapy. A thorough knowledge of group dynamics is imperative before starting to provide any of these services. Counselors need to understand the significance of group goals, structures, norms, and cohesiveness in the functioning of any group. In addition to knowledge and understanding, the counselor must have skills in helping the members establish goals, develop a structure and norms of behavior, and achieve the cohesiveness necessary for members to form an effective working environment to assist one another in achieving their goals.

The counselor is aware of the various membership roles that are necessary to help the group function appropriately and facilitate individual members in assuming new roles as well as those more natural for them. Likewise, counselors are aware of their own characteristics that they use in helping individual members as well as the whole group.

Groups go through a series of stages: initiating the process, experiencing

126 Chapter 6

conflict, becoming cohesive, focusing on productive behaviors, and terminating. Each stage finds both members and leaders performing leadership roles, including those of the task leader, the emotional leader, the scapegoat leader, and the defiant leader.

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