

PREFACE

Groups are a part of everyday life. We are born into a family group, and many of the most important events of our lives take place in the educational, recreational, and work groups of which we are a part. Almost everyone is influenced daily by some type of group, and it can be justifiably argued that we truly become human through our interactions in groups. Sometimes just the memory of a group experience or the attractions of an upcoming group event can have a powerful impact on us. The groups with which we directly and indirectly associate affect us all.

The helping professions have worked with people in groups since the end of the 19th century. Professionals realize that, if used properly, groups have the power to help, heal, direct, and support. Working with persons in groups has become an increasingly popular, diverse, and viable means of promoting change and the accomplishment of tasks. Because each group is different, group workers must be equipped with a variety of skills.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

My purpose in writing this new edition of *Groups* was not only to update the text with the latest research but to make the seventh edition more user friendly, interesting, scholarly, and relevant. To improve the book, I initially looked at how it was organized and how the flow of the chapters could be enhanced to help readers more readily learn the essentials of working with groups. With this goal in mind, I focused particularly on incorporating into the text examples and exercises that could give the reader more practical techniques for conducting a group. I also wanted to give the reader more examples of different types of groups and to provide creative methods for working with groups.

I was able to accomplish all of these goals, and thus there are a number of substantial differences in this seventh edition when compared to the previous edition of this book. Major and important new features to this seventh edition are as follows:

- More than 120 new references have been added and incorporated into the body of the text. These references are all new from the last edition. Numerous older references have been deleted as well, making the book more current than ever and more evidence based.
- Chapter overviews have been added, giving the reader an idea of the important points covered in the chapter.
- Brief introductory stories have been added to the beginning of each chapter.
- The number of chapters has been reduced from 17 to 16.
- The chapter in previous editions on the history of groups has been shortened, simplified, and made into Appendix A with an accompanying chart (Appendix B) to make it more readable.
- New material and updates on previous material covered in the book have been added to each chapter. Some of the most notable additions include those that focus on social justice, creativity (particularly the work of Keith Sawyer), different specialty groups throughout the life span, technology and group work, brief groups, and groups for older adults.
- A new appendix, Appendix C, has been added, entitled “Some Prominent Self-Help Group Organizations.” It lists prominent mental health associations that deal with troublesome behaviors, such as addiction and eating disorders, and do so largely in self-help/mutual help formats.

ORGANIZATION

This book, like previous editions, examines essential skills required to be an effective worker with groups in multiple settings.

Part 1 of this text (Chapters 1–7) concentrates on types of groups (task/work, psychoeducation, counseling, psychotherapy, and mixed) and how they develop, including their stages and dynamics. Skilled group workers must be aware of and comfortable in dealing with the dynamics and the development of groups over time, from their forming to their adjourning.

Part 2 (Chapters 8–10) focuses on ethics, legal issues, diversity, social justice, creativity, and special kinds of groups. Ethical and legal aspects of working in groups are discussed, along with specialty groups and the influence of culture, social justice, and creativity on groups.

Part 3 (Chapters 11–14) examines the role of groups throughout the life span. These chapters cover issues and procedures for working with groups that focus on children, adolescents, adults, and older adults. Each of these age-and-stage groups has special needs that can be addressed positively in a group setting. Different types of groups appropriate for various life-span periods and circumstances are highlighted and discussed.

The final part of this book (Chapters 15 and 16) concentrates on theoretical approaches to leading groups, describing eight of the most prominent approaches. Each theory is examined in regard to its premises, practices, leadership, emphases, outcomes, strengths, and limitations. The specific theories explored here are transactional analysis, reality therapy, Adlerian, person-centered, existential, Gestalt, rational-emotive behavior therapy, and psychodrama.

A PERSONAL NOTE

I decided to write this book after reflecting on my own experiences in groups. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, I was exposed to a variety of groups, including what were then known as T-groups. I participated in group marathons, psychoeducational groups, self-help groups, task groups, and counseling groups. I took formal courses in conducting groups at Yale, Wake Forest, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Later, I joined such organizations as the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) and the North Carolina Group Behavior Society. In my initial employment at a mental health center, I was required to lead psychotherapy, counseling, and psychoeducational groups. In private practice and in my duties as a college professor and administrator, I have added task/work groups as a part of my experience.

Fortunately, I have had some excellent instructors and colleagues over the years. They include Wesley Hood, Larry Osborne, Peg Carroll, Diana Hulse-Killacky, Jerry Donigian, Bob Conyne, Chuck Kormanski, Rosie Morgannet, Beverly Brown, Janice DeLucia-Waack, Marianne Schubert, Johnne Armentrout, and John Anderson. I have also been enriched as a practitioner and a writer from my experience as president of the ASGW and editor of the *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*.

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My family group, to whom all editions of this book have been dedicated, has been patient and supportive during my writing and rewritings. My wife, Claire, has given me encouragement, support, and a healthy helping of humor throughout this process. My children—Ben, Nate, and Tim—were 4, 2, and just born, respectively, when I began this project. They are now 28, 26, and 24. Time goes by quickly, and writing a revision of the book every four years has helped me keep track of their lives and mine individually and collectively.

CONCLUSION

In concluding the seventh edition of *Groups*, I am more aware than ever of the importance of collaboration in accomplishing goals and fulfilling dreams. The poet John Donne was correct in reminding us that we are not isolated islands sufficient unto ourselves. We are connected to humanity and have the power to help or hinder one another's growth and development. It is in the mixing of personalities and processes that the heart of group work lies, through which our past gains meaning, and from which our present and future are created.

Samuel T. Gladding

Types of Groups and Group Work

I live in a group
that contains many groups
all spinning in different cycles
like planets around the sun.
In each I am me,
differently,
distinctively,
collectively,
and freely.*

**From "Planets" © 2010 by Samuel T. Gladding. Reprinted by permission from Samuel T. Gladding.*



Monkey Business/Fotolia

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

From reading this chapter, you will learn about

- Different classifications of groups and examples of each:
 - task/work,
 - psychoeducational,
 - counseling,
 - psychotherapy,
 - mixed

AS YOU READ, CONSIDER

- The need for each type of group
- The intended outcomes of each type of group
- What types of groups you have been in or seen demonstrated and their effectiveness

On April 11, 1970, Apollo 13, the third Apollo mission intended to land men on the moon, was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida. As portrayed in the movie *Apollo 13*, a mid-mission oxygen tank explosion not only aborted the goal of the mission but put the lives of the astronauts aboard in jeopardy. To survive, the crew of the mission shut down the command module and used the lunar module as a “lifeboat” during the return trip to Earth. Despite great hardship caused by limited power, loss of cabin heat, and a shortage of potable water, the crew returned safely to Earth on April 17, but only because a group of engineers devised a method to help them meet their needs. The engineers took materials available within the spacecraft that had been designed for one function and found ways to connect them to serve other functions so that the astronauts could survive. If there ever was a time when the wisdom and power of a group prevailed in the face of overwhelming odds, it was this mission, and the creativity that went on within the engineering group behind the scenes after the astronauts sent back word to Mission Control: “Houston, we’ve had a problem.”

Groups, whether on rescue or routine missions, are a part of everyday life and are defined in many ways. Not every gathering or collection of people qualifies as a group, because they may lack an awareness and purpose of seeing themselves as such (Meneses, Ortega, & Navarro, 2008). The following definition, adapted and modified from Johnson and Johnson (2013), encompasses the main qualities of groups. A **group** is a collection of two or more individuals who meet face to face or virtually in an interactive, interdependent way, with the awareness that each belongs to the group and for the purpose of achieving mutually agreed-on goals. From family councils to town meetings, groups are an important component of everyday life. Healthy groups are contextually unique, are complex in regard to their multiple transactions, and are open systems as well (Conyne & Bemak, 2004).

Groups vary according to type and purpose. There are four distinct group specializations: task/work, psychoeducational, counseling, and psychotherapy. The Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) (1991, 2000) has defined and developed standards for each. Within these types of groups are multiple purposes—for example, remediation, development, prevention, skill training, and problem solving. There may be several types of groups that meet the purpose of individuals joining them. For example, a psychoeducational group may be preventive and skill focused, whereas a task/work group may be remedial, preventive, and problem solving. Thus, it is prudent to focus on types of groups initially, because a number of types of groups can be beneficial to individuals seeking help.

That group work is effective has been established through multiple research-based studies (Ward & Ward, 2014). Developing standards and competencies for group workers was a major breakthrough complementing the evolution of the group work literature. Explicitly defining specific group types and establishing skills that need to be acquired and developed in each has fostered evidence-based interventions (Ward, 2006). Furthermore, exemplary training models set up in educational institutions for each type of group have promoted the growth of competent group leaders. Having such models allows programs that prepare group specialists from a variety of disciplines to point to examples of what should be done in the preparation process of forming a group as well as in the implementation of groups (Conyne, Wilson, & Ward, 1997).

Groups, if run well, are dynamic. They include numerous **activities**, which are verbal and nonverbal undertakings a group and its members participate in, such as expressing themselves in different ways and interacting with others. Activities rarely produce meaningful learning in and of themselves. “Rather, it is the carefully selected and planned use of an activity, targeted for a specific purpose with a specific group,” that when processed effectively is likely to lead to or promote change and understanding (Nitza, 2014, p. 95). For example, Jill may be asked to

describe herself in five words to other group members as the group begins. If Jill is not asked or allowed to explain why she picked the words she did, the activity will soon be forgotten and useless. However, if Jill is given an opportunity to explore the words she picked and why, she and other group members are likely to understand her better.

In human service occupations, groups have usually been thought of as dedicated to mental health issues, but they may focus on task and education agendas as well. Today, the concept of group work is broad. That is why the Association for Specialists in Group Work (2000) defines **group work** as

a broad professional practice involving the application of knowledge and skill in group facilitation to assist an interdependent collection of people to reach their mutual goals, which may be intrapersonal, interpersonal, or work related. The goals of the group may include the accomplishment of tasks related to work, education, personal development, personal and interpersonal problem solving, or remediation of mental and emotional disorders. (pp. 329–330)

This chapter explores each type of group that has been well defined and that has educational standards to match (task/work, psychoeducational, counseling, and psychotherapy groups). Group work in the context of its purpose, structure, and intended outcome is also covered. In addition, other models, past and present, for classifying groups are discussed, especially the goals and process (GAP) model. The ways in which group purposes and skills can be combined are also illustrated through an examination of the ways in which self-help groups operate. By being aware of different types of groups and their purposes and group work as an entity, you should gain immediate knowledge and insight into a growing and essential field of working with people.

CLASSIFYING GROUPS

Before exploring the four different types of groups, it is important to briefly examine how they came into being. In truth, there is no systematic way these groups came to be recognized. Rather, the process was one that has developed over time and has come in spurts. In fact, the classification system for categorizing group work is still being debated, as is discussed later in this chapter.

Need was part of the reason for the development of different types of groups. Group workers needed a way to describe what they were doing and what could be expected. For example, **contact-focused group theory** was an early forerunner of the group type model. The focus of this theory was on the purpose of groups. Three primary contact groups described in this theory were group guidance, group counseling, and group psychotherapy. Mahler (1971) differentiated among these groups as follows: (a) the group's initially defined purpose, (b) the group's size, (c) the management of the content, (d) the length of the group's life, (e) the leader's responsibility, (f) the severity of the problem, and (g) the competency of the leader. To further distinguish among these three groups, Gazda (1989) emphasized that guidance, counseling, and psychotherapy groups could be viewed along a continuum with overlapping goals, professional competencies, and unique distinctions.

A model that was even more comprehensive and useful in conceptualizing groups was the **specialty/standards model** pioneered by Saltmarsh, Jenkins, and Fisher (1986). This model evolved out of the realization that groups differ in their purpose and functioning. Not all groups are created equal, and to try to conduct them in similar ways is neither prudent nor possible. Thus, Saltmarsh et al. set up a model of group work known by the acronym TRAC, with each letter representing an area in the total picture of group work: tasking, relating, acquiring, and contacting (see Figure 1.1).

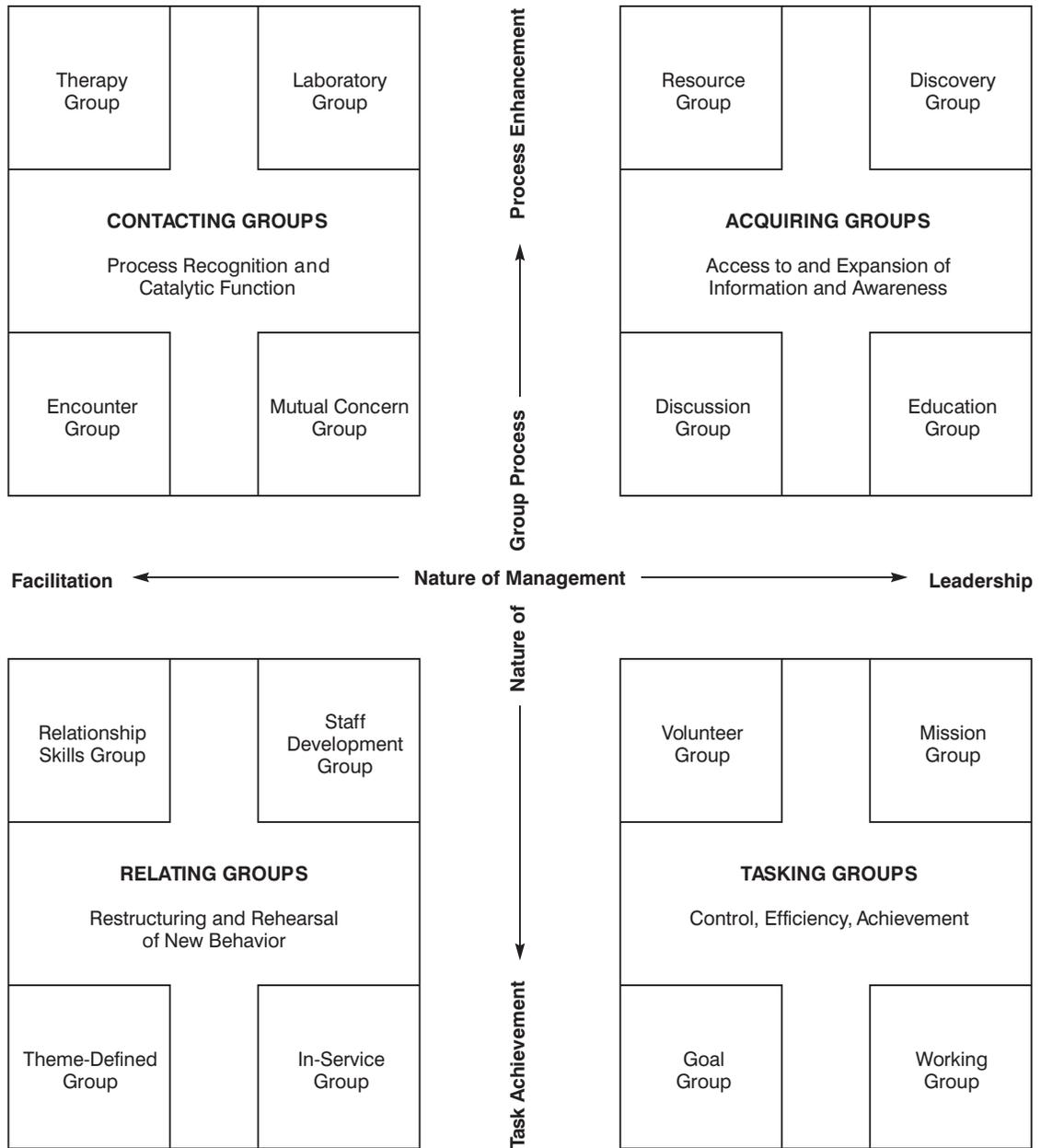


FIGURE 1.1 The TRAC map of group processes and management. Source: Robert E. Saltmarsh, Stephen J. Jenkins, Gary L. Fisher, Figure 1.1: The TRAC map of group processes and management, "The TRAC Model: A Practical Map for Group Processes and Management" *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 11, p. 32, Taylor & Francis—US Journals, 1986, 32.

The main characteristic that distinguishes one type of group from another in this model is the focus. *Tasking groups* are focused on task achievement. *Relating groups* emphasize the options for movement within the life of each person. *Acquiring groups* are directed toward learning outcomes that members can apply to others. In contrast, *contacting groups* are focused on the individual growth of members. (Saltmarsh et al., 1986, p. 34)

It is possible by using this model to explain how groups that start out in one major area (e.g., tasking) may move into other areas (e.g., relating). For example, a group set up for a special event, such as staging a race for a charity, may evolve into one where members simply enjoy getting together and hold frequent “reunions.” The **TRAC model of groups** clearly delineates group process and management and the types of specific groups found in each of four areas. It was the forerunner of the ASGW (1991, 2000) *Professional Standards for the Training of Group Workers*, which delineated the four types of groups that we now discuss: task/work, psychoeducational, counseling, and psychotherapy.

TASK/WORK GROUPS

Task/work groups “promote efficient and effective accomplishment of group tasks among people who are gathered to accomplish group task goals” (ASGW, 2000, p. 330). They are the “only group type not inherently formed with personal psychological learning as a primary objective” (Ward & Ward, 2014, p. 45). There are as many types of task/work groups as there are kinds of everyday jobs and assignments. The major types of tasking groups, according to Saltmarsh et al. (1986), are volunteer groups, mission groups, goal groups, and working groups. Task/work groups also take the form of “task forces, committees, planning groups, community organizations, discussion groups, and learning groups” (ASGW, 1991, p. 14).

Regardless of type or form, all task/work groups emphasize accomplishment and efficiency in successfully completing identified external work goals (a performance, an assignment, or a finished product) through collaboration (Falco & Bauman, 2014; Stanley, 2006). Skillfully led work groups engage workers in a process where problems are identified and explored and collaborative solutions are developed and implemented (Letendre, Gaillard, & Spath, 2008). Unlike other groups, task/work groups do not focus on changing individuals. Whether the group is successful depends on **group dynamics**—the interactions fostered through the relationships of members and leaders in connection with the complexity of the task involved.

Because task/work groups run the gamut from informal subcommittee meetings to major Hollywood productions or corporate transactions, the number of members within a task/work group may be large, but this type of group usually works best with fewer as opposed to more people. In an analysis of group size, development, and productivity, Wheelan (2009) examined 329 for-profit and nonprofit work groups in organizations across the United States. She found that groups

containing 3 to 8 members were significantly more productive and more developmentally advanced than groups with 9 members or more. Groups containing 3 to 6 members were significantly more productive and more developmentally advanced than groups with 7 to 10 members or 11 members or more. The groups with 7 to 10 members or 11 members were not different from each other. Finally, groups containing 3 to 4 members were significantly more productive and more developmentally advanced on a number of measures than groups with 5 to 6 members. (p. 247)

From her study Wheelan concluded that work-group size is a crucial factor in increasing or decreasing both group development and productivity. In small groups, unintended subgrouping does not occur and members may focus more on the tasks at hand.

The length of a task/work group varies, but most are similar to other groups in that they have a beginning, a working period, and an ending. Total quality groups found in business settings are a good example of task/work groups. These groups apply group methods “to solve problems related to consumer satisfaction and quality” (Smaby, Peterson, & Hovland, 1994, p. 217). Juries are another good example of task/work groups. The movie *12 Angry Men* not only illustrates how some task/work groups operate but shows the many facets of group process as well (Armstrong & Berg, 2005).

Like other types of groups, task/work groups run best if the following assumptions are met:

- If the purpose of the group is clear to all participants,
- If process and content issues are balanced,
- If the systems of the group as a whole, leader, member, and subsets of members are recognized and acknowledged,
- If time is taken for culture building and learning about each other,
- If the ethic of collaboration, cooperation, and mutual respect is developed and nurtured,
- If conflict is addressed,
- If feedback is exchanged,
- If leaders pay attention to the here-and-now,
- If members are active resources,
- If members learn to be effective and influential participants,
- If leaders exhibit a range of skills for helping members address task and human relations issues,
- If members and leaders take time to reflect on what is happening. (Hulse-Killacky, Killacky, & Donigian, 2001, pp. 21–22)

There are, however, at least two major differences between task/work groups and other types of groups. First, these groups may disband abruptly after accomplishing their goal. In this way they have the most similarity to psychoeducational groups that may end hurriedly because of time constraints, especially in a school setting. If members or leaders pay little attention to the termination stage in a task/work group, then members may feel incomplete when the group is finished. A second difference between task/work groups and other types of groups is that task/work group members and leaders may have considerable contact with others in an organization in which the group is housed. The reason is that task/work groups need input and feedback from people who are not group members.

Reflection

Task and work groups can either be rewarding or disappointing. What is the most satisfying task/work group you were ever in? What made it so? What was the worst? What factors contributed to your being disappointed in the group?

An Example of Task/Work Groups: Teams

Task/work groups “have great importance for our everyday lives, our jobs, our government, and our world” (Stanley, 2006, p. 27). A special type of a task/work group is a team. A **team** is a

group of “two or more people who interact dynamically, interdependently, and adaptively and who share at least one common goal or purpose” (Azar, 1997, p. 14). In this respect, a team is more than the sum of its parts. Just think of athletics teams, for instance, such as those in the Olympics or at the college or professional level. There may be some players who are more skilled than others, but if the team as a whole does not cooperate and work together to maximize strengths and abilities, the team will fail to reach its potential.

Teams differ from other types of groups in four main ways (Kormanski, 1999; Reilly & Jones, 1974): (a) They have shared goals, as opposed to individual goals, as in most groups; (b) they stress interdependency more; (c) they require more of a commitment by members to a team effort; and (d) they are by design accountable to a higher level within the organization. “A lack of commitment to the team effort creates tension and reduces overall effectiveness” (Kormanski, 1999, p. 7).

Teams differ from task/work groups in at least a couple of ways. For one thing, more interdependence and accountability are evident in a team than in a task/work group. In addition, in a team effort, there is more sharing of information and work toward a common goal than in a task/work group. The result is usually a greater bonding of members to one another and more cooperation and unity in achieving a common objective (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Table 1.1 describes other differences between teams and task/work groups.

Although teams can be classified in many ways, one of the more common is by setting. From this perspective, teams are primarily found within work, sports, and learning situations (Johnson & Johnson, 2013). Examples of teams can be found in environments in surgery (such as the 4077th M*A*S*H medical unit of film and television notoriety), exploratory excision

Table 1.1 Task/work groups versus teams.

Working Groups	Teams
A strong, clearly focused leader is appointed.	Shared leadership responsibilities exist among members.
The general organizational mission is the group's purpose.	A specific, well-defined purpose is unique to the team.
Individual work provides the only products.	Team and individual work develop products.
Effectiveness is measured indirectly by group's influence on others (e.g., financial performance of business, student scores on standardized examination).	Effectiveness is measured directly by assessing team work products.
Individual accountability only is evident.	Both team and individual accountability are evident.
Individual accomplishments are recognized and rewarded.	Team celebration. Individual efforts that contribute to the team's success are also recognized and celebrated.
Meetings are efficiently run and last for short periods of time.	Meetings with open-ended discussion and include active problem solving.
In meetings members discuss, decide, and delegate.	In meetings members discuss, decide, and do real work together.

Source: From Johnson, David W.; Johnson, Frank P.; *Joining Together: Group Therapy and Group Skills*, 5th ed. © 1994. Reprinted and Electronically produced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

(such as Lewis and Clark's mapping of the Louisiana Territory), and flying (such as the miracle landing on the Hudson River of a USAirways plane by its pilot, Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger). In a work team, the emphasis is on interpersonal interaction in which members' proficiency and success in doing their jobs are maximized and their efforts are coordinated and integrated with those of the other team members.

A second way to classify a team is by how it is used. Common uses include problem solving (e.g., ways to improve quality, efficiency, and the work environment), special purpose (e.g., facilitating collaboration between unions and management), and self-management (e.g., a small group of employees who produce an entire product or service).

A final way teams can be classified is in regard to what they recommend, do, or run. Teams that recommend include task forces that study and help find solutions for problems, whereas teams that do focus on performance (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). It is rare for a team to run something, such as an organization, especially a large and complex one such as Microsoft or AT&T.

A number of guidelines should be considered in establishing teams. First, it is important that teams be kept small, half a dozen members or so at most, because large numbers of people generally have difficulty interacting constructively in a group. Second, team members should be selected for their already-established expertise and skills as well as those they have the ability to master. Therefore, effective teams are heterogeneous, and their members possess a variety of abilities. In such groups, team members will often serve as "external memory aids" for one another and "divvy up what needs to be remembered about a task, with individual members remembering different aspects of the task and everyone knowing who knows what" (Azar, 1997, p. 14). A final necessity for forming a team is to bring together the resources necessary to function, including both tangibles and intangibles, such as materials, support personnel, space, and time.

Once a team has been established, it must be structured and nurtured. A crucial ingredient in this process is giving the team a mission and the independence to operationalize the goals that go with the mission. Teams function best when they have a meaningful and worthwhile purpose, such as winning an athletic competition or finding a cure for a disease. A further necessity in structuring and nurturing a team is to provide opportunities for team members to interact face to face or virtually and promote one another's success (Johnson & Johnson, 2013). Frequent and regular meetings are one way this may be done in a face-to-face way, but electronic communication, such as e-mail, Skype, and phone time, can also be counted as time spent together.

Other matters that must be attended to in structuring and nurturing a team, according to Johnson and Johnson (2013), include the following:

- Paying particular attention to first meetings, especially what those in authority do in such meetings because they are the role models for the members
- Establishing clear rules of conduct, especially pertaining to attendance, discussion, confidentiality, productivity of members, and constructive confrontation
- Ensuring accountability of the team as a whole and its members individually
- Showing progress, especially obtaining easy goals early in the life of the group
- Exposing the team to new information and facts that help them redefine and enrich their understanding of their mission, purpose, and goals
- Providing training to enhance both task/work and teamwork skills
- Having frequent team celebrations and opportunities to recognize members' contributions to the team success
- Ensuring frequent team-processing sessions so the team can examine how effectively it is working and discuss ways to improve

Overall, teams that function best emphasize continuous improvement of themselves on an interpersonal, process, and product basis. They work as a group to create a culture that is supportive for members—one that gives them a sense of identity. At the same time, team members focus on specific goals and missions they wish to accomplish and make sure their energy is constantly focused on outcomes that are directly related to their purpose. Effective teams also train together, with the result being better performance over time, increased productivity, and fewer mistakes (Azar, 1997). Teamwork is a set of skills that must be developed through practice and feedback (Levi, 2014).

Case Example

Bradley at the Bat

Bradley has always loved baseball. He was never a great player, but he has now joined the city recreation league and is a member of his company's team. He plays second base, and his colleagues applaud him for both his effort and, at times, his efficiency.

Bradley is the lead-off batter. His job is to get a hit and get on base. He finds that whenever he comes to the plate his teammates cheer for him whether he gets a hit or not. That makes him feel good, and as a result he tries harder.

Bradley has noticed recently that he is becoming closer to his fellow workers at his

company. There seems to be a spillover effect, and whether he is at the ballpark or at his computer, Bradley is trying hard to do a good job. He notices that he and others now, regardless of where they are, use phrases such as “Let’s have a winning attitude here” and “Let’s do this—for the team!”

Questions

When have you seen a team positively affecting one of its members? What do you think this says about the power of teams and teamwork?

PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL GROUPS

Psychoeducational groups were originally developed for use in educational settings, specifically public schools. “The developmental nature of psychoeducational groups [proved] very useful when working with children’s self-concepts and attitudes toward school” (Villalba, 2003, p. 264). One of the first types of groups to evolve in the development of group work, psychoeducational groups were premised on the idea that education is treatment not only because of the knowledge acquired in the process but also because of the perceptions that may be changed as a result (M. Young, 2013). Basically, psychoeducational groups, with well-organized and structured activities and exercises, help increase the self-worth of participants (Villalba, 2003). Because of their structure, psychoeducational groups, in many instances, lend themselves to work with cultural diverse populations (Champe & Rubel, 2012). Furthermore, drawing on Yalom’s research on therapeutic factors, these groups provide information, socializing techniques, hope, and modeling (Waldo, Kerne, & Kerne, 2007). Sometimes psychoeducational groups are simply referred to as **educational groups** or **guidance groups**.

Regardless of the name, “psychoeducation group work emphasizes using education methods to acquire information and develop related meaning and skills” (Brown, 1997, p. 1). Thus, psychoeducational groups are able to function on multiple levels and with a wide variety of clients. They can be preventive, growth oriented, or remedial in their purpose and focus. Because of their versatility, psychoeducational groups are increasingly being used in various settings outside of schools, including hospitals, mental health agencies, correctional institutions, social service

agencies, spiritual settings, and universities (Champe & Rubel, 2012; Christmas & Van Horn, 2012; Morgan, 2004). They include “discussion groups, guided group interactions, recovery groups, support groups, orientation groups, educational groups, or student-centered learning groups” (Rivera, Wilbur, Roberts-Wilbur, Phan, Garrett, & Betz, 2004, p. 391). Lefley (2009) has found that psychoeducational groups help members who have serious mental illnesses “combat social isolation, redeem self esteem and hope, and improve their life situation” (p. 369). Emotional support and education rather than psychotherapy in many cases is what is needed and valued.

“The overarching goal in psychoeducational group work is to prevent future development of debilitating dysfunctions while strengthening coping skills and self-esteem” (Conyne, 1996, p. 157). For instance, Hage and Nosanow (2000) reported that an 8-week, 90-minute psychoeducational group for young adults from divorced families helped participants “reduce isolation, establish connectedness, and build a stronger sense of their own identity and empowerment” (p. 64). In addition, Morgan (2004) states that cognitive-behavioral or behavioral approaches for offenders and mandated clients work well, especially if the psychoeducational group is structured on a topic such as stress management, problem solving, or life skills. Because of their flexibility and efficiency, psychoeducational groups may even be preferred in counseling and psychotherapy environments “when managed care policies demand brief and less expensive treatment” (Brown, 1997, p. 1). They may also be preferred when the leader has less clinical experience and wants the group members to realize immediately why they are in a group.

The size of psychoeducational groups will vary across settings (e.g., whether the activity is in a self-contained classroom or in a public lecture hall), but a range from 20 to 40 individuals is not unusual. In such large groups, discussion and skill practice can take place in subgroups. However, if subgroups are set up, they must be small enough to ensure that each member of the subgroup is not seriously limited in the available **airtime** (“the amount of time available for participation in the group”; Brown, 1997, p. 4). Therefore, subgroups should be limited to 10 to 12 adult members at most, and fewer if the members are children.

The leader of psychoeducational groups is in charge of managing the group as a whole, disseminating information, and breaking groups into subgroups when necessary. “Effective leaders are those who are skillful at managing time, are able to redirect the focus of the session when appropriate, provide considerable structure for the group, and are competent at helping members set clear, specific, and concrete goals” (Riva, 2014, p. 150). A leader who is not an expert in the group’s focus area must bring in someone who is. The leader’s responsibilities then include managing the expert’s presentation as well as the group’s activities. The juggling of data, along with processes ensuring that group members benefit from the group experience, is demanding. Timing is crucial, and the group leader must be cognizant of group members’ readiness to approach certain activities (Jones & Robinson, 2000). To do the job well, a psychoeducational group leader should take preventive steps before the group’s first session. These include planning for session length, session frequency, number of sessions, and what will occur within sessions (the curriculum). Follow-up planning for subsequent sessions is crucial.

In the planning process, it is vital that the leader focus specifically on the design of the group. Such attention to detail is a highly involved endeavor but has a tremendous payoff in keeping the group focused and on course (Furr, 2000). In designing a group, Furr advocates a six-step process: (1) stating the purpose, (2) establishing goals, (3) setting objectives, (4) selecting content, (5) designing experiential activities, and (6) evaluating. Such a procedure leads to purposeful and meaningful outcomes.

Although the length, frequency, and number of sessions of psychoeducational groups will differ according to the ages of the people involved and the stage of the group, these groups

usually last from 50 minutes to 2 hours. In general, psychoeducational groups work best when they have a regular meeting time, such as once a week. The number of sessions offered will depend on the purpose, but the range varies from 4 to 20 or more sessions. The average number of sessions is 8 to 10. Regardless of the number of sessions, psychoeducational groups should have opening and termination sessions and at least one session dedicated to each of the goals of the group (DeLucia-Waack & Nitza, 2014). However, all of these parameters are subject to change as “emerging policies on parity for insurance coverage of mental health services . . . influence the length and focus of many psychoeducation groups, as part of the mental health care system” (Brown, 1997, p. 13).

In general, psychoeducational groups stress growth through knowledge (ASGW, 1991, 2000). Summing up previous comments about such groups, Rivera et al. (2004) state that the focus of psychoeducational groups is on transmitting, discussing, and integrating factual knowledge. Because of this focus, psychoeducational groups are “amenable to certain technological applications,” such as computer-assisted programs, video and audio transmissions, and computer simulations (Bowman & Bowman, 1998, p. 434). Content includes, but is not limited to, personal, social, vocational, and educational information. Activities in these groups can take many forms but usually are presented in the form of nonthreatening exercises or group discussions (Bates, Johnson, & Blaker, 1982). For instance, in working with individuals who have undergone cardiac transplantation and their families in a psychoeducational short-term group, Konstam (1995) found that framing anger in a positive way helped the group to discuss this normally “taboo” emotion for heart patients. Furthermore, the group process helped members realize they were not unique in their experiences of anger. By the end of the group, anger had significantly decreased.

One way to improve psychoeducational groups is to give members *out-of-group homework exercises* (Morgan, 2004). For instance, instead of just talking about the positive aspects of anger, group members might be assigned a photo opportunity of taking pictures of anger at work in a positive way. They might find that mild forms of anger or frustration can lead to people planting gardens, paving roads, or clipping hedges, all of which have a positive outcome.

Reflection

When have you been a member of a psychoeducational group? What did you learn from the experience? How did it help you or give you fresh insight or knowledge?

An Example of Psychoeducational Group Work: Life-Skills Development Groups

A special form of the psychoeducational group is the life-skills development group. The concept of the **life-skills group** began to emerge in the 1970s when theorists such as Ivey (1973) and Hopson and Hough (1976) started using terms such as *psychoeducation* and *personal and social education*. In the 1980s, the momentum for this approach gained further impetus through the social skills and life-skills training methods advocated by Gazda (1989). The emphasis on life-skills training and its importance in society continues.

Life-skills training focuses on helping people identify and correct deficits in their life-coping responses and learn new, appropriate behaviors. Sometimes these corrective measures are achieved in individual counseling, but often they are carried out in a group setting. One example is helping parents relate effectively to their children with disabilities (Seligman, 1993). The focus of life-skills training is on immediate remediation and future prevention. The training itself is

primarily developmental, with the group emphasis being on “how to.” Activities within the group may include the use of films, plays, demonstrations, role-plays, and guest speakers.

A life-skills emphasis is appropriate for individuals in schools, colleges, families, work settings, clubs, and other natural group environments. Because many troubling situations arise in groups, the group setting provides an excellent place in which to work on resolutions. Because of the focus on life skills, such as increasing appropriate interpersonal communications or assertiveness abilities, “the growth process proceeds more comfortably, more observably, and with more precise attention given to the specific ingredients that induce change” (Zimpfer, 1984, p. 204).

Through life-skills training, people can be taught on an intrapersonal level how to prevent potential problems, such as depression, from occurring (Sommers-Flanagan, Barrett-Hakanson, Clarke, & Sommers-Flanagan, 2000). They can also be reinforced for taking corrective measures on behavioral and cognitive levels if difficulties arise. For example, Waldo and Harman (1999) found that the communication and interpersonal relationships between state hospital patients and staff improved and became more enjoyable when Bernard Guerney’s (1977) Relationship Enhancement (RE) therapy approach was used in a group with both.

A number of steps are involved in learning life skills, many of which are the same as those that Johnson and Johnson (2013) describe in learning group skills:

1. Understand why the skill is important and how it will be of value to you.
2. Understand what the skill is, what the component behaviors are that you have to engage in to perform the skill, and when it should be used.
3. Find situations in which you can practice the skill over and over again while a “coach” watches and evaluates how you are performing the skill.
4. Assess how well the . . . skill is being implemented.
5. Keep practicing until the skill feels real and it becomes an automatic habit pattern.
6. Load your practice toward success [set up practice units that can easily be mastered].
7. Get friends to encourage you to use the skill.
8. Help others learn the . . . skill. (pp. 53–54)

Through implementing these procedures, group members enable both themselves and others. The result is a kind of snowball effect wherein skills continue to build on skills in an effective and complementary way.

Life-skills development groups ideally offer both the opportunity to learn new ways of behaving and the support necessary to continue to exercise them. Leaders and members can learn through each other’s feedback and evaluations whether the strategies they employed have been useful and thereby improve their mastery or delivery of skills for future situations. Participants who profit most from these types of groups are those who have enough time and practice to fully integrate what they have learned in the group into their real-life situations.

Case Example

Patrick Practices His Psychoeducational Group Skills

As a group leader, Patrick wanted to experiment in finding out what methods worked best in leading a psychoeducational group for preteens. Therefore,

when he made his lesson plans for his four fifth-grade classes, he used different ways of presenting the material: role-play, lecture, PowerPoint, and a combination of these methods. He gave each class a pre- and posttest to see what they knew and what

they learned. He also measured how much they enjoyed the class.

Patrick was not surprised to find that the more active role-play format received the highest rating. He was also not shocked to find that the lecture method was least well received. Interestingly, the classes learned about the same amount of information regardless of the method used, and in a follow-up test a few weeks later, Patrick found that the class that used a combination of methods had the highest knowledge retention.

Questions

Patrick's results might be different from others because of his circumstances. Therefore, think of your own life experience and how you have learned best and with the most enjoyment when in a psychoeducational group. Were there methods used, other than those just mentioned, that helped you grasp or retain the material that was presented? What were they?

COUNSELING GROUPS

Counseling groups are preventive, growth oriented, and remedial. These groups are “generally considered to be a treatment mode that is equal in effectiveness to individual counseling” (Stockton, Morran, & Chang, 2014, p. 133). The focus of counseling groups, which are also referred to as **counseling/interpersonal problem-solving groups**, is on the improvement of interpersonal relationships and the intrapersonal growth of members through the help of the group. Members are not in need of psychotherapy or remediation (Ward, 2010). Although goals are personal, the group as a whole may share them. For instance, some counseling groups may concentrate on ways for each individual in the group to deal with disabling emotions, such as anger, whereas others may focus on disagreeable and crippling feelings, such as anxiety. Regardless, the interaction among people is highlighted, especially in problem solving. These groups emphasize group dynamics and interpersonal relationships and tend to promote cohesion (Waldo et al., 2007). Although psychoeducational groups are recommended for everyone on a continuous basis, counseling groups are more selective. They “are generally for people who may be experiencing transitory maladjustment, who are at risk for the development of personal or interpersonal problems, or who seek enhancement of personal qualities and abilities” (Merchant & Yozamp, 2014, p. 20). In other words, these groups are ideal for individuals experiencing usual, but often difficult, problems of living that information alone will not solve.

The size of counseling groups varies with the ages of the individuals involved, ranging from 3 or 4 in a children's group to 8 to 12 in an adult group. The number of group meetings also fluctuates but will generally be anywhere from 6 to 16 sessions. The leader is in charge of facilitating the group interaction but becomes less directly involved as the group develops.

Usually, the topics covered in counseling groups are developmental or situational, such as educational, social, career, and personal. They also tend to be of short-term duration. Counseling groups are a more direct approach to dealing with troublesome behaviors than are psychoeducational groups because they target specific behaviors and are focused on problem solving, instead of being aimed at general difficulties that may or may not be pertinent to every member's life. For instance, Finn (2003) described a nine-session counseling group to help students cope with loss in which members used artistic means, such as drawing, music, and drama, to access the underlying feelings and thoughts common to grief and process what they were going through. The focus in this counseling group was on a common experience, loss, that had taken many forms but that was disruptive in these adolescents' lives until dealt with openly.

A major advantage of counseling groups is the interpersonal interaction, feedback, and contributions group members experience from one another over time. Certainly that was true in the grief group just described.

One form a counseling group may take is **adventure groups**. This type of group was originated by educator Kurt Hahn to enhance emotional and physical abilities in clients by having them deal with safe but risk-taking events in the wilderness (Gillen & Balkin, 2006). Like other groups, these groups go through a number of stages. They focus on the promotion of long-term change and the opportunity to learn new coping skills. They may be used as adjuncts in hospital and clinical settings. Fletcher and Hinkle (2002) found that integrating an adventure component into an institutional setting produced positive results in participants, such as enhanced self-confidence, self-concept, and well-being. Other findings support enhanced benefits, such as more immediate insight and quicker movement through developmental stages within the group.

Reflection

If you started a counseling group, do you think you would incorporate physical activities, such as the arts or movement, into it, or do you think you would concentrate mainly on having members talk about their concerns? Why would you do what you do, and how would it help the group develop?

An Example of a Counseling Group: A Counseling Group for Counselors

Often counseling groups are conducted in schools or agencies with clients who want or need to focus on a developmental or situational problematic aspect of their lives, such as making a career decision or resolving negative feelings toward specific people or experiences. The purpose of the group and its members is clear.

The counseling group chosen as an example here, a counseling group for counselors, can be enhancing for several reasons. For example, it promotes a dialogue among members of a profession who may otherwise not meet together at any other regular time. One of the most important dimensions of this type of group, however, is to help counselors deal with what Kottler (2010) describes as the “toxic effect” that comes from working with people in pain. The **toxic effect** includes physical and psychic isolation, repeated feelings of loss in regard to client termination, and interpersonal distancing from family and friends who may perceive counselors as interpreting their words and actions. Thus, as Guy (1987) recommends, counselors need periodic, regular counseling to keep themselves well and functioning in an adequate and effective manner.

A counseling group for counselors can be conducted in a number of ways, but Emerson (1995) has set up an open-ended group model that appears to be most appropriate for practitioners in local communities. Her model is premised on Coche’s (1984) suggestion that experienced group counselors reexperience participation in a counseling group. Specifically, Coche states that this reexperience can help group workers go beyond blasé and stereotypical responses, make them more aware of group participants’ feelings, and resensitize them professionally to their power as group leaders.

In a counseling group for counselors, just as in other group counseling, self-disclosure and exploration of one’s strengths and weaknesses are important for the development of the group

members and the group as a whole. **Yearbook feedback**—that is, saying nice but insignificant things about a person, as high school students do when they write in annuals—is a tempting but nonproductive strategy. Instead, group members must deal with anxieties about their concerns as the group develops in an atmosphere of mutual trust where calculated risks are taken. When this type of behavior occurs, people who risk making themselves known and attempt to engage in new or different behaviors gain the most from the group experience.

Like other participants in counseling groups, counselors in counseling groups may experience some negative as well as positive outcomes. For instance, Gene may have suppressed anger and may erupt over what seems like an innocuous remark directed at him. In such a case, the group needs to help Gene recognize both from where his anger is coming and toward whom or what it is really directed. Likewise, secrets may keep Bogusia from sharing significantly with the group and may inhibit the group's development if they are not acknowledged and shared. On the positive side, the awareness of personal growth that comes in problem solving and sharing may lead to members developing greater confidence in themselves as counselors, friends, family members, or parents. For example, Cassandra may discover from feedback in the group that she is perceived in a positive way congruent with her own self-concept. Thus, she may become even more open and available to those around her.

Case Example

Cassie Tries a Counseling Group

Cassie was in a natural disaster and was having trouble coping afterwards. A friend suggested that she sign up for a counseling group offered by the local mental health authority. Cassie was reluctant at first, but after a few more sleepless nights, she relented and joined a group.

The group leader, Martin, made it clear that members were free to work on issues that were of most concern to them. Cassie chose her experience in the natural disaster. She was not the only person struggling with reliving such a bad mem-

ory. In the group Cassie was able to verbalize her anger, angst, and anguish. She was able to come to terms with what she did and did not do to help others and herself. As the group ended, Cassie, who kept a journal, told the other group members: “I was wrung out when I came to the group, now I’m right on.”

Questions

When have you felt it would be helpful to be in a counseling group to deal with a life issue? Is that still an issue you could use some help with?

PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS

A psychotherapy group is sometimes simply called **group psychotherapy** or group therapy. It is a group that addresses “personal and interpersonal problems of living . . . among people who may be experiencing severe and/or chronic maladjustment” (ASGW, 2000, p. 331). Such a group is remedial in nature and emphasizes helping people with serious psychological problems of long duration by confronting them with “their unconscious conflicts so that they may be resolved” (Lev-Wiesel, 2003, p. 240). As such, this type of group is found most often in mental health facilities, such as clinics and hospitals. The emphasis in psychotherapy groups is on therapy *by* the group rather than therapy *in* the group (Grossmark, 2007). As an entity, a psychotherapy group may be either **open-ended** (admitting new members at any time) or **closed-ended** (not admitting new members after the first session).

One of the primary aims of the group psychotherapy process is to reconstruct, sometimes through depth analysis, or to rectify through various treatment modalities the personalities or intrapersonal functioning of those involved in the group (Brammer, Abrego, & Shostrom, 1993; Gazda, Ginter, & Horne, 2001). The literature rather clearly documents group psychotherapy as an effective intervention for a wide variety of disorders, with client improvement supported in a vast number of studies (Hoffmann, Gleave, Burlingame, & Jackson, 2009). For instance, Semmelhack, Hazell, and Hoffman (2008) used a group-as-a-whole method with 11 severely mentally ill adult clients residing in a long-term care facility over 30 weeks. The **group-as-a-whole approach** is one where the therapist makes comments directed to the whole group that “reflect processes operating in the group in the here and now that seem to be out of the group’s current awareness” (p. 44). Through this approach they were able to bring about “a significant decrease in anxiety and a reduction in depression” when this population was compared to a control group (p. 58).

The size of psychotherapy groups vary from 2 or 3 to 12 members. The duration of the group is measured in months, or even years. The leader of the group is always an expert in one of the mental health disciplines (psychiatry, psychology, counseling, social work, or psychiatric nursing) and has training and expertise in dealing with people who have major emotional problems. The leader’s responsibility is to confront as well as to facilitate.

It should be noted that, although group psychotherapy is focused on severe problems, it is not wise or effective to include only individuals with personality disorders or diagnosable mental disorders, according to the latest edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Instead, a variety of individuals (a heterogeneous group) works best. To select such a group, leaders must prescreen carefully, preferably using prescreening instruments, such as the Group Therapy Questionnaire (GTQ) (MacNair-Semands, 1997). Leaders of psychotherapy groups most often operate from a theoretical position (e.g., psychoanalysis, Gestalt, existential). Three primary forces are operating at all times in a psychotherapy group: individual dynamics, interpersonal dynamics, and group-as-a-whole dynamics (Bernard et al., 2008).

Reflection

How do you think group counseling and group psychotherapy differ? How are they the same? What concerns, besides those already mentioned in the text, do you think would be appropriate for a psychotherapy group?

An Example of Group Psychotherapy: Group Work with Abusers and the Abused

Working with abusers or the abused requires a different approach from that used in other forms of group work. Individuals who are abusers, or who have been abused by others, have great difficulty in establishing healthy intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships (Vinson, 1992). They suffer from a variety of symptoms ranging from poor impulse control in the case of abusers to poor self-concept in the case of the abused. Many people in either category have trouble working through their problems on an individual level. Abusers “usually have long histories of abuse, extremely strong defenses against change, and relatively little ability to follow through on commitments” (Fuhrmann & Washington, 1984, p. 63). The abused, especially those who have been sexually molested as children, tend to shut down, suppress, or

distract themselves to the point of not dealing with what happened to them (Emerson, 1988; McBride & Emerson, 1989). In both types of cases, denial is a major means of dealing with present and past situations.

Group psychotherapy is often effective with such individuals for at least two reasons. First, many perpetrators of abuse and their victims are socially isolated and, therefore, welcome a structured experience in which they can “tell their story” and become more connected with others. Second, groups composed of members with similar backgrounds, such as abusers, are more resistant to manipulation by their members.

Almost all psychotherapy groups for abusers and the abused make use of basic group techniques, such as role playing, modeling, feedback, and confrontation (Fuhrmann & Washington, 1984; Vinson, 1992). The degree and type of change that occurs in group therapy is related to both the emphasis in the group and the group’s developmental stage (Wheeler, O’Malley, Waldo, Murphey, & Blank, 1992). Psychotherapy groups that work best are composed of volunteers who are prescreened before being selected. However, because of the seriousness of abusive disorders, some groups are mandated as a part of court-ordered treatment and are filled with openly resistant clients. In such situations, group leaders must know how to work with resistance, such as not opposing it, but talking it through. Because of the volatility present in abuse groups, co-leaders are often recommended.

Probably the abusive disorder in which group psychotherapy strategies are most prevalent is with addiction, ranging from “foodaholism” (Stoltz, 1984) to chemical dependency (Clark, Blanchard, & Hawes, 1992; Kominars & Dornheim, 2004). In such groups, it is helpful but not always necessary to have leaders with experience in working through the abuse involved. A group leader does not have to have been abused or have been an abuser to be effective with group participants in this personality reconstruction process, but a thorough understanding of the individual, group, family, and community dynamics that contribute to abusive disorders is essential. For example, if Zelda undertakes conducting such a group, not only does she need to have established expertise in dealing with the dynamics underlying the abused or abusers, but she also must have established a network of community resources she can utilize in helping her group members reconstruct their lives. See Figure 1.2 for a summary of the four main types of groups.

Case Example

Garrett and the Psychotherapy Group

Garrett has been in and out of the state mental hospital three times. Having read the book *A Mind That Found Itself*, he realizes that he is much like the author, Clifford Beers, who had moments of clear thinking amid times of despair. In one of his clearest moments, Garrett decides to enroll in a psychotherapy group to help himself.

The group is open-ended, with new members coming in all the time and old members leaving. Yet, Garrett finds that the constant leadership of the group worker keeps him focused on not getting too upset when his day is interrupted or when he makes

mistakes. He takes his medicine every day and talks about the time when he may no longer need medication. Overall, he is better adjusted than before because he is becoming more aware of himself and what he can do to help himself.

Questions

What people do you know, either from a distance or up close, who you think could benefit from a psychotherapy group? Do you think most people who need psychotherapy groups are or should be on medications? Why or why not?

Type of Group	Emphasis	Setting	Size	Duration Number of Sessions
Task/Work	Promote efficiency and effective accomplishment of group goals	Almost any environment—work, school, religious settings, community organizations, civic groups	Work best with 12 or fewer members because otherwise subgroups may form	Time depends on task, but most task/work groups last from a half hour to 2 hours. Meetings may be regular or spontaneous depending on objective and whether setting is formal or informal
Psychoeducational	Acquire information and develop related meaning and skills	Hospitals, mental health and social service agencies, educational and religious settings, work environments	20 to 40 is average	50 minutes to 2 hours. Regular meetings usually weekly—average number of sessions 8 to 10, although many may be just for one session
Counseling	Prevention, growth, remediation, interpersonal and group dynamics	Schools, universities, mental health agencies, employee assistance programs, etc.	8 to 12 adults, smaller size for children, may vary depending on whether open or closed ended	20 to 90 minutes on average with longer lengths for adults. Regular meetings usually weekly
Psychotherapy	Personal and interpersonal problems of living—some severe; remedial, reconstructive	Hospitals, clinics, mental health and social services agencies	Depends on whether open or closed ended	60 to 120 minutes. Regular meetings often last over a number of months or years

FIGURE 1.2 Comparison of four basic types of groups.

MIXED GROUPS AND A PROPOSED REGROUPING OF CATEGORIES

Some groups simply do not fit into any of the four major categories of groups just described; that is, it is hard to classify them as mainly task/work, psychoeducational, counseling, or psychotherapy groups. “Overlapping and blending of group types in the same group experience often best represents the reality of the evolving practice of group work” (Ward, 2006, p. 95). Furthermore, as Waldo and Bauman (1998) assert, the four main categories of groups are problematic “in that the goal and process dimensions of group work are combined within each category” (p. 164). Groups that defy classification are sometimes described as **mixed groups** because they encompass multiple ways of working with their members and may change their emphasis at different times in the development of the group. For instance, the Doctor Interactive Group Medical Appointment (DIGMA) is a “group intervention that combines the services of behavioral health and primary care” while combining elements of psychoeducational and support groups (Westheimer, Capello, McCarthy, & Denny, 2009, p. 151). It has been found effective in helping hypertensive male veterans reduce their blood pressure and promote healthy behaviors. Yet, it is a mixture of different types of groups.

Waldo and Bauman (1998) have proposed using multiple dimensions to describe groups. They point out that, although there are at least five dimensions that could be used in categorizing groups—goals, process, members, setting, and leader—“it is possible to arrive at a meaningful and practical categorization of groups through the use of the first two dimensions, goals and process” (p. 169). Their nomenclature for goal category includes the terms

- *development*, that is, forward motion and expansion;
- *remediation*, that is, overcoming or correcting manifest problems; and
- *adjustment*, that is, assisting members in coping with problems or circumstances that cannot be remediated.

The process dimension of their proposal retains three of the titles and process descriptions currently employed by the ASGW: psychoeducational, counseling, and psychotherapy. Therefore, when goals and process are placed as two dimensions of a matrix, they form nine categories of group work.

Waldo and Bauman (1998) have validated their goals and process, or **GAP matrix for groups**, by having independent raters categorize randomly selected articles on group work under this system as well as the ASGW’s four types of groups. They found much more agreement (100% vs. 33%) for raters using the GAP model and point to the utility, specificity, and research implications of their system as opposed to the four-group specialty system.

In response to the GAP matrix for groups, Conyne and Wilson (1998) point out that, although the system has many merits, if it were to be adopted as proposed it could undermine the ASGW training standards, which are a firm foundation for training, research, and practice and “whose positive effects are only now just beginning to emerge” (p. 183). Another drawback to the GAP model is that it does not consider task/work groups (Keel, 1998). Furthermore, the model is not as applicable as it would seem to such areas as psychoeducational groups for college students and, in fact, may complicate training for professionals entering student development and related fields (Taub, 1998b). Another drawback is that the model itself may need further refinement. For instance, the GAP model might be more useful if three dimensions (members, settings, and leaders) initially discussed by Waldo and Bauman were included as well as the dimensions of goals and process (Gerrity, 1998).

In response to the criticisms of their GAP model, Bauman and Waldo (1998) have revised their system to incorporate the four ASGW group classifications. Regardless, there are many examples of how groups may overlap in purpose, process, and content. For instance, a group might begin with multiple purposes (psychoeducational, psychotherapeutic, and task oriented). Such groups can be found among a number of self-help or mutual help groups.

Self-help groups and **mutual help groups** (i.e., **support groups**) are synonymous (Klaw & Humphreys, 2004, p. 630). They take two forms: those that are organized by an established, professional helping organization or individual and those that originate spontaneously and stress their autonomy and internal group resources—self-help groups in the truest sense (Riordan & Beggs, 1988). Although distinctions in support groups and self-help organizations can be made regarding leadership and control (Silverman, 1986), these groups share numerous common denominators, including the fact that they are composed of individuals who have a common, or single-life, focus and purpose. They are psychoeducational, psychotherapeutic, and usually task driven. In addition, members of these groups

frequently employ basic counseling techniques, such as reflection, active listening, and confrontation.

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s laid the foundation for the self-help and mutual help/support group movement. Minorities, especially African Americans, realized during this time that they would have to band together and rely on their own resources if they were to make substantial gains and obtain major changes in American society. Other factors, such as the success of earlier self-help and support groups (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous, Weight Watchers) and the failure of federal programs to take care of needs they were intended to address, also contributed to the momentum behind this movement.

Many support and self-help groups seem to be successful in assisting their members to take more control over their lives and function well. The narrow focus of these groups is an asset in achieving specific goals. For instance, support groups for survivors of natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, Superstorm Sandy, typhoons in the Philippines, or tsunamis, had an immediate positive impact on problem solving. Furthermore, they may have had a preventive effect in decreasing posttraumatic stress disorders by normalizing stress reactions and stress symptoms, providing a means for members helping others physically and psychologically, and being a source of understanding where individuals really felt listened to (Fernando, 2009).

There are hundreds of self-help organizations in the United States alone and “more than a 1,000 national, international, model, and online self-help support groups for a variety of stressful life situations—including mental health, addiction, bereavement, parenting, abuse, and more” (Merchant & Yozant, 2014, pp. 34–35). “Indeed, mutual help organizations exist for almost every major chronic condition and leading cause of mortality” (Klaw & Humphreys, 2004, p. 631). Furthermore, these groups are used: “approximately 7% of American adults (about 11 million people)” participate in them every year, and approximately 18% have done so in their lifetimes (p. 632).

A national survey revealed important facts about the characteristics of self-help group participants. First, with the exception of groups for eating problems (whose membership is composed almost entirely of White women), African Americans and Whites are equally likely to attend all types of self-help groups. Furthermore, individuals with low incomes (from \$0 to \$20,000 per year) are more likely to participate than are middle-class and affluent individuals. Finally, individuals who are divorced or separated and have less social support are more likely to attend groups than are married individuals and individuals with extensive social support. Given these data, we may conclude that self-help groups have significant potential to benefit diverse racial groups and individuals with low financial and social resources (Klaw & Humphreys, 2004).

In addition to the foregoing, within a self-help group context, a group member is empowered because he or she provides as well as receives services, and the positive self-identity of these individuals grows. Furthermore, “self-help groups can be successfully incorporated into professional programs in a fashion that enhances outcomes with little additional cost” (Klaw & Humphreys, 2004, p. 635). Thus, mental and physical health can be improved through the use of self-care groups. They can lower health care costs if used by health care and health promotion programs.

Some of the most common self-help groups are those for chronic conditions such as arthritis (Young at Heart) and psychiatric disabilities (Recovery, Inc.), as well as those established to combat leading causes of mortality such as tobacco (Nicotine Anonymous) and illicit drugs

(Narcotics Anonymous). A list of names and addresses of some of the most prominent self-help group can be found in Appendix C of this text.

Reflection

What surprises you about self-help groups? What facts about these groups did you already know or assume?

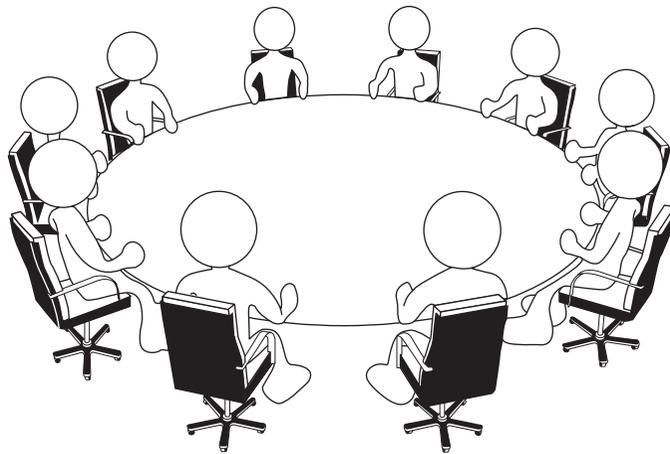
An Example of a Mixed Group: A Consumer-Oriented Group

A support group that encompasses self-help and functions from a psychoeducational and task/work perspective is a consumer-oriented group. Consumer-oriented groups, which are often groups that advocate for change and social justice, are formed on the basis of need and may be either short term or long term, depending on the problem or concern. For instance, consumer-oriented groups may revolve around long-term themes, such as protection and promotion of the environment around low-income neighborhoods. In such cases, these groups tend to be ongoing, with individuals joining or dropping out of the group depending on the sociopolitical climate and the impact of specific events on their lives. Short-term consumer groups focus on immediate issues, such as safety in particular locales, taxation, property values, or zoning permits in a community. These groups are usually spontaneously organized and less hierarchical than long-term consumer groups. After their issue is settled (e.g., new stop lights are installed, school zones are redrawn), the short-term groups usually disband. They work in such cases much like task/work groups.

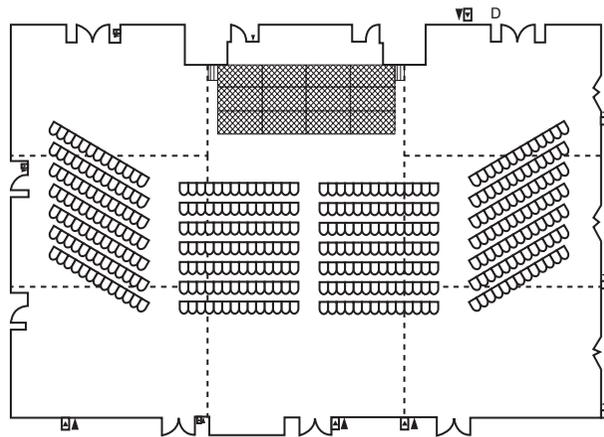
Consumer groups are sometimes impaired, at least initially, because there is no immediately recognized leader. When this occurs, the group must wait for one to emerge. Considerable chaos may ensue while members jockey for positions and direction. Consumer groups that are successful have both *rigor* (structure and a plan of action) and *vigor* (constant communication and contact with officials), whereas those that fail primarily have only one or neither of these qualities.

Consumer groups that meet in public and wish to elicit community support need to identify responsible people who will arrange for a variety of tasks that must be carefully and efficiently carried out if the group is to be successful. Many of these tasks are rather mundane and mechanical, but they are crucial in promoting the outcome of the group—for instance, arranging for audiovisual equipment and food, if necessary.

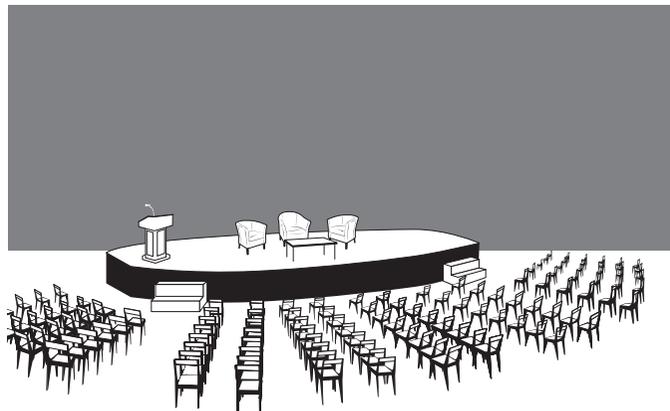
One of the more important dimensions to planning consumer group meetings is the seating arrangement of the room. At least three arrangements will enhance or detract from the task of the group, depending on how they are used (Wilson & Hanna, 1986) (see Figure 1.3). Consumer group leaders should be aware of these designs when setting up their meetings to enhance the use of their time and the resources of the people involved. For instance, if Benjamin, the leader of a consumer group, mainly wants the group to hear new information, he may arrange the room and program as a symposium or a panel discussion. However, if he wants group members to become active and discuss strategies for dealing with a particular matter, he may use a round-table format and arrange as many tables as needed to accommodate the size of the group. After discussing issues for a specified length of time, each table leader can then report back to the group as whole.



Roundtable



Symposium



Panel Discussion

FIGURE 1.3 Three ways of helping groups gather information and make decisions.

Case Example

Charlie and the Moving Chairs

Charlie loved working as the leader of an advocacy group of young professionals. He noted how smart and aware they were and how they were driven to achieve tangible goals. However, Charlie noted that of late, the group had become more lethargic, and not as much was being done inside or outside the group by the members. Therefore, he decided to shake things up, starting with the way the chairs were arranged in the room. Each week Charlie haphazardly arranged the chairs in different formations. In some of the formations, members could see each

other directly. In others, members' views were partially blocked or they actually saw the back of other members' heads. Charlie noticed there was more physical motion in the group after he started moving the chairs around, but he could not tell that it made a difference in any other way.

Questions

What do you think of Charlie's experiment? What else do you think he might have done to have helped the group refocus itself and be more successful?

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has covered past and present proposed categories for classifying groups. Past models include those that were contact-focused or specialized, yet flexible, as in the TRAC model. In 1991, the four major types of groups (psychoeducational, counseling, psychotherapy, task/work) as proposed by the ASGW became a standard for categorizing groups. This system was revised in 2000 when it was realized that some groups, such as many self-help groups, are mixed and incorporate multiple dimensions of the four ASGW group emphases in their functioning. The GAP group model is the most recent innovation in the group classification system. Its usefulness is now being openly discussed among group experts.

Group workers who narrow their skills to working with only one type of specialty group will limit their flexibility in working with people in groups. Although specifics can increase expertise in

a particular area, human service professionals, such as counselors, psychologists, social workers, and psychiatric nurses, are called on to deal with a variety of clients in multiple ways. Sometimes conducting a psychoeducational group will be more productive than running a psychotherapy group, and sometimes psychoeducational group skills are necessary to facilitate a psychotherapy group (MacNair-Semands, 1998). Working in task/work groups will be required regardless of what else the clinician does.

From case conferences to task force teams, everyone who works as a professional helper needs to know how to facilitate a group that is focused on achieving a product other than individual change. Therefore, it is essential to adhere to and master the standards and competencies that professional associations have laid out. Group work involves different types of groups. It is a complex and demanding process in its actual application.

Classroom Exercises

1. In a group of three, identify two life skills, such as applying for a job or making conversation in a social situation, that you think could be taught in a psychoeducational group. Outline the ways you would teach these

skills. Confer with another threesome about the skills they have selected and the approach they have decided to use. Select one skill and approach from your combined group of six, and as a group present it to the class.

2. Read recent periodicals in your library to gain a sense of how task/work groups and teams are used in business and nonbusiness environments. In a group of three, discuss the articles that each of you has selected. Share your ideas about ways to use task/work groups and teams in the helping professions.
3. In dyads, read and critique a recent research report or journal article on the effectiveness of a counseling or psychotherapy group. Report your findings to the class as a whole.
4. You have been asked to train a group of novice group workers and teach them about the four major types of groups. From what you have read in this chapter, how would you go about accomplishing this task? Would you incorporate the GAP model into your training? If so, how? Share your outline for presenting your material with your class.

Group Dynamics

Emotions ricochet around the room
 fired by an act of self-disclosure
 in an atmosphere of trust.
 I, struck by the process,
 watch as feelings penetrate the minds of members
 and touch off new reactions.
 Change comes from many directions
 triggered by simple words.*

**From "Group Dynamics" © 1989 by Samuel
 T. Gladding. Reprinted by permission from
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Monkey Business/Fotolia

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

From reading this chapter, you will learn about

- Group content and process and the importance of balancing them
- Group dynamics
- The differences and similarities between working with groups, individuals, and families

AS YOU READ, CONSIDER

- How much group structure is related to the success of a group
- How positive and negative internal and external variables can affect a group
- The importance of preplanning a group

In William Golding's book *Lord of the Flies*, the reader is taken through a process of events that depicts how young English boys gradually decline from proper to savage behavior. The boys are marooned on an island in the middle of the ocean after a plane crash, without any link to the world. They initially start to help each other out just as adults would do. But the group deteriorates, and violence and bloodshed result. In contrast, B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two* starts and ends differently. A thousand inhabitants of a planned utopian community live happy and healthy lives thanks to adhering to the principles of behaviorism. Both novels represent different aspects of group dynamics and how such dynamics affect a group.

Regardless of what groups people may be a part of, they need to be aware that groups are dynamic entities that have a direct and indirect impact on their members (Bion, 1959; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). "In any group, it is a mistake to ever conclude that nothing is happening within or between its members" (Conyne, Wilson, & Ward, 1997, p. 32). The presence of others may improve or impair the performance and development of persons, depending on their background and preparation (Zajonc, 1965). When individuals are accustomed to working with others and well prepared for a group experience, the group enhances their performances, and they add to the group. In contrast, when individuals are used to working alone and are not well prepared for a group experience, their behavior may be detrimentally affected by being in the group, and they may detract from the group as a whole. Thus, a **social influence** emerges in a group that manifests itself by altering actions, attitudes, and feelings (Asch, 1951; Festinger, 1954; Sherif, 1937).

Research taken from three separate disciplines—individual psychology, social psychology, and sociology—focuses on explaining these and other interactions that occur in groups and how groups influence their members (Munich & Astrachan, 1983). Basically, people act differently in groups than they do by themselves. As a general rule, **primary affiliation groups** (those with which people most identify, such as a family or peers) exert greater pressure on individuals than **secondary affiliation groups** (those with which people least identify, such as a city or a confederation).

Case Example

Alberto Wreaks Havoc

When he is with his family, 13-year-old Alberto is polite and well behaved. So it was a shock when Mrs. Hernando received a call from the director of the camp Alberto was attending during the summer asking that she and her husband come and get him. When the Hernandos arrived at the camp, the director informed them that Alberto had broken into the kitchen with several other boys and dumped flour all over the tables and chairs. When questioned,

Alberto could not give a rational explanation. He said he simply thought it was funny and that the camp staff would not care. He was having a good time with his new friends. His behavior at camp was far from what he displayed at home with his family and peers.

Questions

What do you think happened to Alberto? Based on what you have read, why might it have occurred?

The influence of groups on members, and what has grown to be known as group dynamics, was first studied as a phenomenon in work environments. Indeed, "the origins of group dynamics are largely in social and industrial psychology and stem from the efforts of experts in these fields to understand group influence on individual behavior and on productivity in the workplace and in other human groups" (Friedman, 1989, p. 46). Elton Mayo and associates at

the Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company conducted the initial landmark study on the influence of groups (Mayo, 1945). This research group investigated the effects of manipulating physical features in the work setting. It was discovered that physical aspects of the work environment were not as important as social factors within the work group. Changes in behavior as a result of observation and manipulation of conditions in an environment became known as the **Hawthorne effect**.

Although Mayo's work involved group dynamics, he did not describe it in that way. Rather, the term came from Kurt Lewin (1948), who was the first to use it. For Lewin, group dynamics includes everything that goes on in a small group. He was especially interested in how the climate of a group and its processes influenced the interactions of group members and ultimately outcomes. He thought many factors contributed to the overall concept of group dynamics, including the group's purpose, communication patterns, power, control issues, and member roles. For instance, a psychotherapy group for survivors of natural disasters, such as a forest fire or earthquake, has a purpose and intensity quite different from those of a research group formed to study the Internet's effects on community values. Member roles and interactions are not the same, either. The intensity or temperature of these types of groups differs dramatically. By understanding forces operating within a group and their interplay, group specialists are able to discern the nature of groups and how interactions among participants affect a group's development.

Reflection

What role(s) do you play in your primary groups, such as in your family or on your athletic or artistic team? How does your behavior differ in these circumstances compared to that when you are in a secondary group setting, such as riding on a train or plane?

GROUP CONTENT AND GROUP PROCESS

Included in the term *group dynamics* (forces within a group) are two powerful elements that have a major bearing on a group's development and productivity: **group content** (information within and purpose of the group) and **group process** (interactions and relationships among members within the group). The amount and mixture of group content and group process ultimately determine the dynamics within a group.

Group Content

Group content involves the actual words, ideas, and information exchanged within a group as well as the purpose of the group. For example, in a psychoeducational group, participants may talk about the facts surrounding the purpose of the group, such as how to prevent the spread of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or ebola. However, groups do not run well on facts and information alone. After some time in most groups, members have enough basic knowledge to accomplish their goals. This point does not mean that new and pertinent information should not be added to the group over time—quite the contrary, because groups absorb and deal with information developmentally. Rather, it means that more information is not necessarily better. Large quantities of information in short periods are not useful because it cannot be adequately digested. For instance, in a group for victims of a disaster, information on recovery is given in pieces over time because otherwise group members become overwhelmed, confused, or discouraged.

People in groups, just like people individually, do not make most of the important decisions of their lives based on cognitive knowledge. Instead, good decision making involves interaction with others in pursuit of a purpose. It is based on members having pertinent information, an opportunity to understand their options, and a chance to assess what they are thinking and feeling with other people they trust and value. That is where group process comes in.

Case Example

Professor Drone Goes On and On

Despite his sincerity and sense of caring, Professor Drone gets terrible student evaluations. He complains to his colleagues and tries harder each semester without making any substantial progress. He is knowledgeable and amicable, but his students do not like being in his class and do not learn a lot. The reason:

He drones on with lecture notes from the minute he starts class until the bell rings. Students do not interact except to occasionally squirm and roll their eyes.

Questions

What would you advise Professor Drone to do besides “try harder”? Be specific.

Group Process

Group process is the interaction of group members with one another, often in some meaningful way. For example, Joe may feel he cannot speak up in a group because another group member criticized one of the first things he said in the group. His lack of trust and inhibition detracts from the group because he remains silent. If Joe is an especially astute observer of people or has insight that would really help the group, his nonparticipation in the group hurts that much more. Regardless, other members will eventually notice Joe’s withdrawal. Then either the group will spend time attending to Joe—trying to coax him into contributing when they could be focusing on other goals—or they will criticize him even more, thereby alienating him significantly from the group. Thus, attending to process within the group is vital to the group’s well-being.

As groups develop, less time generally is spent on content material, and more is focused on process functions. There is often a relational paradox. Individuals, especially those who have been in nonmutual relationships, want to become connected with others. Out of a sense of fear or hurt, however, as with Joe in the preceding illustration, they simultaneously employ strategies that restrict or limit their ability to become close to others (Comstock, Duffey, & St. George, 2002). Therefore, they disconnect. They may reconnect (when trust is built) and enhance their connection (when they feel safer yet).

Seven types of group processes that most frequently occur in groups related to this paradox and the dynamics surrounding it have been outlined by Donigian and Malnati (1997):

- **Contagion**—In this process, member behavior elicits group interaction. For instance, if Bette talks to others in a group about her emptiness and loneliness, then she may elicit an emotional and physical reaction from other group members as some cry and some lean forward to listen more intently.
- **Conflict**—Matters involving conflict usually revolve around significant issues in people’s lives, such as authority, intimacy, growth, change, autonomy, power, and loss. All group members and leaders experience conflict during the life of a group. How a group leader

handles conflict makes a difference. For example, if in a group counseling session Rex, the group leader, pushes Stu to have a fight with Keith, Rex may be vicariously meeting needs he never satisfied in adolescence, but he may not be helping Stu or Keith to resolve their differences.

- **Anxiety**—The tension involved in anxiety and the uneasy feelings that go with it are universal. To cope with the discomfort of some emotions in a group, members typically employ one of two strategies. The first is a *restrictive solution*, such as changing the subject, attacking a group member, intellectualizing, detaching from the group, or ignoring a group member. Thus, if Karen feels uncomfortable discussing her personal life, she may flippantly say, “But my situation is just like everyone else’s.”

A second, healthier strategy for dealing with anxiety is to employ *enabling solutions* (Whitaker & Lieberman, 1964). These types of solutions revolve around open listening and discussion about the anxiety that is present. In such a situation, Roosevelt might say to Regina, “Tell me more about how you felt when your mother criticized you.” Overall, “anxiety is a mobilizer of group process,” especially if it is faced openly and honestly (Donigian & Malnati, 1997, p. 62).

- **Consensual validation**—The process of consensual validation involves checking one’s behaviors with a group of others. In this interaction, people are questioned, confronted, or affirmed either individually or within the group. Thus, in a group for overeaters, members might question one another about their interactions involving food to find out how unusual or common their behaviors are.
- **Universality**—It is comforting to know that others within a group have similar experiences and feelings. Such insight helps people feel they are in the same ballpark as the rest of the group members. In the universality process, this discovery enables group participants to identify and unify with one another. For instance, in a psychoeducational group involving families with adolescents, families in the group may be relieved to know they are not the only ones having difficulties with parent–teen communications. If a group is going to be productive, it is essential for universality to occur early in its development.
- **Family reenactment**—Families of origin continue to influence people throughout their lives (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Because groups resemble families in many ways, it is natural that some behaviors by group members are connected to issues they never resolved in childhood. The group is either helped or hindered by such actions, depending on whether group members are assisted in focusing on the present or allowed to lapse into the past. In the first case, the group member and the group work through issues. Thus, Pedro may say to Veronica, “I need you to help me hear what you are saying. Your actions are a lot like those of my mother, with whom I was constantly arguing.” In the second scenario, group interactions become distorted or toxic. An example of this type of behavior is when Sally repeatedly tells David, “I’m not listening to you. You sound just like my father, and he never had anything worthwhile to say.”
- **Instillation of hope**—In some groups, especially those involving counseling and therapy, many members may feel hopeless. They believe their environment controls them and they will never be different or change. It is, therefore, vital that these group members be helped to come to terms with their own issues. Through such a process, all group members can come to realize that their issues are resolvable. In such a situation, Kathy may begin to believe she can be different because William has gotten better and his problems were similar to hers when the group began.

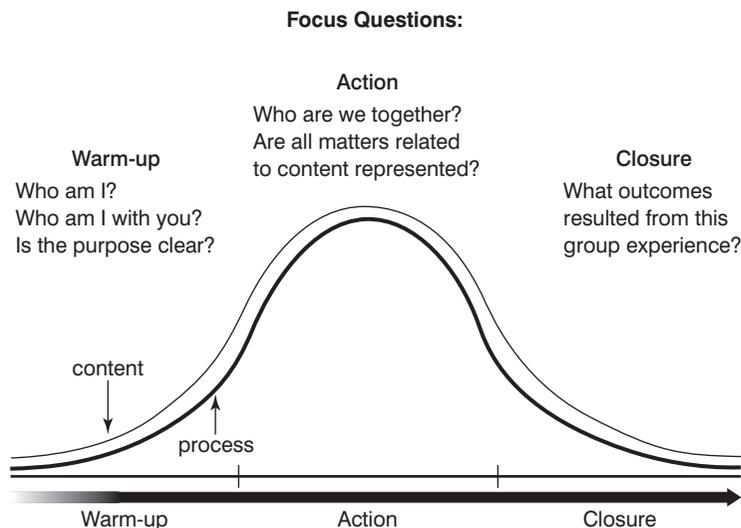


FIGURE 2.1 Balanced process and content. *Source:* From “Leadership in Groups: Balancing Process and Content,” presentation at the annual convention of the American Counseling Association, April 1994. Reprinted with permission of Diana Hulse-Killacky, Becky Schmacher, and Kurt Kraus.

Balance Between Content and Process

Process must be balanced with content regardless of the type of group being conducted (Kraus & Hulse-Killacky, 1996). Process, along with content, is at the heart of decision making. Leaders can use two sets of questions to guide the interplay between content and process (Hulse-Killacky, Killacky, & Donigian, 2001).

Content questions include:

- What do we have to do?
- What do we need to do to accomplish our goals?

Process questions center on:

- Who am I? [intrapersonal]
- Who am I with you? [interpersonal]
- Who are we together? [the whole group] (p. 9)

One way to think about process is to liken it to a river, whereas content is like a boat on the river (Geroski & Kraus, 2002). Regardless, interpersonal dimensions of a group take on increased importance as the group moves toward its objectives (Armstrong & Berg, 2005; Luke, 2014). The ideal balance between content and process can be seen in a bell-shaped curve (see Figure 2.1) in which content and process look like a single thread even though they are two separate fibers (Hulse-Killacky, Schumacher, & Kraus, 1999). However, achieving such a balance is not easy (Champe & Rubel, 2012).

When process and content are out of balance, there may be too much of one, or the two may not be intertwined. For example, a group can begin with an overfocus on process (see Figure 2.2). In such a group, an experiential activity that does not tie in with the rest of the group session is used to get members emotionally involved. For example, a leader may take one of the energizer

“Now for the first half hour tonight we are going to play some ‘noncompetitive games’ in the hope. . . .”

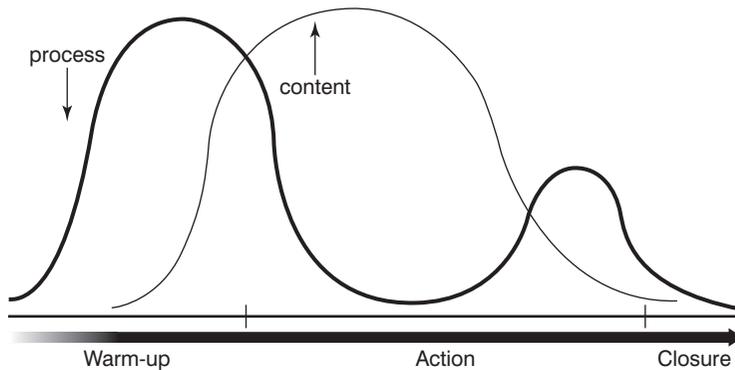


FIGURE 2.2 Process first, content after. Source: From “Leadership in Groups: Balancing Process and Content,” presentation at the annual convention of the American Counseling Association, April 1994. Reprinted with permission of Diana Hulse-Killacky, Becky Schmacher, and Kurt Kraus.

exercises from Keene and Erford (2007), such as “It’s Snowing” (p. 26), where everyone represents himself or herself as a snowflake in the introduction segment of the group and highlights unique personal qualities. However, in this unbalanced scenario, the activity is then never connected to the work of the group. Another such scenario may occur if Peggy, the group leader, has group members talk to one another initially about the most important event that shaped their lives and then moves onto having the group solve a problem concerning the selling of tickets to an upcoming play, without connecting the group experience to the work activity.

The opposite of such a scenario is for a group to stay focused on content (Figure 2.3). This type of arrangement occurs frequently in task/work groups in which members may not even be introduced to one another before the group leader states what the group will do for the day. In a

“We have lots to do today. So let’s get right down to business. . . .”

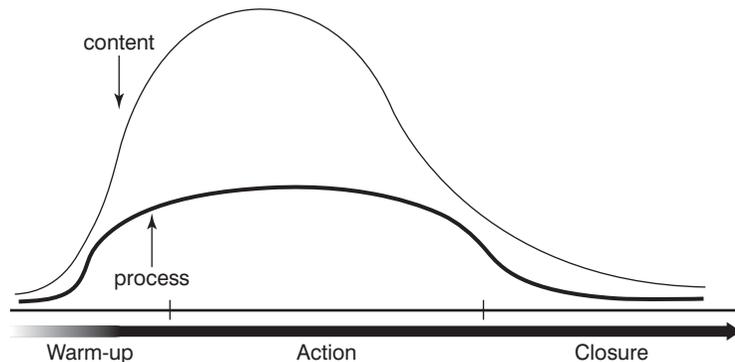


FIGURE 2.3 Content-inhibiting process. Source: From “Leadership in Groups: Balancing Process and Content,” presentation at the annual convention of the American Counseling Association, April 1994. Reprinted with permission of Diana Hulse-Killacky, Becky Schmacher, and Kurt Kraus.

content-dominated group, process is inhibited, and members often withdraw from the group mentally or physically because they never felt a part of it to begin with.

Therefore, groups that work well, regardless of their emphasis, are those in which members and leaders are aware of the need to have content and process balanced. In such groups, everyone works continuously to make sure neither gets out of line. Champe and Rubel (2012) suggest using focal conflict theory, a theory with psychoanalytic roots, as one way of balancing these two entities, especially in psychoeducational groups. The key to balancing content and process in psychoeducational groups using this theory are: “1) creating a safe learning environment, 2) engaging group members in each others’ learning, 3) exploring group members’ relationship to psychoeducational content, and 4) returning promptly to agreed upon content and content-related activities” (p. 87).

Reflection

What is the best-run group that you have ever been a member of? What made it so? What was the worst? What made that a bad experience? In your evaluation of these groups, think how content and process were handled.

THE GROUP AS A SYSTEM: A WAY OF EXPLAINING GROUP DYNAMICS

Because content and process must be balanced to have productive group dynamics, a question that arises is “How?” One answer is to think of the group as a **system**, a set of elements standing in interaction with one another (Agazarian, 1997; Connors & Caple, 2005). Each element in the system is affected by whatever happens to any other element. Thus, the system is only as strong as its weakest part. Likewise, the system is greater than the sum of its parts (Gladding, 2015). An example of a system is a living organism, such as a plant or an animal. However, a group can be conceptualized as a system, too. As such it is made up of three crucial parts: the group leader, the group members, and the group as a whole (Donigian & Malnati, 1997).

For the system to be healthy and productive, each of these parts must function in an interactive and harmonious way as a unit and with the other two parts of the system. Thus, if group members are constantly in conflict with one another, then the group will not work well as a whole regardless of how talented the leader might be. Likewise, if group members work well together but are led by a leader who is unable to use this strength, then the group as a whole will under-function. Finally, if group members and the group leader are both healthy, but no one in the group knows anything about how a group functions over its life span or the group has no goals, then the group as a whole will suffer.

Systems theory goes a long way in explaining how groups work and group dynamics (O’Connor, 1980). In a systems context, group members are always deciding between their needs for *differentiating themselves* (taking care of their needs to do things by themselves) and *integrating with others* (doing things with others) (Matthews, 1992). From a systems perspective, group leaders must orchestrate their efforts in helping members and the group as a whole to achieve a balance of individual and collective needs as the group develops. Multiple factors—such as interpersonal relationships, the mental health of the individuals involved, and the skill of the group leader—affect the group. The dynamics within the group are complex and connected. Although some factors influence others directly (in a **linear** or cause-and-effect way), most factors influence each other **systemically** (in a circular manner) (Bertalanffy, 1968; Donigian & Malnati, 1997; Matthews, 1992).

From a systems perspective, even small or seemingly insignificant events make a difference in the group. For instance, the presence or absence of a group member affects how a group operates. Similarly, the withholding or divulging of feelings has an impact. Even inevitable events, such as the passage of time, influence both the lives of group members and the life of the group as a whole. Consider, for example, the Beatles. During the 1960s, each member of this band—Paul McCartney, John Lennon, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr—changed not only himself but also the outward appearance, musical style, and performance of the others and the group as a whole. The Beatles of 1969 were not the same group in the way they operated (or even looked) as the Beatles of 1964 (Forsyth, 2013). The point is that groups as systems with many parts are constantly in a state of flux. In a more mundane illustration, if Bill feels uncomfortable in the presence of Norm and Nancy, then their absences from the group will most likely result in Bill being more active, which in turn will lead to new information being added to the group and a new interactive group process.

The complexity of working with groups as distinct types of entities must be properly understood to promote healthy atmospheres within them (Korda & Pancrazio, 1989). People who are uninformed or ignore how groups function usually become frustrated and bewildered. They do not help the group grow and may even behave inappropriately by encouraging behavior that group members are not ready to handle yet.

Case Example

Retro Rick

Rick is 50, married, and the father of three children. He works in information technology. Because he wants to expand his circle of male friends, he joins a local “growth group” of men who are at various life stages. Instead of talking about his own situation, Rick tries to be “cool.” He talks about himself in singular terms and as if he were single and still in his 20s. He seeks out the younger men in the group to “hang with.” Everyone is confused

as to what Rick is doing. As one of the men his age says to him: “You are not ‘youthing,’ you are aging. ‘Time passages’ is more than a song by Al Stewart.”

Questions

What do you think is happening with Rick? What is happening in the group? What aspects of health and dysfunction are present? How is the group working as a system?

One method of assessing which types of factors most influence certain group situations is by studying the research on groups as systems in such journals as *Small Group Behavior*, the *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, *Group Dynamics*, and the *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*. Good research that is clearly and concisely written can convey a considerable amount of information. Direct group observation or participation is a second means of comprehending the evolving nature of groups and how members are influenced by one another and external forces (e.g., cultural surroundings). This method gives firsthand knowledge about how a group is operating. A third way of assessing group influences is feedback from outside objective observers or a critique of group videotapes. This last means of obtaining data, especially if outside observers use video, allows a thorough examination of the group as a system and enables viewers to both see and hear what is occurring within.

INFLUENCING GROUP DYNAMICS

Given that group dynamics can be explained from a systems perspective, it behooves group workers to take advantage of this knowledge. They can do so by setting up conditions and structures that will help the group potentially run better and more smoothly in both the long and the short run. Although veteran group leaders “develop skills to assess the dynamics of group members and use their skills to anticipate and react to group movement” (Gerrity, 1998, p. 202), most group workers are wise to spend time and energy attending to the preplanning part of a group, the group structure, group exercises, group interaction, and members’ roles.

Preplanning

The dynamics of a group begin before the group convenes. In the pregroup stage, the leaders plan what type of group to conduct, in what setting it should be held, how long it will last, who should be included, and how it will be evaluated. All of these considerations are an essential part of facilitating a successful group (Glaser, Webster, & Horne, 1992). If leaders are not sure of the type of experiences they wish to set up and for whom, then the group will most likely fail.

The first factor that must be considered in preplanning is **clarity of purpose**—what the group is to accomplish. For a group to be successful, it must be relevant and meaningful for all of its members. Otherwise, they are likely to withdraw or disengage. For instance, a psychoeducational group focusing on careers may have an appeal to senior high school students but not be relevant to primary school children unless it is modified to their level and presented so that they see a connection between themselves and future careers.

In addition to clarity of purpose, a **group setting** (its environment) will influence how well it runs. Settings should be rooms that are quiet, comfortable, and off the beaten track. This type of environment, one that promotes positive group dynamics, is not found by accident. It must be carefully selected because the group’s functioning ultimately depends on it. Members who feel secure in an environment are more willing to take risks and use themselves and the group to the fullest.

A third factor that must be considered in preplanning a group is time. A group session should not be too long or too short. Sessions running more than 2 hours may cause members to become tired and lose interest. Likewise, with the exception of some children’s groups, most groups need about 15 minutes to “warm up” before they start working. Therefore, groups that meet for less than half an hour, except for children’s groups, do not have time to accomplish much. The ideal time frame for most groups is between an hour and an hour and a half. A few groups, such as marathons, use extended periods to help lower defenses through the effects of fatigue. In this way, they promote identity and change. Most groups, however, meet weekly within the period just described. Such a schedule allows group members and the group as a whole to obtain a comfortable pace or rhythm.

Even in a small group, size makes a difference in group dynamics. Research indicates that increasing the size of a group (beyond 6 to 14 members) decreases its cohesiveness and member satisfaction (Munich & Astrachan, 1983). One study indicated a significant reduction in interaction among group members when the group size reached 9, and another marked reduction when the group size reached 17 or more (Castore, 1962). In such cases, **subgrouping** (in which two or more members develop a group within the group) tends to occur. The result of subgrouping is that some members become silent while others dominate. Competition for airtime, focus, and inclusion becomes intense (Shepherd, 1964), and the atmosphere of the group changes. Groups with fewer than 5 members (except those composed of elementary school children) tend not to

function well, either. In such groups, too much pressure is placed on each group member to perform or contribute. There is virtually no opportunity in a group of 5 or fewer to choose not to participate.

Another component of a group that affects its dynamics is membership, in regard to both the mixture and the number of people in it. **Heterogeneous groups** (those composed of people with dissimilar backgrounds) can broaden members' horizons and enliven interpersonal interactions. Such groups may be helpful in problem solving, such as in psychotherapy and counseling groups. Yet, **homogeneous groups** (those centered on a presenting problem or similarity in gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or sociocultural background) are extremely beneficial in working through specific issues. They normalize "one's experience and the sense of shared struggle in a common area" (Perrone & Sedlacek, 2000, p. 244). Task/work groups, as well as some counseling and therapy groups, are often homogeneous for this reason. A potential drawback to homogeneous groups, however, is "when group members gain the belief that only others who are similar (adult children of alcoholics, abuse survivors) can fully understand or help" them (MacNair-Semands, 1998, p. 209). That aside, it is the nature and purpose of the group that usually determines what its member composition will be.

Other factors affecting group dynamics that must be preplanned are the fit between members' goals and group goals (expected or planned outcomes), the level of membership commitment (whether members are joining the group voluntarily or because of external pressures), the openness of members to self and others, a commitment to take or support risks, members' attitudes toward leadership and authority, and the leader's attitude toward certain member characteristics. The point is that group dynamics are a result of interaction patterns that develop because of careful or careless preplanning (see Table 2.1).

Group Structure

Group structure refers both to the physical setup of a group and to the interaction of each group member in relation to the group as a whole. Both types of structure influence how successful or harmonious the group will be and whether individual or group objectives will be met. Leaders and members have the ability to structure a group for better or worse. In this section, the physical structure of a group is examined; the essence of group interaction will follow in a later section.

The **physical structure** (the arrangement of group members) is one of the first factors to consider in setting up a group. Physical structure has a strong influence on how a group operates.

Table 2.1 Factors involved in preplanning a group.

Clarity of purpose	What the group is to accomplish
Setting	The environment
Time	The length of the group meeting
Size	How many people will be involved
Membership	Heterogeneous or homogeneous
Goals	Expected or planned outcomes
Commitment	Voluntary or mandated attendance
Openness	Consideration of novel ideas and actions
Risk taking	Engaging in new thoughts and behaviors
Attitudes	How members and leaders perceive tasks and others

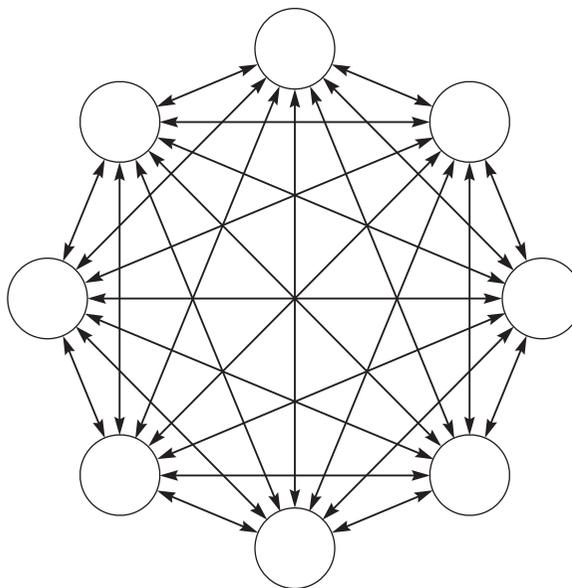


FIGURE 2.4 Optimal group structure/interaction. Source: Adapted from “Some Effects of Certain Communication Problems on Group Performance” by H. J. Leavitt, 1951, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 46, pp. 38–50.

If members feel they are physically removed from the group or are the center of it, then they will act accordingly.

The seating arrangement in a group is, therefore, important. Many groups, regardless of purpose, use a **circle** format. In this configuration, all members have direct access to one another (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Equality in status and power is implied as in the famous Knights of the Round Table stories from the legends of King Arthur. The disadvantage of a circle arrangement is the lack of a perceived leader in the structure unless the identified leader is active and direct. Overall, the circle lends itself to being a democratic structure for conducting group work and is probably the best structure for ensuring equal airtime for all group members (see Figure 2.4).

However, the circle is not the only way to set up a group. Other formats yield different types of interactions. In an experiment to determine the effects of various structures on group performance, Leavitt (1951) devised three communication networks in addition to the circle (see Figure 2.5): the “chain,” the “Y,” and the “wheel.”

In the **chain** arrangement, people are positioned or seated along a line, often according to their rank in the group. Communication is passed through others from a person at one end of the configuration to a person at the other end. The chain is a popular way to run some group organizations. For example, the military conceptualizes its command structure as “the chain of command.” However, a chain is seldom used outside a hierarchical association because of the indirectness of communication, the lack of direct contact with others, and the frustration of relaying messages through others. In a group, for instance, Janet will probably become exasperated if she has to communicate her wishes and thoughts through Georgia, who in turn has to relay them to Penny, who then conveys them to the leader.

In contrast, the **wheel** arrangement has a “center spoke,” the leader, through whom all messages go. Although members have the advantage of face-to-face interaction with the leader in this

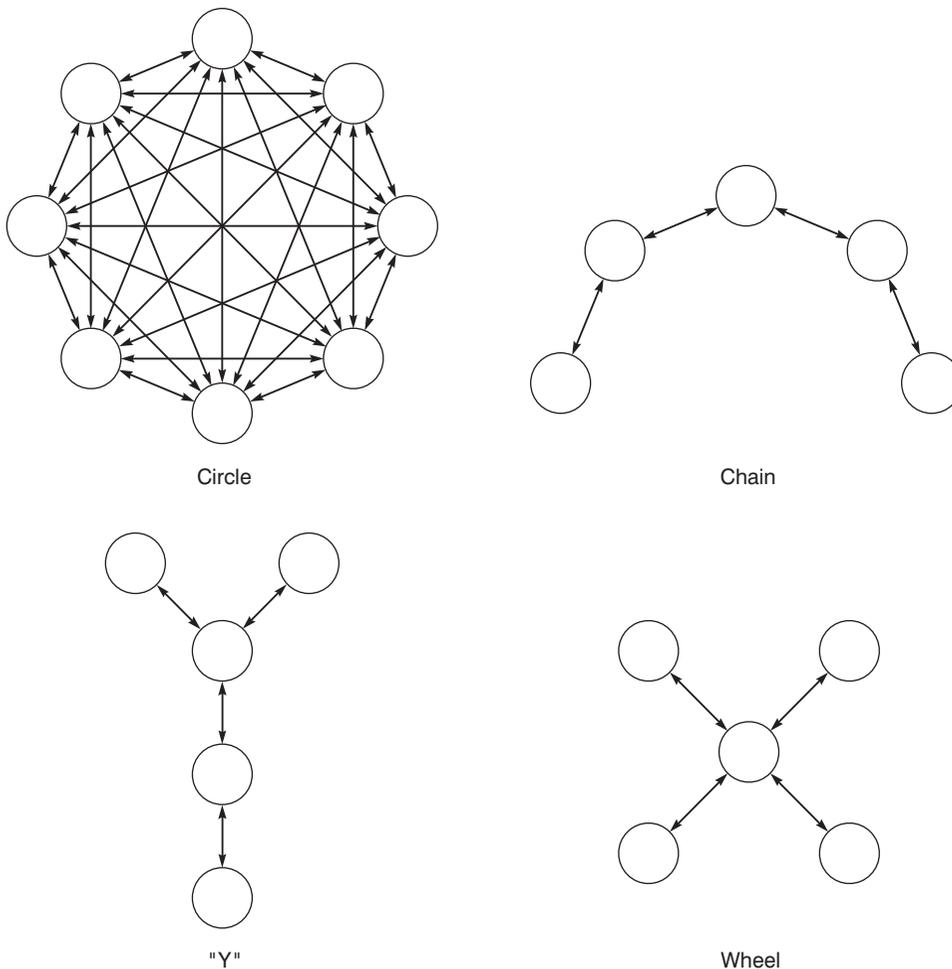


FIGURE 2.5 Effects of group structure on group performance. *Source:* Adapted from "Some Effects of Certain Communication Problems on Group Performance" by H. J. Leavitt, 1951, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 46, pp. 38–50.

structure, they may become frustrated by the inability to communicate with another group member directly. In the wheel configuration, some members are not informed about what their colleagues are doing. For example, supervisors in a factory may work as the center spokes in a wheel formation and have different personnel report to them. If they do not give as well as receive information, then their workers will not know how the plant is operating or which issues need to be addressed.

The final type of group structure Leavitt (1951) experimented with was the Y, which combines the structural elements of the wheel and the chain. In this arrangement, there is a perceived leader. The efficiency of the unit is second only to that of the wheel in performance. Like a chain, however, the Y may frustrate group members who wish to have direct contact and communication with one another. Information is not equally shared or distributed.

In most cases, the importance of structure will vary according to the type of group being led. For instance, in a psychoeducational group, members may be arranged in yet another

structure—**theater style**—in which they are seated in lines and rows. Because of the emphasis in psychoeducational groups on obtaining cognitive information, this arrangement may be useful. However, group members are cut off from interaction with one another in a theater-style arrangement because they are all facing the same way. In contrast, if psychotherapy groups are to work well, they should be structured so that members can easily interact with one another verbally and physically, such as in a circle. Similarly, positive dynamics are crucial to the success of most task/work groups. Some of these groups will employ a more hierarchical structure, such as a “chain of command,” to operate efficiently. However, many organizations are moving to flatten hierarchies by using group circle formats. This trend is prevalent in businesses and associations that operate according to a quality management style (Walton, 1991).

Reflection

In my mid-20s, I was a first lieutenant in the United States Army. There I became used to the “chain of command” where orders were given by higher-ranking officers and were carried out by lower-ranking personnel. I found the chain to be both efficient and frustrating. What has your experience been with group structures? When do you think working in a circle is best? When should it be avoided and another structure used? Be as specific as you can.

Group Exercises and Activities

The outcome of a group is dependent not only on the variables present at the beginning of the experience, but also on the number and kind of structured exercises and activities used during the group. Group activities can be categorized into 14 types according to Jacobs, Schimmel, Masson, and Harvill (2016). These include:

1. written exercises,
2. movement exercises,
3. creative props exercises,
4. arts and crafts exercises,
5. fantasy exercises,
6. common reading exercises,
7. feedback exercises,
8. trust exercises,
9. experiential exercises,
10. moral dilemma exercises,
11. group-decision exercises,
12. touching exercises,
13. rounds, and
14. dyads and triads.

The question of whether prepackaged activities have a place in groups is one that group leaders and members must deal with constantly. There are certain advantages and disadvantages to employing exercises in a group setting (Carroll, Bates, & Johnson, 2004; Jacobs, 1992). For example, if the leader knows that a particular game or exercise is likely to result in a positive outcome, then it may be used as a catalyst, especially early in the group’s life, to bring people together. In such a capacity, games and exercises can play a vital part in promoting group dynamics. However,

group leaders should always ask themselves why they are doing a particular activity at a specific time and what they hope to achieve as a result.

An example of a purposeful activity a leader might use to begin a group is the exercise “Adverbs” (Gladding, 2011b). In this activity, group members pass around a pencil to one another in a circle saying and demonstrating any word that ends in “-ly” in the process. Thus, Juanita might say to Charlene who is seated on her right, “I am passing this pencil to you quickly” and in the process give the pencil to her quite fast. Charlene, in turn, would then turn to the person on her right and use another “adverb” and motion such as “slowly,” “clumsily,” or “hesitantly.” The process is repeated until the pencil has gone around the group several times. At that point, the leader and members talk about ways of doing things and behaving in the group that the exercise demonstrated.

Overall, **group exercises** can be beneficial if they promote a positive atmosphere in a group. Jacobs et al. (2016) state that exercises have the following benefits:

1. They may generate discussion and participation, thus stimulating members’ energy levels and interaction.
2. Exercises may help the group focus on a particular topic or issue. This is especially true in task groups.
3. Group games help shift the focus from one area to another. Although effective group leaders should be able to redirect the focus without employing games, some exercises provide a natural bridge to important group topics.
4. Games and exercises promote experiential learning, which means that members will probably go beyond their thoughts in self-exploration. Furthermore, exercises such as rounds provide the group leader with useful information about the group and what needs to be done to move forward.
5. They increase the comfort level of participants and help them to relax and have fun. Learning is best when it is enjoyable.

Group exercises and activities “are commonly used in groups to activate the group, encourage members to take risks, and provide a learning experience that moves the group members” (Riva, 2004, p. 63). Basically, these ways of working with a group are “either intrapersonal or interpersonal, and the type of communication is either verbal or nonverbal” (Trotzer, 2004, p. 77). “Interpersonal activities involve interacting with other group members in dialogue—for example, introducing oneself to the group and answering questions. If the activity is nonverbal, words are not used, such as the exercise ‘changing seats’” (asking select members or an entire group to change seats). “Intrapersonal activities are those in which an exercise is done alone at first” (such as drawing a line that represents a present feeling) “and then shared and explored with others at a later time. . . . Nonverbal activities include private, personal experiences” (Carroll et al., 2004, pp. 116–117). Overall, when combined, four possible categories emerge that are of low, medium, or high intensity in the four following types:

1. **Verbal intrapersonal**—A low-intensity verbal intrapersonal exercise would be having group members draw pictures of how they perceive the world and using these pictures to introduce themselves verbally to the group.
2. **Verbal interpersonal**—An example of a low-intensity verbal interpersonal activity would be having group members divide into small groups and discuss their sibling positions. Then the group as a whole would reassemble and members would talk about how they view the world based on past perceptions.

3. **Nonverbal intrapersonal**—A low-intensity nonverbal intrapersonal exercise would be what is known as “body relaxation,” where the leader would talk members through relaxing parts of their body starting with the feet and ending with the head. Members’ eyes would be closed the whole time.
4. **Nonverbal interpersonal**—In a nonverbal interpersonal activity, members might line up from most to least about any concern that is relevant for the group at the moment such as anxiety. Members would then get a chance to compare where they stand in regard to others in the group.

In summary, exercises and activities take multiple forms and can be used almost anytime in the group process, as long as they do not become gimmicks and are processed afterward so that members:

gain insight into themselves personally,
become more aware of themselves as members of the group, and
understand group dynamics more fully.

Processing usually lasts twice as long as activities themselves. The important point to remember in using exercises and techniques in groups is that timing and instructions are crucial. A poorly timed event with unclear instructions may damage the group instead of promoting cohesion, insight, and movement. If employed too frequently, group activities can negatively influence the group by taking the focus off its purpose. There are also some ethically questionable exercises that promote anxiety and do harm; thus, group leaders who use them should do so cautiously.

Group Interaction

Group interaction can be described as the way members relate to one another. It consists of nonverbal and verbal behaviors and the attitudes that go with them. Group interaction exists on a continuum, from extremely nondirective to highly directive. For example, in some psychotherapy groups, members may be quite reserved and nondirect in their interactions with others, at least initially. In many task groups, however, members may be direct and verbal. The type of group interaction (e.g., nonverbal, verbal communication) as well as its frequency makes a difference in how or whether the group develops. Each factor is examined separately here, even though none of these components operates in isolation from the others.

Nonverbal behaviors make up “more than 50 percent of the messages communicated in social relationships” and are usually perceived as more honest and less subject to manipulation than verbal behaviors (Vander Kolk, 1985, p. 171). The four main categories of nonverbal behavior, according to Vander Kolk, are *body behaviors*, *interaction with the environment*, *speech*, and *physical appearance*. Group leaders and members have many nonverbals to watch. For example, when Sue wraps her arms around herself, does it mean that (a) she is physically cold, (b) she is imitating Heather, or (c) she is psychologically withdrawing from the group? The meaning of nonverbal behaviors cannot be assumed. In addition, the same nonverbal behavior from two different people may not convey the same message. Walters (1989) has charted behaviors frequently associated with various group members’ emotions. Nonverbal behavioral expressions should always be noted (see Table 2.2).

Verbal behavior is also crucial in group dynamics. One of the most important variables in group work to track is who speaks to whom and how often each member speaks. On a formal basis, there are ways to chart such interactions, such as **sociometry**, a phenomenological

Table 2.2 Behaviors frequently associated with various group member states.

	Head	Face	Mouth	Eye Contact	Hands	Posture
Despair/ Depression	Down	Sad frown (eyebrows down at outer ends)	Tightness	Little or none; may cover eyes with hand	Autistic behaviors; body-focused self-stimulating movements	Approaches fetal position
Excitement/ Euphoria	Mobile movement	Mobility of expression	Smiling; laughing	Tries to capture and to hold eye contact of all other persons ("Look at me.")	Sweeping, expansive movements	Frequent change; seductive
Fear/Anxiety	Stiff movement; chin down	Flushing	Tightness; clenching teeth	Darting glances to others; wants to keep watch on others by not meeting their gazes ("I'll watch you.")	Tightness; gripping; sweaty palms ("clenched and drenched")	Frequent movement; crouching; hunching shoulders
Hostility/ Rejection of another person Active/Overt	Head, and often chin, thrust forward and/or tilted upward	Angry frown (eyebrows down at center)	Lips tensed and pushed forward slightly	Defiant	Clenching; fist; thumping (symbolic hitting)	Poised on edge of chair
Passive/Covert	Down; turned away slightly	Squinting of eyes	Closed; normal	Aversion; blank staring	Body-focused movements; self-inflicting behaviors	Infrequent change
Dependency/ Attraction toward another	Head slightly down while making eye contact ("Poor me.")	Mirrors expression of other	Frequent smiling	Frequent	Reaching motions	Quasi-courtship
Resistance to Learning	Turned; rolled back	Rigidity of expression	Tightness	Avoidance	Clenched; looking at watch; body- focused movements	Held in; stiffness of limbs

Source: Gazda, George M.; Walters, Richard P.; *Group Counseling: A Developmental Approach*, 4th ed. © 1989. Reprinted and Electronically produced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

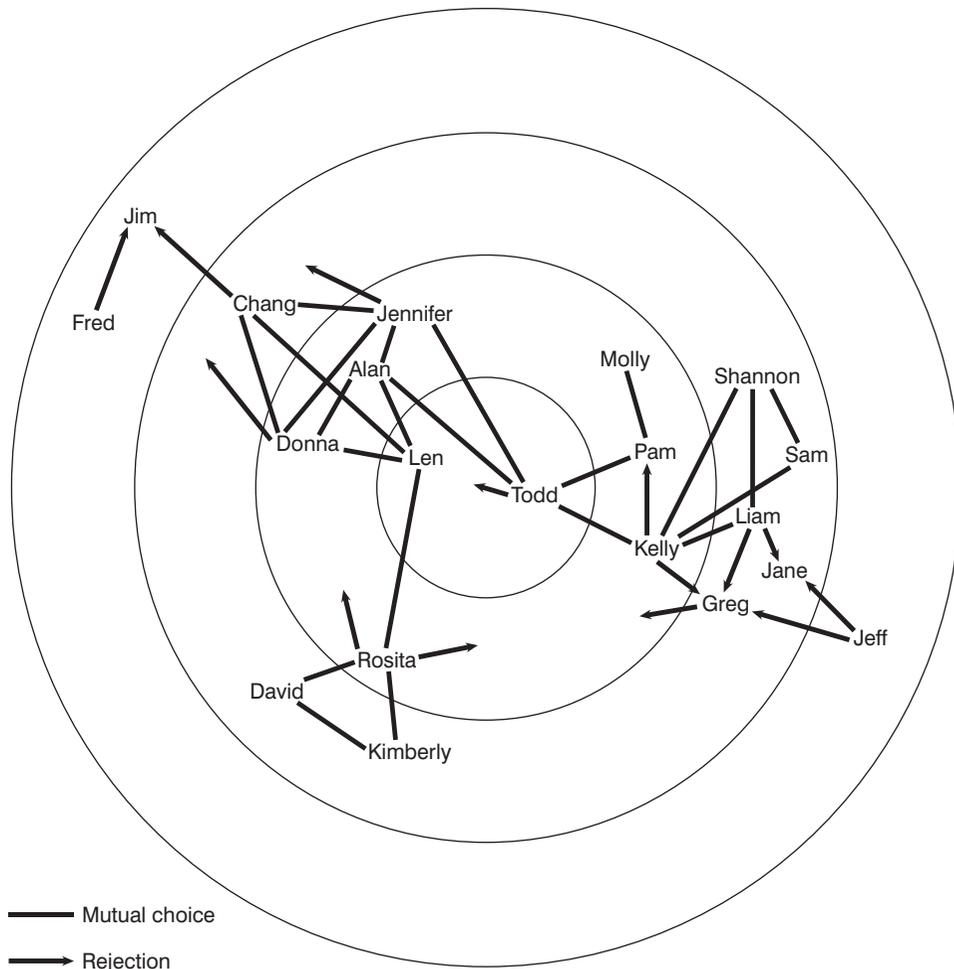


FIGURE 2.6 Sociogram depicting choices and rejections of classmates.

methodology for investigating interpersonal relationships (Treadwell, Kumar, Stein, & Prosnick, 1997). For example, by using a **sociogram** (a tool of sociometry that plots out group interactions), a group leader might learn that Melissa addresses most of her comments in the group to one of three people. Such data might be helpful to the leader and the group in examining or modifying their interactions (see Figure 2.6).

However, most leaders operate informally and map in their minds awareness of how group members speak and to whom. They also pay attention to silence and how it is observed and respected. It is difficult for some groups to deal with silence but less likely to be bothersome in certain psychoeducational and task groups in which members are not especially attuned to it.

Group discussion is usually important to the functioning of a group. In task, psychoeducational, counseling, and psychotherapy groups, discussion allows members to process information relevant to making decisions (Forsyth, 2013). Alternative courses of action can be considered more thoughtfully when the group as a whole discusses them. The amount of time spent in an active discussion of issues influences the quality of the group's decision (Laughlin, 1988).

Sometimes groups will use their time unwisely and collectively engage in what is known as the **Law of Triviality** (Parkinson, 1957). According to this law, the time a group spends discussing any issue is in inverse proportion to its consequences. For example, in an hour-long task group, 50 minutes might be spent talking about whether a group celebration should be held on a Thursday or a Friday and 10 minutes might be spent in planning the activities and considering a budget for the event.

Case Example

Debra the Diligent

Debra decided to form a work group for student leaders at her university. She wanted the group to go well and was determined to give group members all of the help she could. Therefore, when the group met, Debra had an outside observer make notes on how often people spoke, who spoke, what was discussed and for how long, and what decisions were made. At the end of the semester, Debra had the outside observer give this information to the group as a whole in the way of feedback. The response was

mixed. Most of the group members who had been most active liked it. However, when Debra tried to reform the group at the beginning of the next semester, she found several members were not interested in being a part of it.

Questions

What do you think of Debra's method for helping the group? What could she have done better? What might you have done from the start if you had been Debra?

Members' Roles

A **role** is “a dynamic structure within an individual (based on needs, cognitions, and values), which usually comes to life under the influence of social stimuli or defined positions” (Munich & Astrachan, 1983, p. 20). The manifestation of a role is based on the individual's expectation of self and others and the interaction one has in particular groups and situations. For example, Mabel, a reflective and introverted person, might take the role of a “group observer” in an active counseling group. By so doing, she could give feedback to the group as a whole without exposing personal feelings. Every person has multiple roles he or she can fulfill. When groups change or when people change groups, roles are frequently altered.

Roles are usually different from the overall identity of individuals. For example, people may play certain roles in their vocational lives, such as being a sales clerk or a computer operator, but not envision themselves exclusively as their occupations. Therefore, although Terri sells shoes, she does not consider herself as a shoe salesperson. Nevertheless, roles strongly influence how individuals act in a group (Shepherd, 1964). For instance, entrepreneurs may want to push their point of view regardless of how it affects their acceptance into the group. Sometimes roles become so strong that people have a difficult time separating themselves from the roles they play. Such a situation may be enacted if people mainly see themselves in terms of a role they played in childhood. For example, adult children of alcoholics (ACoAs) often play one of four roles to adapt to their environments: hero, scapegoat, lost child, or mascot (Harris & MacQuiddy, 1991; Wegscheider, 1981). In such circumstances, the individuals may become trapped in dysfunctional ways of relating that will detrimentally affect them in all but psychotherapeutic groups.

When group leaders become aware of roles and behaviors that are detrimental to the group as a whole, they have an obligation to act. Their behavior can take a number of forms, such as

having a one-on-one conversation with the person about their behavior, asking the person to assess his or her behavior in the group and note how it affects the group, or, in extreme cases, removing the person from the group (Goodrich & Luke, 2012). These basic forms of addressing a problematic group member hold true regardless of the type of group being run.

TYPES OF ROLES

One way to conceptualize most roles in groups is to view them as primarily functioning in one of three ways: facilitative/building, maintenance, and blocking (Capuzzi, 2010).

A **facilitative/building role** is one that adds to the functioning of a group in a positive and constructive way. Members who take on such a role may serve as initiators of actions and ideas, information seekers, opinion seekers, coordinators, orienters, evaluators, or recorders. Group facilitating and building focuses on helping everyone feel like a part of the group. Members who function in this way help the group develop while keeping conflict to a minimum. Group facilitators and builders do their best work during the initial formation of a group. For instance, in a task group, Dot may take the role of being an opinion seeker. Before the group moves on its decisions, she makes sure all views are heard by asking more quiet members for their input.

A **maintenance role** is one that contributes to the social-emotional bonding of members and the group's overall well-being. When interpersonal communication in the group is strained, there is a need to focus on relationships (Wilson & Hanna, 1986). People who take on such roles are social and emotionally oriented. They express themselves by being encouragers, harmonizers, compromisers, commentators, and followers. For example, in a counseling group, Ned may help by serving in the role of a harmonizer as he assists members in seeing the differences they have and pointing out how these differences can give each group member a new perspective on the world. In group maintenance, group members are encouraged to openly express "both positive and negative feelings, supportive responses to member concerns and contributions, and acceptance of differences" (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1989, p. 25).

A **blocking role** is essentially an antigroup role. Individuals who take this role act as aggressors, blockers, dominators, recognition seekers, and self-righteous moralists. For instance, those who perceive themselves as outsiders—such as Lucy, who has been placed in a psychoeducational group for punishment—may actively attempt to keep the group from discussing a proposed topic. Such a member may also seek to divert attention away from the group's goal by being negative and preventing the group from accomplishing anything.

Fortunately, few members act out a pure role.

PROBLEMS IN CARRYING OUT ROLES

Sometimes problems arise in the fulfillment of roles (Hare, Blumberg, Davies, & Kent, 1994). Both internal and external factors contribute to these problems, and there is seldom a simple cause. Four major forms of role difficulties are role collision, role incompatibility, role confusion, and role transition. In **role collision**, a conflict exists between the role an individual plays in the outside world (e.g., being a passive observer) and the role expected within the group (e.g., being an active participant). In **role incompatibility**, a person is given a role within the group (e.g., being the leader) that he or she neither wants nor is comfortable exercising. **Role confusion**, sometimes known as *role ambiguity*, occurs when a group member simply does not know what role to perform. This may happen at the beginning of groups or in leaderless groups where members do not know whether they are to be assertive in helping establish an agenda or passive and just let the leadership emerge. Finally, in **role transition**, a person is expected to assume a different role as the group progresses but does not feel comfortable doing so. For example, in self-help

groups, experienced members are expected to take on leadership, rather than “follower,” roles. Yet, some group members do not feel comfortable doing so.

In most groups, maintenance and task roles need to be balanced. “Too much attention to socioemotional functioning can cause the group to wander and lose sight of its goals; in similar fashion, overemphasis on task can result in disruption and dissatisfaction if members have no outlet for their grievances and no way to resolve their conflicts” (Shaffer & Galinsky, 1989, pp. 25–26).

Reflection

When have you ever been placed in a role where you felt uncomfortable? What did you do? Looking back at the time and circumstance, what else could you have done or wished you had done?

THE EFFECT OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE VARIABLES ON GROUP DYNAMICS

Many group specialists (e.g., Corey, 2012; Jacobs et al., 2016) have listed a number of variables within groups essential to group life and functioning. Psychotherapeutic and counseling groups seem to have been especially targeted by experts in this regard. Yet, the factors generally noted are applicable to most psychoeducational and task/work groups. These variables include member commitment; readiness of members for the group experience; the attractiveness of the group for its members; a feeling of belonging, acceptance, and security; and clear communication. These factors are collectively conceptualized as **positive group variables**. For example, if group members speak from an “I” position, everyone in the group becomes clear about what they are saying and can respond appropriately. Positive forces within the group, when expressed to the fullest extent possible, can lead to a group that is both cooperative and altruistic (McClure, 1990).

Yalom (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) was among the first to delineate positive primary group variables based on research he conducted with others on therapy groups. He has called these positive forces **curative (therapeutic) factors within groups**. These variables are expressed in successful groups through a variety of means. They often affect the interactions of members and the group as a whole in complex ways. For counseling and psychotherapy groups, these therapeutic factors are as follows:

- **Instillation of hope**—Assurance that treatment will work. For example, the leader might say at the beginning of a group: “I think we will be able to accomplish most of your goals through our work in this group.”
- **Universality**—What seems unique is often a similar or identical experience of another group member. For example, the leader might say: “Isaiah, it seems that you and Austin share a similar concern about how you can find balance in your lives.”
- **Imparting of information**—Instruction about mental health, mental illness, and how to deal with life problems through group discussion. For example, a member might share that she has read that to stay mentally healthy, a person needs 8 hours of sleep at night.
- **Altruism**—Sharing experiences and thoughts with others, helping them by giving of one’s self, working for the common good. For example, Jessica might inform the group that she is going to work a night at the homeless shelter and invite them to work there, too.

- **Corrective recapitulation of the primary family group**—Reliving early familial conflicts correctly and resolving them. For example, Louise may find that through her interactions with Roscoe she is able to find ways of disagreeing with a male who is slightly older, like her brother Taylor, without becoming emotionally upset.
- **Development of socializing techniques**—Learning basic social skills. For example, Aiden may come to realize through the group experience that people like to be invited to do activities rather than carped at to do them.
- **Imitative behavior**—Modeling positive actions of other group members. For example, Jayden may learn ways of requesting what he wants by imitating the behavior of Colin.
- **Interpersonal learning**—Gaining insight and correctively working through past experiences. For example, Virginia may see through talking with members of the group that her bossy behavior in the past has gotten her nowhere.
- **Cohesiveness**—The proper therapeutic relationship among group members, group members and the group leader, and the group as a whole. For example, after everyone in the group shares their thoughts about racism, they may feel closer together.
- **Catharsis**—Experiencing and expressing feelings. For example, Julia may cry softly when she realizes how much hurt she has been carrying around for so long.
- **Existential factors**—Accepting responsibility for one’s life in basic isolation from others, recognizing one’s own mortality and the capriciousness of existence. For example, Sebastian may come to the realization through talking with older members of the group that his life is half over and that he needs to work hard on improving himself if he is ever going to live his dreams.

Yalom (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) contends that these variables constitute both the actual mechanisms of change and conditions for change. The interplay of the factors varies widely from group to group. However, these factors help members gain insight into themselves and their relationships with others. “For instance, altruism, catharsis, and group cohesiveness enable . . . members to feel supported, emotionally connected, and as though they belong” (Marmarosh, Dunton, & Amendola, 2014, p. 8).

To this list, Bemak and Epp (1996) have added what they consider to be a 12th factor—love. They believe that although love may contain aspects of some of Yalom’s other factors, it stands alone as a contributor to the healing process in group psychotherapy. “Love’s nature and dynamics in groups . . . can have many variations”—for instance, transference as well as genuineness (p. 119). According to Bemak and Epp, “the unmasking of transference and the fostering of open expressions of giving and receiving love are essential healing factors in the group therapy process and in the development of healthier human beings” (p. 125).

Yalom’s (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) conceptualization of group dynamics, with the addition of Bemak and Epp’s (1996) contribution, is extremely useful for conducting group counseling and psychotherapeutic sessions. It gives group leaders and members ideas and experience-based realities on which they need to focus. Such variables are like a map that can guide the group process. For instance, if a group member, Sarah, refuses to work through past family impasses and treats another group member, Charles, as if he were a rejecting parent, then the leader and other members can take steps to correct this behavior. In this case, the group might confront Sarah with how she is acting and role-play situations to help her recognize and resolve previous dysfunctional patterns that are interfering with her present functioning.

In addition to positive variables and therapeutic forces, **negative group variables** operate. These variables include, but are not limited to, avoiding conflict, abdicating group responsibilities, anesthetizing to contradictions within the group, and becoming narcissistic. If most or all of

these variables are present, then a group will become regressive and possibly destructive (McClure, 1990, 1994). In such cases, the whole group and the individuals within it lose.

Avoiding conflict involves the silencing of members who expose the group's shortcomings or disagree with the majority's opinions. Silencing is often done through coercion or acts of domination. For example, whenever Dee tries to tell the group she does not feel understood by the other members, she is belittled through comments such as "That's touchy/feely stuff, Dee, get real" or "You are being oversensitive." As time passes, Dee learns not to speak. A destructive dynamic is set in motion by avoiding conflict and silencing dissent. If it remains unchallenged and unchanged, then the group becomes unhealthy.

One of the most destructive behaviors for groups to take is to become narcissistic. "**Narcissistic groups** develop cohesiveness by encouraging hatred of an out-group or by creating an enemy As a result, regressive group members are able to overlook their own deficiencies by focusing on the deficiencies of the out-group" (McClure, 1994, p. 81). The leaders of North Korea are sometimes cited as a national group that is narcissistic, as in their reaction to the motion picture *The Interview*. In the process of projecting their feelings onto others, group members create an illusion of harmony that binds them together. In a more mundane example, a student newspaper is launched with the intent of attacking the president of a university. Within the group, members focus on "digging up dirt" and disregard any positives they find. A bunker mentality develops in which the president becomes the enemy and the student newspaper, the source of all truth. Member disagreement is handled by dismissing anyone from the paper who does not agree with the party line. Cohesiveness is developed through rewarding member writers who can find the most damaging material to print.

Occurring in regressive groups, along with the avoidance of conflict and the development of group narcissism, is **psychic numbing**, in which members anesthetize themselves to contradictions in the group. In the student newspaper example, writers may break into an office to get information they want and not feel guilty about breaking an ethical or legal code. Overall, a regressive group expresses an abdication of responsibility for the group and a dependency on its leader. Members do not take on the role of being leaders or facilitators of the group but rather become obedient followers. They do not take risks and, in effect, give their power away to influence the group. In such cases, the group is left without means to correct itself and will continue to be destructive unless a crisis occurs that influences its members to behave differently (Peck, 1983).

Case Example

Philip Puts the Positives Before the Group

Philip has had mixed results with the groups he has run. After reading about Yalom's positive factors, Philip decided he would make a copy for all group members of a task group he was running. He asked each member to study the factors carefully. He also told the group about negative factors that could affect the group. To his delight, Philip's group ran well. He thought it must be because of the materials

he distributed and the way he asked members to pay attention to them. However, the next time Philip tried the same procedure, the group did not run as well.

Questions

Why do you think Philip's method worked the first time but failed on his second try? How important is it for group members to have the kind of information Philip provided?

LEARNING GROUP DYNAMICS

Knowledge of group dynamics that is both experiential and cognitive can help a group worker either lead or be in a group. Such learning may take place in multiple ways. One model is based on interdisciplinary education and involves five activities that help participants gain greater insight into the ways their group is functioning (Marrotta, Peters, & Paliokas, 2000).

1. **Videotaping**—Through observing their personal and collective interactions in a group, participants may note verbal and nonverbal behaviors of members and how these actions affected the group and its development. They may also note group roles, if any, that stand out.
2. **Journaling**—A journal is a weekly log of the content and process that occurred in a group and one's reactions to particular activities, exchanges, or the group as a whole. By writing immediately after a group is completed, participants capture present thoughts and feelings related to what happened in the group. By reading their logs later, they may gain insight into patterns occurring within the group.
3. **Outdoor experiences**—Participating in an outdoor exercise can help individuals explore their cooperative and competitive styles and how these mesh with the group as a whole. The group can be seen more fully as a dynamic entity in events such as rope courses, where if the group is to be successful, everyone must participate and negotiate in regard to overcoming an obstacle or completing a task.
4. **Simulation games for team building**—“Problem-based learning situations in the classroom are isomorphic to issues that professionals will encounter in the workplace” (Marrotta et al., 2000, p. 21). A task such as having a group, along with the teacher, design a logo for a class can bring out or highlight behaviors that either help or hurt the group in reaching a goal. By having the group analyze what happened in the process, members can see more clearly the dynamics involved in what happened and how they contributed.
5. **Sociometrics and learning integration**—A final way to help facilitate the learning of group dynamics is to employ sociometric techniques. These activities can provide perspective on each member's learning style and on various aspects of group dynamics, such as leadership, boundaries, and subgroups. All of these can be depicted through visual models. For example, individual students might be given Tinkertoys to create a visual model of their understanding of the development of cohesion. The crucial component in this activity, as with the others, is debriefing, discussion, reflection, and the fostering of insight.

GROUP, INDIVIDUAL, AND FAMILY DYNAMICS

Working with groups is both similar to and different from working with individuals or families. Individual, group, and family approaches to helping have some parallels in history, theory, technique, and process. However, because of the unique composition of each, the dynamics of these ways of working are distinct (Gladding, 2015). The numbers of variables and interactions differ, as does the focus. A skilled group worker who has knowledge of individual and family helping dynamics is able to compare and contrast what is occurring in the group with what might be happening in another setting and, more importantly, to assess what may be needed. **Awareness** of individual and family helping dynamics assists a group worker in realizing whether referral of a member is in order. The complexity of working with others is a process that involves knowing what to do, when to do it, and what the probable outcomes may be. In this section, the dynamics

of individual, group, and family work are discussed in regard to persons, processing, and consequences.

Persons

In examining the entities of groups, individuals, and families, one immediate common denominator is apparent. All are bodies, singularly or collectively, with defined boundaries and interrelated parts. An intervention cannot be made at any level without affecting other aspects of the body. For example, even on the individual counseling level, a counselor cannot work from a strictly behavioral perspective without influencing the cognitive and affective aspects of the client. However, in working with individuals, only one person is the focus of attention. The influence of others may be discussed, but they are not a part of any direct form of helping. In addition, single individuals may or may not be behaviorally or emotionally connected with others. Therefore, attention is almost always centered on intrapersonal issues.

With groups and families, the focus is on more than one person. It is often simultaneously intrapersonal and interpersonal. Trotzer (1988) and Vinson (1995) point out that groups share many similarities with families. For instance, both have hierarchies (power structures), roles, rules, and norms. In addition, groups and families move through phases and stages during the counseling process, with group leaders being more active in the initial sessions of any therapeutic interventions. In groups and families, a tension also is manifest overtly and covertly that must be resolved or managed if members are going to work well together. A final similarity between groups and families is that all members in their units affect both. Thus, if a member of a group or family is dysfunctional, then the entire group or family will work in a dysfunctional way.

Groups are distinct from families in that the members come together initially as strangers for a common purpose (Becvar, 1982; Hines, 1988). They have no experience of working together. Families, in contrast, have members with a shared history of interactions. This history may hinder or facilitate any actions taken in trying to offer assistance, but interventions made in family work usually occur faster and with more impact because of the family's common background. Another difference in working with groups and families is the purpose for the treatment. In groups, intrapersonal change may be just as important as interpersonal change, whereas in families the focus is usually on changing the family system. Although groups may resemble families at times in how they work, groups dissolve after a set time, whereas families continue. Overall, as Becvar (1982) states, the group is not a family, and the family is not a group.

Processing

In group work, **processing** refers to an activity that helps group members and the group identify, examine, and reflect on their behaviors and what occurred in a group in order to increase understanding, extract meaning, integrate knowledge, and improve their functioning and outcomes. Processing activities and events in the group helps group members better understand their experiences in the group and relate these to their personal lives (Ward, 2014).

Processing with individuals, groups, and families is similar in several ways. One important similarity involves an examination of what is involved. In essence, all effective processing can be thought of as following the **PARS model (Processing: Activity, Relationship, Self)**, even though this model was originated for group work (Glass & Benschhoff, 1999). Processing following this model includes three stages: reflecting, understanding, and applying (see Figure 2.7).

In *reflecting*, individuals retrace the steps of a particular activity and essentially ask, "What did we do?" An individual may reflect with a counselor, group members may reflect with one

Reflecting
Understanding
Applying

FIGURE 2.7 The PARS Model.

another and the leader, and family members may reflect with one another and the therapist. “Reflection allows participants the opportunity to recreate the experience by describing actions the group [or the individual] went through to complete the exercise” (Glass & Benshoff, 1999, p. 18).

In the *understanding* stage, the focus is on participants discussing specific interactions as well as offering explanations and interpretations of what occurred, especially in relationship to others. On the group and family level, this stage is more complete because of the others immediately involved. Finally, in the third stage of PARS, the emphasis is on *applying* what has been learned through experience and interaction in the session to one’s own life. Without this last stage, which involves a transfer of insight and learning, processing is not complete.

In addition to the PARS processing model, some common counseling and psychotherapy theories are used as guides in individual, group, and family work (Horne, 2001; Patterson, 1986). For instance, Bowen and Adlerian theory may be employed in helping adolescents differentiate themselves from their families in a counseling group format and thereby become less anxious personally and within their family context (Nims, 1998). Likewise, person-centered and behavioral theories have been translated to working with people in individual, group, and family environments. However, an individual theory of helping may not be appropriate for use in some group and family situations, just as some approaches created by group workers and family therapists are not geared for individually oriented helpers.

Consequences

In addition to both subtle and obvious differences in processing and employing theories, a major difference in working with individuals, groups, and families is what happens after helping ends. Success and failure have different consequences. If the individual or the group work does not go well, then those involved may be disappointed. However, with few exceptions, they leave the experience and those involved with it behind them. Families, however, live together through any attempts at helping, and change may promote tension both during and after the process.

Overall, individual, group, and family approaches overlap and yet are distinct from one another. The participants, how they are involved, and how they relate to the professional clinician and the others outside of treatment sessions must be taken into consideration in any comparison. Likewise, a crucial aspect of the process of working with these populations in different phases and stages of their development is which theories of helping are used and how. The leader’s role in each differs in regard to what is highlighted in inducing change.

Reflection

How do you think your family-of-origin background has influenced you in your interpersonal relationships with others? What strengths and liabilities do you carry from your family of origin that could help or hurt you as you work with groups?

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has focused on group dynamics. In most groups, it is crucial that group leaders and members be aware of these dynamics because such forces help influence group development. Several key areas of group dynamics have been discussed. For instance, the content and process in a group must be recognized for what they are and what they contribute. It is also crucial that content and process be balanced. Furthermore, in fostering change, it helps to perceive the group as a living system with interacting parts that affect one another.

In influencing the dynamics of groups, leaders must preplan and clarify the purpose of their groups. This type of action before the group begins can be instrumental in positively affecting the way the group functions. In addition to a clear purpose, leaders should plan for a quiet, conducive environment for their groups. Planning groups with regard to time, size, mixture of people, and goals is also crucial. Group structure in terms of member positioning and group interactions, especially verbal and non-verbal behaviors, must be taken into account. If groups are to prosper, they must spend their time wisely and be as inclusive of all their members as possible.

Members' roles must also be considered. In healthy groups, members may switch roles and be facilitative or supportive. Antigroup roles, such as being aggressive, must be dealt with to prevent groups from being regressive and destructive. At the same time, positive group variables, such as clear communication and acceptance, must be promoted. Ways of helping groups include the limited use of group exercises and employing basic helping skills. Learning activities that promote insight into how groups operate are helpful, as are teaching devices that highlight group dynamics. In working with groups, leaders are best able to understand and make appropriate interventions if they are aware of the differences and similarities in group dynamics compared with those of individuals and families in helping situations.

In summary, groups are a unique way to work with individuals in resolving past problems, accomplishing present tasks, and undertaking future goals. Those who wish to participate or specialize in them are wise to realize that groups are dynamic entities with lives of their own that differ from those of their members. Those who are knowledgeable about how groups operate know what to expect and can help facilitate positive action in themselves and others.

Classroom Exercises

1. In groups of three or four, discuss what you consider to be the most important positive group variables mentioned in this chapter. Are some variables more important for some types of groups than for others? Which ones does your group think would be most crucial in the following types of groups: (a) a group for troubled adolescents, (b) a social skills learning group for mentally challenged adults, (c) a grief group for those who have lost loved ones, and (d) a task/work group planning for a lecture series? Compare your discussion with those generated by other class members.
2. Pick a role mentioned in this chapter with which you feel comfortable. Why do you find this role attractive? Think about whether you have played this role in groups before. Also describe what role in the group you consider least desirable and why. Discuss your findings with another class member.
3. This chapter mentioned ways of influencing a group. Discuss in subgroups three ways you might pragmatically exert a positive presence in a group. Especially concentrate on the importance of factors that affect group dynamics, and identify whether these factors are primarily those related to content or process.
4. Observe or recall a group that you are or have been involved in, and note which factors mentioned in this chapter are or were prevalent in the life of the group. How do you think the group could be improved? What is your feeling after this observation about the influence of groups on people and people on groups?