

Group Reflection Paper

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Abstract

Being a part of a group has been an amazing learning experience. Connecting with the group members has allowed this student to see the beauty in the group process. Having good leadership influences the group immensely. A “second chance family” was established within the group. Having an open space to talk to one another is truly liberating. The group functioned very well with the guidance of the group leader. This group has put this student in the position to want to connect more with others and see how an effective group leader can enhance the group.

Group Reflection Paper

Group therapy was a requirement to take Group Dynamics and Therapy. At the time this student felt indifferent about it. It felt more of a requirement than something that caught this student's interest. The group was composed of students from AGSC, which made it a little less nerve-wracking. The group had a diverse group of individuals. The group consisted of 2 males and 4 females. BF was one of the males in the group and Caucasian with 25 years of age. BF is a single male and wants to be a pastoral counselor that has taken an interest in working with the LGBT community. BF has had prior experience with groups in his church. S.W is an African American male, he is about 45 years old, married with one son. He did not speak much about his experiences in the group, but he was very open to group therapy.

JH was the eldest in the group. She is a mix of Latina and African American. She is married with children and even more grandchildren. She has always felt as though she was a part of a group within her family. She had 14 brothers and sisters. She was very open to the group for this reason. KS is a Hispanic American who is 30 years old. She is currently single and has experienced different groups in her job. KS works with kids who have been diagnosed with autism and for this reason, she has been in many groups, with the children and the parents of the children. IF is also a Hispanic American who is 24 years old and is currently single. IF has also experienced a group within her church community with the adolescents. Lastly, this group member is 24 years old, Hispanic American, and single. This group member also experienced a group setting in the church youth group by being a part of it and the leader of a one now. Overall, we were all open to participating in the group and were willing to see what resulted because of it.

Coming into this group, this group member wanted to be able to connect with people that there was no relationship with other than us being a part of the same program. Sara is at a point

where she has cut off many friendships that were weighing her down. This was very difficult to do but needed to be done at the time. Ever since this decision has been made, there has been a feeling of numbness. It has been hard to connect with others to the point where they become someone meaningful. This had been a hard place to be in. The expectations for joining this group were to connect with the group members on a deeper level, seeing other perspectives from the group members, seeing the functions and stages of a group, and learning about myself and why it's so hard to connect with others.

All the expectations were met but not in the way it was originally thought that it would be met. This group member did feel as though she was able to connect with the other group members on a deeper level and gained a better sense of self because of it. We grew close within the group, but there can still be a disconnect amongst each other. It felt more like a shared experience rather than gaining friendships in the way this group member wanted. Seeing the other member's perspectives helped this group member see differences and similarities in our daily struggles with school and work, but also see how beautiful life is. This was a very diverse group that consisted of different ages, cultures, and genders. This group member has gained a deeper appreciation for life and gained a new way of seeing life.

This member was able to see what was learned from Group Dynamics and Therapy and experience it head-on. My group was fortunate enough to have such a great group leader that gave many examples of the group's process, function, and stages. Throughout the group, LQ explained what was going through individually and as a group and how it applies to our lives. She also said we were a great group to work with since we were very cooperative with no conflict. Our group was a good example of a functioning group that seemed to achieve their goals and met some if not all of their expectations. Learning about one's self can be difficult.

Throughout the group, this member was able to reflect on where my disconnection was coming from and received support throughout the process of digging deep. The group leader and group members triggered something within the self that makes me want to make some changes but also go through the process of healing. Ultimately this group has had a positive influence and has been a great example of what a group can have the potential to be.

This group members experienced transference when BF b decided to break the silence about him leaving the program to start his wedding plans. We were the first of the students to hear about his decision, which indicated how closely we have grown. Finding common ground with schoolwork allowed us to connect on a more personal level. This news was a shocker to everyone in the group because of how diligent BF has been. BF stated that “it was a harsh reality that sometimes things have to come to a stop in order for something else to continue”. He expressed feelings of coming into terms with his decision. The group leader asked how everyone felt about his leave and if we had come to terms with things in our life that had to take a pause or come to an end. JH expressed how upset she is because she did not want to see him go and that she has also had thoughts about leaving the program. For JH it was personal because she felt that she was losing a friend and it brought relief knowing that someone else will be leaving the program. KS felt discouraged because although she expressed interest in staying in the program, she has thought of how overwhelming it has been overall and BF was a result of it. SW was happy for BF, because he has taken so many pauses throughout life to get to where he is that all he can feel is acceptance. Although he has expressed his struggles with the program, he remains focused. IF became very emotional because she has come close to giving up many times. She expressed what she has been through in life to get her to the point of giving up. IF felt upset and uncertain about what she would do. Seeing everyone get emotional was very triggering to me. There was real

emotion that was not being fully processed. This had left this group member feeling unstill. What loss was accepted and what was pushed back? This transference occurred through the whole session and it was very powerful to see how we could all connect and still feel differently about how we connected. Raw emotion can be very triggering.

It was an absolute privilege to have a group leader that gave the extra push that was needed. She was firm and confident in what she said and had a great sense of humor to be more relatable yet humble. She was able to read the group members and point out the connections we all experienced. She was able to break down what we were feeling and make sense of our emotions which validated them. She made it feel very personal to us but yet still connected us to one another. She made sure everyone felt included and participated.

LQ was a great example of how a group leader should be. Everything we learned in class about the qualities of a good group leader was seen hands-on with her. When there was silence, she always had a way to include breaking the silence by asking a question or calling on someone to speak. Being that we were a cooperative group it was easier for her because we did not give her a hard time. Overall, we were able to learn so much from her in how she conducted herself as a leader and we learned so much from each other in the group. There are no complaints about her as a group leader.

This group member can describe herself to be vocal about what she is thinking but can hold back on emotions because they can be difficult to process. There is a disconnect with inner emotions that could be healthy to process. A goal this group member had for the group was wanting to establish a good connection with the group members. In the beginning sessions, this group member was very talkative, but when transference started to take place, she became very silent. Her mind started to wander into many different places.

The focus was not on the group but on how she has been processing what has been happening in her life. The group leader noticed the silence and was constantly trying to bring her back into the group when her mind started to wander. This group member did not realize how disconnected she was and how disconnected she can become when she became triggered. This realization showed the gravity of the situation. With the guidance of the group leader and the support of the group members, it made this group member want to work on herself. There were emotions starting to rise up that never wanted to be experienced. In an accepting and supporting atmosphere, this group member became vulnerable to herself and realized that it was time for a change. For that change to begin there needed to be an exploration of feelings that have not been dealt with.

The group leader took a psychodynamic approach with our group. “Psychoanalytic therapy is based largely on insight, unconscious motivation, reconstruction of the personality, and early childhood experiences. The psychoanalytic model has had a major influence on all of the other formal systems of psychotherapy” (Corey et al., 2018, pg. 111). During the interview process, the group leader explained that the group will be centered around obtaining a “second chance family”. She also explained that she will be pointing out when our position in this “family” stands out and how that represents the place we are in. She proceeded to get a background of this group member’s family to understand the dynamics that were established. Each group member was asked to speak about the dynamics within our families and what our mothers meant to us, and how that influences how we view ourselves. The group leader had a way of digging deep by our reactions and responses to questions and through transference from the group members. “Psychoanalytic group therapy focuses on the influence of the past on current personality functioning” (Corey et al., 2018, pg. 112).

The primary goal of a psychodynamic approach is to make the unconscious conscious. Through the group's leader direction, undesired feelings that were pushed back started to come out to the light. The therapeutic relationship with a psychoanalytically oriented group can range in leaders being characterized by objectivity, warmth, detachment, and relative anonymity to those who favor a role that is likely to result in a collaborative relationship with group members (Corey et al., 2018, pg. 112). Her leadership was recognized to be from a psychoanalytic approach that worked very well with the group.

Personal qualities that can enhance effectiveness as a group leader are a sense of humor, openness, being genuine, caring, being, and culturally aware. Being caring and genuine shows a sincere interest in the welfare of others. This is an essential quality to have as a group leader. Caring can help members get what they are coming for. Caring involves respecting, trusting, and valuing people. This will allow the group members to open up more. Being culturally aware of other people's cultures and being able to notice biases within the group is a good trait to have. As a group leader discrimination or bias should not be allowed in the group. As someone who is constantly meeting new people from different backgrounds, there has been a form of acceptance for the beauty of being different. This carrying over to the group can influence them to be more accepting of one another. Sense of humor makes one more real to members and makes the group process less intimidating allowing members to open up more. Lastly, openness is revealing enough of myself to give members a sense of who you are as a person. Being open can enhance the group process if you appropriately reveal your reactions to the members and to how you are being affected by them (Corey et al., 2018, pg. 33).

The qualities that can detract from my leadership are lack of confidence, lack of empathy, and strong character. Speaking up has always been an issue, overthinking has always been the main

reason for this. Group members can see when a group leader is being hesitant. If group members are looking at you to lead, then they can also become hesitant. Empathy can always be worked on. Seeing a group member complain and not want change can be a reason for this group leader to be less empathic. Working with a client and validating their thoughts and feelings can help them understand themselves and what they need to work on, instead of them not feeling accepted. Having a strong character can be a good quality to have if used properly. The downfall in having a strong character is giving members the sense that you dislike them and are not willing to work with them instead of standing firm to not let them run over you. These qualities can be improved and shaped to be an effective group leader.

The work in the group taught me this by having a great example of leadership. Seeing how the group leader facilitated the group allowed me to see how experienced she was. She made this group member think and be able to explain my reactions. This group member gave her a hard time, but she was able to break me out by asking questions and showing interest in my well-being as an individual and member of the group. She did this for the other group members as well.

The group tends to function very well. Since the beginning sessions, every group member showed willingness and respect for other group member's thoughts, feelings, and opinions. There was no malfunction or conflict in the group other than there being periods of silence where the group members were not speaking up. The group leader was always prepared for the group to have responses or reactions. There was slight resistance but overall, the group went very smoothly, because of the leadership.

Techniques that were being used varied from offering feedback, to suggesting homework assignments, and presenting interpretations (Corey et al., 2018, pg. 107).

Being that we are all in the same program there was a sense of respect and willingness to learn from each of us. Everyone in the group was ready to establish connections with one another. No one knew what to expect but was open to the process. It felt like a school assignment at first but then it became something we all looked forward to that took away from the stresses of work and school. It became a scapegoat and developing the group chat helped us connect outside of the group. The group leader helping us see the connections between one another also let us grow closer together.

References

Corey, M. S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2018). *Groups: Process and Practice* (10th ed). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning