

Running head: Group Reflection Paper

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Group Dynamics

## Abstract

Corey, M. S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2018) stated, “Groups are an excellent treatment choice for numerous intrapersonal and interpersonal issues and for helping people change. Counseling groups are being offered in all kinds of settings today and for many different client groups” (p.6). This writer attended a total of eight group therapy sessions. As a student at Nyack College’s Clinical Mental Health Masters program, we were mandated to select a process group to be apart of in conjunction with our Group Dynamics and Therapy Course. This writer selected to join the process group of Marie. M. Fevrier, along with two of her classmates, K and S. In this paper, this writer will disclose the dynamics of the group, the group leadership styles and observances, personal experiences as a member of the group, and much more. This writer will also disclose her personal and professional insights, likes and dislikes as well.

**Introduction**

This writer attended eight group therapy sessions as a requirement for her Group Dynamics and Therapy Course. The group was composed of three students, including the writer, from AGSC. K is a black female, single mother, a physical therapist in her late forties or early fifties. S is a black female, single mother, administrator, in her fifties. This writer is a white female, single, personal trainer, softball coach, and current student aspiring to own her own business in health and wellness, offering personal training services, mental health counseling services, and more. The group leader's name was Marie, M. Fevrier. Marie is a black female counselor and teacher (marital status not specified.) This writer was the only white member in the group which brought diversity into the group.

**Five Expectations**

This writer had five expectations before entering the process group. The first expectation was to receive mental and emotional support during the global pandemic and rioting that the United States is facing at this time. This expectation was fully met. Each week my group leader would ask each group members how they felt and encouraged them to share openly and freely. This form of expression allowed this writer to get everything she was experiencing and feeling out into a safe space and group of people whom she trusted. With her mother and sister being nurses and on "the front lines" of the COVID-19 pandemic, and her other sister, an NYPD officer, she was asked to share about her feelings and experiences during this time. This was very beneficial for her to have the opportunity to do and also a blessing.

The second expectation this writer had was to gain professional and personal insight about current situations and circumstances she was dealing with in her life such as dynamics with her mother. This expectation was partially met because she realized she required a different form of therapy (her group leader suggested psychotherapy) to explore deeper into the reasoning

behind the abusive and toxic relationships in her life and why she allowed them and has been allowing them for so long.

The third expectation this writer had was to gain positive socialization during a time of human isolation. This expectation was met. This writer's groupmates and she shared many laughs during their group sessions and had insightful and productive conversations. During the riots, she learned about systematic racism and the limitations that have been placed on black people for years. This writer has never known what black people have gone through and the struggles they have faced throughout the years to the extent they did. One of the members of the group educated her on this topic, and it was special to be able to learn from her and hear from her about her struggles, worries, and feelings on the topic.

The fourth expectation this writer had was to feel comfortable in the group therapy dynamics and experience. This expectation was met. Her groupmates and herself meshed very well. They all took on different roles throughout the therapy sessions. K was the big sister, S was the sterner, yet gentle-hearted mentor, and this writer played the role of the client. This writer shared the most out of the three members and she believes she got the most out of her group therapy experience. She was able to learn from K and S, and they became a team. They listened to one another, helped one another, respected one another, and they cared for one another. This made this writer feel comfortable in her group experience.

The fifth expectation this writer had was to learn different therapeutic approaches in real-time, and learn how to incorporate them into the group experience. This expectation was not met. During the group, our group leader briefly mentioned other approaches at one point, but this writer can remember it as if it was being a paintbrush taking one soft stroke, barely touching the canvas.

**Transference**

Corey et al. (2018) said, "Transference consists of the feelings clients project onto the counselor. These feelings usually have to do with the relationships the clients have experienced in the past" (p. 261). During one of the sessions, this writer was sharing a lot. She remembered one of her groupmates sharing something, and this writer had something to share in regards to what she was saying. She remembered the counselor stopping her from speaking so we can hear from another groupmate instead. At this moment, this writer remembered feeling a variety of different emotions. A few of the feelings she felt were unheard, unseen, and almost wanting to crawl back into her shell and become quiet. She noticed these feelings were not necessarily because of the group leader, but because of the unfinished business, she has with her mother. Her whole life, she has felt unheard, unseen, unloved, and that she does not matter. This writer's mother rarely has ever listened to her or what she has to say, but instead would always voice her complaints and everything has always been about her. She did not notice any transference to occur with the members of her group.

**Likes and dislikes**

This writer liked the way the group leader allowed herself to enter the background of the group, while allowing the members to share amongst each other, get the group going and feed off of each other, only stepping in for teaching purposes and constructive purposes to keep the session flowing. The group leader would step in when she felt it was time to ask the other members of the group to share their experiences or thoughts in regard to the topic of conversation started by other members.

This writer liked how the group leader was insightful, knew what she was talking about, provided the necessary structure for the group, and was very mindful of their privacy. If their privacy were in danger at any given moment, such as someone walking by, etc., the leader would

close her screen right away, and when she returned, she would explain in full detail why she did what she did and emphasized the importance of the members' privacy in-group. This writer liked how the group leader allowed them to share freely and openly, allowing for their sessions to flow almost effortlessly.

This writer liked how the group leader never let anyone off the hook. After each person would share, whether they were the starter of the conversation or not, the leader would make sure to engage each of member of the group and ask for their thoughts, feelings or opinions on each of the material that was being shared by one of the members, so their input can be included as well.

There were not many things this writer did not like about the group leader, but if she had to mention one thing, she would have liked to have more structure in the group. With that being said, this writer understood why the leader chose to lead the group the way she did, and in doing so, the group became cohesive and one unit.

### **Self-realizations**

This writer learned that she is very forthcoming and unafraid to share with others. She learned she is a leader and was usually the person who "got the group going." As one of her members in the group said, she brought "color" and "spice" to the group. In session 6, this writer realized something about herself that made her extremely upset, but she also kind of already knew this about herself. The group leader told her she has a very compassionate heart towards others and but that may be a coping mechanism she has developed for the dysfunction in her life. It's amazing to this writer that her group leader said and noticed these things about her.

Because this writer has always felt unheard by her mother, and even slighted by her mother's words most of her life, she has become someone who is a good listener to others and wants to make every person she meets feel worthwhile and heard, and feel that they matter

because she knows what it is like to feel unheard, unloved, and like she does not matter. The group leader hit the nail on the head in telling this writer this analysis about herself, but it also made her feel very angry at that moment to know she has been so affected by her family's dysfunctional dynamics, and she remembers feeling even angrier at her mother that day.

From this same session, she learned that she has a tendency to focus on the bad in people rather than seeing the good. Ever since this writer heard this, she has been working on herself to change her focus on these things. She learned that there is a little girl inside of her, no matter how old she is, that feels and questions certain things. For example, she is thirty years old today, but the little girl inside of her still wants to know why her mother does not listen to her, or why she yells at her or says the hurtful and destructive things she says to her. The little girl wants to know what she did to deserve this verbal treatment and or why the things she does are never good enough to please her mother. This little girl wants to know why she can never do anything right in her mother's eyes.

This writer has learned that she has poor self-esteem and poor self-worth and that she is deeply wounded by her upbringing. She can see how she can benefit from further and deeper counseling (such as psychodynamic and psychotherapy). This writer learned that boundaries are important to establish in her life, with everyone and anyone in order to protect herself. She learned that she has always been going to other people's "turf" instead of them coming to her space.

The experience of this group fits with what Corey et al. (2018) state in the textbook:

- 1- The group leader's main role is to be present with members during group time. One way to increase this presence is through appropriate self-disclosure by the leader.
- 2- Members can be invited to behave authentically by a group leader modeling authentic

behavior. 3- The basic work in a group is done by the members. A leader's job is to create a climate in which members are likely to try out new ways of being. (p. 118)

This writer's group leader gave the option of having a free-flowing group, or a group structured and tailored to the lessons the members were learning in their group dynamics class. The group decided on free-flowing; allowing more present moments to occur in real-time, rather than following a structured plan. The leader created a climate that enabled the group members to "run the show" as she took a back seat, and was engaged with the group for teaching moments and to check in with each member from time to time (to see how they were feeling, to ask if anyone wanted to share, and to gain other thoughts, feelings or perspectives on what was being shared by another group member). The group leader was fully present during each session, and she disclosed personal information about herself at times.

This writer feels she is a great listener, compassionate, and empathetic. She is great at engaging and motivating others, speaking positively, and helping others see the positive side of life. This writer feels these are qualities that may enhance her effectiveness as a group leader. According to Corey, et al. (2018), "group leadership skills consist of the following: active listening, reflecting, clarifying, summarizing, facilitating, empathizing, interpreting, questioning, linking, confronting, supporting, blocking, assessing, modeling, suggesting, initiating, evaluating and terminating" (p. 38-45).

A quality that may detract this writer from leadership is her fear of confrontation. According to Corey et al. (2018), "Beginning group leaders are often afraid to challenge group members for fear of hurting them, of being wrong, or of inviting retaliation" (p. 42). This writer noticed that she could sometimes be passive when it comes to confrontation with others. If someone raises their voice or disagrees with what she is saying, she can become defensive or

tend to agree with what the other person is saying even if it is not what she truly agrees with, in order to avoid the confrontation. Rather than sticking up for herself verbally, or standing on her word she will sometimes walk away from the situation or will keep her thoughts inside and remain quiet, instead of sharing what she has to say, to avoid a potential disagreement and feeling that she is being "shot down." This is something she is going to need to work on in order to be the most effective group leader possible. This writer's work in the group taught her this because she remembered the time in one of the sessions where the group leader stopped her from speaking and said she wanted to hear from the others and their thoughts. She remembered at that moment, feeling like she wanted to crawl back into her shell. This is something this writer would like to improve upon too.

This writer learned that group's function when there are cohesiveness and unity amongst the group members and the group leader. When there is a sense of trust and respect in the group, sharing becomes easy. This writer feels she had the best group possible and could not have asked for a better group leader or groupmates. With that being said, this writer understands if any of the necessary components were lacking, such as trust, respect, etc. the group would malfunction and not be cohesive as it was and or is desired to be.

This writer observed the leader has been using an existential therapy technique. Corey et al. (2018) believes, "Existential therapy reacts against the tendency to view therapy as a system of well-defined techniques; it affirms looking at those unique characteristics that make us human and building therapy on them. Existential group therapists are free to adapt their interventions to their own personality and style, as well as paying attention to what each group member requires" (p. 119). The group leader was extremely attentive to each member of the group at all times, noticing everyone's reactions, facial expressions to what they were saying and not saying.

Community and trust were built in the group when members shared about lighter topics at the beginning of some of the sessions, such as discussing hair types and accepting each other for who each other are, ranging from ethnicity to unique personalities. This writer believes that when she stepped up to the plate and shared vulnerably, in doing so allowed the other members to realize the trust she felt with the group and upon doing so, allowed the creation of the cohesiveness, the vulnerability, the deeper discussions rather than surface talk.

This writer's group experience was nothing short of amazing. The group leader did a phenomenal job at creating the group rules and structure at the beginning of the session, all the way through to taking a back seat and allowing the group to be free-flowing, present moment, teaching therapeutic techniques, answering questions anyone had about professionalism for when they are in her seat as the leader or counselor. The leader was very attentive to the atmosphere of the group, to the members' reactions and non-reaction, and always engaged each member at all times at the appropriate times. She always asked each of all points of view and checked in with each of the members to hear if they had anything to say in regard to the topics that were being discussed. This writer was very pleased with her group experience.

References

Corey, M. S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2018). *Groups: Process and practice* (10th ed.).

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