

Jessica Maldonado

Reflection Paper #1

“The future is a hundred thousand threads, but the past is a fabric that can never be rewoven.”

Orson Scott Card When I read this quote, I immediately was reminded of what my group leader would say “each topic we discuss has a common thread”. Before you have a fabric, you need to use thread and those threads can create different patterns and form different themes within a fabric. The patterns and themes that are visible in a fabric is like one’s life. In the same way groups have themes and patterns that are formed because of everyone’s own life experience. Although everyone’s past is different and likened to a fabric that can never be rewoven within the group there are common threads that each member can relate to in their lives. It is interesting to see how each member came up with different yet similar topics.

The themes that exist in my group are insecurities, difficulty being vulnerable, unresolved issues, family trauma, and unforgiveness. The themes that I have observed have led to patterns within the group such as feelings of abandonment, seeking acceptance and low self-worth. These feelings have led individuals to seek acceptance from others. For example, if their father left the family as a child growing up, they may blame their self for parent leaving. As an adult these feelings have resulted in one trying to be perfect or trying to measure up to peoples’ expectations.

I found it interesting the way my group leader facilitates the group. From day one she made the group about us. Each group member was asked to come up with three topics they would like to explore. She lets the group go in the direction where it needs to go without knowing what to expect beforehand. It is not structured there is a flow that leaves you in expectancy for the next week. I appreciate that every now and then she will share similar life issues. In my opinion having the group leader add her own experience adds to the dynamics of the group in that the members feel like she can relate to them. She

does not make the group about herself when she shares. She knows exactly what to give. Never too much just what we need to go forward.

Her style is to confront. She does not mind calling you out to participate. She does it in such a way that is nonthreatening. I have been the quiet group member where she would call me out. I feel that I need someone with her style. Honestly, I have never felt bad about it I feel she is pushing me to engage. Something I find difficult at times, I just do not know what to contribute. I have learned it is ok to say just that "I don't have anything to contribute right now". When I have expressed not having anything to share, she has not probed me to say more. She has given me my space and eventually as the group continues, I am able to share.

Lastly, she provides resources, gives insight, helps us process what is going on and gives us homework. I look forward every week to the resources she will provide. For example, she suggested I read a book by Henry Cloud called Boundaries. I started reading it. I am looking forward to learning more about myself as I continue to read this book. She also does a great job of helping us process what we have shared and at the end of group most of the times she gives insight to us individually and as a group. It is a skill I have observed she has of making it personal yet collective at the same time.

I would say what has been most surprising in my experience in group is that I cried in front of the group. It was something I did not plan on doing. I do not like crying in front of people. I was shocked at myself. I was sharing and giving on the surface responses and Dr. Perez asked for more detail. I thought it was powerful how a simple question can bring up things that you did not realize were realize that at the end of the day we all have things we need to work on. Just because we are in this field does not make us perfect, we have our battles to fight daily and will continue to have them once we become counselors.

I do not feel that my culture, race, ethnicity, has played a role in my group dynamics. I believe my gender may have played a role in the group dynamics. Most of the members are women. I feel more comfortable sharing with women as opposed to men. I do not have anything against men in my life I have been surrounded mainly around females and I feel that may play a role in why I feel more comfortable around women. The men in my group have made me feel comfortable.

If I were the group leader, I would start groups with an ice breaker. I like ice breakers because it is like a warmup before we begin. Everyone has a lot going on in life some might be coming straight from work or coming from a long day of taking care of their children. I feel an ice breaker helps the individual get into a zone or refocuses before we begin our group session. Another thing I would do differently is finish on time. I realize it is important to respect people's time. The group that I am currently in we go over and we are all fine with that because we are flexible. We enjoy it. In the future as a counselor, I would try to end on time. Although group members may be fine with it. It might work against me in that a member will think the group can extend every session. As mentioned in class finishing on time helps establish boundaries as well.