13 Approaches to Achieving Different Purposes

It will be helpful for members, workers, and agencies to consider that the selection of activities can be aided by recognizing that some activities are more appropriately used for attaining some purposes rather than others. For this reason, we have utilized a typology of purposes that Garvin (1997, pp. 40–46) described previously. These purposes also have implications for such processes as planning for the group, recruiting and orienting members, helping members deal with group formation, seeking environmental change, and evaluating and ending the group. In this book, we shall also discuss the social justice implications when members focus on one of these purposes. We begin this chapter with a discussion of different purposes and how we have categorized these. We shall then discuss some of the processes and activities that are ways of accomplishing these purposes.

A Typology of Group Purposes

It is extremely important for practitioners to understand in helping members define the purposes for their group that our typology is a set of *ideal types*. This means that we are presenting a schema that should be utilized to examine the purposes of the group. These purposes may vary in a variety of ways, as groups may have overlapping purposes, or may shift their view of group purposes as the group evolves. We cannot state too strongly that we are presenting *a tool for thinking about group purposes, and the tool is to be used flexibly and not dogmatically to theorize about the group and its processes*.[1]

We began thinking about purposes as we considered how Vinter (1965) and Hasenfeld (1985) conceive of the major group purposes as socialization and resocialization of members. The former category views members as undertaking the normal processes of human development. Examples are children who separate from their parents or other caretakers and enter the peer culture of the school; adolescents who are taking greater responsibility for themselves as they leave home for work or college; middle-aged persons who are planning to retire; and elderly persons who give up their family homes and enter a supported living facility or nursing home. The latter category refers to individuals who because of environmental and personal factors have severe

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[1] We strongly recommend a book by Forte (2014) in which he describes how *all* professional practice of social work should use and contribute to theory.

difficulties with the various stages of life development. Examples of this are children who experience barriers to development due to physical and/or mental conditions; adolescents who join an antisocial gang and are pressured to take part in illegal acts; college students who are lonely and isolated when at college due to their lack of social skills; adults who are limited from performing in expected roles due to their psychiatric circumstances; and elderly people who are unable to engage in self-care due to their physical and/or mental statuses.

As we worked with linking the concepts of socialization and resocialization, we found it important to subdivide socialization into two subpurposes: *identity development* and *skill attainment.* One example of this was a member who was a woman trying to raise her level of consciousness of changing women's roles so she could pursue a career as well as motherhood. Another was a lesbian who wanted support in "coming out" to family. A third was an adolescent who identified as a political progressive but wasn't sure how to deal with his politically conservative family. Practitioners have told us that their group members often discussed issues related to deciding how changing norms in society raised questions about how they viewed themselves and made life choices.

Once members have worked out identity issues, they sometimes had trouble because of a lack of skills to act in ways to achieve purposes related to their identities. Thus, as indicated above, we refer to this as skill attainment. We will use the examples in the previous paragraph to give examples of skill issues. The woman dealing with her changed view of women's roles lacks the skill of identifying possible jobs, obtaining the skills required by these jobs, locating jobs for which she may apply, and participating in a job interview. The lesbian member didn't think she knew how to respond to her family's queries and opposition to her lifestyle she. She also thought she didn't know how to initiate relationships with others similar to herself. The politically progressive youth also didn't think he knew how to respond to his family's arguments of his views and their possible rejection of him. He also thought he didn't know enough about how to play an active role in organizations in which members shared his beliefs.

We also found it useful to subdivide the category of resocialization into social control and rehabilitation. The category of social control was necessary because institutions ranging from schools and hospitals to prisons and parole or probation agencies may seek to impose the institution's goals on group members in groups under their auspices. One example of this was an adolescent service in a psychiatric institution instructed to form groups to stop members from "playing" with the elevators. Our investigation showed that the teenagers were bored, and the activities they were offered did not appeal to them. They appeared interested in joining a group to plan such activities. Another example was a school that told the social worker to form groups to convince the students to do their homework. The students in turn said they wanted a group to discuss how to deal with teachers they saw as unfair to them and prejudiced against them. Later, we shall discuss how group workers address these types of social control issues.

The final category is rehabilitation. When this is the primary focus of members, the group and worker have the function of developing new values, knowledge

(including self-awareness), and skills to replace dysfunctional ones. While the members may be in conflict with their environments, they have not acted in violation of major social norms and the subsequent legal sanctions. While there may be considerable environmental pressure on members to do something about their situation, they are likely to seek help voluntarily because of personal discomfort. Agencies serving these members are likely to be supportive of the choices members make regarding their purposes and goals when social control functions are at the forefront. Even in such institutions as prisons, groups may be formed to help members determine their own rehabilitation goals. We do not deny that these members may find personal change and environmental change difficult to work for because of previous patterns in dealing with what has often been a socially unjust environment. The worker's efforts are directed at building on member motivation by reinforcing change and helping the members experience with change to be a rewarding one. Groups that function as social control instruments can evolve into rehabilitation if members find a common ground.

Social Justice Issues Related to Purposes

For each of the "ideal type" purposes we have just presented, there are likely to be social justice issues that impede or support members working to accomplish the purpose. With respect to identity development, the following social justice issues are likely to emerge:

Social Justice Issues That Further Identity Development

- Support from peers and others who are seeking to develop or confirm similar identities

- Support from social institutions through affirmative action, legislation, or resources in recognition of members working on identity issues

- Support from the media (e.g., role models presented in dramas) who successfully cope with the same issues of identity development

- Sponsoring agency actively seeks to assist groups that are working on this purpose through consultation, material resources, and employment of group workers who have skills in relevant aspects of identity development

Social Justice Issues That Impede Identity Development

- Oppression of members of the identity group (e.g., negative stereotypes of the identity group, barriers in education, employment, housing, etc.)

- Past history of oppression known to members of the identity group

With regard to skill attainment, the following issues are likely to emerge:

Social Justice Issues That Hinder Skill Attainment

- Lack of resources that can facilitate skill attainment (e.g., barriers to education)

- Social forces that deny the right of members to attain the skill (e.g., beliefs that members are incapable of developing the skill or that they do not have a right to obtain the skill)

- Beliefs that it is not the proper role in society for relevant members to obtain the skill (e.g., women should not receive training for careers other than as wives and mothers; youths under the voting age should not be taught skills to affect political processes; inmates of prisons should not receive advanced education while in prison; youths should not receive sex education

Social Justice Issues That Support Skill Attainment

- Affirmative action is in force.

- Resources are made available to oppressed persons so they can attain the skills (e.g., employment support programs; job training programs; available remedial education; high quality and available sex education).

Social Justice Forces That Support Social Control

- Government support for institutions that function as social control agents (e.g., prisons, schools, and some hospitals)

- Societal norms that support punishment for persons who deviate from these norms

- Belief systems that support racism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, and other sources of oppression and that favor institutions that control the behaviors of women, LGBT people, older people, youths, people of color, and so forth.

Social Justice Forces That Oppose Many Forms of Social Control

- Worker sees role as helping members find common ground between agency purpose and member goals.

- Advocacy groups that work for patient rights, prisoner rights, student rights

- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) chapters, national organizations, and other professional organizations that actively advocate for the sets of rights referred to above

- Students, patients, and inmates—whenever possible—find means of advocating for their rights.

Social Justice Forces That Oppose Rehabilitation

- The media and organizations in the society that stigmatize persons who have mental or physical limitations

- Lack of an adequate number of competent professionals and organizations to supply rehabilitation services

- Lack of adequate funding for rehabilitation

- Social norms that promote punishment rather than rehabilitation

Social Justice Forces That Support Rehabilitation

- Recognition by some organizations and political entities that all persons should receive the services required to realize their potential in society

- Social services in the schools when they are adequate to meet the needs of students

- The existence of such programs as halfway houses or supported living for the elderly (rather than only nursing homes)

Group Programs and Processes That Help Members Attain the Purposes

Now that we have defined our typology of purposes, we turn to ways of working with groups when the immediate, if not long-term, purpose is one or more of the four we have defined.

Identity Development

This purpose is at the forefront when the worker wishes to help the members determine their values, norms, and aspirations in situations where these are in flux, in conflict, or altogether absent. As Culbert (1976) states,

All societal roles and practices are open to suspicion. Conventional sex roles are questioned for the limitations they place on individual expressiveness. The Anglo's domination of industry and education is questioned for racist practices and elitist control. Government and the courts are suspect. Formulas and principles of welfare and taxation are challenged. No longer are conventional marriages and single careers the norm; private medicine doesn't work; the environment is deteriorating at an unacceptable rate; and all hidden forms of influence whether from the private sector or from government are being viewed for the limitations they pose to individual freedom and democratic values. (p. 231)

Many of the methods used by such groups have come from approaches labeled "consciousness raising" and "values-clarification" and to a lesser degree what was labeled "the encounter movement." While we shall discuss a range of methods groups utilize when working on identity development, we shall draw heavily from these sets of ideas.

- *Pregroup Tasks.* Workers are recruiting members for groups that are likely to have this purpose. We have found that a degree of heterogeneity is valuable. Thus, a group of men seeking to adapt to changing masculine roles is likely to find it beneficial to enroll some members who were gay and some who were straight. When the group began and members discussed their experiences as men at different stages of their lives, the similarities and differences between the gay and the straight men helped each to clarify many of their conceptions of masculinity. Furthermore, the worker had invited men of different ages—the youngest being 19 and the oldest 50, and different statuses—ranging from cook to college professor. Because of this compositional range, the similarities and differences in their experiences helped to illuminate for them many of the topics they discussed.

We have found that these group purposes are best pursued in groups of between eight and 12 members. A smaller group, while providing for intimacy among members is impeded when one or two members have to miss a meeting because such absences cause the members to fear that the group is not valued. This type of group or group with this purpose should begin with a clear idea of the number of sessions to which members commit and whether it is short or long term. The short term is appropriate for a group working on a specific role such as working mothers, coming-out gay or lesbian, or expectant father. The long-term, or indefinite, group, usually has a broader focus in order to encompass the full range of gender roles relevant to the members.[2]

- *Group Formation Tasks.* During group formation, the worker will encourage members to share their identity concerns. For example, a group of men joined the group because they wished to examine how their views of manhood affected people around them, particularly their partners and children. They explained to the worker that their views often conflicted with the expectations their partners had of them. One man said that his partner expected him to share in the cooking, and he had never considered that his role. He was willing to discuss this in the group and to hear what other members thought. He added that his father had never cooked except when his wife was away from home, and he had told his son of these views. He added that all of his friends and his minister also talked about women's roles from quite separate from men's as the men's role was to be the major financial support of the family and the disciplinarian.

During formation, the process of assessing the members's identity concerns will continue. With respect to this kind of purpose, the worker will help members to

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[2] An example of one such group is that to which one of the authors (CG) belongs. It is a men's group encompassing men who have a variety of concerns and, while leaderless, has a number of members who are experienced group facilitators. The group has met for over 30 years. In its earlier days, it focused on issues of finding a partner and raising young children. At this point, the topics often range from the health of aging members, to the death of some members, to the deaths of their partners.

understand internal barriers to defining one's values and roles, as well as barriers from the environment, and this will continue throughout the group. The external barriers, such as oppression of members of the identity group, lack of opportunities to achieve, and overt hostility from others, are important social justice issues. Culbert (1976, p. 233) found in his discussion of consciousness-raising groups that this duality in assessment can be approached by asking members what they think is "off" in their interactions with some environmental institution. Culbert also noted that some people are reluctant to discuss the way the "system" has negatively impacted their sense of identity, and they may even blame themselves. The opposite may also occur. Some members blame the environment rather than realize that they compounded their problems when they failed to take moral stands.

In-group discussion helps the members assess how they made important choices previously and whether these choices led to satisfaction or frustration. Value conflicts that should be resolved can also be uncovered in this type of discussion.

During the group formation phase, the members will also clarify group purpose. Thus, in a men's consciousness-raising group, a discussion took place as to whether all issues of concern to the members would be discussed or whether some were beyond the purview of the group. In a woman's group, for example, it was acceptable to the other members that one member clarify for herself what her obligations were in her marriage. Another member defined her purpose as deciding what kind of lesbian lifestyle would fit her personality and her needs.

- *Goal Pursuit Tasks*. For the members questioning their personal beliefs, their target is to examine their attitudes. Workers will draw upon their knowledge about how attitudes are formed and how attitude conflicts may be resolved. This involves examining beliefs that help form attitudes. For example, in one group in which prejudice against people of color was an issue, members looked for information about accomplishments of people of color. In another group of gay and lesbian members, they determined that they wanted to challenge people who express stereotypes about people like the members and to demand that their rights to hold jobs, receive promotions, and so forth are based on their skills, not their gender orientations.

Culbert presents a model for the development of consciousness-raising groups that can help members attain identity development purposes. His first phase is similar to the ideas we discussed above with respect to group formation (Culbert, 1976). Culbert's second stage is understanding ourselves and the system. In this phase, he recommends that members work to develop a better understanding of themselves (i.e., how we work and what we need) as well as the systems with which they interact.

In this analysis of self and environment, members sometimes hold stereotyped perceptions or remain committed to their initial views. The worker seeks to affect this by asking members to examine their concrete experiences rather

than their previously held pictures. The members subsequently discuss how specific experiences sometimes contradict their closely held views.

In Culbert's third stage, the members work to develop a better understanding of their relationship to relevant systems. He sees this understanding as facilitated by answering the following type of questions:

1. What are the goals we hold for our interactions with the system, and what means do we use to attain them?

2. How do you think the system views you?

3. How do we influence the system, and how does it influence us? (Culbert, 1976, p. 239)

A major function of group discussion of these questions is to become aware of the assumptions members make.

The fourth stage, according to Culbert, is one of identifying alternatives (pp. 241–242). He states: "We do this by noting how assumptions which have been characterized by our relationship with the system are inconsistent with what we have learned about our own needs, interests and ideals" (Culbert, 1976, p. 241).

An example of this is a member of a men's consciousness-raising group who stated that his wife expected him to make the major family decisions; she became upset when he refused to do so. The other members pointed out that he was making assumptions about what his wife wanted and why she became upset. One member stated that he had a similar situation and later learned that his wife feared that he intended to leave her when he refused to continue making decisions. He found out that she actually resented his power but feared being left alone even more. The husband who had originally spoken developed new ideas about decision making. He thought he would try to work toward consensus on issues by engaging in mutual problem solving. He would raise an objection to being asked to make "the decision" and would explain the role he really wanted to have.

The final stage of Culbert's model is "affecting the lives of others" (Culbert, 1976, p. 242). Culbert makes the excellent point that effective consciousness-raising requires that the member secure the support of others outside the group. Examples are women after a consciousness-raising experience hoping that the men in their lives will see that they are also oppressed by stereotyped male role requirements and gay men and lesbians hoping that "straight" persons see limitations in that role as they experience such things as strict definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Skill Attainment

This purpose is central when members seek to fulfill the requirements of social positions (and related roles) they aspire to or are already in. Examples of such positions are a student, parent, employee, or retired person. The student may want to learn good study habits; the parent may want to find constructive ways of guiding a child; the employee might want to learn how to negotiate in conflict situations so the needs of both parties are respected; and the retired person might want to learn of and fulfill interests that they discover they had now that they did not face the demands of full-time employment.

Pregroup Tasks

In groups that work on skill attainment, it helps if members have similar positions and roles. Thus, a group may be composed of parents who lack parenting skills, workers who do not have the skills for negotiating conflicts in the workplace, or elderly people who have recently retired and are seeking to participate in activities that they find satisfying. Prior to the first meeting, the worker should assess the skills already possessed by the members. There will undoubtedly be variance here, and this is valuable as there is a great deal members can learn from each other. Common environmental barriers can be also confronted when members are working on similar skills.

Skill-attainment purposes are often the focus of short-term groups that meet 6 to 20 times. The short-term framework is also supported if members are prepared for the group prior to the first meeting. In task-centered groups, to be discussed below, the worker may help the members to become clear about the processes in the group and the kinds of skills they may wish to pursue.

An example is of a group of young adults with problems of separating from their families. In advance of the group, prospective members were helped to consider their issues in separating. One young man defined the problem as responding to parents who imposed advice on him; a young woman wished to establish a separate residence against parental opposition; another man wanted to help his family be less dependent on him for advice and direction.

In short-term groups that are likely to have skill attainment purposes, the worker is likely to have interventions in mind and these should be explained to members in advance of the group. In a task-centered group, members are given an explanation of the task concept. They are told that the members will be helping one another identify and work on tasks related to their issues. In assertiveness training groups, members may be given handouts on the meaning of assertiveness and a sequence of activities: learning more about assertiveness, assessing interactions with others with respect to assertiveness, practicing being assertive (often through role plays), and applying what they have learned with their friends or families.

When the approach to be used is known, this will have an impact on how members will be recruited for the group. Some potential members can adapt to a structured format, while others may not because they appear to be unable to focus on a topic and have little motivation to give and receive help from others.

If the group has a structured format, the group can accommodate a larger number of members. Some groups, for example, that focus on parent training may enroll as

many as 15 or 20 members. The worker can still subdivide the group into smaller groups to discuss an issue or role play a skill.

In the formation of any type of skill attainment group, the worker should be aware of stereotypes and biases. Gambrill and Richey (1983) have investigated gender issues in social skills training. Men and women both may present a socially desirable image rather than how they really view themselves. Men may deny their social anxiety, and women may overestimate their assertiveness. Still another set of stereotypes are cited by Gambrill and Richey related to sexual orientation:

> For example, lesbian women may join a social skills group to increase contacts with other women, not with men or their goals may be related to career advancement and not be relationship focused. The sexual orientation of group members may not be at all obvious. This discretionary visibility (whether sexual orientation is disclosed) may mislead a trainer into making faulty assumptions about desired goals. Reluctance to disclose a deviant (sic) sexual orientation may be increased by failure of the trainer to overtly recognize alternative life style. (p. 58)

Group formation tasks

In the first meeting of the group, the worker should discuss the group's purposes and procedures with the whole group. This will reinforce what members were told before the group began. It is also likely that when members "see" who else is present, they may have questions or reactions they did not have in advance of this meeting. For example, in a parent education group, the worker will already have in mind skills in discipline, preparation for school, and so on and will ask the members whether these are the issues that concern them. In contrast, in a task-centered group, the group worker will help the members to state a detailed description of their issues so that each member can develop individualized tasks. In a cognitive-behavioral group, an initial assessment is to help members assess the conditions that exist (antecedent conditions) before a behavior they wish to change. They will then be helped by the worker and other members to determine a behavior they wish to see occur other than what occurred in the past and what will happen afterwards to sustain the new behavior, such as rewards or other reinforcements. A considerable literature exists on ways members can engage in this type of behavioral analysis (Ledley, Marx, & Heimberg, 2005; MacLaren & Freeman, 2007).

Brim and Wheeler (1966) present a useful framework for assessment relevant to skill attainment. Specifically, they state, "There are three things a person requires before he [sic] is able to perform satisfactorily in a role. He [sic] must know what is expected of him [sic] both in behavior and values, must be able to meet the role requirements, and must desire to practice the behavior and pursue the appropriate ends. It can be said that the purposes of socialization are to give a person knowledge ability, and motivation" (p. 25). This is summarized by Brim and Wheeler in Table 13.1.

In discussing this table, Brim and Wheeler (1966) explain that "cells A and B indicate respectively that the individual knows what behavior is expected of him [sic] and what ends he [sic] should pursue. E and F indicate that the individual is motivated to behave in the appropriate ways and to pursue the designated values: C and D indicate

TABLE 13.1	Socialization Purposes, Behaviors, and Values	
Purpose	**Behavior**	**Values**
Knowledge	A	B
Ability	C	D
Motivation	E	F

that the individual is able to carry out the behavior and holds appropriate values" (pp. 25–26).

Based on these types of assessments, the worker and members will choose appropriate activities. These activities may relate to combinations of members' behaviors, attitudes, and cognitions (knowledge) required for the role requirements the members seek to fulfill. The futility of accomplishing this arises when the environment is a socially unjust one and does not provide reinforcement or support. Thus, the worker and members can seek to change the environment.

An example is of a group of children with learning difficulties. The group worker and members targeted the members' skills in paying attention to the teacher as well as the members' level of motivation for school success. The school was deficient in its opportunity structures as there was no remedial instruction to help the children "catch up." The worker helped the members compose a petition to their teacher and the principal requesting this service.

Also, during the formation period of the group, the members are helped to determine their skill-attainment goals. It is usually feasible when skill-attainment purposes are the focus of the group to attain a high level of precision in such formulations.

Goal Pursuit Tasks

A frequently used procedure for attaining skills in groups is role rehearsal. In this activity, the worker helps the members role-play the behavior they wish to possess. The following are the steps in this process.

1. The member through actual enactment with other members or through description presents an example of the way the situation currently occurs.

2. Members, with the help of the worker, suggest changes in the way the member in question acts. These changes are often guided by general principles the group members have learned, such as "giving and receiving compliments" and "carrying on conversations."

3. The member has an opportunity to clarify suggestions from the group and to plan how she or he will act.

4. A member volunteers to play the other person in the situation and is briefed on what this will entail.

5. The role play is enacted.

6. After the role play, members first state the positive aspects of the performance; members then make suggestions for improvements.

7. The member is invited to plan occasions outside the group to try out the newly acquired behavior. At subsequent meetings, the member is invited to report on this. Additional modifications and rehearsals may then be suggested.

Another major procedure when members are working on skills is modeling. Many of the other members can model behaviors that members desire to learn. Members who have successfully acquired the behavior can demonstrate it in a role play or describe how they handled situations. Workers can also play video-based examples that present good examples of handling relevant situations.

In task-centered groups, any of the preceding approaches can be used to help members accomplish tasks. In our experience, the first members to select tasks do so slowly. They serve as models for other members. In a homogenous group, members may select similar tasks that will accelerate the process.

During the task accomplishment phase, members can be helped in several ways by other members. They can rehearse them through role plays in the group, or they can discuss with the group how they anticipate dealing with specific situations. Other members can also reinforce their actions outside of the group.

Problem-solving approaches will also be used to determine ways of coping with problems that occur in these real-life situations.

Coaching is another approach to helping members accomplish tasks. This involves helping members create a series of intermediate goals, obtain support when it is needed, ask for advice, and even request that the worker and/or other members be present when the worker works on the tasks outside of the group.

In behavioral groups when a skills attainment purpose is being pursued, a major emphasis is placed on helping members define their concerns precisely and monitor their changes through such measures as behavioral counts. As in task-centered groups, members in behavioral groups may be given homework assignments with respect to trying out behaviors and monitoring them. Members can develop a notebook in which assignments are recorded, as well as the outcomes when an assignment is done.

The worker may also train the members in behavioral procedures such as finding reinforcements as well as altering dysfunctional thoughts.

This sequence of activities with respect to skill attainment has been standardized. First sessions are spent describing and planning subsequent ones.

A sequence of skills is taught through exercises and "homework" assignments. Opportunity is provided for members to describe or enact experiences related to the skills and to engage in problem solving. An assertiveness-training experience, for example, might incorporate exercises in the first session to teach members how to effectively indicate agreement or disagreement, how to initiate a discussion, how to respect their own rights and those of others, and to assert their rights.

Because of the problems some members have in learning and applying skills, group workers seek to understand how to overcome obstacles such as members' negative thoughts that interfere with their acting in desirable ways. Members should be helped to recognize such thoughts as "one must have love all the time from significant people," "one's life is bad when it does not go my way," "the solutions to problems must be found quickly," and "one cannot overcome the consequences of past misfortunes." When the members have such thoughts, they can be helped to make other self-statements that facilitate forward movement.

Similarly, members working on skill development may be hindered by their emotions. Such emotions are anxiety, anger, jealousy, or sadness. Workers might respond empathically to such emotions and help members to cope with them. One approach is relaxation training. This technology was originally described by Jacobson (1929); a recent discussion is presented by Öst and Breitholz (2000). The reader is urged to consult these detailed descriptions of this technology, which involves gradually tensing and then relaxing each muscle group from head to toe while thinking the word "relax." The exercise usually ends with the members visualizing a peaceful scene. All the members of a group can use this approach at the same time.

Because skill attainment experiences are so oriented to educational procedures, the worker should sometimes provide for a release of tension. One is to lead the group in a "round." Members go around the group and state what they are feeling. Members may also benefit from a "halfway through party" or other social experience.

In the earlier days of group work, many group workers were employed in community centers and settlement houses. These agencies provided many activities that were oriented to skills through club activities and special interest groups such as arts and crafts or dramatics. These groups accomplished their purposes through the worker's awareness of principles of group development and group decision making and the selection of activities appropriate to the members' developmental tasks. While we are not offering a detailed discussion of group work in such situations, many of the procedures we have described throughout this book and particularly in this section on identity development and skill attainment can and are being used in such groups.

Resistance to Social Control

In the two previous sections of this chapter, we presented ways of working when group purposes are helping members work on identity issues or transition from one role to another or from one stage of a role to a later stage. The members' purposes may also be thought of as prevention in that the members are learning to cope with situations that can lead to emotional illnesses or dysfunctional or illegal behavior. In

this section and the next, we shall discuss group workers' actions for members viewed by society in other ways as those to which we have just referred, perhaps because of a failure in such socialization. Thus, members may be characterized by social institutions as criminals or delinquents on the one hand or as mentally/emotionally ill on the other. The group's purpose is often described as *treatment or rehabilitation* rather than education. We think of the overall function as *resocialization*. At times, the members recruited for such groups do not share some or all of the goals of the agency. We have termed this phenomenon as "working with groups in social control situations." In our current approach to social justice, we are heading this section "Resistance to Social Control." The social control aspect is justified by the agency in that society through legislative processes has established the social control function and has created judicial and executive procedures to select the individuals to whom it should apply. Thus, people who break the law may be placed on probation or sent to prison. People can also be placed in psychiatric facilities by judicial decree. Social control is also the issue when schoolchildren are required to attend groups established to get them to conform to school procedures.

There is considerable literature on what has been termed "involuntary clients" (Rooney, 2009). It defines an involuntary relationship as containing one or more of the following elements: (a) a person feels forced to remain in it because of physical or legal coercion; (b) the cost of leaving the relationship for the person is too high; (c) the person feels pressured to act differently in the relationship than she or he wishes.

Many members of so-called involuntary groups may have a degree of ambivalence about the group experience. While they may recognize that the group may benefit them, they may also oppose its involuntary nature. This is explained by "reactance theory," which has to do with the way people respond when they experience negative forces (Rooney, 2009). Group work may still fulfill its ethical principles as members may get to know and trust the group worker who accepts their resistance to the group and helps them find a common ground with relationship to group purposes, member purposes, and agency purposes. How this is attained is the focus of this section of the chapter.

We do not believe that social workers should be restrained by the mission of institutions such as those in the psychiatric or correctional sphere. This is similar to the way we see the role of teachers, doctors, and other professionals who supply professional services to people to meet their individual growth and health needs.

Based on the above discussion, we have developed a set of principles relevant to these groups and in view of our social justice orientation to practice:

1. Identify socially unjust forces that contribute to the involuntary nature of the group and recognize these with the members' participation.

2. Respect the member's right to reject participation in the group.

3. Explain the rationale for group work, the group work methods to be utilized, and the evidence for the effectiveness of group work. Many members in involuntary groups have not been respected as intelligent people; reinforcement of their awareness of their own abilities to learn and problem solve will help them approach future situations as opportunities to acquire effective solutions to problems.

4. Choose ways to involve the involuntary member in decision making in the group such as prioritizing issues for consideration, selecting problems on which to focus, or selecting the types of group processes to employ.

5. Support group members in striving to change or improve relevant systems and entities such as the agency, community institutions, and social policies.

6. Above all, recognize that the group member is a unique individual and not a "clone" of other prisoners, patients, or whatever term applies.

When the members have identified a commonality between their goals and the goals of the agency, they are likely to use the help of the group and the group worker to work toward these goals. The function of the group shifts to *resocialization*, which we shall discuss in the next section of this chapter.

Ethical issues are very important in working to attain any group purpose but are especially prominent in social control situations. There can be a thin line between coercing members and urging them to consider values and behaviors that the worker thinks will benefit the members. The issue here is the power the agency wields compared to the power of members, especially when the agency controls the members' access to discharge (if a correctional program), release from mental health services, or return to the general student population in schools. There are no easy answers to this issue, and workers in social control settings must struggle with this every day. We suggest that workers should discuss these dilemmas with members, especially if they expect the members to share their conflicts.

Another struggle for workers is to resist being co-opted by the agency. In a set of interviews we had with inmates of a federal prison, they described a worker who they believe had accepted the guards' attitudes toward prisoners. An example a member gave was that he had spoken to the worker regarding obtaining a pass to visit his seriously ill wife. The worker was unreceptive and even said that prisoners often were trying to "con" the system.

The strategies for group work in social control situations must address several conditions. Group members are likely to see themselves as in an involuntary situation, at least at first. Group attendance is often seen as leading to a "benefit" such as a recommendation for parole or probation, and the worker should be transparent on this issue as to his or her role in such decisions. A second condition is that the members are often seen by "society" as socially deviant. They are subject for this reason to denial of social resources such as jobs and education, pressure from peers who are in the same social category, and the imposition of derogatory labelling. Group members facing such social control issues are likely to cast off such labels, and this can be discussed in the group to help the members do this. Social workers also have an obligation to help educate outside social institutions so that these views can be changed. This is often a problem for poor communities and among those oppressed by their identity as members of ethnic or other oppressed communities. An example of this was the portrayal by President Donald Trump that such communities are rife with crime and decay.

When groups are conducted in an institution for law breakers, the members are likely to be affected by the *inmate code*. This code requires the member to uphold his or her solidarity with others in the institution by withholding information about them and by supporting them in encounters with staff. As a consequence, members resist discussing their reactions to others in the group as group workers urge members to present their reactions to others in the group. These reactions are the core of many group work approaches, and workers should help members to recognize their reactions to each other protected by norms of confidentiality that should be instilled in the group.

If the barriers related to the inmate code are to be surmounted, there must be a commonality of group and agency purposes. Correctional institutions can be coercive, and this can undermine the emergence of self-disclosure and confrontation by one member of others (or even the worker). The worker, consequently, should find ways of reducing the coercive forces in the agency—a huge task!

The group can play a role in changing some of the coercive practices of the agency. For example, one of the authors (CG) consulted with social workers employed in a state prison. The worker had a project to train inmates as group workers for inmate groups. The process to develop this included lobbying the prison administration to secure approval of this project and to conduct a pilot program. Because of the success of the program, several guards were also trained as social workers, and some groups cofacilitated by an inmate and a guard were both supervised by the worker. This gradually led to a more positive attitude of guards to inmates, and each set of people began to see the other set as individuals rather than stereotypes.

As we have indicated, other settings than those in the correctional sphere may exercise social control (e.g., schools, hospitals). Members in these settings may resist a challenge to their values and behaviors. Workers should help members discuss these issues with each other and to examine them. The workers should not be restrained from presenting their own values, what Schwartz (1961) calls "lending a vision" of what a "just society" would be like. This does not guarantee a change in values and behavior but does open the door to a consideration of change.

We now turn to a discussion of group development when social control features are present.

Pregroup Tasks

The interactional and social-psychological conception of deviant behaviors holds that antisocial behaviors are maintained by individuals' interactions with their families and peers. This view requires the worker to examine the peer group interactions of potential group members. The worker may also work directly with the peer group itself, as in street gang work. In residential settings with delinquent teens, the group is often primary because this is where delinquent norms may be maintained.

In any case, in a pregroup assessment, the worker will determine the members' sub-cultural identifications. Members will be asked about the groups to which they have belonged and how members acted in such groups. In their current groups, it is important to discover whether there are value conflicts among members as some motivation for change may emerge from these conflicts.

Motivation to examine one's values and behaviors or to change them is assessed during pregroup interviews. This can be assessed by asking prospective members about times they had considered prosocial goals, how they may respond now to new opportunities, and whether family members are likely to support their entry into new roles.

Even under optimal conditions, the group composition will sometimes work against the members' consideration of new roles. Workers will sometimes "seed" the group with members who have been in the program long enough to have begun the process of personal change.

It is also possible to have a sequence of groups: the first one orients members to the program; the second to help members to make choices regarding the courses of their lives and begin to embark on them; and the last, to facilitate termination from the program and to select subsequent experiences that will support their chosen life courses.

Group Formation Tasks

When a group is started in a social control situation, it is usually hard work to overcome the initial distrust the members feel toward the worker and, sometimes, toward each other. Empey and Erickson (1972) in their development of an approach called "Guided Group Interaction" describe a number of techniques used in their model to begin group work in a social control environment. They find that members will act in an erratic and defensive manner and, therefore, "the concern of the group leader should be with fostering interaction among group members and instilling some confidence that it might eventually be effective and rewarding" (p. 96).

The worker, consequently works to "foster and reward interaction," and that will help members to realize "that whatever interaction took place in a group and whatever progress was made, would depend on them, not just staff" (pp. 103–135). This is aided by showing sincere interest in what members say and by avoiding stereotyped responses. In social control situations, members often seek formulas for the group and in prisons how to attain parole. Sometimes there may be institutional norms that discourage members from providing personal information, and the worker should help members to examine whether this is taking place and what the members see as pros and cons for talking about themselves.

Attention should also be paid, and this is especially important to our social justice approach, to discussing such barriers as racism, poverty, and sexism that have discouraged members from forming prosocial life goals. Some practitioners have criticized this inquiry by arguing that this provides "excuses" for deviant behavior. We, on the other hand, recommend that space be provided for discussions related to all of these: personal shortcomings, personal strengths, and aversive environments.

Our experience with groups in social control settings is that members can become inpatient and restless with the way the group may be avoiding "real" issues and that this use of the group will not lead to parole, release from a group (such as a school group).

The members may then be ready to use the group for problem solving. The worker facilitates this by helping the members reflect on how they have been (mis)using the group.

Helping members choose and work on goals might well be paralleled to legitimately seeking changes in the sponsoring organization. Member who view that organization as largely unresponsive to their needs are unlikely to use the services of the organization to examine their own lives. The members are likely to have embarked on socially deviant careers in response to a lack of environmental opportunities, and an agency that re-creates this will not be likely to be helpful to members.

The assessment processes during the formation period must include an examination of agency/organization conditions that are detrimental to group members. When the worker is open to this, the members are likely to be encouraged to also look within themselves for the sources of their difficulties. The agency/organization procedures for invoking disciplinary measures (e.g., use of punishment, arbitrary or excessive penalties, favoritism) and sexist and racist attitudes will hinder the members' examination of their own behaviors and attitudes.

Goal Pursuit Tasks

At first, members begin to raise concerns but are still wary of where this will lead. They may ask questions they think they are expected to ask, and they make comments of a similar quality. The group worker during this period must be patient. Confrontations made too early may reawaken members' defensiveness. The worker should be aware of genuine problem statements that are not merely in compliance with worker expectations. Members during this period are likely to be tentatively testing out the problem—solving potential of group processes. This phase may also see some group conflict as some members are open to problem solving, and others are suspicious of it. Empey and Erickson (1972) have the following to say about this phase as it occurs in adolescent groups:

> When a group encounters such problems, basic loyalties, basic beliefs, and commitments are subject to strain. Boys are torn between their own self-interests and those of others. In a prison a rule that is enforced by staff as well as offenders is that everyone should do his own "time" and not mess with the "time" of others. Some of the same behavior can be expected in a community program. The pressures against those who would assume a reformer's role is (sic) considerable. That is why group members at this stage of development cannot be expected to run much risk in dealing with the problems that emerge. (p. 103)

Rehabilitation

This is a category that refers to group members who are acting in ways that are seen as deviant.[3] These members have a double burden: to overcome the personal and social forces that cause them to be described with a psychiatric term or a law-breaking one

and to acquire new behaviors, insights, and ways of performing consistent with new roles. An example is members suffering from a serious mental illness. As they acquire skills to cope with life's stresses, they must also overcome forces in the family and the community or workplace that define them as "sick" and act toward them in harmful ways. An effective group program must be focused on both of these issues.

Attention to social justice issues is very important in all rehabilitative work. Oppression in the form of lack of adequate educational, economic, housing, and other necessities may have been a source of the stress that exacerbated the emotional difficulties. In addition, lack of good treatment for many persons in poverty or in an oppressed group may have denied the resources that are necessary for rehabilitation. For persons involved in some aspect of the criminal justice system, harsh and discriminatory correctional forces may make rehabilitation all but impossible.

There are major differences as well as similarities for members suffering from the situations to which we have just referred. For example, persons suffering from serious mental illnesses may have few adaptive mechanisms and must be helped to develop them. Clients in the correctional system may require help to control behaviors that get them into trouble and a system that may harshly treat persons of their ethnicity, social class, gender, or gender identity.

We have identified five types of group treatment programs for these members, although new ones or improvements in older ones are emerging. These are the following:

- Minimal Skill Training Groups. These are similar to the social skills groups used in programs described above as skill-attainment groups (Sprafkin, 1993). This involves training members in social skills who may have needs and abilities that are somewhat limited.

- Activity-Oriented Groups. While activities may be employed in any type of group, such things as dance, drama, music, sports, and games may be very helpful to members in helping them create new ways of expressing themselves and new situations that involve paying close attention to others (Middleman, 1968).

- Group Psychotherapy. This approach involves working with the relationships of members to each other. This involves members talking about how they perceive other members, how they have responded to them, giving feedback to each other, and experimenting with new ways of relating to other members (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

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[3] We are using the term *deviant* here in a sociological sense, not a pejorative one. The term means "diverging sharply from a customary, traditional, or generally accepted standard, or displaying such divergent behavior" (*Encarta Microsoft Word Dictionary*). For purposes of this chapter, it applies to people classified with a psychiatric diagnosis or a law-breaking behavior.

- Transition Group. This type of group helps members who are moving from one status to another, such as being discharged from an institution, graduating, or preparing for retirement.

- Government Group. This category of group involves forming a council of members to share in making the rules, planning the activities, and dealing with institutional problems. This group can be formed in children's institutions, schools, and community organizations.

Pregroup Tasks

As with other types of pregroup tasks, the group workers must consider what the purposes of the group will be. This then leads to considering the type of group to be created, and the set of types described above will be a guide to that. The next task is to recruit members to the group. Some members may already have been preselected. If the worker is forming a group in a unit of an institution, the members are persons who live in that unit; if the group is composed of people leaving an institution, all such persons may be eligible. If the group is a governance group, the members might be elected by the larger array of people.

In a group planned for members in a psychiatric facility, it will be important to determine the level of disability in recruiting members. This includes capacity for interaction with others. This includes whether the prospective members had had friends, whether they were of different genders, and what kinds of activities in which they engaged. In planning a minimal skills-training group, the skills needed by the members should be assessed and some commonalities noted. Group psychotherapy may last for many months, and the ability of the prospective members to sustain that should be examined. Transition groups usually meet only a few times, while patient government groups are usually ongoing.

In any case, prospective members should be prepared for the group experience. In skill-training groups, the skills to be taught should be explained. Individuals may be prepared for group therapy by an explanation of talking about interpersonal and group processes and the need to be open about their thoughts and feelings, especially toward other members. Some frustration in early meetings is to be expected.

Both minimal skill training and group therapy situations usually have five to seven members. Activity-oriented groups and transition groups are usually larger. The size of patient government groups varies depending on the number of units that must be represented.

Group Formation Tasks

In structured groups, the goals for the members are likely to be settled before the group meets. During group formation, however, the purposes and processes will be clarified, and members will often ask questions about this. In addition, the members will also introduce themselves to each other, and this may also be structured by posing some questions that members will address, such as their names, neighborhood of residence, occupation, and so forth. The group worker will be looking for social injustices

the members may have suffered as they introduce themselves. This relates to opportunity structures available to members and the lack thereof. For example, people in psychiatric programs must be able to find jobs, obtain an education, or participate in vocational training.

In more process-oriented interactions in the group, the members will be asked to clarify their goals, and this may be a little different than those they indicated in pre-group interviews as members begin to perceive the realities of other members. The group workers also work to deepen their understanding of the members. In cognitive-behavioral oriented groups, this applies to understanding the "antecedent conditions" of the members, actions and the consequences of their actions (i.e., reinforcement and punishment).

During the formation period, members will work to make their relationships more gratifying, their activities less likely to get them into trouble, and their strivings be met with success. This feeling of hopefulness may be contagious among the members. On the other hand, fears may also be felt: that the group will be another promise that is broken, that the worker and members are not sincere in their offers to help, and that the hindering and unjust forces in the environment will be powerful.

Goal Pursuit Tasks

- *Minimal Skill Training Groups.* One model is "Structured Learning Therapy" (Sprafkin, 1993). This approach combines elements of modeling, role playing, social reinforcement, and transfer of training techniques. These types of groups often meet several times a week. The group physical setting may resemble a classroom. This physical arrangement conveys the idea to members that they are learners and prepares them for other learning experiences after the group ends. More details of the processes in such groups may be found in Garvin (1997, pp. 267–268).

- *Group Psychotherapy.* The literature in this area presents this as a long-term process in which members become cognizant of dysfunctional relationship patterns through feedback from the worker and other members. Consistent with our social justice approach, the oppressive forces in the environment should not be overlooked. One example of this was a woman in a therapy-oriented group (facilitated by CG), who was castigated by her superiors for, as a manager, failing to penalize employees for coming late. She, on the other hand, took into consideration that some were parents who ran into childcare crises. The worker pointed out that all her superiors were men who, in her case, were only interested in the employees' work habits. She thought she might get together with other woman managers to confront their superiors with the idea that concern for the employees might lead to more rather than less loyalty to the workplace.

Basically, members will be helped to explore their reactions to other members and the other members' reactions to them. The worker may provide "interpretations." We view an interpretation more broadly than psychoanalysis prescribes, as pointing out a connection among actions of the member, with actions in other situations, and the thoughts and feelings of the member.

Groups may also be formed in institutional settings in which members only remain for a few weeks. Yalom (1983) presents a useful model of groups in which a short-term goal is determined by each member, and the members work on this goal as they interact in the single session.

● *Activity Groups.* The following are examples of how such groups are used in rehabilitation:

Arts and crafts include work with clay, paints, cloth, and other materials. These media help members express feelings, communicate thoughts, and enhance their sense of creativity.

Games and sports help members attain such goals as being assertive, dealing with competition, and relieving tension.

Cooking and food preparation, for example, help members feel nurtured or nurture others.

Music and dance help members become aware of feelings, express them, and feel unity with others. In dance, members may improve body image and a sense of one's physical self.

Trips may add to members' knowledge of their world and skills in dealing with this world. Trips may be to restaurants, stores, museums, amusement parks, and zoos.

Dramatics can help members learn new roles, communicate ideas and feelings, and practice new behaviors.

● *Transition Groups*. Such groups are likely to focus on helping members cope with family and community forces that pave the way to returning to previous behaviors that were problematic. They also help members deal with explaining their hospitalization or incarceration when they wish to do so. The group may also help members make specific plans for work and living arrangements. The group may use behavioral rehearsal and homework assignments if the members have short-term "passes." Members may be ambivalent about leaving what may have been the "safety" of the program or institution. We have even encountered members in penal institutions who are anxious about leaving this "known" environment. Some examples that have been reported in the press are the growing numbers of people who have been found innocent after long periods of incarceration.

● *Patient Government Groups*. These groups may be modeled on a legislative body. Members may be elected from groups such as wards or cottages. The group worker will be called upon to train members for such activities as planning an agenda, engaging in problem solving, and participating actively. When properly charged and constituted, these groups may contribute to members' feelings of worth and power. When the groups are limited in what actions they can take, they may add to members' feelings of unreality and impotence.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we examined achieving differing purposes. This includes the worker's activities, purposes, and processes at different stages of the evolution of the group. It also includes the worker's tasks in pregroup planning, group formation, and pursuing group goals. We looked at different kinds of group purposes using the typology we presented in Chapter 5. This typology consisted of group activities for identity development, skill attainment, responding to social control, and rehabilitation. In each set of purposes, we emphasized the importance of strongly assessing the kinds of social injustices the members face.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think of a group that you have worked with or been a member of. Which set of purposes was the group trying to attain using the typology utilized in this book?

2. What kind of activities and processes did the group seem to be engaging in at a specific point of time?

3. Discuss whether these activities conform to the suggested ones in this chapter. Were these the same or different? If different, would you have used the ones suggested in this chapter or not? Discuss your answer.

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