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Bion's concept of psychodynamic group process and Bennis and Shepard's theory of group development are applied to data gathered during participant observation of an ongoing seminar group consisting of five ninth-graders in academic difficulty. All were of Afro-American descent, as was the group's primary facilitator. Events noted over the life of the group that suggested phasic development are discussed in terms of the theory, and an alternative perspective is offered on the "dilemma" of the Black woman in authority.

GROUP DEVELOPMENT IN A HIGH SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT SEMINAR

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Building on Bion's (1959) psychodynamically oriented conceptualization of therapy groups, Bennis and Shepard (1970) proposed a theory that defined sensitivity training groups in terms of two basic phases, dependence and interdependence, and six distinct subphases, which were elaborated as follows:

PHASE I: DEPENDENCE—POWER RELATIONS

Dependence-flight: The group is initially characterized by anxiety and remoteness as it searches for a task.

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Counterdependence-fight: Subgrouping and conflict over leadership emerge as the members express hostility toward the trainer who fails to guide them in traditional ways.

Resolution-catharsis: Once the group realizes that the trainer is not crucial to its existence and is merely another member, there is a brief “exhilarating highpoint” that marks the end of the dependence phase.

PHASE II: INTERDEPENDENCE—PERSONAL RELATIONS

Enchantment-flight: The group is characterized by a determined “harmoniousness” that rejects all evidence of difference or disagreement among members.

Disenchantment-fight: Anxiety reactions set in, and there are distrust and suspicion of various group members as new subgroups are formed around issues of trust and intimacy.

Consensual validation-pairing: This phase is attained when effective mediation of diversity is finally forced on the group by evaluation tasks related to ending.

The idea of groups developing in stages has generated considerable research as well as some debate over whether observable changes in group behavior actually constitute group development. After reviewing the negative evidence, Cissna (1984) concluded that additional studies were needed to determine the developmental variations associated with different types of groups. Most research on the development of small face-to-face groups (e.g., Lundgren, 1977) has been conducted with adult professionals attending laboratory training groups, and as Webb (1982) has pointed out, “whether the same developmental patterns characterize groups in educational settings remains to be explored” (p. 441). The present article therefore attempts to apply a stage theory of group development to the interpretation of data obtained from participants in an academic enrichment program for low-income ethnic minority students.
THE HIGH SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT SEMINAR

As a diagnostic intervention, the high school adjustment seminar met 11 times over a three-week period. The sessions took place at the end of the school day, and each lasted about an hour and a half. There were 15 or so program participants who were already evidencing serious academic difficulty by the end of the first marking period in the fall semester, but only 6 responded to the invitation to attend the diagnostic sessions. The three female and two male students who became regular attenders were all of Afro-American descent. The author, who served as primary facilitator of the group, is a female social psychologist of Afro-American descent and was 40 years old at the time. There were also four graduate students who served as cofacilitators on a rotating basis. Two of them (Bruce and Peter) were Euro-American males in their early twenties; one (Nina) was an Afro-American female in her midtwenties; and the other (John) was an Afro-American male in his early thirties.

Although the seminar was not specifically intended as a sensivity training group, and the facilitator’s role was generally more directive than would have been the case in such a group, process notes written at the end of each session suggest much the same type of phasic development as that described by Bennis and Shepard. The transition from one subphase to the next tended to be gradual and not readily attributable to a particular point in time, but the shift from the dependence phase to the interdependence phase seemed to occur near the end of the fourth session. The following excerpts from the process notes may serve to illustrate.

PHASE I: DEPENDENCE—POWER RELATIONS

[Session #1] . . . Biology was mentioned as a problem course by more than one person, and Western civilization was mentioned as a course in which several people were doing well. Nubra (the primary facilitator) asked how they had done in middle school and was told that the work had been much easier, but there was not much enthusiasm for this line of discussion. Antonio sat hunched over the seminar table the whole time whispering to the girl next to him.
When Nubra asked him to share what he was saying with the rest of the group, he said he didn’t want to. Derrick remarked that Antonio was always talking and never really saying anything. Nubra said she hoped the group would become a place where they felt comfortable talking about whatever they wanted. John (the cofacilitator) made a comment about how rare that was in school, and there was some expression of agreement. After a while Antonio put his head down on the table, but when Nubra asked whether something was wrong, he said no, and there was general laughter. Derrick said Antonio was leaning over like that because he was doing something he wasn’t supposed to do. Antonio muttered something under his breath, and Nubra suggested that he move to sit next to her, so she could hear what he was saying better. Derrick remarked that that way Antonio would “have all the comforts of home.” Antonio looked embarrassed and declined the offer. . . .

[Session #2] . . . When asked what he wanted to accomplish in the seminar, Derrick said he wanted to learn to relax more. He said he had trouble paying attention in class, because other boys were always doing things to make him laugh or act up with them. After talking at length about the kinds of misbehavior that often went on in class, he said he had once asked his mother to send him to a psychiatrist but it hadn’t helped, because she just listened to him talk and wrote things down. Nubra asked him whether he thought there was some way the seminar group might be more helpful, and he said he didn’t know. When Nina (the cofacilitator) asked what they could do to help him with his academic work, he said, “Nothing.” He said he would just have to want to do it and then he would, but nobody else could make him.

[Session #3] . . . Krissy began by talking about why she was doing so poorly in biology. She said that she didn’t understand the words the teacher used and she didn’t do the homework. When Nubra asked why she didn’t do the homework, Jerel spoke up and said that they both had the same problem. She said that they didn’t like the class and thought it was boring, so they sat by the door and rushed out as soon as it was over. Since the teacher always gave the homework assignment just before the bell rang, most of the time they didn’t hear what it was. There was general laughter, and Krissy
said as an aside that we would have to excuse them because they were from “the ghetto.” Later she aimed a preliminary apology in the direction of Bruce (the cofacilitator) and then launched into a commentary about someone in her family who had gone to college and then couldn’t get a job, because the people who did the interviewing were White, and White people tended to be prejudiced against Black people. This sparked a general discussion among the students about whether it was possible to get good jobs if you were Black, and someone noted that sometimes Black people were prejudiced against Blacks, too, but Derrick insisted that the key to getting good jobs was having good references. Antonio suddenly turned to Bruce and demanded to know whether he could help them get jobs “right now!” Bruce laughed and seemed taken aback by the question. . . .

[Session #4] . . . After a good deal of discussion about the types of jobs they had had in the past and the low level of pay that had been involved, Nubra asked whether the group members thought it might help their motivation to be paid a certain amount to improve their grades. There was general agreement that that kind of approach really wouldn’t work and shouldn’t be necessary anyway. Antonio was the only one who didn’t immediately express an opinion, and after a while he mentioned that he knew of someone “who got paid either a hundred or a thousand dollars to go to college.” Antonio asked Bruce whether he had ever heard of anything like that, and Bruce assured him that that was not unusual, adding that students often got even larger amounts of financial aid. Bruce explained the difference between scholarships, loans, and grants-in-aid, and, after listening intently, Antonio announced that he was going to get a scholarship or a grant-in-aid for a thousand dollars. . . .

PHASE II: INTERDEPENDENCE—PERSONAL RELATIONS

[Session #5] . . . Tara had missed two or three days in a row when Yolanda asked to join the group. Nubra announced her request at the beginning of the session, and most of the remaining time was then devoted to a discussion of whether new members should be
allowed to join. Jerel and Krissy both said the group should be kept small, but Krissy was undecided about whether one more person should be allowed to join. Derrick suddenly announced that Carl and Ezekiel (two students who had signed up but never attended) would be coming to the next session, and there was some discussion about why they hadn’t come before and whether they should be allowed to come now. Antonio suggested a vote and then went on to say that he didn’t mind if Carl and Ezekiel wanted to come but that he thought the group shouldn’t be more than five or six people. Krissy and Jerel pointed out that they had five already.

[Session #6] ... Krissy and Jerel left the room for an extended period of time without saying where they were going, and Derrick said they should be put out of the group. When they came back, Yolanda told them what he had said, and Jerel accused him of wanting the group all to himself. Nubra asked whether Antonio and Derrick were feeling uncomfortable about being in a group that had more females than males, and they both said it was okay to have it be just the two of them. When another argument flared up again between Derrick and the girls, Antonio asked Nubra for a piece of paper and abruptly left the table to sit in one of the reading carrels along the wall. After a moment or two, Derrick jumped up and ordered Antonio to come over to sit in the seat next to her that Antonio had vacated. When Derrick started to do so, Antonio bolted up and reclaimed his seat. Nubra asked Derrick to take the seat he had had before and to say what he was so upset about. He said he didn’t like what Antonio was doing. Antonio responded by saying that Derrick kept trying to act like he was somebody’s father or something. Krissy pointed out that when Derrick left the table to go after Antonio, he was doing the same thing he wanted to put them out of the group for doing. Derrick was leaning back on the rear legs of his chair so that the distance between him and the rest of the group got visibly greater by the moment. Nubra got up and brought a chair over to sit in the space he had created on his left, and Antonio instantly brought another chair and sat on his right. They both expressed their support for Derrick. Then Nubra said she wanted him to listen to what the other group
members were saying, because it might turn out to be a way for him to use the group to achieve the goal he had set for himself during the first week of the seminar—namely, to change his behavior in the classroom. Derrick didn’t say anything but seemed to be considering the idea. John said he wanted Derrick to know that they were not against him in any way and that he might indeed benefit from listening more closely to what other group members were trying to say to him. Antonio suddenly got up and went to get the pieces of paper he had been making while he was sitting across the room. He said that they were ballots and that the group was going to vote on whether to take a trip over spring vacation.

[Session #7] Yolanda suggested that everyone sing a song and then tried to get Peter (the cofacilitator) to sing a popular song that he said he didn’t know. Antonio wanted to know why he wore his hair so long, if he wasn’t into punk rock, and Peter said it was “a matter of convenience.” Jerel and Krissy suggested places where he could get it cut, and Jerel went on to describe the kind of cut she thought he should get. When Nubra asked whether Peter’s hairstyle really made that much difference to her, Jerel said yes. She said it made her look bad for him to have hair longer than hers. There was much laughter, and Antonio began talking about some women who he said were “dykes” and wore their hair very short. Nubra said that reminded her of childhood experiences of being embarrassed at a mostly White school by the smell of the pine tar that her mother put on her hair to make it grow, and Jerel expressed indignation at the idea of her being made to feel bad about herself that way. Nubra went on to say that in high school she had also felt bad about having to straighten her hair with a hot comb, because she couldn’t afford a permanent, and Antonio wanted to know what a “permanent” was. Later she talked about meeting an African student in college and eventually opting for a natural, and someone else wanted to know what a “natural” was. Nubra described it as “wearing your hair kinky and tight around your head,” and the word kinky sparked general laughter. Antonio said he’d like to see a picture of her with her hair like that, and Nubra suggested they all bring pictures of themselves the next time.
[Session #8] ... Bruce had brought a snapshot taken when he was in college that showed him with a baleful expression on his face and a headful of dark, unruly curls. No one could believe it was really he. Nubra had brought pictures of herself at various ages with drastically different hairstyles, and Yolanda had a picture of herself at 3 with her head totally covered by her father's hat. Derrick produced a photo of himself at age 4 with his hair in a giant Afro and took a lot of teasing about it but didn't seem to mind.

[Session #9] ... Yolanda had been complaining about how unfair her mother was being, and Bruce said maybe she should be more assertive with her mother, but Yolanda said that would be suicidal, and there was general agreement from the other members of the group. Antonio pointed out that White people argued back with their parents, but Black people didn't do that. He said that if he even acted as if he were going to talk back to his mother, she would say, "I brought you in the world, and I can take you out!" Nubra said that her mother had started out talking like that but that over the years she had come to realize that the world was a changing place and that her children sometimes had a better sense of what was right for them than she did. Antonio said his mother would never change....

[Session #10] ... Antonio started things off by asking John whether he was "Black or White." John seemed taken aback and wanted to know why he would ask something like that. Antonio said he couldn't tell because of the way John talked, and there was agreement from some of the other group members. Later, Jerel asked John where he would like to live eventually, and he said, "London." When she asked him why, he said he didn't like the way Black people were treated in this country. She asked whether they were treated better in London, and, after a moment, John said he thought so—or at least he hoped so....

[Session #11] ... Yolanda suggested group singing again, and Nubra pointed out that singing had also come up the last time Peter was there. Someone said he looked like a musician, and Peter laughed as though he liked the idea but said he really wasn't. Nubra said she thought the people who really wanted to sing should sing,
and the rest of them could be the audience. Yolanda, Krissy, Jerel, and Antonio stood up together. Peter and Nubra turned their chairs around and placed them on each side of Derrick's, so that all three faced the singers. Yolanda led off in a clear, high voice, and after a few false starts, the others found the harmony, singing with energy and earnestness. They sang about the children being the future and leading the way, about giving them a sense of pride, and about letting their laughter remind us of the way we used to be. They sang about looking for a hero, but there was also a part about dignity and about learning to depend on yourself and love yourself.

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Certainly, Bennis and Shepard's theory of group development is not the only one that might be applied appropriately to the unfolding of this seminar group. Tuckman's (1965) stages of forming, storming, norming, and performing might just as well be used as captions for the series of events detailed above. However, one advantage of taking a more psychodynamically oriented approach is that it tends to highlight the similarities between the group's developmental issues and those of the individual. Such a perspective can be particularly illuminating when group members are also in the process of moving from one stage to another in their personal development.

THE DEPENDENCY GROUP

According to Bion, the dependency group behaves as though it had come together to be cared for by a nurturing mother. In the first session, true to the concept of dependence-flight, the group members seemed detached and unenthusiastic about participating in the seminar. However, even in the perfunctory responses to the facilitator's questions, there was evidence of an underlying concern about the kind of "teacher" she would turn out to be. The discussion of their academic difficulties focused exclusively on biology and Western civilization, the only two courses in the curriculum taught
by females who were, like the primary facilitator, of Afro-American descent.

A combination of dependency and flight was also suggested by the equivocal response given to offers of assistance or support, as during the second session when a member presented at length about his behavior problems and then insisted that only he could solve them. Counterdependence-flight first became evident in the third session and took the form of group members' challenging the implicit assumption that it was important for them to do well in high school and go on to college. In the fourth session, however, the gulf between facilitator and member seemed to be bridged effectively by demystifying the financial aspects of attaining a college education and allowing resolution catharsis to be achieved. This apparently marked the end of the dependency phase and the beginning of the independence phase, in which personal relations and pairing issues replaced power and authority relations as the members' major concerns.

THE PAIRING GROUP

Although Bion made no reference to interdependency as a group modality, he did say that the motive behind the pairing assumption was to create a messiah who would save the group from extinction. Similarly, group preservation may be seen as the basic issue of the enchantment-flight subphase, and the seminar group first showed signs of this attitude during the fifth session. The discussion was much calmer and more orderly than it had been in previous sessions, and yet the group members were somehow refusing to deal with their personal concerns about the admission of new members. Nor were they willing to discuss how they actually felt about the existing composition of the group.

These were, however, the issues that erupted during the sixth session as the group entered the disenchantment-fight mode. What occurred was potentially frightening for members and facilitators alike but also tended to affirm the level of safety that had been attained within the group. Cooper, Gustafson, and Dawson (1986) have indicated that this is often the case in therapy groups, and as
group development theory would predict, the mediation between subgroups was accomplished by a female facilitator showing support for a beleaguered male member.

Bennis and Shepard concluded that not every group might reach the *consensual validation* stage. They also stated that whereas the effectiveness of the trainer was reflected in the successful resolution of the dependence phase, only the group could determine the outcome of the interdependence phase. In Sessions 7 through 10, issues of gender, race, age, and self-presentation were thrashed out with remarkable honesty and good humor. The exploration of social norms that found expression in the group's concern about lifestyles, hairstyles, and manners of speech was not unlike the process of value attribution that typically occurs in both therapy and encounter groups (Shawver & Pines, 1978). The process of normalization was, however, balanced by a need to affirm the fundamental worth of the individual, and the intensity of that need was suggested by the soulful delivery of the lyrics offered as a closing tribute to the group experience. Its theme of rugged individualism and determined self-love strongly attested to the fact that, by the last session, the group had indeed come to grips with the issue of diversity enough to allow for effective closure.

**EDUCATING THROUGH DIVERSITY**

Bayes and Newton (1978) have made a connection between the social learning that occurs in nuclear families and the sex-typed role conceptions that encourage resistance to female authority. According to Dumas (1980), there is even greater resistance when it is a Black woman assuming leadership. On one hand, she is expected to be a “good mother,” who nurtures and protects. On the other hand, she is expected to be a “good mammy,” who criticizes and controls. The fact that these represent basically contradictory demands means the Black woman in authority will be endlessly dealing with expressions of anger that arise from the group's frustrated expectations. Such expressions not only threaten to prevent her from working effectively but can also mean that anyone
who attempts to work closely with her will become a target for hostility as well.

Many of the issues that were raised in the seminar group did seem to indicate that group members were having difficulty dealing with the emotionally charged associations evoked by the various facilitator pairings. Still, there was a sense of successful resolution, and the experience reported here seems to validate Smircich and Morgan's (1982) statement that "the key challenge for a leader is to manage meaning in such a way that individuals orient themselves to the achievement of desirable ends" (p. 262). Using such an approach, it proved possible not only to respond constructively to apparent expressions of hostility or challenge but also to generate a highly engaging and potentially growth-provoking learning experience for everyone involved.

Gordon and Shipman (1979) have advocated an emphasis on the concept of human diversity as a basis for efforts to achieve equal educational opportunity in this day and age and have also called for more specific analyses of student-environment interactions. It is hoped that the case material provided here will serve to illuminate patterns of student behavior that might otherwise be viewed as either educationally obstructive or socially inappropriate. This material is also intended to underscore the importance of a developmental approach in devising effective strategies for intervention at both the group and the individual level.

REFERENCES


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