Running Effective Groups: An Interdisciplinary Experience

Course Director
Dr. Sharan L. Schwartzberg, 617-627-5920, sharan.schwartzberg@tufts.edu
Professor, Department of Occupational Therapy, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Professor of Psychiatry, Professor of Public Health & Community Medicine, Secondary
Appointments, School of Medicine
Tufts University
Mondays 4:30-7:30 PM Spring 2019

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interdisciplinary course explores the structure, dynamics, communication, and action patterns of small groups. Classes and readings will focus on theories of small group functioning and elements of group process that lead to effective group formation, development, and closure. Group experiences in class will assist in integrating theoretical learning, building upon skills in group observation, leadership, and individual membership. Understanding personal dynamics with organizational culture in relation to group development in small and large group systems will also be addressed. The class will be part of its own laboratory in small group dynamics. One course credit. Maximum enrollment 12. Prerequisite: Graduate student and consent.

Meets the requirement for ED 252 Group Dynamics for School Psychology majors.

The class will meet weekly for the semester and the time divided as follows:
4:30-5:50 PM Process Group (1 hour and 20 minutes)
5:50-6:00 PM Break (10 minutes)
6:00-7:30 PM Theory Presentations and Discussion (1 hour and 30 minutes)

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Observe, describe, document the communication and action patterns of self and others, as group leader and member, and accurately interpret small group dynamics effecting the individual, subgroup, and group as a whole in small and large group systems such as schools, health care institutions, and community agencies.
2. Observe and evaluate one's repertoire of group leadership and membership roles, accurately describe one's effect on others reflecting on one's own culture and development and propose directions for growth as a group leader.
3. Understand and practice the identification and problem-solving process to correct (organizational, behavioral, intra-group) problems that interfere with a group’s objectives.
4. Compare a variety of theoretical models for leading and understanding group dynamics critically analyzing related research evidence.

III. ACOTE Standards Addressed by Course
B.5.4. Design and implement group interventions based on principles of group development and group dynamics across the lifespan (Related assignments: Readings, discussion questions, written critique).

B.5.7. Demonstrate therapeutic use of self, including one’s personality, insights, perceptions, and judgments, as part of the therapeutic process in both individual and group interaction (Related assignments: Reflective logs, Group Activity Demonstration).

B.5.21. Effectively communicate and work interprofessionally with those who provide services to individuals, organizations, and/or populations in order to clarify each member’s responsibility in executing an intervention plan (Related assignments: Process group, Group Activity Demonstrations, discussion questions).

B.8.3. Use scholarly literature to make evidence-based decisions (Related assignments: Reflective logs, Group Activity Presentation).

IV. REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED TEXTS/ARTICLES

Required text:

Below is a link that students can use to order books.

https://tinyurl.com/W19-OTS-0230-01

Required journal articles:


Croker, A., Higgs, J., & Trede, F. (2009). What do we mean by ‘collaboration’ and when is a ‘team’ not a ‘team.’ A qualitative unbundling of terms and meanings. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(1), 28-42.


Recommended:


ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING
Assignments
1. Class Attendance and Participation. Call Dr. Schwartzberg (617.627.5920) if expected absence or lateness.
2. Weekly Reflective Diary Log entry about experience in small group including three questions to raise about weekly reading for class discussion. Bring to class each week. Three pages double-space maximum. Submit as one cumulative document last class.
3. In Class Student Demonstration of Theoretical Model applied to Group with Written of Synopsis for class including Comparison of Model to Two Other Theoretical Systems including the Functional Group Model.

Grades of Scholarship
A Superior Work (1, 2, 3, & 4 above satisfactory)
B Meritorious Work (1, 2, & 3 above satisfactory)
C Not Acceptable for Graduate Credit (1 satisfactory plus 2 or 3 above unsatisfactory)
D Not Acceptable for Graduate Credit (1 satisfactory plus 2 and 3 above unsatisfactory)
F Failure (Satisfactory in only 1, 2, or 3 above)
Plus and minus at the discretion of the professor

Suggested Topics for Theory Paper
A comparison of theoretical perspectives on small group dynamics
Define three-five theoretical perspectives (e.g. functional, psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, educational, biological, modern analytic, systems, ego psychology, bio-psycho-social)? How do they compare in terms of basic assumptions and technical approaches? What are the implications for application to your population and setting? Why take one perspective over another?

Group leader qualities
What qualities and characteristics are useful for and desirable in a group leader? How are these qualities different from conceptually stylistic aspects and features of group leadership?

Therapeutic factors in group treatment
Define major therapeutic factors in group treatment and explain how they contribute to the therapeutic process of the group.

Phases of group development
What are the principles of termination and how is this phase an essential facet of therapeutic and task groups?
Group composition
Heterogeneous or homogeneous? At what cost and by what mission? Consider factors such as age, socio-economic orientation, gender, sexual orientation, diagnosis, functional capacity, etc.

Group size
How is a large versus a small therapeutic group defined? How does group size affect the group methods, leader strategies, and outcomes? What theoretical models been used as guidance for facilitating large groups? What are the theoretical and practical differences between small group, median group, and large groups in therapeutic and educational settings?

Subgrouping
Why does it occur? How should it be handled? For example, member contacts outside the group.

Scapegoating in the group
What is it? Why does it occur? How does it differ and overlap with projection? How can the leader intervene at the level of the group and individuals?

Anger in the group
What is it and how to intervene at the level of the group and individuals?

Conflict in the group
Why does conflict emerge in a group? How can the leader intervene to channel anger into a positive energy in the group?

Silent group member
Role in group, issues for member, and leader intervention

Co-leading versus going it alone
What are the issues, advantages, and potential problems?

Violation of confidentiality and group agreements
What are the potential group process, ethical, and legal issues? For example, a group member tells friend about member in-group. The person is recognizable. The violating member tells group of incident. The following week, the violator is absent and the violated announces he is leaving the group.

Leader self-disclosure
Sharing such things as vulnerability and error. What are the issues? Transparency, opaqueness, and openness. Which, how much, and when?

Boundary regulation and containment
What is it, why, and how is it addressed? How much and how little? There are a multitude of permeable boundaries in group systems. When do they become too tight or too loose? What is the effect and how is boundary regulation facilitated?

Narcissism and projection
What is the relationship between the two, how is it manifested in the group, and how can it be approached?

Open versus closed groups
Discuss differences in dynamics, if any. Do they go through the phases of development as a whole or do individuals go through the phases as individuals rather than as a group as a whole?

Phases of group development
Do they truly exist? How does the group format influence the group’s development, i.e., short-term versus long-term groups, task focused versus process-oriented? Describe various models of stages of group development, including the group tasks and leadership responsibilities for each.

Gender, envy, jealousy, and competition in groups
How does gender influence envy, jealousy and competition in groups? What is the developmental and socio-political influence of gender on group and member functioning in a group? How does gender influence the ways in which members compete in a group?

Group leader self-care
What mental health issues do leaders face in light of issues presented by group members and their families? What strategies can the leader use to manage the stresses inherent in group work and being a leader?

Group process and outcomes
What research evidence exists that groups are effective, for which populations and settings? Using an evidenced-based practice model, what can we learn from studies on the effectiveness of small groups for therapeutic purposes? What is the strength and limitations to the findings? What research is needed to demonstrate the efficacy of group interventions?

Large group systems
What theoretical models exist to explain interactions in the large group such as found in organizational settings like the school, hospital, or community agency? What barriers exist between small groups and the larger system? What methods of intervention have been useful to effect change in large group systems?

Developmental perspectives
What are age related concerns related to the structure and leadership of a group? What are appropriate expectations for differing age and service delivery settings, e.g., early-intervention, preschool, adolescent, adult, and older adult; school, hospital, community setting, business, etc.
Support groups (leaderless groups & leader led groups)
How do support groups (self-help groups) differ from leader led therapeutic or educational groups? Where are there similarities? Which model is more effective and for whom?

Group supervision
Describe models for group supervision, aims, similarities and differences (e.g., peer or leader led). Why is one model more effective than another? What criteria can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of group supervision?

Interprofessional team group processes (in health care, schools, and/or community settings)
What constitutes interprofessional education and practice? Why is IPE and IPP of value? What constitutes best practices and outcomes of interprofessional teams as small groups? What are barriers in group process that may deter team functioning? What are successful models and strategies to maximize team and institutional functioning in group process?
**COURSE SCHEDULE**

1. W Jan 23 Monday schedule
2. Jan 28
3. Feb 4
4. Feb 11

Feb 18 No Class President’s Day

5. Feb 21 (Monday Schedule on Thursday)
6. Feb 25 (AGPA SLS)
7. March 4
8. March 11

March 18 Spring Break No Class

9. March 25
10. April 1
11. April 8

April 15 No Class Patriot’s Day

12. April 22
13. April 29

**Class 1 Jan 23**

Introduction to Course, Group Assignments, and Group Contract
Value of Groups
Ethics in Conducting Groups and Cultural Sensitivity
Small Task-groups and Large Group Systems
Group Variables: Composition, structure, context (culture), climate, goals, norms, and cohesion; individual, subgroup, and group-as-a-whole
Group dynamics, membership roles, decision-making, and problem-solving
AGPA Practice Guidelines
Schwartzberg, Howe, & Barnes Chapters 1, 2, & 3
Brown, 2003, 2018
Counselman, 2008

**Class 2 Jan 28**

Theories of Group Leadership
Phases of Group Development
The Functional Group Model (FGM)
Schwartzberg, Howe, & Barnes Chapter 4
Bernard, Burlingame, Flores, et al., 2008
Gans & Counselman, 2010

Class 3 Feb 4
Interprofessional Team Functioning and ‘Teamliness’
Debiak, 2007
Brown, Lewis, Ellis, et al., 2011
Croker, Higgs, & Trede, 2009
http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html?_r=0

Class 4 Feb 11
Designing and Forming a Group
Schwartzberg, Howe, & Barnes Chapters 5 & 6

Feb 18 No Class President’s Day

Class 5 Feb 21
Leading a Group
Schwartzberg, Howe, & Barnes Chapter 7
Billow, 2003
Ormont, 1990
Shapiro & Gans, 2008

Class 6 Feb 25
Guest Speaker Making an Impact on Community Agencies and Working within Systems
Peer Process Group

Class 7 March 4
Evaluating a Group
Gans, 2005

Class 8 March 11
Problems in a Group
Conflict: Diagnosis and Intervention
Billow, 2006
Gans and Alonso, 1998
Nitsun, 2000
Weber and Gans, 2003
Bernard, 2005
March 18 Spring Break No Class

Class 9 March 25
Concluding a Group
Schwartzberg, Howe, & Barnes Chapter 8
Shapiro & Ginzburg, 2003

Class 10 April 1
Student demo session 1

Class 11 April 8
Student demo session 2

April 15 No Class Patriot’s Day

Class 12 April 22
Peer Process Group
Student demo session 3

Class 13 April 29
Student demo session 4
Course Summary and Evaluation Discussion
Cumulative Reflective Log diary due
Theory Paper due- No exceptions to due date

1.9.19 SLS