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Group **Paper**

**Clinical Group Component**

On January 28th, 2024, my class participated in a simulated group therapy session. For a portion of the class, I functioned as the therapist; for another, I played the role of a client. This was the first meeting with the class and consisted mainly of introductory information and statements.

Our group is in the beginning stage of engagement and assessment. As the therapist, I gave the group time to introduce one another and create a group dynamic. The goal of this session was to warm up and begin to build a group culture in which clients felt comfortable. Yalum describes this stage in group development as the formative stage in which the therapist helps to create and maintain a group. The fundamental tasks of the therapist here are to build a group culture and help to activate a view of the here and now (Yalum et al., 2020). As described by Jacobs, I tried to establish a positive culture that allowed members to feel welcome (Jacobs et al., 2015). My goal was to be democratic in my leadership and avoid having an authoritarian presence that dominated the conversation. I showed democratic leadership by encouraging members of the group to create group rules and expectations.

I also tried to encourage the establishment of group cohesion by allowing members to interact with one another and have some lighthearted conversations (Jacobs et. al. 2015). We also covered confidentiality (Yalum et. al., 2020) at the start of the group to ensure that they were aware of their rights and the expectation that they would respect the confidentiality of the rest of the group members who would be sharing about their lives.

**Experiential Component**

 I was nervous going into the group, and my mind seemed to go blank with ideas when we began. I remembered that I needed to cover confidentiality and introductions with the clients. I asked them to share a little bit about themselves and say where they would like to go on vacation. I felt like the icebreaker was an excellent way to break the tension and encourage them to let loose. As we went through the group members, I quickly realized that they had forgotten their assigned characters and were fumbling over their words. It was a little awkward, so I asked everyone to pause and look over the character sheet for reference. I felt like this was uncomfortable at first, but I think pausing helped everyone in the group reset and prepare for the session. This would not be an issue in a real session, but the idea of pausing could be helpful in a real scenario. Sometimes, you need a minute to collect yourself. This was the most difficult part of the practice time, and I am glad it went well.

 I enjoyed listening to each of the stories and hearing their responses to the icebreaker questions. I could have done a better job of breaking the introductory questions into a more natural progression, such as asking for names and dream vacations before asking why they were there. I also did not explain my role as clearly as I would have liked. Next time, I would start out by more clearly defining my role and helping them understand the purpose and goals of group therapy. I would also try to progress through the introductions more quickly to allow for more group time to discuss issues and concerns. I did not give enough time for participants to fully discuss their reasons for being in group therapy.

I thought Misty did a great job of picking up where I left off and doing a lot of the more formal information part of the introductory phase. She was able to cover some things that were not fully addressed. She talked more than I did and covered more material. I look forward to playing my character and interacting with classmates as a client.

**References**

[Jacobs, E. E., Schimmel, C. J., Masson, R. L., & Harvill, R. L. (2015). *Group counseling: Strategies and skills* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning. Chapter 13 *Using Counseling Theories in Group*](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14T0ERRCX1NHDAzUfL7r978tf8vzfTGzp/view?usp=sharing)

Yalom, I. D., & Leszcz, M. (2020). The theory and practice of group psychotherapy (6th ed.). Basic Book