Second Edition

Putting a New Spin on Groups

The Science of Chaos

BUD A. McCLURE

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FOR BUDDY,
who continues to remind me that a rich life
is full of chaos and unpredictability.

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Preface

Bud McClure has written a very curious book. In some ways, what he produced is a compendium-in-brief or a wide world of information. He writes of chaos theory, including a run past ". . . a three-stage model of science." He recounts theories of physics and arrives at ". . . the mathematics of dynamics . . . (which) . . . forms one of the cornerstones of chaos and self-organizational theories." He takes us through dynamics, principally nonlinear dynamics, and attractors, and strange attractors; chaos terminology, including dissipative structures, the Butterfly effect, fractals, bifurcation, slime mold, phase locking or entrainment, and the Beluzov–Zhabotinski Reaction. Along the way, we pass a least one theory of evolution (Arthur Young's), and toruses, and Koch's snowflake. And that's only the first 15 pages! Make no mistake, this is fascinating stuff.

—A reviewer's comments from the first edition.[1]

This edition of the book continues the discussion about small groups and chaos theory, particularly the mechanisms by which groups develop and change. Other topics like group metaphors, spirituality, regressive groups, gender, and other ideas not usually addressed in group-oriented textbooks are explored here. Many of the ideas articulated here grew from my own experiences with groups. The perspective expressed in these pages follows from those experiences. I am reminded that my ideas, like those of other writers who have written about groups, are always filtered through and from one's point of view no matter how that view is constructed.

This edition revisits the literature from 1998, when this book was first published, through to the present. New ideas, new applications of chaos theory in the social sciences, and new thinking about group behavior

[1]Henry, S. (1999). Putting a New Spin on Groups, Book Review, *Social Work with Groups, 2/3,* 209–212.

have been added throughout the book. This edition has been reedited in response to feedback from reviewers and colleagues who graciously took the time to carefully read and comment on the first edition. I also received a number of comments and questions from students around the country and Canada who helped me sort out some of the confusion and ambiguity in the original text.

The chapters in this edition have been reorganized for better flow and readability. My colleague, Sandy Woolum, added examples throughout the book drawn from her many years of leading grief groups. Her interpretation of what I had written, as reflected in her examples about chaos theory, helped clarify my own thinking.

My ideas about group development remain rooted in the basic notion that groups are self-organizing; move through phases of chaos and order in a nonlinear, spiral-like fashion; cannot avoid conflict if they are to succeed; and can benefit from correctly timed interventions by a leader. Further, I continue to conclude that most groups never reach their full potential and infrequently progress beyond the initial stages of development. A combination of factors accounts for this inadequate development, but foremost is the leader's lack of understanding of group dynamics. Many group leaders are insufficiently trained, having perhaps one course in graduate school and having too few supervised group experiences before they begin facilitating their own groups. Many of these groups are run through community agencies with too few resources to see clients individually. At most these groups offer a palliative for the client, but little else.

Further, many textbooks fail to satisfactorily characterize the stages of group development, treating group development as if it were a relatively unimportant group phenomenon. Finally, many group phenomena go unexplained.

When I began teaching a group dynamics course, I used standard textbooks. As my group experiences increased, I began to notice certain group phenomena occurred that were not described or were unreported in these books. I began to write about my observations over several years and to refine them as I observed more group activity. The genesis for the first edition of this book resulted from two discoveries: the work of Arthur Young and chaos theory. Young's theory of evolution provided me with a framework for many of my ideas about group development, and chaos theory helped me clarify my thinking about how groups develop and change. Both editions of this book are a result of these discoveries.

Young's model, combined with ideas drawn from chaos theory, in addition to forming the foundation, provide the threads that connect the various parts of this book. Each chapter details a little discussed group phenomenon that is woven into the whole fabric by these two threads. The pattern

that emerges in this quilt is brightly colored and will illuminate many of the experiences that leaders encounter in working with groups.

This book continues to challenge orthodoxy and static ideas about small-group dynamics. A primary goal of this book is to offer an alternative model of group development that addresses three factors. First, the model integrates old ideas from previous models of group development with new concepts from chaos theory and the work of Arthur Young. Second, the book emphasizes the importance of conflict in group development, and recognizes that group growth, although progressive, is neither linear nor unidimensional. Third, particular attention is focused on how groups change, evolve, and mature. Of equal importance is the goal of highlighting certain group phenomena that have been given only cursory attention in many group textbooks. These areas include women in authority, group metaphors, regressive groups, and the transpersonal potential of small groups.

The book is divided approximately in half between a comprehensive examination of group development and the stages which characterize that development and subjects that have normally not been the focus of small-group textbooks.

The first five chapters of the book include an overview of chaos theory, an extensive presentation of a group development model, detailed description of each stage of that model, and the factors that advance and hinder change. Leadership attributes necessary for effective group facilitation are described in detail. The second half of the book covers material seldom found in group books. This portion of the book provides an explanation for many phenomena that group leaders encounter, but rarely understand. To facilitate the writing process, I have alternated the use of masculine and feminine pronouns from one chapter to another. The pronouns are interchangeable.

Chapter 1 provides the introduction to the book, highlighted by examples drawn from my personal, professional, and educational experiences that have influenced my thinking about small-group dynamics. Introduced in this chapter are major theorists who have influenced my thinking.

Chapter 2 introduces ideas drawn from major theoretical perspectives of systems theory, existentialism, and transpersonal psychology. Carl Rogers and Carl Jung are introduced in this chapter as a prelude to their discussion throughout the book.

Chapter 3 considers basic terms of chaos, their origins in physical and biological science, with illustrations of how these concepts could apply to groups. The commentary and examples were written by Sandy Woolum and taken from her many years of group work leading grief groups. I asked Sandy to read the chapter and then, based on her understanding of the

ideas presented there, to add group examples to each section. Her work enriched the chapter by clarifying chaos terminology with vivid and illuminating group examples.

Chapter 4 introduces several innovative studies to illustrate how chaos theory is currently being applied in the social sciences. Two important tenets of the theory—self-organization and behavior in systems far from equilibrium—are detailed and form the basis for subsequent discussion of how groups change at all levels of organization.

Chapter 5 reviews group stage theories and introduces Arthur Young's theory of evolution. Young's seven stages of evolution form an arc that is divided into two phases—a descent and an ascent. For Young the arc represents the process evolution undergoes as it moves progressively from complete freedom of movement, through a series of stages that constrain it into permanence, at which point it is propelled back upward to complete freedom. Young's arc forms the basis for an alternative model of group development that contains seven stages. The stages are arrayed on both sides of the arc and are joined at the vertex by the critical Confrontation stage. Group development is first depicted as moving through several stages of constraint, in which individual identities are temporarily relinquished for the sake of the forming group. After the group has navigated the crucial conflict period, freedom is regained in the final stages where individual identities reemerge.

Chapter 6 integrates many of Young's ideas with those from chaos theory and applies them to change and transformation in groups. Group development is characterized by periods of relative calm punctuated by intervals of chaotic activity. This order–chaos–order cycle is essential for growth and reorganization because, without undergoing periodic upheaval, groups cannot evolve. Understanding how groups undergo this metamorphosis is essential for effective group leadership because attempts to control and limit it lead to regressive and potentially destructive solutions. Constructs such as phase locking and constructive and destructive interference are used to explain the process of change in groups.

Chapter 7 provides a broad overview of effective group leadership characteristics. Many of the ideas presented in the first several chapters are translated into practical leadership strategies. Leader interventions are divided into two categories: containment or perturbation. Pattern recognition, sensitivity to nuance, and amplification are several leadership skills that fall into one of these two categories. Each one is fully explained in this chapter. The concept of high leverage points is introduced and developed as an intervention opportunity, at which point group leaders can maximize their influence on the direction of group development. Gender issues rela-

tive to group leadership are explored, and several factors relative to women in authority are uncovered.

Chapter 8 addresses another aspect of group leadership that is not described in most group textbooks—women in authority. It is a particularly important issue because women are in the majority in the helping professions today.

Chapter 9 addresses those skills needed during the descent of the arc. Examples and transcripts in these chapters come from my work with graduate student training groups. These groups met between 10 and 15 sessions. Each of the student leaders had a supervisor (or I was their supervisor). The groups were oriented toward personal growth and did not have specific topics. Primarily, the groups followed a psychodynamic model, so terms like *transference, countertransference, latent,* and *manifest content* are used.

Chapter 10 shows how, as the group moves through the Confrontation stage and into the ascent of the arc, there are additional requirements for the leader. This chapter includes a more detailed transcript of Stage 4, Confrontation, and discusses the leadership skills needed to navigate the stages of the ascent: Disharmony, Harmony, and Performing.

Chapter 11 introduces the subtle and symbolic level of group interaction. *Group metaphors* are defined as analogies that permit group members to remove affect from an emotionally charged situation, substituting a nonthreatening external subject for a threatening internal one. The group metaphor is also examined from the perspective of chaos theory and is equated with a strange attractor. In other words, the group metaphor is the resulting pattern that emerges as the group attempts to resolve overwhelming anxiety. Methods for using group metaphors are explained, and many case examples are provided.

Chapter 12 examines the dark, denied, and unacknowledged behavior of groups and organizations. These groups are labeled *regressive* and remain stuck in the forming stages of development. In the language of chaos, regressive groups form a limit cycle attractor, unable to evolve or develop. These groups remain dependent on the leader for direction, repress anger and dissent, and create out-groups onto which they project their shadows. This chapter examines the development of regressive group characteristics and provides suggestions for transforming these rigid groups into more productive organizations. Leader behaviors that can liberate regressive groups are enumerated. A small-group case example is provided.

Chapter 13 examines very high levels of group development and cohesion that lead to spiritual and transpersonal growth. Utilizing case studies, the chapter focuses on how group leaders can recognize transpersonal issues and promote spiritual healing.

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Sandy Woolum was instrumental in helping me complete this second edition. Her ideas are reflected throughout the book. I am grateful for her creative energy and her lasting friendship. Thanks also to Mike Sullivan who applied his considerable talent in producing many of the figures for this book. I want to acknowledge the students, staff, and faculty in the Department of Psychology and the University of Minnesota Duluth for their support during these past four years in which I have served as chair.

Chapter 1

Self-Organization and Chaos: Driving in Turkey

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity. . . .
—From *The Second Coming,*
William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

While riding in a car in Istanbul, I recently found myself in the middle of chaos. Drivers in Turkey drive anywhere, ignore the white lines painted on the road, and cross lanes with what appears to be reckless abandon. Breath-taking encounters with other automobiles, passing within inches of your own car, leave you numb. Compounding this apparent bedlam are the hundreds of daredevil pedestrians who zigzag between cars as they attempt to get from one side of the street to the other. Taken together, the crisscrossing cars and people create a cacophony of blurred images and sounds.

Sitting in the back of a taxi, I imagine it to be in the interior of a bubble chamber surrounded by swirling electrons. However, in the midst of this apparent disorder, for the weeklong period I was there, I never saw one accident or witnessed a pedestrian being run over—not once! Underlying all this apparent disorder was some ordered pattern of behavior that enabled both driver and pedestrian to arrive home safely. Let me add that,

although I have a great appreciation for the interface between chaos and underlying order, it did little to comfort me during the time I spend traveling the streets of Turkey.

For many of us, the experience of chaos or overwhelming anxiety in our lives is unpleasant. Seth, the Egyptian God of chaos, was associated with evil; even today most people seek to avoid chaos in their lives because it can uproot all that is familiar. Having grown up in a chaotic household, I am no exception. However, in recent years, with the advent of new understandings from the broad field known as *nonlinear dynamics,* I am learning to appreciate the importance of disorder in my life, and in the world, as a stimulus for new growth.

Dynamics refers to the way systems—whether it is an individual, family, small group, or large organization—change and are characterized as either linear or nonlinear. Linear dynamics sees the world through a Newtonian lens as additive, like the linear equations that form the basis of most social science research. Linear equations are arrived at by adding the sum of the parts. It makes research easier. Unfortunately, the real world is not deterministic—we cannot equate cause with effect no matter how enamored the social sciences have become of that marriage. Even measurement, given the imprecision of our instruments, can never eliminate uncertainty. In the 17th century, Newton hypothesized that given enough information about a system its behavior could be explained. His ideas worked well for deterministic systems like solar and lunar eclipses that can be predicted years in advance. Newtonian equations are at a loss, however, to explain random or chaotic behavior. For years scientists ignored error variance, assuming that cloud patterns, dripping faucets, and waves crashing on the shore were utter randomness and thus unpredictable. Chaos theory is changing that perception because we are learning that underneath all that messiness and apparent disorder are patterns that follow certain rules and numerical constraints.

Nonlinear systems represent most of what we encounter in our everyday life. The world is full of uncertainty, randomness, and chaos (just try and predict the weather 48 hours from now). Nonlinear systems are highly flexible. Changes that occur in these systems are discontinuous, resulting in sudden jumps in behavior or reorganization. These changes are unpredictable, and that makes them frustratingly difficult to quantify and quite impossible with linear methods. However, mathematical mapping methods can give us snap shots of the patterns these nonlinear systems create.

CHAOS THEORY DEFINED

One branch of nonlinear dynamics is chaos theory. There are multiple definitions of chaos theory depending on which discipline one subscribes

to. In chemistry, chaos is used to describe dissipative structures; in physics, it is applied to dynamics systems; and in mathematics, it describes fractal geometry. Hence, chaos theory in all its manifestations is not easy to comprehend, especially its mathematical branch. Nevertheless, even a basic understanding provides a perspective that enlarges one's view of the importance of disorder in shaping our lives.

Chaos science is concerned with nonequilibrium—how systems far from equilibrium change, evolve, grow, and develop—in essence, how they self-organize. Because of this science, we can now understand and even see recognizable patterns under what we previously thought to be random behavior. Therefore, beneath the seemingly haphazard traffic patterns of Turkey, there is some underlying order or self-organizing behavior. These two related concepts—change in systems far from equilibrium and self-organization—are the two major principles that I have applied to my work with small-group behavior.

David Loye and Riane Eisler[1] suggest that chaos (theory) is actually a misnomer when applied to social systems. For most of us, our daily lives are well structured, and we are not faced with constant upheaval or change. Mostly our lives flow smoothly in the presence of a combination of order and disorder, linear and nonlinear dynamics. Loye and Eisler[2] propose, and I wholeheartedly agree, that a more appropriate name for the social sciences is *transformational theory*. They assert that transformation emphasizes "a process out of or through which order gives way to chaos, and chaos again leads to order."[3] Transformational ideas are not new to the social sciences, but can be traced all the way back to the "dialectic theory found in the ancient Chinese Book of Changes, the early Greek Philosophers, and through the works of Hegel, Marx, and Engels."[4] These early ideas echo what contemporary theorists are expressing—that "life is an emergent process that exists between order and chaos, within chaos, and at the edge of chaos."[5]

Transformational theory clearly identifies the ebb and flow of order and disorder as one spiral in the emergent life process that is characterized by our growth and development. Another emergent aspect of our lives embedded within the transformational idea is a spiritual level of intrapsychic development that is also spiral in nature and characterized by intersecting periods of light and dark. The idea of a spiral suggests that as we grow spiritually, become more aware, more consciousness, we also continually revisit the many issues in our lives each time with a potentially greater awareness. With each growth spurt, we gain the potential to view our lives through a wider lens.

For example, my relationship with my mother dramatically changed after my first year of therapy. I no longer saw only the things she did not do for me, but I gained the ability to see and appreciate the things she did

do. These opportunities for spiritual growth are ubiquitous in our lives and are often facilitated by the people we meet and the places we visit or live, which I refer to as transpersonal geography.

MY BACKGROUND AND INTEREST IN CHAOS THEORY

As an undergraduate, I was unprepared for the rigors of academic life, but well prepared for the social life that college afforded me. I flunked out after 2 years. My biggest regret was that I was so preoccupied, fulfilling my own needs, that I missed participating in the 1960s revolution that was taking place in this country. Twenty-five years later, I returned to that campus as a faculty member, on a temporary appointment, just as the first Gulf War was starting. This time I was fully awake. I helped organize the students, and together we made many trips to Washington, DC, to protest that war. My time there presented me with other issues to resolve, and I took full advantage of those opportunities. By returning to that campus, I got a second chance to complete my original experience. As we grow spiritually, we bring new understanding to old issues in our lives, and through the people we meet and the places we visit, we are given unlimited changes, even at times direct second chances, as with my mother and former college, to move beyond blocked points in our lives.

This chapter not only reveals the genesis of my interest in chaos theory, but also shows how the intersection of my educational and spiritual growth has made possible movement beyond dysfunctional behaviors in my family of origin. As this chapter unfolds in the following pages, the interrelationship between my personal and professional interests in this subject matter become evident.

I have written this chapter in chronological order, beginning with my introduction to systems theory in graduate school. While there I also became fascinated with small-group behaviors, which have become the basis for much of my academic work. After summarizing systems ideas, I highlight how I have applied transformational theory to small-group behavior, and then I briefly explore the self-organizing capacity of the psyche. I conclude with a personal example of how I have translated all of these ideas into actual group practice.

I was introduced to systems theory during a time when it formed the basis of multiple approaches to family therapy and captured the imagination of many as it held promise for understanding and explaining all of the complexities of human interactions. In his book, *The Web of Life,* Fritjof Capra[6] provides some of the most cogent writing on systems theory and

cybernetics that I have come across. Particularly remarkable is his ability to demonstrate how novel ideas formularized under the broad rubric of systems theory later became the foundation for complexity theory and one of its components, chaos theory. I found the threads of these ideas beginning in graduate school. However, my learning process was much more experiential at first, almost intuitive, as I first fit these ideas to make sense of my own life and then only later extrapolating them to my academic work with small-group behavior.

Early family therapy approaches were adapted and developed from the work of the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy,[7] whose notions about open systems theory emphasized wholes not parts. In particular, Bertalanffy emphasized a new kind of thermodynamics that postulated that open systems thrive on the flow and constant interchange of matter and energy with their environments. It is this flow that creates a dynamic balance that enables living systems to adapt, change, and grow. Another group comprised of Norbert Wiener, Gregory Bateson, and his wife, Margaret Mead, among others, also greatly influenced the family therapy movement with their work on cybernetics—another kind of systems thinking that, according to Capra[8] focused on patterns of organization, particularly communication patterns. In their work, they adapted terms such as *feedback* and *self-regulating behavior* to describe how living systems were capable of self-regulation and learning that ultimately led to their capacity for self-organization.

Coming from my own disorganized and muddled family of origin where behavior felt random and unpredictable, family systems theory offered me refuge and insight into those dynamics and a template of how I might both improve my familial relationships while extricating myself from the emotional drama that held us together. Engaged in my own personal development while in graduate school, I began to understand the tenets of systems theory, notably the notion that family members' behavior was interconnected. Over time, covert and overt norms developed that not only governed how we related to one another, but how our interactions had co-evolved. The idea of how negative feedback, as a system-maintaining mechanism, was utilized by families to defend homeostasis or the status quo was enlightening for me.

Fortunately for me, my graduate school was only 25 miles north of the Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute in Portland, Connecticut, where regular workshops featuring the lions of family therapy—Murray Bowen, Carl Whitaker, James Framo, Virgina Satir, and many others—performed. At a workshop further east in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I added Salvador Minuchin to my list. At Elmcrest, the workshops cost $25 a day, including lunch. In the morning, the featured family therapist would explain his or her variation of systems thinking; in the afternoon, on stage, they would conduct a family

therapy session with one of the patients from Elmcrest and his or her family members. Without exception those sessions were dynamic not only for what happened on stage, but how clearly one could see the therapists bringing to life interpretations of their theories.

Bowen's idea of differentiation of self,[9] the ability to separate oneself from the powerful emotional influences of the family or even maintain one's sense of self in the family maelstrom, was of particular interest to me. His notions of transgenerational influences, the family projection process, and the ubiquitous undifferentiated family ego mass were absorbing.[10] Although his ideas were electric, his therapeutic style was measured and designed to control or reduce the emotional drama in the family where he spent his time questioning or monologuing with them. He was cantankerous, unyielding, argumentative, and sure he was right. I saw Bowen work on three different occasions over 15 years. I was enthralled by his ideas and fascinated with his arrogance that, unlike fine wine, never mellowed as he aged. Of morbid curiosity to me was his chain smoking of unfiltered cigarettes and the contempt, at times, he seemed to evidence for the ignorance of his audience. Bowen liked the one theory fits all model of therapy and stuck to his guns. He lacked the panache that characterized his more experiential and flamboyant counterparts, Whitaker, Satir, and Minuchin.

Whitaker was the antonym for Bowen. Wildly spontaneous and experiential, his presence increased the family emotional intensity, often pushing it well beyond comfort levels. For Whitaker, experience was primary, and he pushed families to have new and different experiences with one another, often encouraging them to play together more. Some accused him of being irreverent, which Whitaker wore as a badge. He could incite families to take emotional risks. He had a very soothing presence despite his large, gangly body. He could be confrontational with families because there was nothing in his demeanor that was threatening to families. Unlike Bowen, his existential theory was not expansive or elaborate and depended more on who he was. He followed basic principles of systems theory that he applied with broad strokes in responding to the ebb and flow of the family. Although he treated the family as one unit, he advocated for authenticity and full expression of self for each family member. He advocated for more emotional intimacy among family members, believing the lack thereof was the root of many interpersonal problems. Whitaker embraced ambiguity in his work with families. He understood, I think, that the genesis of significant change lay in the family's ability to tolerate it. However, it was often the source of considerable frustration for audience members watching him and wanting him to explain in detail the nuances of his interventions. He could not, for the most part, because he acted on intuition and his own inherent wisdom. His book with Augustus Napier, *The Family Crucible,*[11] was a page turner and

read like a novel to me. The book captured some of the magic I witnessed the two times I saw Whitaker work.

Minuchin was one of my favorite theorists and therapists, especially in his later years when his thinking matured and he became less confrontational in therapy and showed a marked increase in patience with families. He was a master practitioner, and when I saw him work with families live and on videotape his skill at therapeutic interventions was unparalleled. Minuchin worked with families to define appropriate boundaries between subsystems (e.g., clarifying and strengthening the boundary between parents and children). He viewed families and their individual constituents on a continuum from disengaged to enmeshed. He sought balance and flexibility to increase the families' adaptability so that in times of stress the family could more readily respond to the immediacy of the situation rather then resort to reified patterns of behavior.

There were many other family systems theorists who strongly influenced my thinking, among them Gregory Bateson, Don Jackson, Paul Watzlavick, and Mara Selvini Palazzoli of the Milan group. During my early graduate school years, I had an insatiable yearning to read everyone who had written about family systems. My immersion in this area sowed seeds that over the years would grow with my interest in small-group behavior and eventually flower into my curiosity with how chaos theory could inform my understanding of group dynamics. One other important aspect of my learning came from viewing the work of the aforementioned therapists, who helped me clarify my understanding of the importance of both timing and the limitations of therapeutic interventions.

From all of these theorists and therapists, coupled with my own life experiences, I learned about systems theory and the interrelationships among living systems that Capra referred to as the *web of life.*[12] I was introduced to Bertalanffy's ideas of transformation and change in biological systems that provided hints toward what we now refer to as the capacity for self-organization. As I watched Whitaker, Minuchin, Bowen, and Satir work with families, I saw them, each in their own way, balance disorder with order, although I did not have the vocabulary at the time to describe what they were doing. In retrospect, I can see how they were able to contain the family's turmoil and anxiety, Whitaker and Satir with their comforting manner, Bowen with his affectless questioning, and Minuchin with his measured patience. Each in his or her own way created a holding environment in which the family could experience safety and experiment with new ways of relating. When it came time to agitate for change, Whitaker and Satir pushed from the inside out, but only after they had gained entrance into the family system. Bowen gave instructions for change to family members as if issuing an edict from on high, and Minuchin skillfully moved family members like chess pieces searching for the perfect end game.

GROUP WORK

Group work literally captured my interest from the initial moment I sat in a class surrounded by fellow graduate students and experienced the enormous energy generated by our first group experience. I was hooked and spent many hours trying to figure out how it all worked. Today I am still working to understand and describe the processes by which groups evolve and change. Once chaos theory leaped into my life, my vocabulary expanded, and it enabled me to merge many of my groups ideas that before had only hung loosely together. As I came to understand the ideas of change, self-organization, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, systems far from equilibrium, spontaneous emergence, chaos and order, among others, my thinking about group work matured. Combined, these ideas formed the basis of this book. Let me identify three highlights.

First, the fundamental principle on which my work is based, which now seems self-evident, is the notion that living systems, like groups, are self-organizing so each has an inherent capacity to learn, grow, and change. From this premise comes the second highlight that I propose. Group leadership skills can be distilled into either one of two categories: containment or perturbation. The leader is either engaged in some aspect of containing the group's self-organizing capacity (reducing anxiety, making it safe) or perturbing it (challenging, pushing boundaries). In my estimation, all leadership skills detailed in all group textbooks can be reduced to either one of these two categories.

The third highlight, related to the preceding two, is how small groups change—that is, emerge from one level of development to another. More specifically, I am interested in the group state of change/no change, the critical moment when both of these possibilities exist simultaneously, much like the ice cube at 32°F that melts at its edges and refreezes in the middle. At these moments, leadership interventions are the most effective; even a very small perturbation can assist group development in healthy and positive ways. Timing, however, is critical, and in this book I paid careful attention to this issue. Returning a moment to the work of Minuchin, Satir, and Whitaker that I briefly outlined earlier, we can see that each of these therapists had the ability to contain the family by emotionally structuring psychological boundaries so the family felt safe enough to surrender some of its order (norms, compulsive patterns, behaviors, etc.) and move farther from equilibrium. Once accomplished the therapist would introduce some form of spontaneous play into the family. This unbalanced them, and if the containment was sufficient, the family might sustain the behavior long enough to reorganize itself to a new level of organization in which previous dysfunctional behavior could be viewed through a different and more encompassing lens. However,

and here is the point, the family's willingness to go along with the therapist depended in large part on how well the therapist had timed his or her request. I once saw Whitaker move too fast with a family that felt threatened and they shut him out for the entire therapy hour.

SELF-ORGANIZATION AND THE PSYCHE

About 7 years ago, when I began to read more about chaos theory and its applications in the social sciences, I came across Joanne Wieland-Burston's book, *Chaos and Order in the World of the Psyche.*[13] A Jungian, she explores the relationship between chaos and order in the psyche, asserting correctly that most of us value order in our lives and overlook the importance of chaos as order's necessary counterpart. She implies that recognizing psychological disorder and acknowledging the role it plays in our ability to reorganize ourselves can be beneficial and even therapeutic. She notes too that the terrible plague of pharmaceutical interventions today has been vastly more costly to individual psyches than any possible derived benefits. These medications, she notes, often interrupt and interfere with a natural reorganizing process that involves considerable disorder and upset before a new level of psychological organization emerges.

I came to appreciate the necessity and therapeutic value of turmoil in one's life and later came to recognize that mental, emotional, and spiritual health were measured by how able we were, as Edwin Singer noted, to respond spontaneously to what life presented us. I realized that the ability to be flexible and spontaneous issues forth from a life gently rocking in the cradle between the pillars of order and chaos.

James Hillman was another Jungian whose work with the psyche grabbed my attention. He speculates in his acorn theory of development that each person bears a uniqueness that asks to be lived. Beyond, he says, "the interplay of genetics and environment there is something essential-the distinctiveness you feel to be you."[14] That distinctiveness you feel to be you refers to the true self. The true self, as opposed to a false self that is constructed to please and appeal to others, is the directing force in our lives. Kohut[15] suggests that each self contains a nuclear program or self-organizing center that unfolds throughout our lives when facilitated by healthy, functioning, loving connections with others. According to Gila and Firman, this unfolding can be experienced as an invitation or call to follow a particular life path.[16] This program not only reveals our unique being, but also expresses our higher connection to the divine that shines through us.

Throughout our lives, the nuclear program within each of us continually efforts to make itself known—if you will, "calling us home." However, although this directing and self-organizing force can lead us to an authentic

existence, the journey is difficult and often requires that we act in opposition to our artificial desires and expectations that are created from our efforts to fit in or conform to societal norms or the norms of others. It requires that we move into uncertainty beyond our ordered existence and comfort level and live at the edge of anxiety, a still point, which emerges from just the right balance between order and disorder in our lives. When we experience that center, we feel alive and even blissful, as Joseph Campbell noted.[17] Overall, Hillman[18] helped me understand how all life choices express a part of our unfolding essence and are each a fraction of a self-organizing process out of which emerges the whole.

This notion is captured in Mary Catherine Bateson's book, *Composing a Life.*[19] In it she chronicled the lives of five women whose careers and life focus continually changed and evolved over many years in a series of discontinuous leaps that at first glance appear unrelated. However, from the biographer's perspective of hindsight, Bateson showed that although each woman's life path appeared to unfold as a series of seemingly random and disconnected threads, over time the threads combine to yield a richly colored and woven tapestry. In her book, the reader recognizes an emergent whole in each of the five women's lives that is greater than the sum of the life and career choices that each has made. I read this book during a time of transition in my own life, as I left a secure academic job, surrendered a single life to marry a woman with three children, and, a while later, when I was 43, we had a son. These decisions continued a pattern of seemingly discontinuous life choices that at one level appeared unrelated, but with hindsight I can see the connections. In some cases, I literally felt called toward a life choice. In the context of Hillman's work,[20] I now understand that these callings issued forth from my center or nuclear program, and in each case once I committed to that choice I felt embraced and carried along by the flow of my life.

THE DEPARTMENT

Five years ago, after I finished the first edition of my book, it happened again. I felt a strong calling to become Chair of the Psychology Department at my University. The calling came suddenly, without warning, and strongly contradicted my preference for avoiding any involvement with what I considered to be a very dysfunctional group. During my first years in the department, I made efforts to call attention to the crazy-making behavior, but over time those efforts abated and I withdrew into my own work, even moving my office to another floor away from the department. In retrospect, I recognize that this survival behavior was learned in my family of origin as I often sought refuge from our family drama upstairs in my bedroom.

However, once again I was reminded, as I have been throughout my life, that healthy growth and development requires that we work through our anguish, not run away from it. The strong internal urging I felt helped me overcome lingering doubts about the wisdom of this choice. It also signaled that I was ready for another leap in my own spiritual development by taking up the challenge of unraveling the dysfunctional behavior in our department. Here again the spiraling nature of spiritual growth was obvious, as I was called to revisit a major unresolved issue in my life. Given my personal and professional development to that point, it was evident that I had grown into this opportunity.

A catalyst for my reengagement with the department was the hiring of a new college dean a year earlier, someone from outside the University, who ironically (or maybe not) had a transpersonal orientation and was born on the same day, month, and year that I was born. Thus, the possibility of making fundamental changes to our department was greatly improved. As the opportunity presented itself, I moved into my new role and began to operate under many of the principles that I outlined in this book.

The operating principle underlying all of my leadership efforts is that all groups are self-organizing, and the leader's role can be reduced to two important functions: (a) contain collective anxiety that results from disorder, upset, and conflict; and (b) perturb the group, when necessary, out of order and stability by providing properly timed interventions that facilitate healthy group development. Eventually, properly functioning groups learn to contain and perturb themselves.

Generally our department had been extremely unhealthy, to the point of exhibiting dysfunctional behavior and acting out on the part of some faculty, a not uncommon phenomenon in academic departments where tenured faculty have institutional support, often implied, to act with impunity in regard to their individual and group behavior. Many faculty have spent much of their lives narrowly focused on acquiring expertise in their disciplines, which often requires isolated, individual work. In fact many of these individuals are drawn to academic lives because it provides an insular existence quite different from other, more collectively oriented professions. As a result, throughout their professional lives, faculty develop almost no interpersonal skills beyond the ability to function politely in most professional situations. However, under stress those superficial skills give way to the more self-absorbed survival behaviors that they have honed in the academic environment.

Let me add that working in any professional group environment is difficult because it requires that group members are able and willing to invest some of their energy into the collective needs of the group, even relinquishing, at times, their individual needs. In the private sector, corporate success depends, in part, on the ability of employees to embrace a collective vision

and work for the good of the whole, which then rewards each of them in turn. For example, Andersen Windows, an international corporation in Stillwater, Minnesota, fosters this kind of group espirit de corp. Employees work for the success of the corporation, and then each Christmas they are individually rewarded with large profit sharing checks. Unfortunately, most academic environments reward individual behavior, often doing damage to the larger collective good in the process. Faculty have little incentive to promote the common group and seldom do.

Our department was no exception, and over the years its functioning became more and more impaired—even to the extent of sacrificing individual members who could not withstand the emotional demand of living under stressful conditions. My first action as chair was to impose order because I perceived the emotional state of the department to be full of anxiety and uncertainly, and over time I observed that there was no collective ability to effectively resolve any of our stuckness. I sought to impose order in the department by providing maximum structure. First, I consolidated and assumed all leadership roles in the department. This included chairing all search committees and taking over as director of our graduate program. Additionally, I moved my office to a central location in the department and was visibly present most hours of the day. Let me add that these moves were done with the support of an overwhelming number of faculty who had either tired of the emotional stuckness or were just willing to let me do it.

Long before my arrival in the department, many of the behaviors I sought to address had existed for so long that the origin of each was only speculation. Previous attempts to address these fundamental issues were met with absolute resistance by most faculty because, as the old adage goes, "the pain you know is better than the pain you don't." When the new dean arrived, he sought to address our problems and brought in a consultant who interviewed all faculty. The consultant's report to the dean concluded that a fundamental change, by restructuring the department, was necessary. This dovetailed with my own assessment. No amount of group processing, were it possible, could undo the damage that had been done.

A metaphor for our stuckness was the split between our graduate counseling program and the more experimentally oriented undergraduate program. The graduate program contained faculty who were highly dysfunctional and damaging to students and other faculty. Boundary violations, emotional abuse, and other forms of unhealthy behavior permeated the program for years. Any attempts, tepid as they might have been, to address these issues were unsuccessful.

Among my initial efforts at restructuring the department was to find another academic home for the graduate program and those faculty who comprised it. After a long and concerted effort, no other department in the

college wanted the program or the faculty who had become identified with it. The remaining option was to close the program, and faculty voted overwhelmingly to do so. Following the vote, the graduate program's faculty acted out in ways that confirmed just how dysfunctional the program had become, even to the extent of revealing connections to higher administrators who had supported this behavior over the years.

Simultaneous to the re-ordering of the department, the dean had two faculty moved to another floor away from the department. These faculty were extremely toxic, and each had so poisoned their relationship with other faculty that their mere presence was disruptive. Attendant with this move, I suspended full faculty meetings for most of my first year, choosing instead to begin working in smaller, better functioning faculty groups. I made it a priority to work on staff and faculty morale, find genuine ways to recognize both faculty and staff success, and promote a healthy respect for our differences. Removing toxins, restructuring, and imposing order into the chaos were my priorities for the first 18 months in my new role. To their credit, most faculty responded positively.

Adding to the new sense of order has been the ongoing enhancement of our physical space, including painting, carpeting, creating new office space, and decorating to enhance the environment and make it more welcoming for faculty and students. Physical space when correctly organized helps create a proper holding environment that can make individuals feel comfortable, more in control, and less anxious in their work space. Proper assignment of office spaces can also improve working relationships and add to overall feelings of order.

A priority in our search process last year for new tenured and 1-year contract hires was not only to identify academically qualified individuals, but to select those who were emotionally mature and grounded in a strong sense of their own identity and who expressed a willingness to engage constructively with other members of the department. The five new additions to the department came with these prerequisites and together provide a nucleus of positive energy for the department.

Imposing order, although necessary to stabilize the department, is not without potential costs, foremost among the possible dangers is that this autocratic leadership style might stymie the ability of faculty to eventually assume responsibility for the department. Awareness and timing are crucial factors here. Last year we appointed an associate chair for the department, a woman who has been a faculty member for over 20 years and is an archive of historical data about the department. Furthermore, she has served as a touchstone for me in tempering my zeal and keeping me well grounded during this transitional process. A personal cost has been the emotional stress of the job that at times seems unrelenting. Workplace demands are constant, and balancing the demands of the various constituencies, student,

staff, faculty, and administrators is a juggling act that I am still learning to master.

Attendant with these external demands are the intrapsychic ones that emerge—those having to do with issues of competency, dealing with authority, and others that have been the basis of personal work throughout my life. However, as I pointed our earlier, I fully recognize the opportunity I am being given here to confront and resolve these issues. Every day new challenges arise, and every day I feel more capable to address them. It is not easy, but I am not running away either. Instead I am standing steadfast right in the middle of a life path that is intended for me.

In conjunction with these changes, I am conducting a 360-degree evaluation of me as chair of the department. One of our new hires is an Industrial/Organizational psychologist with experience in this area and is coordinating the process from meeting with small focus groups of staff, faculty, students, and administrators to creating the evaluation instrument, to designing procedures for the evaluation. A former chair will collate the results, which will be shared with me and discussed at a faculty meeting. It is my intention to make this an annual process and create a model of leadership that underscores not only shared, but open governance. I hope that, by volunteering to be evaluated in this manner, it will more readily enable our faculty to honestly discuss our collective behavior as we establish these new working relationship guidelines.

Last year we formed a writer's group that continues this year with some members of the faculty. In the group, we share our writing with one another, and this has resulted in members taking a genuine interest in their colleagues' work. Last year, with some different faculty members, we studied Spanish together. We are learning to play together. We celebrate birthdays, and individual achievements are recognized as we work to differentiate ourselves from one another and establish appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

As chair I have been guided by the confluence of individual, family, and group ideas that informs my understanding of the dynamic relationship between order and chaos. Imposing order and taking control are easy. However, any changes implemented under such conditions are temporary if the group is not included in the decision making. Chaos is critical for group development. Groups must learn to navigate turbulence together and, in the process, forge meaningful working relationships. Without a proper holding environment, structure, or leader to contain the group's collective anxiety, the ensuing emotional upset and chaos will move the group toward anarchy rather than some new level of organization. We are slowly rebuilding a foundation on which we can fully explore and express our differences, engage in conflict, and grow a healthy environment in which each of us can thrive.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As I begin work on the second edition of this book, I remain interested in the study of transpersonal and spiritual development in small groups. These ideas hold promise as the next evolutionary step in our efforts to expand our understanding of small-group behavior. I believe they have planetary implications for all of us in the 21st century.

Chapter 2

A Pot of Stew?

Each year I conduct a spiritual retreat for students at the field station at Pigeon Lake, Wisconsin. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the facility is located in the middle of the Chequamegon National Forest. The retreat provides students with a weekend experience structured for self-reflection using meditation, yoga, journaling, art and music activities, and small-group discussions. The retreat is held at the beginning of each summer. At the start of the retreat 4 years ago, we were meditating in a small circle under the large pine trees just outside of the dining hall. Eyes closed and following our breath, the group relaxed into the quiet of our surroundings. After about 10 minutes of silence, there was a large gasp from one of the students. We opened our eyes and standing in the very center of our group was a deer and her fawn. It was an extraordinary moment for us and I imagine for the deer. The two of them stood among us for several minutes as we sat in awe of the wonder we were witnessing. Then she and the fawn walked about 200 feet to one of the old wooden classrooms, which has a gentle sloping ramp that runs parallel to the building leading to the front door. Between the ramp and the building there is a small, narrow space. The mother led her fawn into the space and then left the camp. For two days, the young deer lay in that space. We checked her frequently each day and worried about her safety, yet we respected her space and kept our distance. This event framed the weekend for us throughout most of our activities. As our retreat was ending Sunday afternoon, we thought about calling the Department of Natural Resources to ensure that the deer would be cared for, but the call was not necessary. Just before the retreat ended, the mother returned, gathered her fawn, and the two of them headed into the forest.

The nature of this event and its strange and unknowable meaning at our retreat captures for me the magic potential of groups. The likelihood for this kind of spiritual connection to something larger than the group is a possibility for all groups, but few ever achieve this level of generativity.

Nevertheless, it remains as potential, albeit latent, throughout a group's development. It is one of the many fascinating facets of group behavior that has held my attention for most of my academic life.

Pulling together the many pieces of group behavior that I studied and observed for years into a coherent model of group development eluded me for many years until I was introduced to chaos theory. That theory provided a framework for me to bring together my understanding of group behavior with a number of other diverse ideas gathered from Carl Jung; Carl Rogers; early family therapists like Satir, Bowen, Minuchin, and Whitaker; existential psychology; and transpersonal psychology. Pulling together so many diverse ideas into one book risks creating a "pot of stew,"[1] rather than a melting pot where the ideas coalesce into one or two coherent themes. This edition of the book is better organized, less chaotic than the first, and yet it still challenges readers to find their own emergent meanings.

GROUP MODELS

Most theorists agree that groups develop in stages. The number of stages differ, but generally they range between three and seven. There is near agreement on the group behavior that occurs at each stage of development. Most stages models begin with the group forming and end with the group terminating. More precisely, groups develop over time. They begin as separate individuals who join together for a common purpose. In therapy and encounter groups, there is initial anxiety, then negotiation of group rules or norms, conflict, conflict resolution, intense individual and group work, and then termination.

The group model that gets developed in this book includes some ideas borrowed from earlier models, but there are also substantial differences between those stages models and the one that unfolds in this book. Many of the earlier models of group development were often portrayed as a kind of linear evolution in which groups moved first through one stage and then another. My notion of development is more dynamic. For example, group development is more spiral-like, fluid, up and down, and characterized by a series of discontinuous leaps from one stage to another. Members and leaders rarely experience group growth as smooth and continuous. There are sudden surges, retreats, and times when group progress stops entirely before moving to a whole new level. There are regressive groups, which get stuck and move backward rather than forward. There are groups in which conflict and anxiety become overwhelming, leading some members to leave the group and the remaining members to deal with either loss or relief.

We belong to many different kinds of groups—task-oriented groups, work groups, social action groups, open groups, family groups, and large

groups that are organized around social or cultural norms. No matter what group we belong to, all have a developmental pattern to them. At school, in the classroom, or at work in small meetings, that pattern noted previously, moves through a predictable sequence of development. In larger groups or work groups, which perform a task, it is more difficult to notice group development because the group's evolution is often secondary to the task at hand. However, in encounter groups, which are stripped of clearly defined tasks, group process is more readily discernible. These groups are nondirective, in which the leader does not take an active role, but instead encourages the group to assume responsibility for its own growth. The leader might spend her time in group simply reflecting her observations about the group's process back to the group's members. From these groups, we are most able to observe and learn directly about collective behavior that can apply to all groups. In this book, where small encounter group examples are used to highlight the discussion, it is important to remember that all groups have the capacity and potential to develop as fully as these small encounter groups.

CHAOS

One of the most intriguing aspects of group development for me is how groups change over time. Particularly, what are the mechanisms by which they move from one stage to another? How does the group leader guide that process? What are the differences between immediate and long-term change? Is change irreversible? What does change look or feel like from the perspective of the group member? What is change? Is it different for the group as a whole than for the individual members?

In tandem with these questions about change, I was also interested in understanding how groups organized themselves beyond the stage development models I studied. Leading groups is bewildering at times, and without a firm grounding in how groups work the leader can get lost. Learning to appreciate and understand the necessity of turmoil in groups is difficult for many who find it overpowering. Initially it was these two issues and the manifestation of behaviors in groups that seemed to suggest that some change and organizing were occurring often in conjunction with one another that led me in search of a theory. When I discovered chaos theory, the proverbial light went on. Not only had I found a model that fit my experience of groups, but this model also aided me in understanding how change occurs in groups as well as how groups organize themselves.

I also learned that when discussing groups from a chaos perspective, the group experience can be viewed through an entirely new lens, leading to a broader understanding of groups and enabling the group leader to better

deal with the group at crucial moments of conflict and anxiety. At these critical moments, chaos theory supplies the understanding that can ground and guide the leader's decision making during tumultuous times. Chaos theory provides language that helped me grasp the difference between linear or first-order change and discontinuous or second-order change. Rather than reject linear notions of group movement, I came to appreciate that both linear and nonlinear changes were part of groups' self-organizing mechanisms.

For the most part, linear movement can explain the back and forth movement of groups during times of stability. However, when the group reaches a tipping point or is far from equilibrium, linear explanations fail. These unstable points of change are best described from a chaos perspective because change is not smooth or linear, but involves a sudden transformation in which a lower form of organization is replaced by a higher order. As I discovered, it is during these moments of high instability that leader interventions can have the most impact on the group. The leader may make an intervention, which either perturbs the group to move forward toward one direction or another or entices the group to retreat. Throughout the book, the strands of these ideas as well as others are woven together using chaos theory.

Although the application of chaos theory to group behavior is the basis of this book, several other theorists whose psychological philosophies provide perspectives key to my understanding of groups are briefly summarized next. As you navigate your way through this book, application of their ideas appears in various guises.

CARL ROGERS

Much of my own group experience and training had been from the perspective of unstructured, experiential groups. The focus of many of these groups was personal growth, self-reflection, or actualization as understood from the humanistic viewpoint. Carl Rogers was a proponent of personal growth groups and someone whose work influenced my own thinking. For Rogers, group work provided clients an opportunity to move from rigid behaviors into a more fluid and spontaneous way of being. Groups provided the opportunity to encounter other people—not as superficial beings, but as individuals with depth and transparency. Although the encounter moment held out the hope of a broader transformation of society, the focus of Rogers' work was on inner development. The group existed as a microcosm of larger society wherein individuals interacted with one another, often with little in common. In Rogers' groups, these individuals encountered each other over several days or weeks, with the end goal of creating

an immediate experience in which group members, through self-disclosure and feedback, could get more in touch with their feelings, learn to be more trusting and accepting of self and others, and practice being more alive, creative, and dynamic.

> If one accepts the concept of an open system, which Rogers and Prigogine both do, then the organization is nudged at this point from the condition of entropy or the tendency toward death by means of perturbations, large or small, which permit the organism to export the excess entropy.[2]

As Sanford notes, "this self-actualizing tendency is at work within the organism with a movement toward another form or another level of organization."[3] At the end of the experience, participants return to the larger world with a better understanding of self and those around them. The immediacy of the experience and the activation of buried feeling sometimes made for very explosive encounters. The encounter could be revitalizing and often brought groups members into very real contact with one another once the persona or façade was set aside.

After leading a number of encounter groups, my wife requested that I avoid talking with her for the first 24 hours after I returned home. Imbued with the immediacy of a genuine human encounter and the energy that comes with self-knowledge, I wanted to continue the experience with her. Her wisdom prevailed when she brought to my attention that the only unearthing she did during my weeks absence was digging up the weeds in her garden. After I had re-acclimated to being back in the world, more grounded in daily routine, she was keen to learn of my self-discoveries.

Nondirective leadership—a style advanced by Rogers—was quite frustrating the first time I experienced it as a group member. However, I came to appreciate how it could activate group members. Many of the group ideas formulated by Rogers found their way into my vocabulary, and many of those ideas may be recognized as you read this book.

FAMILY SYSTEMS

As I noted in the first chapter, early family therapists influenced my thinking, and I often considered groups from a family systems perspective. Systems theory addresses change, but generally the emphasis of the theory is on stability or maintaining the status quo. The concept of homeostasis is important for understanding stability—a necessary and important phase of group stages, but insufficient to explain change. The family systems perspective is also important for understanding group dynamics when members enact certain roles from their families of origin. A systems perspective can aid in understanding transference and countertransference phenom-

ena first discussed by Freud.[4] In terms of groups, these phenomena can help explain the interactions of leaders and members, thus broadening the understanding of the group as being both now and then under the influence of each member's family of origin.

Family systems theory can remind us that each person brings a personal history to the group, and the family of the past may have created certain wounds or holes in that member's experience that can lead to limited ways of being in the group. The group then becomes the vehicle for reconnecting with these wounds or lost potential.[5]

CARL JUNG

The Jungian perspective is another influence that provides other important ways to understand groups and group behavior. Later in the book (chap. 13), his ideas are explored more fully. Jung introduced the notion of archetypes into our vocabulary, among them the shadow. The shadow is that

> unconscious part of the personality containing characteristics and weaknesses which one's self-esteem will not permit one to recognize as one's own . . . it is personified in dreams by dark and dubious figures of the same sex as the dreamer.[6]

This archetype provides a foundation upon which to discuss the collective shadow, as well as other dark or regressive aspects of groups. Jung's notion of the collective unconscious introduces a larger notion of collective connection, which help me begin to understand the creative and spiritual potential of groups.

From Jung's own life and journey of self-discovery, we recognize the importance of a descent and ascent, a going and coming, adapted by Joseph Campbell as leaving one condition, traveling to another, finding what's missing, followed by a return. For Jung this idea of leaving the conscious sphere and journeying into the unconscious realm to the center of the psyche or self was the very act of individuation—a model of discovery I find useful when thinking about group development.

Jung introduces the concept of *synchronicity,* which can be used to understand group events as not being confined to chronological interactions, but more as cross-connections in time. Viewing forming groups as a kind of meaningful coming together rather than coincidence can draw attention to a higher meaner of group interaction. Other group events may also be understood by their timing or that moment, in which two or more people are at the same place, can connect, and can spark a transformation in the group as a total.

Jung also discusses symbols of transformation, alchemy, and other ways in which inner experience is connected to outer events.[7] The application to groups of Jung's ideas is most noted in the later chapters of this book.

TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

In addition to Jung's ideas, those drawn from transpersonal psychology have helped me understand the broader and more spiritual dimension of groups. Groups and group behavior have meaning on multiple levels, one of which is the spiritual. Highly developed and creative groups evidence an ability to tap into a higher realm of consciousness, which can be understood in transpersonal terms.

Sometimes even group members' cursory discussion of faith and beliefs can cause groups and group leaders to retreat from these discussions or address them at only the literal level of meaning, leaving the group with a spiritless experience. Transpersonal psychology provides a means for discussing groups as existing within a larger meaning that can enable us to move beyond the ideas of cause and effect or even coincidence as sufficient to explain many of the phenomena that occur during the group experience. Transpersonal psychology, in part reliant on Eastern as well as Western philosophy, underscores the notion that groups may be seen in different ways by different cultures. From the Western viewpoint, we may see individuals coming together to form a group, but in the Eastern context, groups might be seen as a natural priority.

EXISTENTIALISM

Existential psychology is another part of my academic training that informs my view of groups. Most beginning groups experience uncertainty and anxiety. One interpretation of that anxiety may be that it is difficult for members to attend a group or even interact with a number of strangers. Beginning groups are an encounter with the unknown. From an existential viewpoint, the group is also an encounter with being and nonbeing. From this perspective, groups can represent both heaven and hell—or even as Sartre noted, "hell is other people."

From the existential perspective, we get the important ideas of responsibility and choice. Many existentialists believe that we are always free to choose our behavior and our attitudes, and we are responsible for those choices—even the choices we do not make, particularly as they manifest in our lives. In groups we are faced with many choice points; group members, while engaged in a collective experience, must remain cognizant that they

ultimately bear responsibility for their behavior, attitudes, and actions in the group. Satre's concept of "no excuses" is also relevant for group interactions and the constant choice members make between authenticity and alienation.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

> Chaos is a phenomenon that manifests itself over very long time frames,[8] lending itself to a global view of the system. The holistic nature of complex systems demonstrates that everything has the potential to affect evertything else. This increases our awareness of interrelationships and unpredictability. The study of wholeness and change is the science of chaos—a science responsive to the global nature of systems.[9]

Finally, it is important to understand that groups do not exist as separate from society as a whole. There is always a political, economic, or social context that acts as a filter for the group experience. The larger life setting in which the group finds itself influences its development and should be included in the group's life when appropriate. Groups cannot abdicate this responsibility to a greater worldview simply by closing off the group for an hour each week. Although some descriptions of psychological growth seem very inner and personal, the group should be wary of not representing or enforcing conformity to societal norms. Instead the group must be understood both as impacted by society and as impacting society—both by the actions of the group as a collective and by those of the individual members. As we consider chaos and how groups move and change within systems, we recognize how all levels of systems are interconnected.

Understanding group process has informed my own involvement with social action and social justice movements. Understanding the nature of national events from a group and systems perspective has made me more competent to explain and intervene at larger levels.

ART AND SCIENCE

Chaos theory represents a new science—an attempt to move away from an orderly picture of the universe and the causal science of Newtonian physics to something that represents a more contemporary view of the universe, one in which randomness and chaos play important roles in the evolution of the planet. Likewise this study of group dynamics moves beyond the traditional boundaries framed by Newtonian science to a world that retains mystery. Further, our knowing is framed by our experiences that are filled

with paradox and ultimately the knowledge that large parts of our world and experience cannot be measured or even explained.

> Every year when I return to Pigeon Lake, I look for the deer, but she is gone from the walkway. However, the spiritual nature of that place is enhanced both by that event of the past and the unfolding possibilities of the future. The deer and her fawn continue to remind me of the larger mystery of the universe and to help me realize that I am part of something greater than myself. It reminds me that, no matter how much I claim to know, there is always more that I do not know. So it is with this book, a combination of my knowledge and my experience, that I offer another perspective of group development. I remain mindful that there is a great deal about the incomprehensible nature of group behavior that I can never know.

Chapter 3

Chaos and Transformation

> *Our understanding of social groups and organizations has progressed by gradual increments over the last century and then, suddenly, there was a very different theory—one that emphasizes the footprints of change and the many shapes and sizes that could be.* Nonlinear dynamical systems theory, *which is also know colloquially as* chaos theory *or* complexity theory, *is the study of the events over time and space. By* nonlinear *we are calling attention to the uneven change of events over time, and the disproportionate responses that systems make when we try to affect or control them in some manner. Sometimes a small intervention has a dramatic impact. Sometimes a large plan accomplishes very little.*
>
> —S. J. Guastello, *Managing Emergent Phenomena* (p. 1)

This chapter considers basic terms of chaos, their origins in physical and biological science, with illustrations of how these concepts could apply to groups. Examples in this chapter are provided by my friend and colleague, Sandy Woolum, who facilitates a grief support group. Examples of grief group do not represent individual persons, but relay her collective experience from many years of leading the group.

Introduction to Grief Group

For the last 8 years, I have facilitated a grief support group. Grief group is an open group, so there are always new participants, some who stay for a few sessions, some who continue for many months. Each evening is filled with both change and stability. The first level of uncertainty is knowing how many people will come. The number can vary from 6 to 20, so we may need to break up and

make two groups. After the groups are formed, we move from one room to two, draw the chairs together into the number needed, sit down, and begin with a brief orientation and a few group rules. Then we go around the circle and each person says who died and how the death occurred. There is no time to warm up to the discussion, and new people may begin to cry in the first minutes. They have unique stories to tell, stories of sudden deaths in accidents and fires, there may be heart attacks or even murder. There are also stories of long illnesses and descriptions of watching a person you love as this person endures great pain and deteriorates over time.

After everyone is introduced, we encourage the new participants to talk longer and tell more. Then we focus on a topic to be discussed—the topic seems to emerge from the group itself; sometimes that topic lasts the entire evening, sometimes it is replaced by other topics. Finally, we try to wrap up by discussing the group or moving to immediacy in the final moments. The group ends, but leaving is sometimes a slow process. People make connections with each other. Facilitators may talk to participants about seeking individual counseling from the grief support center or about going to other groups that may be helpful. As participants walk out the door, the future cannot be predicted. Some say, "I'll be back," but never return. Others say "this is my last session," but return months later saying, "I wasn't ready" or "I have had another death in my family." The group is fluid, variable, and unpredictable.

Still there are consistent factors. Grief is always discussed. People talk of those who died. They tell how they died, they talk of funerals, cemeteries, changes in family dynamics, strange occurrences, dreams, and their own reactions with depression, guilt, loss, and loneliness. The group emerges during the course of 90 minutes, but it also emerges over time, and that is rather strange as well. Group members become volunteers, then co-facilitators. Perhaps most dramatic are the people who came to group and said, "I don't want to live anymore," but later announce that they will marry again. They send wedding invitations. Group members themselves may die, and others may say, "I went to the funeral."

My own life is much intertwined with this group, and the first and third Tuesdays of every month, I introduce myself by saying that my mother, father, and sister died of cancer, that I went through 7 years of their dying, much of it in my own home, where I provided hospice care. I have said this twice a month for 8 years, but it is never quite the same. I am not the same person, the group is not the same group, the evening is not the same evening. Yet some things are absolutely predictable. I walk into that hospital on a Tuesday evening, I walk out on a Tuesday evening, and I am not the same person as the one who came. Life is different after grief group. I put myself into this place as if it were a warp in time. I come out somewhat different than I went in. This is the nature of groups—they impact us, they make life more profound.

As we think of groups, we realize that they may be both ordered and chaotic. There may be moments when the group seems to diverge from an appointed topic, when participants seem to be on different wavelengths, when we have the sense that no one is listening. However, chaos is not about a lack of order, but rather about the detection of a higher order, which may help us understand the group as an evolving system over time.

DEFINING CHAOS

Defining chaos theory and the concepts that comprise it is much "like trying to grasp Jell-O®."[1] Although Linda Chamberlain's analogy to Jello-O® was intended to depict the difficulty in defining the strange attractor, her creative description equally captures the cognitive experience of one's first, second, or even third encounter with chaos theory.

> It's easy to see that there is some substance there, that the substance has some specific form, and that it appears solid. When one tries to actually pick some up, however, it quickly becomes a challenge to manage and is transformed into a very different substance than it appeared while sitting on the plate.[2]

Getting a firm grasp on a precise definition of *chaos* is even difficult for those hip deep in the Jell-O® because descriptions of chaos theory vary slightly from chemistry when it is used to describe dissipative structures, in physics when applied to dynamic systems, or in mathematics when describing fractal geometry.[3] Each discipline speaks a different language, resulting in slightly different meanings for the concepts of chaos. Several years ago, someone estimated that there were approximately 31 different definitions of chaos theory. Despite the difficulty in deciphering the language, it is worth the effort because even a rudimentary understanding of chaos confirms many of the intuitive feelings one has about how groups work.

Chaos theory describes living systems in process and is part of a larger discipline known as *nonlinear dynamics.* Although scientists investigate chaos from several different perspectives—bifurcation theory, catastrophe theory, the science of complexity—they all study nonequilibrium in dynamic systems.

NONEQUILIBRIUM THEORY

There are two branches in nonequilibrium theory (Fig. 3.1). The first is the narrowly focused mathematical study of dynamics. It is highly technical and limited to a few specialists.[4] The second and broader area emerges from an effort to find application for these mathematical models in the natural

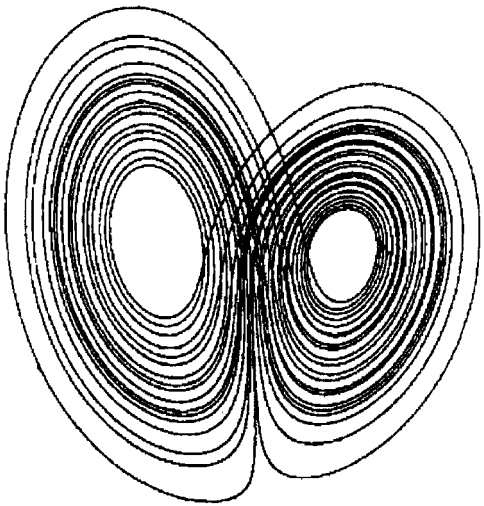

FIG. 3.1. A butterfly attractor. From *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences,* edited by R. Robertson and A. Combs, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted by permission.

sciences.[5] The interpretation of chaos theory used in this book comes from this second branch.

Nonlinear Dynamics

A major focus of this book is small-group transformation. Specifically, what are the factors and conditions that influence group change and development? The answer, I believe, can be found in studying two interconnected ideas generated from the study of chaotic systems: self-organization and nonequilibrium theory.[8] Ilya Prigogine's innovative ideas about dissipative structures form the basis of this exploration. His insight into the relationship between order and chaos won him the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1984. His description of change in systems far from equilibrium is one of the cornerstones of self-organizing theory used in this book. According to Thomas Kuhn, science goes through paradigm shifts. Science often follows a particular paradigm, which dictates both theory and method, so scientists stay with a particular paradigm, conducting research within the limits of what the theory would specify and ignoring incongruities as errors. Over time the incongruities build up until a new paradigm is created. Some people hold to the previous idea, whereas others forge into a new arena, but this is not necessarily an easy transition. In the history of science, Gallileo's idea that the sun was the center of the universe created a paradigm shift, as did Einstein's ideas of relativity. In paradigms it sometimes holds that the older theory is used to explain certain phenomena and the newer theory forges ahead into new phenomena.

In the social sciences, we have often been impressed by new models that were developed in the physical sciences. Early psychologists in the structuralist tradition were impressed by chemistry and looked for "mental chemistry." The behaviorists adopted a model of the old switchboard, so something went in and something came out—sometimes called a *black box.* Psychologists have been fascinated by evolution, electricity, and cybernetics. Knowing that we deal with interrelated systems—such as families—we have looked to systems theory to provide contextual understanding for individual behavior. However, like most theories, current paradigms always have inadequacies and, as we gain more understanding and more clarity, old insight is replaced by new knowledge.

Chaos theory is a new scientific model that has gained support in the physical sciences because it seems useful in helping us further our understanding of how complex systems operate. Chaos theory provides insight into nonlinear dynamics. It allows us to penetrate apparent randomness and see patterns that represent underlying order. Models, like chaos theory, are important because they challenge us to reexamine what we believe and the assumptions we make from those beliefs.

Newton

In the 17th century, Newton theorized that, given sufficient information about a dynamic system, its behavior could be completely determined by the laws of motion. In part this is true. For example, solar and lunar eclipses can be predicted decades in advance. This is deterministic physics. Here Newton's calculations are useful. However, his equations could not explain nor could they account for random or chaotic behavior.[6] For many years, science simply discounted or overlooked messy and unpredictable behaviors.

Lorenz

Edwin Lorenz, studying weather systems on his computer, provided the original mathematical model for explaining unpredictability in the world of nonlinearity.[7] Serendipitously, while trying to predict long-range weather patterns, Lorenz uncovered the elegance of chaos.

Yet perhaps what Lorenz really saw on his computer screen that morning in Massachusetts was the inherent aesthetic of nature: the simple elegance of complexity and nonlinearity that makes possible the vast emergent diversity that we call *evolution.* The importance of his discovery lay buried for almost a decade, then with the advent of supercomputers, scientists began to model and map turbulent behavior in air and water. Twenty years ago, chaos science was being heralded as a universal language of nature.[8]

Waterfalls, crashing waves, dripping faucets, cloud patterns, heart arrhythmias, stock market fluctuations, and predator–prey relationships all exhibit a randomness that makes their behavior unpredictable.[9] That random behavior was largely ignored until the emergence of chaos science. Scientists studying chaos proposed that, although certain behaviors in natural systems are not predictable, there is a pattern to their randomness or irregularity that emerges over time. To fully comprehend chaos theory, it is necessary to have a rudimentary understanding of dynamics.[10] As mentioned earlier, the mathematics of dynamics form one of the cornerstones of chaos and self-organizational theories.

CHAOS TERMINOLOGY

Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions

A cornerstone of chaos theory, discovered by Lorenz, is known as the Butterfly Effect.[11] It is aptly named because of the pattern its creates when graphically depicted on the computer (Fig. 3.1). It has a literal translation too. As James Gleick described it in his seminal work, *Chaos,* ". . . a butterfly stirring the air today in Peking can transform storm systems next month in New York."[12] It is also known by the now familiar chaos term of *sensitive dependence on initial conditions.*

It means that small perturbations at the outset of a system, or in a chain of events, can have enormous effects on the outcome. In other words, small, almost imperceptible, disruptions in one part of a system can have dramatic effects on the system as a whole. Therefore, any small change in the starting point of a system can significantly alter the endpoint. Hence, any nonperiodic or nonlinear system would be unpredictable because it would be impossible to know all the starting parameters.

Sensitive Dependence in Grief Group

Group leaders are well aware of sensitive dependence on initial conditions because in the opening stage of group development often seemingly minor details like physical space, room temperature, seating arrangements, and type of chairs not only play a part in how the group begins its journey together, but often how it ends.

In groups we also recognize that events which happen between meetings may impact a participant and lead to a discussion in the next meeting. Even the failure to find a parking spot could agitate someone, who might then decide to be more direct in the discussion or even express some anger at the group as a whole.

In addition, there are interactions between our physical world and our interpersonal reality. For example, a young woman came to grief group with a story of an automobile accident. She had been driving on a freeway, moving at the speed limit on a dry road. Suddenly she hit a patch of ice and slid violently into some trees. Her passenger was killed. That small patch of ice changed her life. It changed the group. It changed everyone in the room who heard about it months after the event.

Linear Dynamics

In chaos theory, dynamics, or the way in which systems change, are characterized as either linear or nonlinear. Linear dynamics, like linear equations, are additive. Therefore, the way a linear system changes can be measured by simply adding the solutions of two or more equations to form a final solution. Linear equations form the basis for the statistics used in the social sciences.[13] Multiple regression, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and loglinear regressions all use additive equations to describe the relationships among variables. Most research is based on linear models, but in the real-world straight line, linear systems just do not exist. Therefore, when we open the door to nonlinear dynamics, the more realistic view of how the world is organized, the old worldview biased by linear assumptions is revealed as inadequate.[14]

Linear Dynamics in Grief Group

Trying to explain group work in terms of linear dynamics reminds me of watching the interaction of billiard balls on a pool table. I think of old diagrams in which group interactions were mapped as lines from one person to the next, but realize the limitation of understanding communication patterns in such static terms because when someone speaks, everyone is potentially impacted. There are many levels of intercourse, including the actual information in the statement—the "you–me" interaction that is always implied and the possible symbolism involved. A simple statement might lead the group in an entirely different direction. A yawn could bring everyone to a discussion of boredom. Someone getting up for coffee could mean, "Really I am no longer interested."

For example, one week in grief group, a woman said, "It was terrible to lose my husband after 30 years—after being together so long, being alone is the worst thing that could happen." I was thinking of the many different ways this message could be interpreted. There was a young woman who lost her boyfriend—would she be thinking, "You had 30 years, we had only a few months"? There was another young woman who lost a father—would she

be thinking of her mother, who lost a husband? There was my co-facilitator, who had lost a husband and remarried. I imagined her thinking of her first husband—and her second husband—would he die too?

For group leaders, it is important to consider the many different reactions and possible interpretations to the same event because all of it is relevant for the group. By considering the multiple meanings and layers of individual and group communication, verbal and nonverbal, we recognize that a linear perspective would be wholly inadequate to explain the dynamics of group behavior.

Nonlinear Dynamics

In the nonlinear world, just about anything is possible. Nonlinear systems are versatile. Therefore, linear equations are limited in their utility for describing systemic changes in nonlinear systems. In this book, use of the term *nonlinear changes* refers to transformations that are discontinuous and cause sudden jumps in behavior, making them impossible to quantify with additive equations. Not all nonlinear changes exhibit this kind of behavior.

Here is an example that demonstrates both linear and nonlinear change. Begin alternately tapping your index fingers on the table. Within certain limits, you can linearly change or adjust the speed of that tapping to maintain an alternative rhythm. Try changing speeds. Now tap as fast as you can. Notice what happens. Once you exceed a critical speed, you suddenly experience a nonlinear jump and find your fingers tapping in phase.[15] The versatility of nonlinear systems means a single system may show different, even opposing, forms of behavior. "The classic examples here are horses' gaits: walking, trotting, galloping, and running. Each gait represents a completely different organization of leg motion."[16] The transition between gaits, like the leap in finger tapping, occurs as a sudden reorganization.

In nonlinear systems, cause and effect are not functionally related. "A change in one variable may cause proportional changes in other bodies up to a point, at which time the second variable's reactions become nonproportional . . . the straw that broke the camel's back is an apt analogy."[17] Any system in which input is not proportional to output is nonlinear. If you have a headache and take one aspirin you will get relief; two, more relief; four, perhaps even more; but take 50 aspirins and you will not get as much relief as you did from only one. Thus, a headache is a nonlinear system. "It (nonlinearity) is everything whose graph is not a straight line—and that is essentially everything."[18] In these cases, nonlinear applications are necessary, but they are nonadditive and difficult to solve.[19] Measuring nonlinear systems lies in discovering their pattern or patterns.

Nonlinear Dynamics in Grief Group

In a recent grief group, one of our participants, whom I will call Frank, forgot his hearing aids. Frank comes to group regularly, and he claims that the group has helped him. When he forgot his hearing aids, he said, "I can still hear most of it." I was reminded of how difficult it would be from a linear perspective to map group communication in a way that could measure the relationship between input and impact. Some people seem to be impacted in a single session and leave saying, "This is exactly what I needed." Others come for many months, and it appears that nothing happens until one group session when a dramatic change occurs.

I am well aware of what I put into group because I know that it takes focus, energy, and concentration, and even after eight years it almost always leads to a sleepless night. I imagine that it is worthwhile, still I would have no idea of what went into the system, with so many people making so many contributions, and what came out of the system, with some people saying, "It saved my life," and others not even hearing what was said.

Attractor

I remember a time in grief group when I thought that subgroups were forming. On some evenings, we often break up into two smaller groups. Normally the breakup is spontaneous to prevent the same two fixed groups from forming every time. We always have new members and need to stay open to constant change. Still it seemed that people began breaking into regular groups, so one evening I said, "Let's not break in the same way. I want to avoid regular subgroups." One of the participants thought this was funny, so every meeting she warned people against subgroups, and everyone maintained that there were no subgroups. It took months for this single comment to fade away; it circled around and around, becoming a kind of attractor for our group meetings.

Attractors

Another important concept in chaos theory is that of attractor. Attractors can refer to a discrete point, a simple oscillating cycle, a quasiperiodic or limit cycle, and a chaotic cycle.[20]

The term *attractor* is a bit of a misnomer. The word suggests a magnet pulling objects or, in this case orbits, toward it to organize the system. However, "the attractor is the product of the organization. Mathematically and physically, it is the point that completely describes the state of the system at that particular moment."[23]

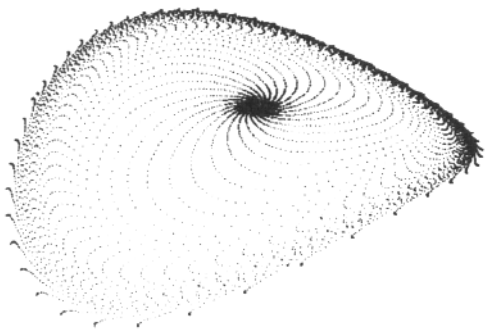

FIG. 3.2. A fixed-point attractor, which represents a "system's movement toward rest." From *Strange Attractors: Creating Patterns in Chaos,* by Julian Sprott. Reprinted by permission of Julian C. Sprott.

Essentially, an attractor refers to the trajectory to which motion gravitates. It has three components. First, an attractor is stable, and any trajectories in its vicinity will advance toward it. Pendulum motion exhibits two steady attractors: back-and-forth motion (a periodic attractor), and no motion a point attractor.[22] Second, an attractor is finite; its behavior is confined within its boundaries. Third, according to its classical definition, an attractor is periodic or quasiperiodic, meaning that its behavior is roughly repetitive, in which subsequent motion nearly returns to its original trajectory.[23] The proof that the attractor exhibits these characteristics—finite, stable, yet nonrepetitive—is found in Poincare's mathematical mapping.

If the movement of a pendulum were plotted on a graph, a spiral would be created as the pendulum moved back and forth slowly impeded by friction. When the pendulum comes to rest, it is depicted on the graph by a point. The point is the attractor around which the moving pendulum orbited. As systems become more complex, attractors appear as images or forms.

In summary, the fixed-point attractor (Fig. 3.2) represents the system at rest. After chemicals have stopped their reacting, they settle into a steady state, reflected by a point on a graph. The periodic, quasiperiodic, or limit cycle attractor (Fig. 3.3) is reflected by the motions of a pendulum or metronome and the regular beating of the heart. Its cycle is finite; like the fixed-point attractor, it is regular and predictable. In fact all future states of both fixed-point and periodic attractors can be mapped if you know their initial conditions.[24]

Fixed-Point Attractors

Fixed and Periodic Attractors in Grief Group

In groups there may be fixed-point attractors that hold the group to a particular topic or hold the focus on a particular person. There may also be periodic attrac-

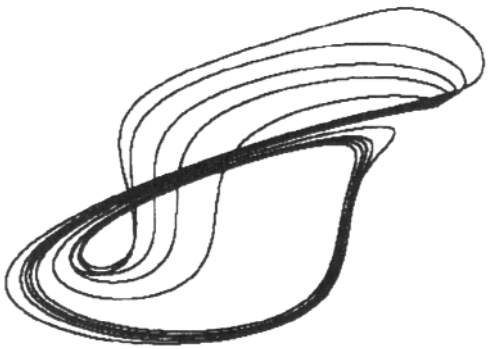

FIG. 3.3. A cyclic or limit cycle attractor, which represents a stable system whose dynamics are cyclic. From *Strange Attractors: Creating Patterns in Chaos,* by Julian Sprott. Reprinted by permission of Julian C. Sprott.

tors. Groups sometimes move from the superficial level to an intense level and back again.

In grief group, it seems the group can only hold so much pain before it needs relief—a backing away. Sometimes something funny is said, which catches the group's attention, providing the momentary relief it needs. After pausing in this way, the group then moves back to dealing with sadness and pain.

Nonlinear Attractors

There are differences between linear and nonlinear system attractors.[25] The orbits of two-dimensional linear equations, plotted over time, appear as circles, ellipses, and parabolas—regular and periodic (three dimensionally they appear as smooth spheres). However, nonlinear differential equations, when plotted on a computer, produce strange shapes and images (attractors) that move as the system changes. The images depict the system in process. Unlike linear equations, these system orbits, while coming very close to one another, do not overlap.

Strange Attractors

For many years, the periodic and fixed-point attractors were thought to form the set—until Lorenz discovered another, which was named the *strange attractor* (Fig. 3.4).[26] It is *strange,* meaning idiosyncratic, because no two patterns are ever alike. It is strange, too, because, although it has a geometric shape, is finite, and stable, it is neither periodic or quasiperiodic. The strange attractor maps the changing behavior of a dynamic system. Hence, by charting the points of a system, which reflect its position at different times, the system can be chronicled as it moves and changes. The shape or map that emerges from these plotted points reveal the chaos pattern

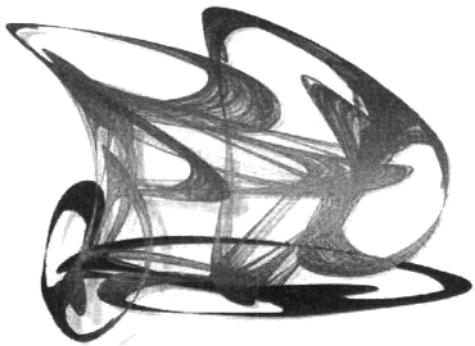

FIG. 3.4. A strange attractor, which depicts a system with more complex dynamics. Although the behavior reflected in this attractor never repeats and exhibits greater variety than either a fixed-point or cyclic attractor, it still produces a recognizable pattern. *http://sprott.physics.wisc.edu/fractals.htm.* Reprinted by permission of Julian C. Sprott.

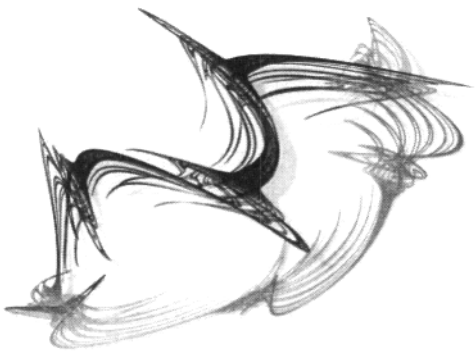

FIG. 3.5. Strange attractor. *http://sprott.physics.wisc.edu/fractals.htm* by Julian Sprott. Reprinted by permission of Julian C. Sprott.

of the strange attractor. Although the behavior it represents never repeats itself, it somehow manages to stay within specific boundaries. Thus, in the midst of apparent chaos and disorder, these strange attractors symbolically represent some underlying order or pattern. Apparently, certain systems in nature have a kind of internal clock or structure that allows them to maintain order amid chaos. That structure is manifested in the images and patterns of strange attractors (Fig. 3.5).

These attractor patterns are quite intricate, elegant, and beautiful, having been described as "baroque spirals, elaborate filigrees, intricate webs spun by non-Euclidean spiders, shapes like amusement-park rides as depicted by Marcel Duchamp."[27] A popular example of strange attractor motion is boiling water. As water is heated, periodic wiggles appear that constitute a limit cycle. However, as more heat is added, the pattern doubles, creating wiggles on wiggles until a critical point is reached where the water shifts into strange attractor motion.[28] Hence, out of what, at first, appears to be random or chaotic activity emerge quirky shapes and patterns that

follow certain rules and numerical constraints. More amazingly, however, is the fact that the laws which explain the chaotic behavior of boiling water also apply to all nonlinear systems. Thus, nonlinear equations, as we see shortly, can model brain-wave behavior, chemical reactions, and even social systems. In fact recent attempts have been made to model the behavior of small-group dynamics.[29]

Strange Attractors in Grief Group

Although our group is about grief and the random and often chaotic expressions that result from our efforts to express it in our group meetings, I believe that our central organizing principle—strange attractor—is really love. Some years ago, one of our participants said, "we grieve because we love." That idea has become so enveloping that I find it is the real glue that holds the group together. Sometimes people say to me, "How can you keep doing that group and talking about death every week?" I think to myself, "It's about love, not death." In a sense, without love we might not grieve.

Of course, there are many emotions that are discussed in grief group. There is sadness, loneliness, guilt, regret, pain, and despair. We sometimes pursue one of these feelings for an entire evening, but none of these feelings is ever omnipresent like love. It is the one, single emotion that orbits in and out of our group's collective consciousness every session.

Fractals or Self-Similarity

Two other chaos terms—*fractals* (or *self-similarity*) and *bifurcation*—have an integral relationship. Fractals, named by the mathematician Rene Mandelbrot, combine the Latin word *frangere,* meaning "to break," with *fraction,* meaning "part of a whole." The whole can be broken down into parts, each of which still resembles the whole. The Koch snowflake (Fig. 3.6) is an example of a simple fractal created by an algorithm that in each successive stage subdivides a triangle.

Fractals can best be illustrated by imagining that you are standing on a cliff looking down at the ocean. Below you the distant shoreline appears as a jagged pattern. As you climb down the rocks toward the water, there is growing complexity. The rocks along the shoreline appear larger and can more easily be distinguished from one another. Yet on close examination, the new pattern you observe bears striking similarity to the original one seen from the cliff.

Fractals exhibit the characteristic of self-similarity at all levels across scale size. In other words, the degree of irregularity remains constant across

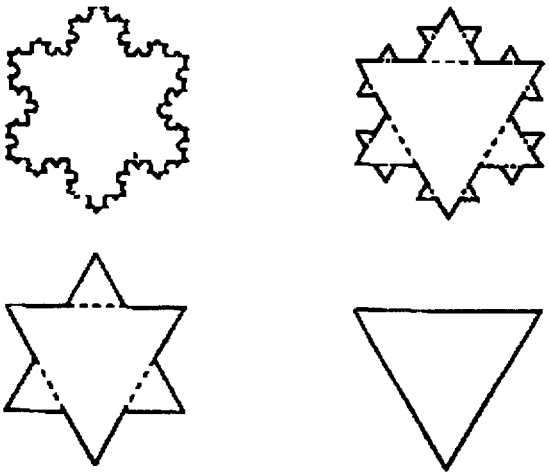

FIG. 3.6. A Koch snowflake. From *Strange Attractors: Chaos, Complexity and the Art of Family Therapy* (p. 95), by M. Butz, L. Chamberlain, and W. McCown, 1997, New York: Wiley. Copyright © 1997 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

different scale sizes—a kind of regularity in irregularity. However, although there is self-similarity, there is not sameness.

Even our personalities evidence a fractal quality: our handwriting, the clothes we wear, the way we keep our house or car, even the way we brush our teeth. A year of our life is mirrored in the activity of each day.[30] Fractal images can be seen in trees, their branches, their leaves, and so on. Like nesting Chinese boxes, contained within each box is a small replica of the original. Blood vessels in the body branching out into smaller and smaller capillaries are mirror images of one another, albeit each level on a different scale.

The behavior of individuals, groups, or other social systems may be similar from "day to day and year to year, or even generation to generation, but no one embodiment in any given cycle or iteration of any given system is precisely like a previous embodiment."[31]

Self-Similarity in Grief Group

After eight years, I know that grief group can never repeat itself exactly. We never have the same participants, and there is never exactly the same topic. Still there is a fractal quality to the group. One fractal quality relevant to grief group is the theme of beginnings and endings. For participants, there is a first time they attend group and a time when they end their participation.

Each group session begins and ends the same way. There is a coming together and a going apart, a walking into the hospital and a going home again. There are topics which begin and end, conversations which hold a focus and then are gone, and relationships which start and stop. All these fractals are embedded in a larger whole of our own birth and death.

Bifurcation

The definition of *bifurcation* used in this book refers to the process of splitting a system into matching parts as the system moves from order into chaos. A bifurcation point is the critical value in the system beyond which the system will evolve toward a new state. As the system becomes less stable, passing through more bifurcation points, it has greater difficulty returning to a stable condition. Bifurcation is also referred to as *period doubling.* At each fork or bifurcation point, the system moves farther from order, doubling the amount of time necessary for it to return to its previous steady state. Furthermore, system complexity increases as do the attractors. The sequence depicted in Fig. 3.7 tracks the increasing complexity of the attractors—the systems movement from order into chaos.

Figure 3.8 depicts system movement from a steady state through a series of bifurcations into chaos. The horizontal lines represent order, the vertical lines chaos. Each bifurcation (fork) represents two distinct choices available to the system. Like Frost's poem in which two paths diverged in a wood, choosing one leads the system in a new and irreversible direction, and that choice depends on which point gets amplified. As the system cascades through more and more bifurcation points, it become less and less stable until finally it erupts into chaos—the dark vertical line—on the other side of which emerges a new level of order.

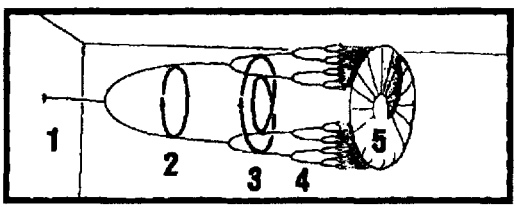

FIG. 3.7. Cascading bifurcations. From *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences* edited by R. Robertson and A. Combs, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted with permission.

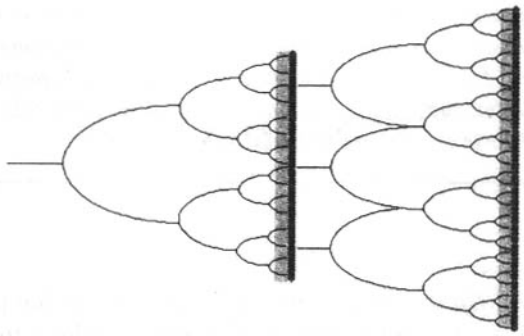

FIG. 3.8. Stability and bifurcation. From *Strange Attractors: Chaos, Complexity and the Art of Family Therapy* (p. 30), by M. Butz, L. Chamberlain, and W. McCown, 1997, New York: Wiley. Copyright © 1997 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Choice Points in Groups

In groups it seems that there are always moments of choice—those moments in which the group moves from one topic to another, from one person to another, from one level to another. Group leaders may be making decisions, adding a comment, or emphasizing a point. In doing this, the leader may deliberately move the group in a certain direction. In groups there are smaller decisions and larger ones, so there may be a moment when the group could move to an entirely new level or organization. There is the possibility of moving ahead, and something that holds us back.

In teaching internship students, I was often focused on this question of timing in groups. There is an opportune moment that presents itself—it may be the moment when you could encourage a silent person to talk, when you might draw the group into a collective cause, when you could continue the conflict—or pull out of it. For group leaders, timing is everything because choice points are constantly presenting themselves.

I think of one evening when a group member said that her husband had died and now she was worried about an aunt who was ill. Her aunt lived in another state. She wanted to drive there, but had never driven alone or been on a road trip without her husband. A group member said, "If you take that trip, you should get a cell phone." This was an offer of support and concern, but it led the group to a discussion of cell phones—how much they cost—what company to use—what plan to have. I looked at my co-facilitator from across the circle as if to say, "This could go on and on." She looked back at me and her eyes said, "You do something." I interrupted the group and said, "We can talk of cell phones later, I think this really means that if someone dies I could

die too." My co-facilitator picked up my move and said something of her own fears of dying. We were back to life and death.

It is hard to be the one in charge of timing because it is possible that the group would have corrected this problem and moved from cell phones back to grief, but we do not always have those options. Life is short.

Torus or First-Order Change

The geometry of the torus represents this self-similar cycle and is akin to first-order change. The figures depicted in Figs. 3.9, 3.10, and 3.11 show how the torus is created by succeeding cycles of similar, but not the same, behavior. I teach a large class each fall entitled "Psychological Change and the Spiritual Journey." The format and basic structure of the course

FIG. 3.9. A torus after one cycle or 1 year's class. From *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences,* edited by R. Robertson and A. Combs, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted with permission.

FIG. 3.10. A torus after five cycles or 5 years of class. From *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences,* edited by R. Robertson and A. Combs, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted with permission.

FIG. 3.11. A torus after 20 cycles or 20 years of class. From *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences,* edited by R. Robertson and A. Combs, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted with permission.

(syllabus, requirements, classroom, etc.) remain the same from year to year, but there are slight variations in reading assignments, paper topics, small-group assignments, different students, but overall the course has a self-similar quality to each year. Even if I were to attempt to exactly replicate the class using the same material, my presentation of it would vary from year to year. It would be impossible to recapture the subtleties or nuances from previous lectures. Using the fractal geometry of the torus to map each year's class yields similar cycles that are loose approximations of one another.

You can see that each year's class is similar, but not the same. This subtle variety—from iteration to iteration—is the essence of human and social interaction, not conformity. It is the slight variety that makes living systems adaptable.

The torus figures also depict first-order change. The slight variety evident from iteration to iteration contains the seeds of possible second-order change, and significant transformation under certain conditions can evolve into a more complex system (Fig. 3.12). Unfortunately, contemporary research tends to ignore these subtle variations—from iteration to iteration—because they are unable to effectively measure them.

Groups exhibit these self-similar patterns. They develop along predictable lines, form norms of behavior, develop leaders, complete tasks, attend to members, and so forth. Yet no one group is identical, nor can any one session be replicated. Most groups are contained by societal norms of behavior, and variations outside of acceptable behavior are usually damped by the group. Over time and with examination of many different group iterations, there emerges a fairly similar pattern of group development, such that articles and books can be written about group dynamics. The hidden danger in this practice is that over time we ignore the subtleties in each group iteration (depicted by the torus) and reduce the three-dimensional dynamic process of groups to a flat two-dimensional form that can more easily fit with the statistics of modern research.[32]

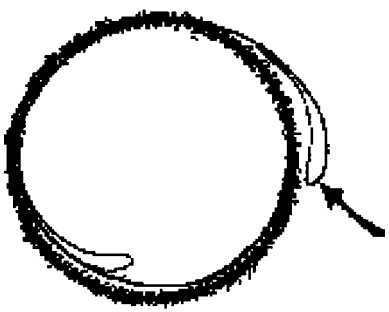

FIG. 3.12. A Poincaré section of a torus after 8,000 iterations. The tongue forming on the outer edge signals the beginning of second-order change. From *Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences,* edited by R. Robertson and A. Combs, 1995. Copyright © 1995 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted with permission.

First- and Second-Order Change in Grief Group

In grief group, I am often struck by the changes in seasons. In winter, the group is larger. When it is dark and cold, grief seems closer and it penetrates to the bone. The holidays bring reminders of friends and family, past and present. The New Year is a time of reflection. In spring, there is new life. People who have lost those they love may watch other lovers hand in hand. As life begins anew, grieving people may also hear that call to start again. In summer, the groups are smaller. The leaves are green, and the sun is a comfort, and there is less need for our group. In fall, the leaves are turning, and we are reminded of death, of our own deaths, of the passage of time.

There is sameness to each season, inevitability, like that in our groups. Although each group is never the same, it seems to go around and around in a predictable manner, over and over, the same and yet different. This is a first-order change.

I can think again of this week's group. It seemed that the group members were so different that we could not find a focal point. Several people were talking of the loss of a husband or wife, but one young woman had lost her mother, and she seemed to be saying, "I am too young." Another young woman had lost a boyfriend—she was crying and hardly able to communicate. I kept worrying that she seemed so alone. A man who had lost his wife was worried about his young daughters. He kept saying, "I can't be a mother to them."

Second-order change occurred when the group moved to a deeper level of intimacy. It happened when an older woman who had been talking of the death of her husband turned to the young woman who had lost her mother and said, "My mother died when I was 21—I was too young, too." This was the connection that made all the difference, and with this comment the entire group moved to another higher level of intimacy. Rather than discussing outside relationships, the group examined their own. As people talked of losing a husband or wife, the young woman who had lost a mother thought of her own mother. As she talked of being too young, the father spoke of his own daughters, who were even younger. As a young woman cried about her boyfriend, it was clear that she needed a family or she would be left out of the group, isolated and alone. The group then recognized within themselves (second-order change) that they were a family made up of mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters capable of caring for one another.

Self-Organization

At the heart of chaos theory and its possible application to social systems lie the assumptions of self-organization, dissipative self-organization, and

antichaos.[33] Self-organization refers to a process "by which a structure or pattern emerges in an open system without specification from the outside environment."[34] Much of the initial work on self-organizing behavior was done by Erich Jantsch[35] and Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers.[36]

More recently, the terms *spontaneous emergence* or *emergent behavior* have been used instead of *self-organization* to explain the reorganizing process a system undergoes as it moves from chaos to order.[37] It remains unclear whether indeed these two terms are synonymous. However, in this book, the term *self-organization* is retained.

Prigogine and Stengers' seminal work sees the universe in terms of a dissipative self-organizing principle. Incompatible with the second law of thermodynamics or entropy, which augurs a world winding down, the self-organizing principle views the world as progressing from disorder to order. Two often cited examples of self-organization—the slime mold and the Beluzov–Zhabotinsky (BZ) reaction—are described next to illustrate their theory.

Slime Mold

Elkaim utilizes the life cycle of the slime mold (Fig. 3.13) to illustrate how a system far from equilibrium changes. Slime molds are composed of amoebas that live and multiply as unicellular organisms. They feed on bacteria on forest floors. When their food supply disappears, their steady state becomes

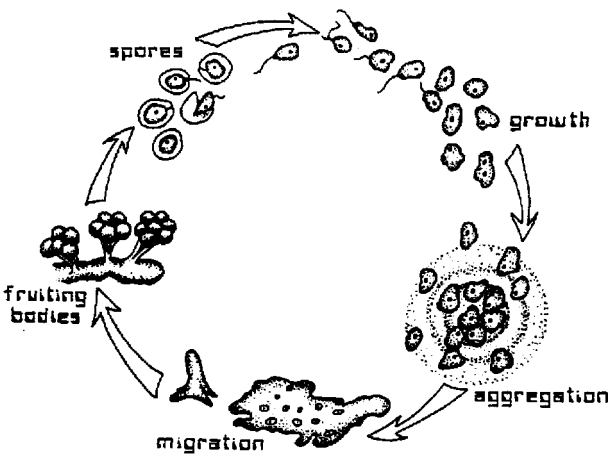

FIG. 3.13. Life cycle of the slime mold. From *Turbulent Mirror: An Illustrated Guide to Chaos Theory and the Science of Wholeness* by J. Briggs & F. D. Peat, 1990. Copyright © 1990 by Harper & Row. Reprinted with permission.

unstable. At a critical point, the individual amoebas begin to aggregate to form a multicellular structure. The amplifying factor is a chemical signal sent out by the cells, which facilitates the aggregation. Individual amoebas are attracted (phase locked) and incorporated into the forming aggregate. The aggregate evolves into a multicellular structure, forms a head and stalk, and moves to a new food supply, where the head breaks open, releasing spores that produce new amoebas.

The conclusion Elkaim reaches from this example is that, once a system passes a critical threshold (in this case, the beginning of aggregation), further fluctuations tend to propel the system toward a new state rather than return it to the previous one.[38]

Phase Locking or Entrainment

The rhythmic pulsing of the individual amoebas that facilitates the collective reorganization and the spatial reorganization in the BZ reaction is known as *phase locking* or *phase entrainment.* The classic example of entrainment is cuckoo clocks. Hang a number of cuckoo clocks on the wall with their pendulums out of sync and after a while, almost magically, the pendulums are synchronized.

> As each pendulum swings, it sends small perturbations through the wall that affect its fellows; it is, in turn, affected by similar perturbations from the other clocks. The many independent cuckoo clock systems "couple" into a larger coordinated clock system; they act as one. Entrainment is the technical term for this tendency to couple into larger wholes.[39]

The phenomenon of entrainment or phase locking also appears throughout nature: fireflies flash in harmony, crickets chirp in concert, women living together tend to synchronize menstrual cycles, and even lovers sleeping together breathe in unison.[40] As Judith Hooper and Dick Teresi note, "the quintessence of nature's self-organizing principle is consciousness."[41] They cite several examples of how consciousness routinely arranges randomness into patterns. Human memory is replayed as a story, not an accurate script. The mind arranges stars in the sky into constellations; biological forms are sorted into phyla, genera, and species; chemicals are chronicled in a periodic table; and letters of the alphabet are turned into the great classics. Steven Strogatz, a mathematician and leader in the new science of synchrony, seeks to explain, using mathematics, biology, and physics, how spontaneous order arises in the universe.[42]

As Strogatz explains, at all levels of relationship, there is a tendency toward marching to the beat and rhythm of the same drummer. However, nowhere in the schemata of individual actors can emergent collective behavior be explained. The whole is not merely additive, but clearly greater than the

sum of its parts. Apparently when large numbers of cells come together, a critical mass is reached and cooperative collective behavior results. In social systems, smaller numbers of individual actors have been shown to be more amenable to cooperative collective action than larger groups, particularly when group members expect to be together for longer periods of time.[43] Biological evolution is thought to occur through the "coupling of independent forms into more efficient and more creatively adapted cooperatives."[44] The Gaia hypothesis[45] proposes that even the biosphere interacts in a coordinated and self-maintaining manner.

Phase Locking in Groups

In early stages of groups, there is often the sense that people are going in entirely different directions. It seems there are many individuals, but no group. Over time there is a sense that some people are beginning to move together, recognizing commonalities in others.

For me one of the most phenomenal moments in a group is that sense that the group does not need me to monitor every interaction. I do not need to worry who is talking too long, who is silent, or when everyone else has lost interest. Instead the group seems to move on its own—participants talk directly to each other, the conversations hold everyone's attention, there is a natural emergence in which I am part, but I am not responsible. Sometimes I sit back and take a deep breath. It is after all a group and has its own life. I am constantly amazed at the sensation of being a separate person and yet not at all separate.

Perhaps this happens when enough people begin moving in the same direction; the group overtakes the scattered needs of individuals, it becomes a group in that moment. For grief group, I need this to happen in less than an hour. I spend the first part of group encouraging people to tell the stories, monitoring the interaction so everyone has a turn, being careful that no one gets hurt, and then by some magic the group begins. Usually it happens when people stop focusing on themselves and take an interest in someone else, perhaps finding themselves in the other. It may be a simple question that one person asks another, but it creates a sudden change in the group. For participants it seems to mean—"I walked into this room so overwhelmed with my own grief that I couldn't think of anyone else—but suddenly I am thinking of you—wondering about you—worried about you." Once this happens, the group begins.

Beluzov–Zhabotinski Reaction

Understanding the characteristics of the Beluzov–Zhabotinski (BZ) reaction also has relevance for social systems, again by illustrating the concept

of self-organization.[46] Prior to this discovery, chemical reactions were always thought to return to a state of equilibrium. In this experiment, inorganic chemicals are placed in a beaker, dyes are added, and the mixture is continually stirred. A pattern emerges as the chemicals oscillate (periodic attractor) in sudden and discontinuous jumps, between red and blue, forming a kind of chemical clock. These oscillations are temporary. When the solution is poured into a petri dish and left undisturbed, an entirely new organization emerges—one with spatial oscillations.

Perturbation in any region of the solution causes instability, which results in the formation of spiral or circular waves. These waves slowly propagate throughout the system with a diverse set of frequencies. Entrainment occurs when a faster wave overtakes a slower wave, making it disappear (constructive interference; see Fig. 6.5). The equations describing both the BZ reaction and the self-organizing behavior of the slime mold can be applied to other natural phenomena as well.[47]

"Where else do we find systems possessing a high degree of naturally generated organization that are highly sensitive to perturbations, switch rapidly from one state to another, and operate spontaneously . . . ?" Schore responds, "in living systems."[48] The slime mold and BZ reaction serve as possible explanations for the emergence of human social order that arises out of the random, unpredictable behavior of individuals.

The Unpredictability of Grief Group

As I think of grief group, it is difficult to picture the total experience. I can describe the topics and give examples of the conversations, but there is something far beyond that and it is difficult to describe.

I think again of the linear diagrams of group interactions: "A impacts B impacts C." Then I think of both the fluid and predictable in grief group and imagine swirling colors. Patterns take shape that hold for a moment, then swirl on to a different shape and consistency. Over time the swirling colors are never the same. They are both predictable and unpredictable, they are self-contained, well organized, and yet fluid. New participants create rapid changes, but the group settles into predictable patterns. Coming into a group, there is a comfort in this vision. I have no idea what the evening will hold—I know exactly what the evening will hold.

Chapter 4

Chaos and Transformation in the Social Sciences

In her book, Composing a Life, *Mary Catherine Bateson notes that "fluidity and discontinuity are central to the reality which we live." Life's upsets, apparent detours, difficult decisions all combined to yield an emergent pattern. "The whole fabric of a person's life interacts with his or her total environment, and something new emerges."*[1]

The commotion that chaos theory has created in the natural sciences has spilled over into the social sciences. An important bridge between ideas developed in the natural sciences and those of social scientists is reflected in Erich Jantsch's creative work, *The Self-Organizing Universe.*[2] Other bridge building has been done in the areas of methodology,[3] organizational theory,[4] career choice,[5] and social structures.[6] However, a direct translation of chaos theory from the natural sciences to the social sciences without first developing an action-oriented social theory may be difficult.[7] Furthermore, the qualitative difference between chaos study in the natural sciences and in the social sciences is a normative one. Studying the patterns of rapidly shifting chemical reactions or wildly fluctuating numbers can be done with no consideration of whether the patterns are good or bad or whether newly organized stable states are healthier than the previous ones. However, when the boundary into the study of living systems is crossed, answers to these ethical questions predominate.[8]

To effectively adapt chaos theory into the social sciences, the word *transformation* may be more appropriate. It is argued that the word *chaos* is

actually a misnomer when applied to social systems.[9] In actuality, most of us do not live in, nor is our social world dominated by, chaos or constant upheaval. What is present is a combination of order and disorder, linear and nonlinear dynamics. Therefore, Loye and Eisler proposed that "transformation theory" be adopted as the social science equivalent for chaos theory because it not only subsumes both chaos and order under its broad title, but draws attention to the primary theoretical value that chaos theory holds for social systems. In others words, "the idea of transformation as a process out of or through which order gives way to, chaos, and chaos again leads to order."[10]

This notion of transformation or chaos is not a foreign idea in the social sciences. It roots can be traced back to early formulations of dialectic theory found in the ancient Chinese book of Changes, the early Greek philosophers, and through the works of Hegel, Marx, and Engles. Even Prigogine[11] noted the effect that Comte, Durkheim, and Spenser had on his formulation of dissipative structures.[12]

Pioneering social scientists have been wrestling with the same questions of change as their counterparts in the natural sciences who were examining the underpinnings of chaos theory.[13] Aspects of group formation or nucleation, solidarity, conformity, norm formation, articulated by Emile Durkheim[14] and others, find current reflection in Prigogine's notion of cross-catalysis. Durkheim's notion of anomie attempts "to describe the psychological effects of the breakdown of norms and social expectations that characterize social chaos states."[15] Even the concept of alienation could be interpreted as a reaction to the constraint of too much order.[16] Other theorists in sociology,[17] psychology,[18] and history[19] have grappled with the dynamics of change and nonequilibrium states.

A growing body of psychological literature reveals that chaos theory and its applicability to the social sciences are being explored. Areas in which chaos and nonlinear dynamics have been applied include psychology and psychotherapy,[20] family therapy,[21] memory and cognition,[22] psychoanalysis,[23] multiple personality disorder,[24] schizophrenia,[25] psychiatric disorder,[26] Jungian therapy,[27] rehabilitation,[28] and society.[29]

General systems theory was built on the early work of Bertalanffy,[30] who drew ideas from the field of cybernetics. His work is complementary with chaos theory. Although general systems theory addresses both stability and change, it focuses on the former. Conversely, chaos theory explores how systems change.

Kurt Lewin's ideas in social psychology have direct correlation to chaos theory. Drawing from his field theory, he expresses the basic transformative notion of social change as a three-step process. First, the current stage is disrupted by some action that perturbs and "unfreezes" it. The second stage is characterized by movement to a new level. Then, finally, a refreezing occurs

during the third stage to prevent a return to the previous level.[31] Lewin had notions about nonequilibrium states, even mentioning them, but he never fully developed his ideas.[32]

While the heuristic value of applying nonlinear dynamics to human systems is debated,[33] brain research by Freeman[34] seems to offer compelling evidence that the processes by which the brain creates memories is similar to the processes that drive an oscillating chemical reaction (e.g., Beluzov–Zhabotinski reaction described earlier).[35] Although "the complexity and irreversible process of growth and pattern development in psychological systems" makes use of nonlinear mathematics impossible, the utility of applying the characteristics and dynamics of self-organizing to psychological systems is beneficial.[36] It is important to remember that "terms that refer to specific and limited ideas in mathematics and physics should not be confused with the broader characteristics of self-organizing psychological systems."[37]

SYSTEMS AT, NEAR, OR FAR FROM EQUILIBRIUM

Now let us examine systemic change from the perspective of systems at or near stability and those far from it. This discussion is based on the work of Mony Elkaim, who has summarized the work of both Ludwig von Bertalanffy and Ilya Prigogine.[38]

General systems theory has been the cornerstone of the family therapy field. Yet as Elkaim correctly asserts, it applies mainly to systems that are at or near equilibrium. The theory focuses on steady-state systems wherein perturbations are damped; under certain conditions, the system remains within prescribed boundaries. This differs considerably from a system that is far from equilibrium wherein perturbation, under specific conditions, can amplify that system to such a degree that it evolves into a new state.

Prigogine's work on dissipative structures focuses on these latter systems. In systems that are far from equilibrium, once a critical threshold is reached, the fluctuations become amplified such that the system cannot return to its previous or steady position. Instead it moves toward a new state that, under certain circumstances, could be less organized than the previous state.

As systems move farther from equilibrium, becoming less stable, fluctuations begin. Each fluctuation is a potential path or bifurcation point leading toward a new state or organization. Here chance enters the equation because it is not possible to know with any certainty which fluctuation or path will be adequately amplified to push the system in one particular direction or another. Elkaim uses the example of termites cited in Prigogine to underscore the role of chance in this process.[39]

African termites build their nests in three steps. First, they construct pillars. Second, they connect the pillars to form arches. Third, they fill in the spaces between the arches. The process begins as termites scatter small piles of various materials at random. Smells from these materials attract other termites. The stronger the piles smell, the more termites are attracted to it. Once a pile reaches a critical threshold (stronger smell), it is amplified by other termites depositing more materials, and the pillar rises. Until the critical threshold or critical mass stronger smell—is reached, it is impossible to tell which of the piles will form the pillars.

THE EFFECT OF HISTORY ON SYSTEMS

The critical point that Elkhaim[40] draws from his interpretation of Prigogine's work is the influence of history on systems at or near equilibrium and those far from it. As Elkhaim asserts, in systems at or near equilibrium, stability is the rule. System behavior follows general laws that are fairly constant and predictable. In addition, stable systems damp perturbations to maintain their original state. As Elkhaim concludes "the history of the system's fluctuations takes place within the norms of the system."[41]

In comparison, systems far from equilibrium are governed not by general laws, but by "the nature of the interactions between elements" or by properties of the systems. Such interactions can create instabilities that perturb systems toward different and new modes of functioning. Elkhaim emphasizes that the mode chosen depends on the system's history. However, given the effect of chance, history can influence the future course of a system's evolution, but not determine it. In other words, history circumscribes the choices or fluctuations that systems undergo as they move farther from equilibrium. However, selection of the fluctuation that gets amplified to a bifurcation point by the system is a random process.

Elkhaim incorporates these ideas into his work with families. "It is the family's own unique properties and the random amplification of certain of its singularities that will bring it (family) to a new stage in its development."[42] We return to this discussion when we examine group development and how leader interventions might serve to amplify certain group fluctuations over others. Now let us examine how these principles of self-organization and change are applied to individuals, families, organizations, and society. Michael Butz's rendering of Jungian Psychology, John Gottman's research on family structures, and Ervin Laszlo's theory of societal evolution offer innovative examples.

BUTZ ON JUNG AND ERICKSON

Several articles have appeared identifying parallels between aspects of chaos theory and Jungian Psychology.[43] None is better than Michael Butz,[44] who integrated ideas from chaos theory with the psychodynamic developmental theories of Freud,[45] Erickson,[46] and Jung[47] to clarify and extend Jung's concept of the self.

Butz defines *chaos,* in human experience, as overwhelming anxiety. This anxiety, which acts as a preconscious gestation period,[48] foreshadows potential psychic growth. Like the periods artists bear before the leap of creative insight occurs, these cycles of intense distress are necessary for psychological growth.

Butz utilizes Erickson's[49] developmental model to make his point that turbulence and anxiety are necessary conditions of, in this case, psychosocial evolvement. In Erickson's model,[50] each of the seven stages of development are seen as crisis points: basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, and generativity versus stagnation. At each stage or crisis point, the individual seeks resolution of the basic dialectic between individual and cultural needs. The conflict, turbulence, and resolution are the reorganizing ingredients that propel the individual forward toward ego integrity. As Butz points out, although Erickson's model is linear, through the lens of chaos theory its power increases.

Carl Jung's[51] theory of development centered on the middle and later stages of life. He ceded much of the early stage theory to Freud.[52] For Jung, the ultimate developmental achievement was the attainment of self. Self, he felt, could be realized by moving beyond the false egoic center created by the mind. In Jung's theory, the self stands as the true center point between the unconscious and conscious mind (Fig. 4.1). As the center of the per-

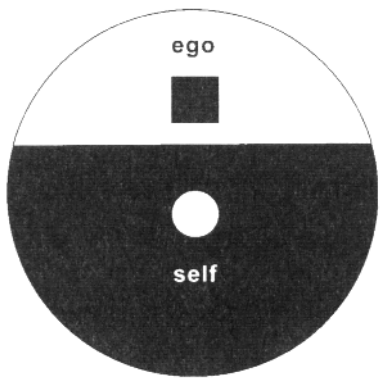

FIG. 4.1. Jung's relationship between self and ego.

sonality, the self is firmly grounded and a point around which all character constellations revolve. Somewhat analogous to Erickson's psychosocial model, Jung characterizes the quest for self as a process of separation from collective or societal norms.

However, as Butz points out, this midpoint state implies a kind of equilibrium that suggests a closed system, and, according to the second law of thermodynamics, eventual entropy. Yet Butz argued that Jung offered conflicting evidence on this point. He introduces Jung's notion of enantiodromia[53] as a countering force that develops within individuals to compensate for one-sided tendencies. To Butz, this suggests that the psyche is never really able to isolate itself and, thus, is subject to the same laws of open systems that apply in chaos theory. Utilizing this evidence, Butz redefines the self as transitory, rather than static, thus enabling it to be modeled by chaos theory.

Butz explains that, during stable periods in their lives, individuals are able to achieve a fixed, yet transitory, sense of self. However, these periods remain stable only until the psyche encounters novel material, which it is unable to integrate within its current mental configuration. When the mental apparatus is disrupted, chaos ensues, followed by a period where the organism reorganizes at a higher level of complexity. This process seems compatible with that inferred in Freeman's[54] brain research mentioned earlier. As the organism develops higher and higher levels of complexity and adaptation, it alternates between periods of stability and chaos. However, as Butz notes, the chaotic periods are far less frequent than are the stable ones.

Butz, like Freeman, realizes one of the fundamental tenets of chaos theory—the self-organizing capacity of living systems. Their work corroborates the earlier research of Prigogine and Stengers[55] in chemistry and Elderidge and Gould[56] in evolutionary theory. Maturana and Varela[57] in biology have confirmed that living systems appear to be able to generate their own new forms "from inner guidelines rather than the imposition of form from outside."[58]

According to Butz, psychic chaos and subsequent self-organization signal a creative gestation period wherein the psyche reorganizes itself to accommodate or integrate novel material. Both Butz and Jung[59] discuss the link between chaos and creativity, recognizing what so many others have—that psychic turbulence is a necessary condition prior to new insight or creation of a new psychic structure. As an artist might struggle with containing chaos to create, so too must an individual in the throes of psychic upheaval manage chaos while undergoing a transformation. During chaotic periods, the unconscious issues forth symbolic images or mandalas. These mandalas, containing symbols of the self, are expressed in a mathematical structure. They appear to be compensatory. Mandalas both express and create order

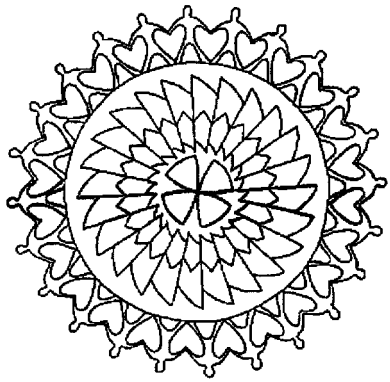

FIG. 4.2. Mandala from *www.peacemaker.com/images*. Created by Lisa Windeler for the Peaceweaver community. It symbolizes the importance of connection of hearts and hands with all beings.

in opposition to ongoing psyche chaos. Butz concludes that "these symbolic representations of the transitory self may also act as a container to focus chaotic experience toward an organized state. As a consequence, the mandala (Fig. 4.2) or the symbol seems to function as an attractor that brings about order."[60] What is fascinating about these mandalas are the incredible similarities they have to the fractal images so prevalent in the geometry of chaos.

COUNSELING

In counseling, the therapist's task is to create order or, as Winnicott[61] so aptly entitled, a holding environment that contains the client's overwhelming anxiety. The container soothes the client's anxiety, but does not interrupt it, dissipate it, nor interfere with the natural psychic reorganization. Furthermore, the therapist does not attempt to order the disorder, but instead validates it as a necessary precondition for change. Therefore, containment as used here legitimates chaos and does not control or restrain it. To create, artists have learned to appreciate the necessity of chaos as a prelude to new insight. As a result, "creative people tend to be more tolerant of ambiguity in perception than less creative people . . . and prefer chaotic and irregular shapes" to more symmetrical ones.[62]

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND CHANGE

John Gottman's research applies chaos theory to the study of family systems and how those systems change.[63] He identifies two types of change—regulated and chaotic—that bear resemblance to ideas of first- and second-order

change,[64] and the more recent notions of linear and nonlinear transformation. Gottman is less optimistic about the reorganizing potential of chaotic change than others.[65] However, his ideas and mathematical model for measuring chaotic change are quite notable and worth examining closer.

Gottman compares regulated change to the concept of homeostasis. This implies that, like the proverbial thermostat, within family systems a mechanism exists that regulates and limits behavior. Although the family is not static, it does remain relatively stable over time because of this control mechanism that limits a family's ability to deviate greatly from the status quo. A similar mechanism exists within the body, called the *baroreceptor reflex;* it operates the cardiovascular system and keeps blood pressure fairly constant, among other things. These regulated systems are quasiperiodic, meaning they go up and down over time. One other feature of regulated systems is the relationship between input and output. Small changes in input produce small changes in output. This differs sharply from the deviation amplifying systems characteristic of chaotic systems, wherein small deviations in input can result in immense changes in output.

Gottman refines his notions of regulated change when applying them to families. He extracts from physiology two terms that metaphorically represent for him the homeostatic dialectic inherent in family systems. He proposes that the terms *catabolic,* or *energy conserving,* and *anabolic,* or *energy consuming,* be used to describe the energetic social interactions among family members and between families and their environment. He concludes that family processes are in balance if energy conservation and expense are roughly equivalent.

Unlike regulated change, which is expected and even predictable, chaotic change is unpredictable. There is no set point at which energy is considered to be balanced. Therefore, homeostasis is violated. Of course what makes the behavior of chaotic systems so unpredictable is that small changes in initial conditions can result in gigantic variations in the system's trajectory. The net result is that we cannot say with any certainty where the system will end. In contrast, in regulated systems, once the initial conditions are determined, the end result is known.

Gottman defines an *attractor* in family systems as a fixed point (e.g., a balance between catabolic and anabolic processes or positive and negative affect). In other words, fixed points for Gottman are defined "as all those things that can be referred to by family members to resolve conflict in such a way that family cohesion increases after conflict."[66] Fixed points connote a sense of "we-ness." Examples of such notions of we-ness include:

> the implicit marital contract, a shared religious or cultural viewpoint, an agreed-upon dominance hierarchy, the family's belief system, shared values, shared goals, shared memories, a shared viewpoint of reality . . . the family's

stories, heroes, demons, and myths, and expectations the parents have of their marriage, the family's rules, rituals, beliefs about people, good and evil, etc.[67]

These fixed points provide the foundation for ordered change. Without them the family faces a breakup every time there is conflict because fixed points are the glue (cohesion) or sense of "we-ness" that holds the family together during stressful times. However, should the family's fixed points become endangered (i.e., extramarital affair, terminal illness), chaotic change may result. Without reestablishing the fixed points, the family may remain in a state of disorder.[68]

As mentioned, Gottman translates catabolic and anabolic functions within the family into positive and negative affect. Catabolic or energy-expanding affects are anger, fear, sadness, or any combination of the three. Conversely, humor, amusement, interest, and affection represent anabolic or energy-conserving emotions. Therefore, a regulated system maintains a balance (4:1 ratio) between positive and negative emotions. This means that positive affect should exceed negative affect by at least a ratio of 4:1. The 4:1 ratio was established in an earlier research study.[69]

In another part of his work, Gottman describes the mechanisms by which families deregulate the balance between catabolic and anabolic processes that results in chaotic behavior. Using a case study, he plotted the negative affect, over time, of a martial couple in conflict. His interest in these data was not whether negative affect was high in dissatisfied marriages, but whether the system was regulated and stable or chaotic. He computed interevent intervals or the time between display of negative affect during a conflict discussion of this unhappy couple. The resulting scatter plot reveals a tendency for this system to wander toward the tip of the created triangle (Fig. 4.3).

In Fig. 4.4, Gottman extends Fig. 4.3 into a three-dimensional trajectory. The results depict an unstable system in decline (but it has shape). It is dissipative, winding down like the pendulum. Over time the intervals between negative responses are shorter and indicative of a runaway system. He concludes that such turbulence can lead to disastrous results.

Gottman observes that the system he has studied, or any for that matter, may be part of some larger framework or subject to some macrolevel regulation: a basic tenet of general systems theory. However, as stated earlier, Gottman is less optimistic about the system's adaptive ability than others.[70] Gottman concludes that during regulated or orderly change a system is capable of subsequent adjustment and assimilation, unlike the unpredictability inherent in unregulated change that results from chaotic systems.

Others view chaos as a means of generating diverse and novel solutions to complex situations.[71] The key in each situation is the threshold behavior that

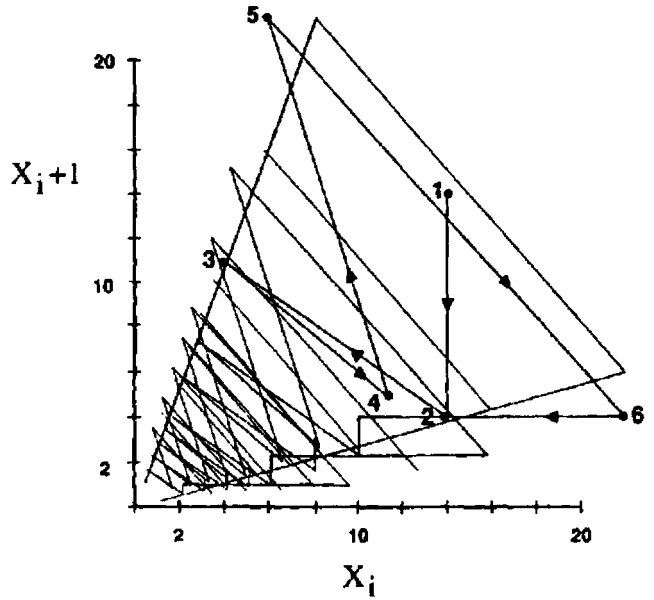

FIG. 4.3. A scatterplot of interevent times with consecutive points connected. From Gottman (1991). Copyright © 1991 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted with permission.

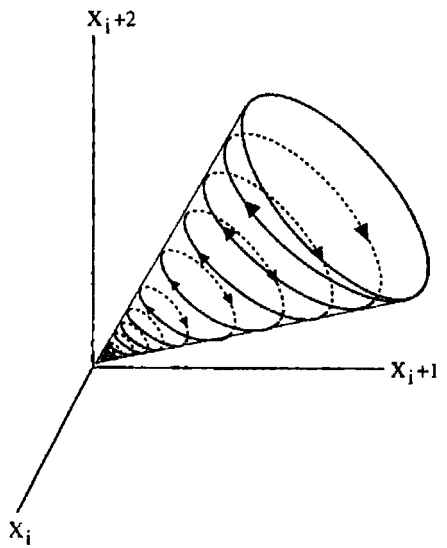

FIG. 4.4. Runaway system. From Gottman (1991). Copyright © 1991 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted with permission.

occurs as a system moves from order to chaos. This critical, or in-between, period presents an opportunity to perhaps influence the system's trajectory.[72] Two other useful ideas that can be gleaned from Gottman's creative work are his notions of fixed and set points. A *set point* refers to the energy balance between catabolic and anabolic processes. *Fixed points* promote a sense of we-ness that stabilizes a system so that conflict can be resolved and cohesion increased. Chaotic systems have no set points because they are in transition.

Before we apply the principles of self-organizing systems to small-group behavior, let us look at the innovative theory of Ervin Laszlo, who has incorporated many of the tenets from chaos theory into his formulations about evolutionary change. His ideas provide yet another view of systemic change.

LASZLO'S SOCIETAL EVOLUTION

Laszlo's ideas about societal evolution are framed by concepts from the natural sciences. Drawing on his understanding of chaos theory, Laszlo proposes that both natural and social systems are subject to the same general laws of change or evolution. In societal systems, these laws are influenced and shaped by the beliefs, mores, values, and habits of the human beings who comprise them. Therefore, the laws do not prescribe outcome, but simply set the rules and limits of the game. However, social systems are not biologically determined. Instead they evolve and persist in the multilevel milieu of other systems in the biosphere. Social systems persist as human beings cycle through it, being born, growing, and dying. Accordingly, social systems are not the sum of the human beings who comprise them, but have functions and attributes that allow them to maintain their congruity and evolve independently of human life cycles. Society is self-organizing and has the survival capacity to adapt, evolve, and change into alternative structures if necessary.

> Society evolves through convergence to progressively higher organizational levels. As the flow of people, information, energy, and goods intensify, they transcend the formal boundaries in the social systems. The catalytic cycles that maintain the system in its environment encounter similar cycles in the intersocial milieu and interact with them. In time the cycles achieve coordination as intersocietal hypercycles. Thus neighboring tribes and villages converge into ethnic communities or integrated states, these in turn become the colonies, departments, provinces, states, cantons, or regions of larger empires and ultimately of nation-states. When empires are stripped of their far-flung territories and overseas colonies, the capital regions and the liberated states are open to new forms of convergence among themselves.[73]

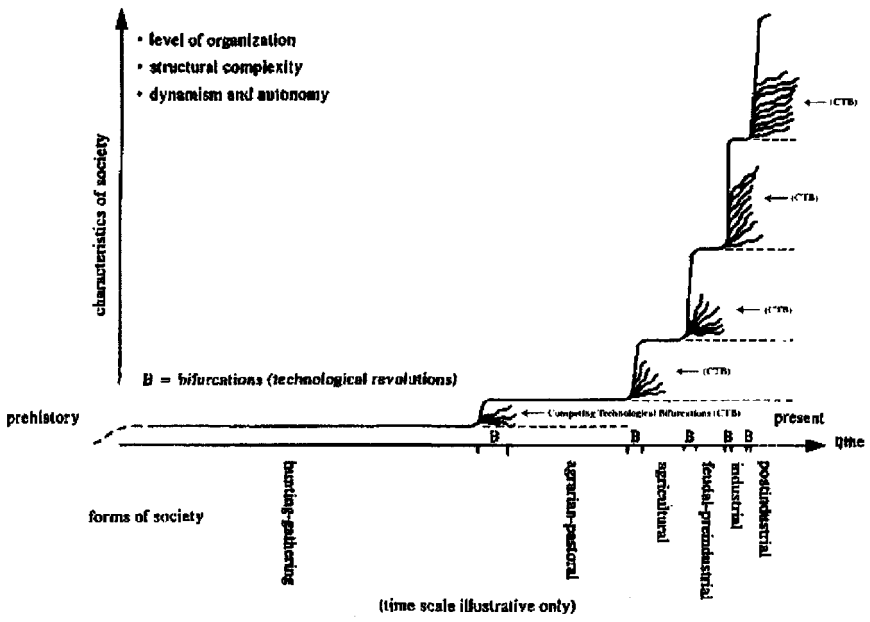

FIG. 4.5. Major stage in evolution of society. From *Evolution: The grand synthesis*, by E. Laszlo, 1987, Boston: Shambhala. Copyright © 1987 by Hampton Press. Reprinted with permission.

The convergence Laszlo describes is an example of entrainment or phase locking. What he describes is evident in several circumstances today. In response to the emerging global marketplace, economic organizations like NAFTA and GATT have been created that supersede national boundaries. The former Soviet Union underwent significant transition and upheaval since its disincorporation. With the new emerging world order, old world organizations such as NATO and the United Nations are under pressure to adapt. The United States has dismissed the need to work with these organizations and has embarked on a new path of unilaterism.

Laszlo's chart (Fig. 4.5) depicts the stages of evolution in modern society. The horizontal axis—time—pictures the evolution of society from the hunting–gathering era to the postindustrial period. The rapidity of contemporary change is reflected when one considers that the hunting–gathering period exceeds all contemporary stages from the agrarian revolution through present times. Societal evolution is speeding up.

Characteristics of society are depicted in the vertical axis. In Laszlo's model, evolution leads to greater structural complexity, higher levels of organization, and increases in dynamism and autonomy. The driving force in Laszlo's model is technology. In short,

> Nomadic hunting-gathering tribes domesticate plants and animals and transform into settled agrarian-pastoral societies; agrarian-pastoral societies evolve such technologies as irrigation and crop rotation and transform into agricultural ones; agricultural societies develop handicrafts and simple manufacturing technologies and thus transform into industrial societies; and industrial societies, under the impact of new, mainly information- and communication-oriented technologies, evolve into postindustrial societies.[74]

It is tempting to argue, here, the advantages and disadvantages of technological innovations; however, Laszlo's notions of change are what we are after. Several aspects of his model are applicable for understanding group change. First, change is progressive, not linear. Movement is uneven. There are sudden leaps forward and periods of regression. Yet overall there is direction. Second, complexity increases at each stage of evolution. Third, the activity or energy of each stage, as well as its autonomy, is increased.

In Laszlo's model, societal stability is explained by autopoiesis: a system's ability to renew itself. Laszlo invokes systems thinking when he notes that societies are dynamic and homeostatic because they oscillate around certain norms. Societies sustain their stability through reproduction and regeneration by ensuring adequate availability of natural resources, energy, information, money, raw materials, food, and people. Societal stability is further maintained by the system's ability to absorb and damp small perturbations (first-order change).

However, as Laszlo claims, societies not only renew themselves, but are capable of significant and second-order change. They can be perturbed into instability by major events—among them war, economic upheaval, and technological revolutions. For example, robotics has had a major impact on the industrial world, causing displacement of tens of thousands of workers. The electronics revolution continues to excite the stability of contemporary society while wars in the Middle East threaten to destabilize the region, if not the world. Such events illustrate how previously stable systems can be pushed toward disequilibrium. When societies cannot maintain themselves and are perturbed to the point of critical instability, then anarchy or chaos may ensue, leading to second-order change. The resulting bifurcations may lead to the emergence of new social, political, and economic structures, or the society may be absorbed into a more powerful system.

A crucial point Laszlo makes about these bifurcations and the resulting new social order is that they are indeterminate in regard to historical direction. They can be either progressive or regressive. However, the sum of these transformations, as he illustrates on the vertical axis of Fig. 4.5, is progressive. Thus, although societal evolution is not predictable or redetermined, it has an overall evolutionary pattern. Here Laszlo illustrates one of the basic tenets of chaos theory: Societal evolution is unpredictable (locally), whereas over time an overall pattern (globally) or direction emerges.

As technological perturbations occur in society, certain innovations expand more rapidly than others. The squiggly lines in Fig. 4.5 represent competing technological bifurcations (CTB). Eventually one will be amplified to the extinction of the others, and that technological advance will organize the next societal level.

In Laszlo's model, technological advances bring about societal change. Dominant societal paradigms are perturbed by new technologies. As certain technologies are amplified (grow), the system is perturbed toward instability. First-order changes can damp these perturbations by incremental adaptations. However, if these incremental adaptations are insufficient to dissipate the mounting energy, the system reaches critical instability, chaos ensues, and the system leaps (bifurcates) to a new level of organization. Bifurcations result in second-order change and are discontinuous. Change that results from a single bifurcation may not advance evolution (as defined by the characteristics describing the vertical axis in Fig. 4.5), but the sum of bifurcations or changes do.

SUMMARY

Society continues to evolve, cycling through transformations like the "industrial revolution" and the "information age." Social change occurs at all levels of organization. For example, many people today believe that the family is changing due to changes in society as a whole. Certainly the family structure of the 21st century is not the family of the 19th century. Further changes in the work environment are likely to influence the family and the individual; people must be more adaptable. The workplace has changed, and now people can anticipate having many different jobs over the course of their lives.

As we think of groups, we must remember that they are embedded in a larger societal context. As society changes, there are pressures on groups to act in very different ways. A work group of the past may have consisted of a stable organization, but today there may be teams, which are formed for a particular project and reconstructed just as quickly.

As Laszlo demonstrated, evolution is speeding up. Our individual and collective lives cycle through more and faster periods of stability and change, and it now appears that we are having to adapt to technology to keep up rather than create technology to adapt to human needs. In this process, we are changing the definition of what it means to be human.

Chapter 5

Group Stage Model: The Arc

> *One thing I saw right away was that we wanted somebody to be the leader. We were uncomfortable without one. But nobody wanted it, or if anybody did we wouldn't let them keep it. Also we were all the time looking for some structure and we couldn't agree on one. It was very frustrating. I think it's how a lot of people feel in groups. Always wanting to be heard, wanting the group to match your own sense of things and feeling that it doesn't. . . . Toward the end of the session, even though we'd talked about a hundred different things, most of the people in the group would seem to come to something. It was like we had created or discovered something in common but it was different for each of us. It was very peculiar.*[1]
>
> —Group Member

Group work proliferated from 1950 to 1975 when, after World War II, the benefits of group therapy were wildly touted. Those small groups were variously referred to as encounter groups, t-groups, human relations groups, laboratory training groups, and their many derivatives. Rogers describes the salient characteristics of these groups.[2]

In almost every case, the group is small (from 8–18 members). It is relatively unstructured, choosing its own goals, norms, and activities. Most of the time, if not always, there is some cognitive input. The leader's primary responsibility is to facilitate the communication of both feelings and thoughts on the part of group members. There is a main focus on the here-and-now personal interaction of all participants.[3]

During those years, numerous theories emerged proposing models of development that depicted group growth as moving through a series of discrete stages. The number of stages ranged from 3[4] to 13[5] depending on

the specificity with which each stage was articulated. In fact most theories could be represented in any number of stages by collapsing or expanding the distinctions made among them.

Since the mid-1970s, few innovative stage theories have emerged. In part, group work has moved into the mainstream of treatment modalities and, thus, earlier assumptions have been reified as fact. As a result, over the years, the distinguishing characteristics of each of these earlier theories have eroded into a nondescript model of group growth. Although there is disagreement as to the exact number of stages groups pass through, there is nearly unanimous agreement that groups do develop sequentially. Cissna is the only theorist who argues against a clear-cut pattern in the process of group maturation, but he is definitely a minority voice.[6] As a result of this unanimity, there emerges a generic five-stage model, popularized in contemporary textbooks, that represents the distillation of these theories. Reified as fact by these textbooks, this generic model becomes the lens through which groups are viewed. Contemporary group practitioners adapt their work to fit with their understanding of this dominant stage model.

Rennan[7] reviewed 50 articles on group development and from them selected 16 that best exemplified the range of theories in the literature. She discovered a "remarkable similarity" among the theories and concurred that most models of group development could be distilled into a five-stage model. Equally important was her finding that, without exception, each theory suggested or implied that groups advanced linearly in a unidirectional fashion. "Each group displays a unique collective personality and a normative patterning all its own. Yet diverse groupings also conform to certain universal principles inherent in joining, forming, and maintaining collective enclaves."[8] Rennan summarizes the five predominant stages she found in her review.

COMMON STAGES

An orientation or forming stage was common in each theory. This stage was characterized by high anxiety, a search for meaning and structure, and dependence on the leader. In many of the models, a norming stage was next.[9] It was depicted as an oasis following the turmoil of the conflict stage. Harmony and increased cohesion marked this period.

Although a single conflict stage was the norm,[10] three theorists did expand it into two stages. Power and control issues characterized this stage. Testing boundaries and challenging the leader were common attributes. Member frustration at unmet expectations was usually followed by anger directed at the leader. The majority of models described a distinct work stage

during which the group actualized its goals. This stage was characterized by authenticity and mutuality among the members. Termination was the final stage delineated in most models.[11] This period was characterized by members validating their group experiences while working to emotionally and physically separate from the group.

My work on the characteristics of both regressive and generative groups, which are discussed in chapters 12 and 13, suggest that three facets of this common model have been inadequately explained. First, in the majority of earlier theories, limited attention is given to the conflict period and less to the difficulty groups experience when trying to negotiate this stage. Some theorists have even neglected to mention it. The difficulty groups experience in addressing and resolving conflict appear to be more commonplace than these theories suggest because many groups failed to advance beyond the conflict stage of development. Second, the implicit notion that group stages evolve in a linear and unidirectional fashion may be misleading. Third, previous theories have never adequately accounted for the winnowing process that groups undergo—the shaping and forging of individual identities into a collective entity. By training I was wedded to the traditional model and tried to fit my observations into it, but there were always these loose ends. It was not until I stumbled on the work of Arthur Young that I had a framework for my ideas.

In this chapter, an alternative model of group development is proposed that addresses these three factors. The model integrates old ideas and new concepts from chaos theory with the work of Arthur Young. It emphasizes the importance of conflict in group development and recognizes that group growth, although progressive, is neither linear or unidirectional. Particular attention is paid to how groups change, evolve, and mature.

YOUNG'S "THEORY OF PROCESS"

Arthur Young is the inventor of the Bell helicopter. He is an eccentric with varied interests, one of which is his search for a universal theory of evolution. His book, *The Reflexive Universe,* details his evolutionary "Theory of Process."[12] A brief summary is presented here.

Young proposes a seven-stage model of evolution, beginning with light, building to particles, atoms, molecules, plants, animals, and ending with humans (Fig. 5.1). His evolutionary theory forms an arc that is divided into two phases: descent and ascent. This image quickly conjures up mythical, philosophical, and religious associations, yet Young uses contemporary physics to support his proposition. The arc represents the process that evolution undergoes as it moves progressively from complete freedom of movement to a series of stages that constrain it into permanence, at which

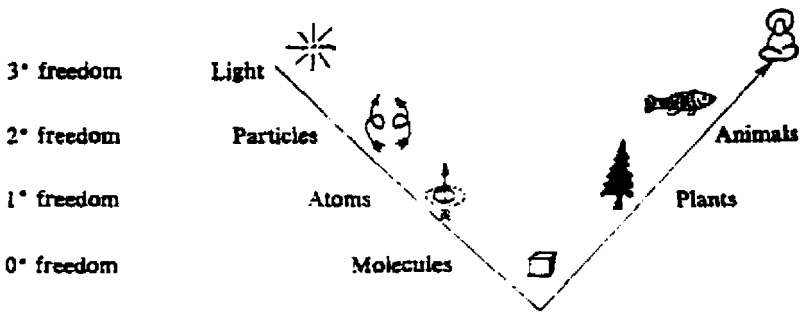

FIG. 5.1. Young's seven stage model of evolution. From A. M. Young, *The Reflexive Universe,* 1976; reproduced by permission of Anodos Foundation, Cambria, CA.

point it is propelled back upward to complete freedom. In his model, the descent characterizes a fall into permanence.

From the initial freedom of movement of light, evolution moves through a series of three stages of increasing constraint culminating in the inertness that characterizes molecules found in minerals. At the bottom of the arc is the stillpoint, the liminal area at which the descent or fall into determinism can be reversed by collecting energy and creating organization necessary for the next stage. Although all molecules can occur as crystals, Young acknowledges that not all are constrained into inert objects. Some molecules, during the ascent phase, become organized and evolve into higher forms: plants, animals, and human beings. These higher forms represent a return to freedom of movement. If the timing is correct, the ascent back up toward freedom can occur. Young's discussion of how molecules build energy and move against entropy hint at Prigogine's notion of dissipative structures.

Timing, for Young, "is the correctly timed control of force." The choice of timing is the only hidden freedom left to the molecule in Stage 4. It enables energy to be collected and used to create the organization in Stage 5. This correct use of timing is learned during the descent and is a necessary condition prior to advanced stages of evolution. It explains why evolution in Young's model is indirect, a descent, which provides time for learning, followed by an ascent. A similar notion of the proper use of timing by the group leader is discussed in chapter 5.

According to Young, what propels matter through this arc is the action of light. Young makes a long and interesting argument for light as first cause. He argues that light is purposive, in part, based on the principle of least action, which asserts that light always follows the path that takes the shortest time. The second argument he proposes is that action occurs in wholes. The whole cannot function when divided into parts. The argument

goes that parts are derived from the whole and not vice versa. Hence, Young emphasizes "the whole exits before the parts." Therefore, "light = quanta of action = whole = first cause." His argument for this assertion is compelling. In viewing light as purposive, he also raises the notion of teleology—an idea I weave into the spiritual discussion of groups.

In summary, there are four ideas in Young's theory depicted in the arc that are utilized in constructing a model of group development.

First, the Arc Is Symmetrical

Young quantifies complementary stages and correlates sides of the arc by counting the axes of symmetry and, conversely, the degrees of freedom at each level. The first and seventh stages have complete freedom of movement. Light has total freedom, as does the seventh stage. In Young's model, it is the highest level of existence and therefore cannot be defined. According to Young, this stage includes, but is not limited to, humans. He points out differences in the sides of the human face, right- and left-handedness, and left/right brain functions as examples of asymmetry.

Stages 2 and 6 each have two degrees of freedom and one axis of symmetry. Animals have similar right and left sides, but differ front and rear and top and bottom (Fig. 5.2) This is known as *bilateral symmetry.* They have two degrees of freedom and move about two dimensionally on the earth's surface.

Likewise, according to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, particles retain two degrees of freedom: position and movement (Fig. 5.3). Bilateral symmetry is also expressed by what is referred to as *chirality,* or handedness, which characterizes particle reactions.

Stages 3 and 5 retain only one degree of freedom and exhibit two axes of symmetry. The tops of the plants differ from their roots, but both right and left sides and fronts and backs are similar (Fig. 5.4). This is known as *radical* or *cylindrical symmetry.* The plant has one degree of freedom, growing only vertically. Electrons traveling around a central nucleus give atoms their radical symmetry (Fig. 5.5). Atoms maintain their one degree

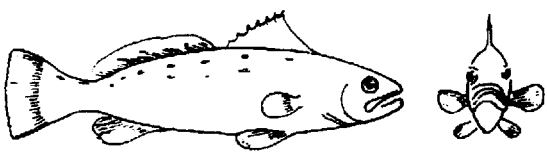

FIG. 5.2. Level two, stage six, bilateral symmetry. From A. M. Young, *The Reflexive Universe,* 1976; reproduced by permission of Anodos Foundation, Cambria, CA.

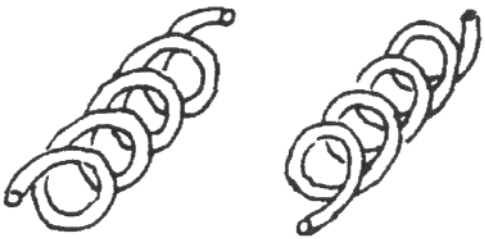

FIG. 5.3. Level two, stage two, bilateral symmetry. From A. M. Young, *The Reflexive Universe,* 1976; reproduced by permission of Anodos Foundation, Cambria, CA.

FIG. 5.4. Level three, stage five, radical or cylindrical symmetry. From A. M. Young, *The Reflexive Universe,* 1976; reproduced by permission of Anodos Foundation, Cambria, CA.

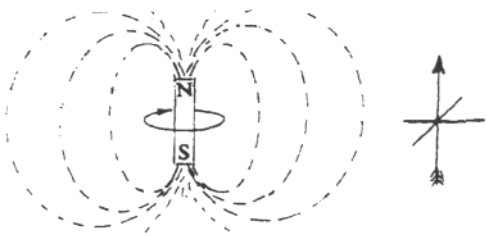

Diagram of a magnetic field

FIG. 5.5. Level three, stage three, atoms. From A. M. Young, *The Reflexive Universe,* 1976; reproduced by permission of Anodos Foundation, Cambria, CA.

of movement by the unpredictability of their energy state. They can either absorb or release energy. In Stage 4, crystals have complete symmetry (Fig. 5.6). Molecules comprising them are arranged tediously in rows, columns, and layers. There is no freedom of movement.

Second, Movement on the Left Side of the Arc Is Random, Whereas Movement on the Right Side Is Voluntary

Life forms on the right have acquired the ability to move intentionally. The movement of light, nuclear particles, and atoms is random. Conversely,

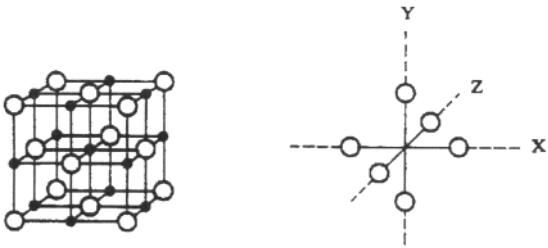

FIG. 5.6. Level four, stage four, molecules. From A. M. Young, *The Reflexive Universe,* 1976; reproduced by permission of Anodos Foundation, Cambria, CA.

plants release and store energy voluntarily, and animals and humans navigate at will.

Third, at Each Stage, Matter Is Transformed Into a Higher Level of Organization

Each stage is both cumulative and additive. New stages assimilate old ones and add something to them.

Fourth, Young's Model is Holographic. Each Stage Is a Holon, Both Part and Whole

Particles, atoms, and molecules are not only separate entities, but expressions of the whole at successive stages of evolution. Suggested here is the notion expressed in light as first cause that the whole exists prior to the parts. In the group model, this idea is further developed.

This summary is only a reflection of the breadth and depth of the ideas found in Young's work. He makes countless arguments and cites many examples in support of his positions, all of which are beyond the scope of this chapter. What is important is that the ideas expressed in his arc (Fig. 5.1) provide an innovative framework on which to construct an alternative model of group development.

In small groups, individuals come together, create a purpose, and forge a collective identity. Initially in that process, individuality is constrained as a group identity forms. The descent represents the collective forging process. The vertex depicts the crucial conflict stage. When the group has no freedom of movement, groups can enter into a conflict or turn around and retreat to an earlier stage. This is the turning point in groups where responsibility is shifted from the leader to the members. Once a strong bond is established, responsibility assumed, and a group identity

emerges, individuality can be reclaimed, asserted, and expressed. The ascent signifies that reclamation process. In a few pages, the model is fully developed.

OLD IDEAS REEXAMINED

Ideas regarding the winnowing or conforming process in groups can be found in some of the studies reviewed by Rennan. In the beginning stages, some theorists describe a pressure to conform to an emerging, collective identity that results in some members withholding aspects of the self. This period has been characterized as "being in or being out."[13] Efforts are made to find commonality with other group members or risk alienation. Members feel pressure to relinquish their individuality and seek commonalities with others as a sign of commitment to the group.[14]

Confinement is another term used to describe this beginning period.[15] Members abdicate responsibility for the group and deskill themselves in deference to the leader.[16] Individuals experience a loss of confidence.[17] Personal boundaries are loosened as members give up preconceived notions of the group and leader. Thus, they become intellectually and emotionally vulnerable.[18] During this initial phase, it is apparent that members contribute more to the group than they receive from it.

In the middle phase of development, the group feels totally constrained and revolts. Members have made sacrifices for the group and have not had their expectations met. Frustration is high; earlier differences, suppressed for the sake of harmony, reemerge. Unrealistic hopes for the group and the leader give way to reality. Group members feel less pressure to conform, and they begin to participate more authentically. Conflict plays a central role.[19] Resolution of conflict signals the shift in power from the leader to the members. The expression and subsequent resolution of the power issues provide the thrust that propels the group upward.

In later stages, it is suggested that members not only recover what they had relinquished earlier, but reap rewards that exceed earlier investments. As the group resolves conflict, members regain a sense of self within the group.[20] Mutuality and increased trust allow the group to achieve new levels of intimacy and understanding.[21] The group gains energy, and freedom is frequently mentioned as a characteristic describing these stages.[22]

These ideas, gleaned from the literature reviewed by Rennan, hint at a model of development in which individual loss and collective gain play a significant role. Additionally, the conflict stage, which signals the shift in responsibility for the group from the leader to the members, can be conceptualized as the stillpoint that marks this transition. Visualizing a framework to account for these ideas leads us back to Young.

GROUP MODEL

The Arc

The proposed model forms an arc and divides the life span of a group into seven potential stages: (a) Preforming, (b) Unity, (c) Disunity, (d) Confrontation, (e) Disharmony, (f) Harmony, and (g) Performing (Fig. 5.7). Seven stages are necessary to adequately and fully portray potential group development. Three stages describe the conflict period (Disunity, Confrontation, Disharmony) to underscore its importance in the overall process. The stages are arrayed on both sides of the arc and joined at the vertex by the Confrontation stage. In naming stages, an effort was made to provide accurate descriptors that best characterize the events that comprise them.

Principles of the Arc

Several principles define the arc. The left side of the arc represents the descent in which individuals are conjoined to form a group. The right side, or ascent, depicts group members as an emerging collective force. The arc is symmetrical. Each stage and its counterpart on the opposite side of the arc are intended to reflect one another. What members relinquish in each stage during the descent they regain in the corresponding stage of the ascent.

Movement through stages in the descent is experienced by members as random. During the ascent members have voluntary control of their movement. Progress through the stages is uneven as the group advances and retreats, but overall group movement is progressive. Transitions between stages occur by discontinuous leaps and these nonlinear transformations are disorderly.

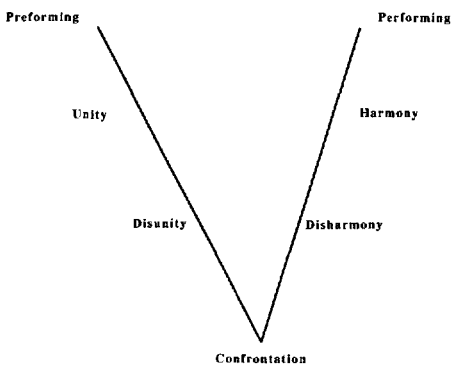

FIG. 5.7. Group stages arc.

Each succeeding stage in the arc represents a higher level of organization. Each stage subsumes the previous one and adds something to it. Successful mastery of each stage is necessary for the group to actualize its full potential.

The arc is a fractal. At every scale of the group, the arc is reflected albeit at smaller and smaller levels. Each stage has seven substages arrayed on both sides of an arc. Every session has seven potential phases, and every interaction could potentially be detailed into seven parts.

Group Stages

Preforming. Stage 1, the Preforming stage, takes place prior to the first group meeting. It occurs as prospective members commit to the group. During this phase, future success is predicated on factors such as group size, member characteristics, and setting.[23] In this period, the group leader organizes the group, determines the structure, and locates an appropriate setting.

Each prospective member has unique expectations for the group and the leader. During the descent, it is these expectations that must be relinquished as members' perceptions give way to reality. In this stage, the group exists as an assemblage of unconscious bonds. These bonds form a group mind in which the group exists as potential. All future possibilities are present. Harry Stack Sullivan, the interpersonal theorist, proposed a similar idea regarding individual therapy when he suggested that all the major life themes and issues that comprise a client's life were present in microcosm, in the first and every subsequent therapy session.[24] This idea is elaborated at the end of this chapter.

Unity. Unity might appear to be a misnomer in characterizing this stage. However, although group members experience considerable anxiety, it is often suppressed and masked. Outwardly members evidence a conformity, albeit superficial, as the group begins its journey. Members feel compelled to invest in the group before they feel any real connection to it. This stage is in marked contrast to its counterpart, the Harmony stage, wherein members experience a deep inner connection with one another.

When the first meeting begins, members are apprehensive.[25] Issues of safety and trust are the focus as members work to establish norms of behavior that will make the group secure. Members experience the group as ambiguous. A predominant feeling in this stage is anxiety. Although it is often masked, the presence of anxiety influences the direction of early group interactions. Members subgroup and project responsibility for action onto others as a way to moderate the anxiety. Beginning group members have not yet established the social conventions by which they will interact with one another; until they do, the atmosphere remains tense.

Members rely on the leader for direction. She represents a powerful figure onto which omnipotent fantasies are projected. In addition to seeking structure from the leader, group members want her approval and acceptance. Dependency issues are present, but, as yet, not fully realized.

With apologies to Pirandello, I often label this period "Eight Characters in Search of a Script." Members are unsure of this new environment, so their earliest interactions are focused on defining their group role and those of the other members. This can present itself in many ways, but often groups will begin with introductions, where each member gives a brief autobiographical statement. The content of the opening disclosure is dictated, to a large extent, by what the first group member to speak says. Remember, there are as yet no guidelines for group members to follow, so each disclosure and subsequent interaction is carefully monitored for clues for acceptable behavior. In turn each member usually discloses a similar amount. The content of these initial revelations are usually name, chosen work, and reason for joining the group.

This outwardly simple process of members self-disclosing, in turn, is the basic pattern by which groups develop, and it is repeated throughout their lifetimes, leading to greater levels of trust and subsequent safety, as members, with each round of disclosure, reveal more and more about themselves. Safety and self-disclosure are inextricably linked: The safer members feel, the more likely they are to open themselves to the group and, in turn, to the feedback of others.

Safety needs occupy the work of the forming group. Members need to feel secure and free from anxiety and disorder. These needs are similar to those of young children, who have strong desires for structure and routine in their lives. New situations are disconcerting, and the child will often cling to the parents in such situations. Although adults have learned to inhibit childlike responses to fearful situations, they are still very much in need of a safe, predictable environment.

Without any structure, members experience too much freedom. This leads to ambiguity and increases anxiety. To reduce anxiety, members minimize their differences, temporarily relinquish their individuality, and conform for the sake of unity. Individuals refrain from showing their real selves. Conformity reduces individual expression, freedom, and movement in the group. During this period, group members are concerned with survival, producing strong dependency needs on the leader, who is expected to provide structure, order, and limits.

Members may also respond to the ambiguity and anxiety by leaving the group and not returning. To alleviate anxiety, much of the group focus is spent discussing past issues and avoiding the present. Members also utilize past group experiences as a means to explain and understand the present one.

Conflict Stages: Disunity, Confrontation, Disharmony

Possibly the least understood area of group work is the role that conflict plays in developing groups. To underscore its importance and ensure understanding of its dominant role in determining the success or failure of groups, three of the seven stages address group conflict. Stage 3, Disunity, depicts the increasing frustration and expression of indirect anger among group members. Stage 4, Confrontation, delineates the members' direct challenge to the leader for control of the group. Stage 5, Disharmony, represents intermember conflict as the group comes to terms with its differences and diversity.

The Conflict stages are a critical period in a group's development. The expression of conflict and its resulting resolution provide a bridge between the superficial conversations of the first stage, Unity, and the direct expression of feelings in the Harmony and Performing stages. "Without working through this phase and establishing appropriate norms of behavior only a superficial level of cohesiveness can develop."[26]

Too often conflict has been associated with negative experiences, and thus individuals have learned to avoid it. Thus, issues of conflict and confrontation are frequently viewed as detrimental to the development of healthy relationships within groups, as well as destructive to the growth of the group. This negative view of conflict may have developed because of its long association with aggression.[27] Although anger that exceeds the tolerance of group members may be harmful, its suppression will manifest itself in destructive ways.

In fact conflict brings "drama, excitement, change and development to human life and societies."[28] Conflict provides the stimulation and potential for group growth.[29] "It is through conflict that existing norms and practices are challenged and changed, and through conflict that we are frequently most creative and innovative."[30]

Conflict is generated from primarily two sources within the group: intermember differences and frustration with the leadership. Conflict is inherent in any relationship. The friction is generated from the differences that naturally exist between people. In groups, the working through of conflict can help members construct an agreed-on working environment where differences can be understood and accepted.

There is a mistaken belief that conflict and its emotional manifestation of anger are nonexistent in healthy relationships. Quite the opposite is true. In fact it is the suppression of conflict that deadens relationships. However, before member differences can be addressed, a norm for the expression and resolution of conflict must be established.

Anger is initially directed at the leader for two reasons. First, she is held responsible for the group. Frustration with her failure to meet all

expectations makes her a likely target. Second, the group must witness the expression and resolution of anger for norms to be established. With no fixed norms, confrontation with the leader takes place in a vacuum. Unlike members, who appear mortal, the leader is perceived, albeit unconsciously and unrealistically, as omnipotent and capable of withstanding the most fervent anger. Therefore, group members feel they can directly confront her without fear of wounding her.

Disunity. The inability of the group or the leader to satisfy member expectations leads them into the first conflict stage, Disunity. Transference is prevalent. Group members view leaders with preformed ideas of how authority figures should act. Members withhold anger and avoid fighting with the leader for the same reason they are unable to confront their parents. They believe their survival, figuratively and sometimes literally, is predicated on appeasing these powerful figures. However, no matter how well the leader leads, she will never satisfy all of the group members' expectations. When the leader fails to meet expectations, members react with frustration, anger, and confusion. Once the group has moved beyond the initial sessions and a minimum level of cohesiveness has been established, the leader should work to facilitate the open expression of anger. This is particularly true when she suspects that either the group or a member is angry with her.

At this stage, frustrations surface in the form of indirect anger. Members begin to unconsciously challenge and resist the leader's interventions. Boundary testing occurs as members question the group structure. Indirectly, they are also challenging the strength of the leader and her predictability. Furthermore, they are assessing her ability to handle conflict. These challenges are further means of establishing a safe and predictable environment.

Intermember rivalry surfaces, very tentatively and beyond the immediate recognition of group members, as power issues are contested. Members suggest actions, demonstrate leadership capabilities, and subtly vie for the leader's position. Politeness is abandoned. Commitment to the group is questioned. Willingness to commit to intimacy is explored. Scapegoating or subgrouping may occur. As conformity gives way to difference, divergent views are expressed.

Metaphors may surface as members covertly express dissatisfaction with the leader.[31] Individuals feel very constrained at this point in the group. During this phase, a primary responsibility of the leader is to invite and encourage the direct expression of anger. As anger is expressed, a risk by one member to openly challenge the leader may be the catalyst that sends the group into Stage 4.

The group's development will cease without the expression and resolution of conflict. Unfortunately, many groups never progress beyond this

point. Often it is due to the leader's lack of understanding about the importance of conflict in developing groups and/or her own discomfort with it. Group members, too, may avoid the anger because of their own dis-ease with it.

Groups at this stage of development are psychologically immature. Most groups are capable of evolving beyond this stage; however, many fall short of achieving their full potential, and remain stuck in the initial stages.

Confrontation. Placement at the arc's vertex underscores the criticalness of this stage. Overall, this is the stillpoint in the arc—the transition period that signifies the shift in power from the leader to the members. The stillpoint represents the edge between order and chaos, a far-from-equilibrium state at which the group is poised for radical change. Here the group teeters between the two sides of the arc. The group faces two choices: chaos and open confrontation with the leader or more order and a possible retreat into a regressive solution.

Forward, beyond this tipping point, the group will move into anarchy and social convention will be abandoned as the group attempts to dethrone the leader. Attacks on the leadership are over issues of power and control and dependence and independence, and they are often based on transference. Group members confront their capacity for governance while attacking the leader's early group role as parent and protector. The anger and frustration directed at the leader may be experienced as personal, but these feelings are directed at her role in the group. Leaders often miss this point and retreat from engagement, forcing the group back into order when they misinterpret the attack as personal. Bear in mind that members are frustrated with the leader's role and her inability to meet their leadership expectations within the group.

If the group leader's only experiences with conflict have been negative and she avoids conflict, the group will retreat backward toward a regressive solution. The group's boundaries are shaped by the leader's own psychological limitations. The more the leader endeavors to transform her personal barriers, the more opportunities the group will have for movement and growth. Most people have difficulty dealing with anger; the group leader is no exception. During this stage, group members must come to terms with their own capacity for leadership by confronting the leader's position in the group. This confrontation must occur before the group takes control of its own destiny.

The turning point in many groups rests on the leader's ability to confront members on their dependencies. The leader must then relinquish the leadership position so group members can experiment with assuming that role and learn "how to exercise mature power in a group setting." Ideally, ". . . the mature group is composed entirely of leaders."[32]

The norm for the expression of anger and conflict resolution is initiated by the leader in this stage and then forged during confrontation with the members. Timing is critical. The leader must not relinquish power before the group is ready. She must assert her position, and the group must engage and overpower him to earn the rights to leadership. The empowerment of members comes from their ability to conquer this omnipotent leader. Confronting, engaging, and vanquishing the leader all contribute to the transfer and investiture of leadership authority in the members. Leadership must be earned.

The road to freedom is through the fire, not around it, although flight into a regressive solution (chap. 12) remains a possible and unfortunate option. However, if the leader is effective, the group will attack. Her ability to invite, facilitate, and withstand the encounter establishes the crucial norm for conflict resolution and propels the group back up the arc.

In Young's model, crystals represent this stage, and metaphorically those crystals reflect group members' emotional feelings of constraint and the their frustrations with the group and the leader. In crystal therapy, the vibrations of the stone are used to facilitate a healing by perturbing the body through a cycle of change, in which toxins and negative energy are shed and a new and irreversible level of order is attained. This healing cycle is akin to what the group collectively experiences as it completes this stage in its development.[33]

Disharmony. Member disagreements fully surface once the leader is overthrown and a norm for the expression of conflict and conflict resolution is established. Having witnessed and survived conflict, members are now prepared and free to resolve their differences—differences that were suppressed during the descent for the sake of unity. Now as members experience their independence from the leader, they can assert themselves and individuate from one another. The expression of anger tests and confirms the strength of their relationships with one another. Sharing feelings of anger presents less of a personal risk than sharing more intimate expressions of affection. Anger is a feeling, but it keeps members at a safe distance and does not invite deeper connections that come with expression of more vulnerable feelings. If members are perceived as being able to tolerate and withstand one another's anger and not leave the group, then the expression of more intimate feelings is possible. Differentiation among members and respect for difference allow the collective to regain a degree of freedom previously lost.

All members must fully join the group at this stage for group development to continue. For members to pursue intimacy safely, affiliation and dependency issues must be resolved. Full commitment to the group is not possible without resolution. Members who withhold and are self-protective cannot wholly participate in the group.

In nontraining groups, members who have found the group too unsafe or stressful have probably quit by this stage. There are numerous reasons that this occurs. Many individuals are not ready to confront certain issues in their lives and should never be required to do so.

However, there are cases where a marginal member has managed to be sustained by the group. In these instances, the group projects meaning onto the person's resistive behavior based on minimal cues. These projections may or may not be true, but they do create the illusion that the resistant member is conforming to current levels of self-disclosure in the group. This projection process enables members to continue in the group with a minimum of input.

Marginal members sometimes manage to escape some of the group anxiety by being late or absent from meetings. However, at this point in the group, the reluctance must be confronted. On rare occasions, this may be accomplished outside of the group. If the member is feeling too unsafe within the group, a private conversation with the leader may be helpful. This should only be undertaken as a last resort, and it should come at a time when the leader is facing the decision to retain or dismiss this member from the group. The meeting, not the details, should be reported to the group. When all members have equally invested in the group, a collective "we" emerges.

Harmony. This stage is characterized by feelings of relief and, occasionally, euphoria. High morale, respect, mutuality, and group pride mark this stage. There is a great sense of accomplishment, having successfully managed the conflict phase. It is also a quiescent period during which the group rests in preparation for more work. This is usually the shortest stage in the group's development. This stage is similar to a way station, where members stop for a brief rest to bask in their accomplishments, recoup their strength, and then move on.

Members value the group. They feel connected to one another and often talk in terms of "we." A bond has been established among them. Pride in the group's accomplishments is expressed. Members experience a sense of mastery and achievement as they come to fully appreciate the group experience. They see benefit in it. There is a strong desire to continue the group. When describing the group, members speak of it in glowing terms.

Members interact with one another rather than with the leader. They share leadership functions. Boundary and maintenance functions are taken over by them. The leader becomes a consultant to the group.

The monitoring behavior exhibited in the earlier stages is virtually nonexistent. Members trust their judgment and understand the norms that have been established. Both negative and positive emotions can be equally shared.

Personal needs are expressed as the group listens objectively. Intimacy marks this stage as members begin to disclose hidden aspects of themselves. Members are seen and accepted for their differences. In juxtaposition to the superficial Unity stage, here diversity is valued over conformity. The freedom to be themselves is regained. Opportunities for intimacy exist and offer further gain for the collective. However, in the euphoria of the moment, sometimes members will minimize differences to embrace the harmony. As a result, not much work gets accomplished; if the group gets complacent, it is the leader's task to nudge them forward.

Performing. The final stage, Performing, centers around productivity. The group works in the here and now. Authentic relationships are possible as members share honest and direct feedback with one another. Earlier fantasies and projections are openly examined. Members are safe to explore themselves at deeper levels. The group is free to focus on members with greater objectivity, because personal relationships have been established. If members are willing to risk disclosure, a more real sense of self can emerge, leading to greater independence and freedom.

One means by which this is accomplished in the Performing stage is through acknowledgment and acceptance of one's dark side—that aspect of the personality that is kept hidden from others. In this safe environment, the opportunity to reveal oneself fully and experience the acceptance of others can be cathartic. It is quite remarkable to witness group members reveal some aspect of self that they have hidden from others, only to find that the disclosure has drawn people to them, not pushed them away. These group self-disclosures facilitate self-acceptance—the essence of self-actualization. Profound and lasting change can be accomplished during this stage. The change is akin to restructuring self-perception, rather than simply altering behavior.

The group is capable of extraordinary healing. Peak experiences are possible. The group flows and appears to function effortlessly as members share leadership responsibilities. Freedom that has been relinquished by individuals during the descent is fully regained.

In the most optimum of circumstances, the group's full potential will be actualized by this last stage. Few groups achieve this kind of generativity. However, the possibility exists for this potential to be realized as the group makes its transformative journey through the arc. During the last stage in the arc, full group actualization occurs as spiritual or transpersonal growth, but is not limited to the collective. Individual members may experience epiphanies within the group. Many meaningful experiences in groups occur through encounters with others. Whether those opportunities are actualized does depend, of course, on the group and its members.

SUMMARY

Every group is unique, comprised of individuals with differing needs. The length of time spent in any one stage is, in part, dependent on the composition of the group members. In addition, the group leader's understanding of group dynamics and her skill in recognizing transition opportunities or high-leverage points can advance or impede group development.

Issues of Concern

To understand how energy or creative tension is generated in developing groups, a second arc comprising issues of concern is depicted in Fig. 5.8. The issues selected represent those described in many of the theories reviewed earlier and follow those suggested by Maslow, but one can imagine other equally important issues to which group members might need to attend as they move through the arc. The issues arc is simply meant to represent a need of the individual group member juxtaposed against the collective pull of the group as a hole. The tension between these two forces creates the push-and-pull energy that characterizes the spiraling movement through the arc. Fig. 5.9 depicts the issues of concern juxtaposed against the group stages. There is an approximate association between the group's ability to move to higher levels of development and the satiation of individual issues within each stage. Energy, amplified by the push to form the collective and the pull of individual issues, propels the group forward.

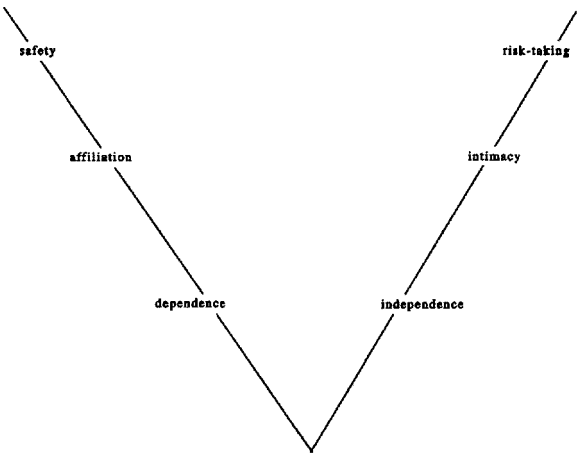

FIG. 5.8. Issues arc.

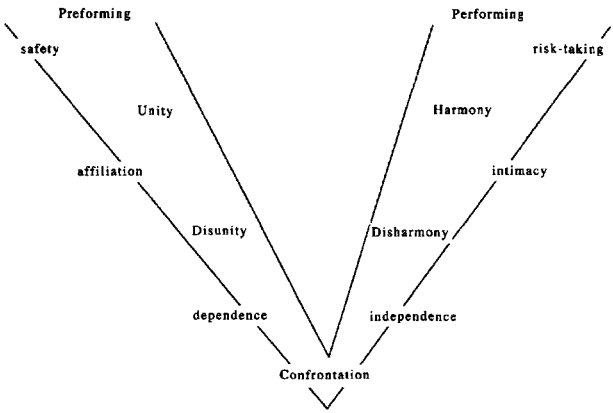

FIG. 5.9. Group and issues arc.

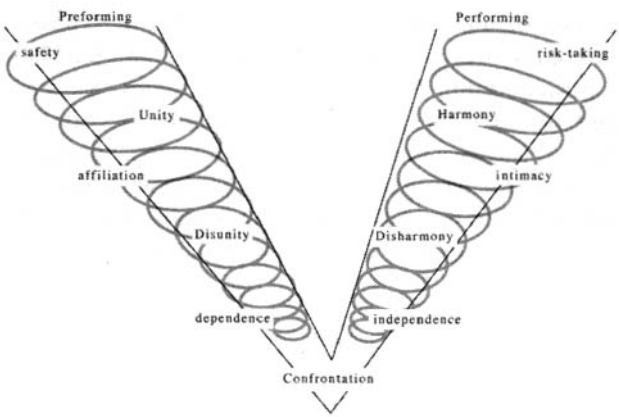

FIG. 5.10. Arc spirals.

These centrifugal and centripetal forces create the spirals of turbulence depicted in Fig. 5.10.

The age-old image of the spiral as both a symbol of change and a transformative container for collective self-organizing is explored at the end of this chapter. It is sufficient to note here that the spiral image is ubiquitous and even appears in several studies referenced in this book. Remember Gottman's research, in the previous chapter, and the spiral that emerged from connecting the plotted points in Fig. 4.3. Likewise, Gary Gemmill and Cal Wynkoop use the spiral as a transformative container for collective self-organizing in their model of group change discussed in the next chapter.

In each stage of development, one of the group's tasks might be viewed as satisfying the stage-appropriate issue of concern: in the Preforming and Unity stages, it is safety; Unity and Disunity, affiliation; Disunity and Confrontation, dependency; Confrontation and Disharmony, independence; Disharmony and Harmony, intimacy; and Harmony and Performing, risk taking.

Placement of these issues in relationship to the group stages is an approximation. Not all members will satisfy safety issues concurrently with group movement from the Unity to Disunity stage. Some members may not fulfill them until the Disharmony stage. Inclusion of this issue hierarchy is a reminder that members are undergoing their own intrapsychic struggles concurrent to those experienced by the group. It also illustrates a competing force against which the evolving group is organized.

The spirals depicted between the arcs in Fig. 5.10 symbolize the organizing or co-evolution that occurs in groups between individual and collective needs. Small and large scale simultaneously influence one another. The back and forth movement between these scales produces the forward momentum that propels the group forward.

In Erich Jantsch's (Fig. 5.11) evolutionary spiral, we witness the same interaction between micro- and macrolevels at the planetary level. Like the

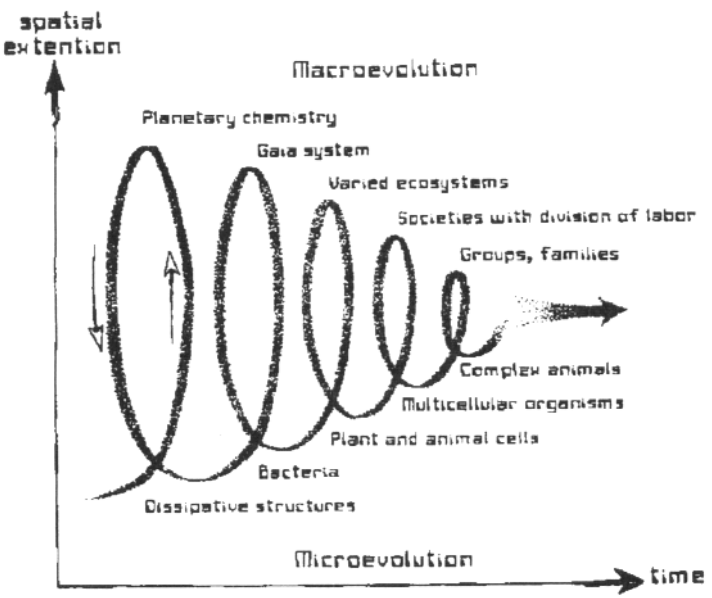

FIG. 5.11. Jantsch's evolution spiral. From *Turbulent Mirror: An Illustrated Guide to Chaos Theory and the Science of Wholeness,* by J. Briggs & F. D. Peat, 1989, New York: Harper & Row. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

group spirals, Jantsch's model depicts the transformation to higher levels of development. Each twist of the spiral represents greater complexity and autonomy as evolution advances.

Although the spirals depicted in this model appears smooth, the movement they represent is not. "Co-evolution is full of chaotic order in which large-and-small changes mirror each other, jumping back and forth, producing an evolutionary movement that is unpredictable but completely interconnected."[34]

Placement of these issues can also be viewed as transitional points. When groups regress during times of stress, members can be seen as retreating to the closest transition point, exhibiting an appropriate issue of concern behavior. Thus, if excessive stress is encountered in moving from the Disunity stage to the Confrontation stage, members might draw back to affiliation issues. Likewise, if the group experiences excessive stress between the Disharmony and Harmony stage, members may retreat to independence issues.

Group members are affected differently by each issue and must resolve them for the group to succeed. The grouping process is the milieu in which these issues must be resolved. Each member must find a way to satisfy them within the emerging group.

Although each issue is associated with a particular stage, all of them are present and recycled through every stage. However, during the descent, safety, affiliation, and dependency issues occupy the group's energy. The complementary issues—independence, intimacy, and risk taking—while present, remain buried. In the ascent, the reverse is true. Independence, intimacy, and risk-taking issues occupy center stage, whereas safety, affiliation, and dependency issues are hidden. Of course certain issues may still predominate for individual members. In the ascent, one or two members may still be resolving safety or dependency issues, whereas the group focus has shifted toward stage-appropriate issues.

In each stage, one issue is illuminated over the others. During that period, circumstances and timing are such that the potential for resolution of that issue is maximized. Throughout the group's history, these issues of concern are revisited again and again. As the group gains new awareness about its own processes at each succeeding level of development, new meaning is given to these issues.

During the descent, group members are influenced by issues of safety, affiliation, and dependency on the leader. Movement is inward, centripetal. The descent represents contraction. Members conform in an effort to belong, to be included. They are cautious, anxious, and seek direction from the leader. Members want security and predictability and externalize these needs to the group. Initially, it is the leader's responsibility to create a safe and predictable environment. If a safe enough environment can be created, members are eventually able to internalize or introject these

security feelings. The thrust for collective organization is constrained by the pull for satiation of the primary issues of concern. Individual survival is predominant over collective survival during the initial stages. Sufficient numbers of members must resolve (phase lock) the primary issue at each stage for the group to progress.

Affiliation issues are central in developing groups. Initially these issues are expressed by members as they search for a connection or role in the group. Their sense of safety is increased through connection and belonging. In the ascent, intimacy issues provide opportunities for deeper levels of relationship. Both affiliation and intimacy requirements are often expressed as inclusion and exclusion themes. Throughout the group's life span, members move through escalating levels of relationship based on trust. The development of each new level of trust occurs as members self-disclose more and more about themselves. Membership in each new level requires that all members disclose a similar amount. This varies from stage to stage. Some members are hesitant and hold back. They can be carried along, but only until Stage 5, when all members must share a similar level of self-disclosure.

Each succeeding relationship level requires more sharing on the part of the group members. The group may proceed rapidly at first and then slow to a snail's pace as more and more is required of the membership. Yet the intriguing aspect of this spiraling process is that group energy is continually focused on inclusion. Groups expend great energy in working to include all members as each new level of familiarity is obtained. Even in the face of the most recalcitrant members, the group will work diligently to include them. Only after the most exhausting effort that has met with no success will the group seek to exclude one of its members.

The leader's role is to monitor the progress of the group and the inclusion of its members. Attending to silent members, regulating the speed of self-disclosures, and attending to feelings are methods of facilitating inclusion. As the group progresses, the leader must continually ask herself, "Is everyone included?"

Beginning the ascent, most members have resolved primary issues. Secondary issues of concern, or, more appropriately, opportunity issues, now emerge. Opportunities for independence, intimacy, and risk taking are available to be experienced in the group. Much of the therapeutic value of groups is found on the right side of the arc. It is gained through self-assertion: emphasizing difference and independence, and fostering intimacy and risking taking through self-revelation.

Individual movement during the ascent is centrifugal. It pushes outward toward separation. Group survival is now predominant, and the inward pull is to remain safe in the secure group environs. For growth, members must take risks and move away from the group sanctuary.

Unlike the primary issues, secondary issues do not have to be satisfied by all members. However, a critical number of members must assert themselves at each stage for the group to continue its upward path.

The symmetry of the individual issues arc is self-evident. Inward movement during the descent is countered by the outward thrust of the ascent. Safety and risk taking, affiliation and intimacy, and dependence and independence are complementary issues. Each is part and whole of a larger totality. They mirror one another, albeit left arc themes are reflected outward, requiring inward resolution, and right arc themes are reflected inward, requiring outward resolution.

Arguments can be made suggesting alternatives or perhaps a different ordering of the needs. However, what is of primary importance is that the issues arc illustrates the dialectic inherent in groups between individual and collective needs.

The issues arc draws from one of Maslow's ideas. Issues depicted on the left side of the arc are primary issues and must be resolved before individuals can obtain benefit from higher level or secondary issues depicted on the right side. Unlike Maslow's hierarchy, the primary issues do not have to be satisfied in order. However, as discussed, they must be resolved by the Disharmony stage.

Secondary issues, indexed on the right side of the arc, reflect opportunities for growth and change. Group members do not have to resolve these issues for their group experience to be fulfilling. However, their experience is heightened significantly if they do.

First Cause

An important group dimension that is seldom discussed is the transpersonal or spiritual component. It is difficult to explain. I try not to complicate it. Mostly it is a shared experience that cannot be verified by traditional methods. Although few groups will ever directly access this sphere, it is important to recognize its existence. Just as individuals are capable of transcendent experiences, so are groups. The spiritual is not to be confused with religion. Although aspects of each may overlap, the spiritual embraces the mysteries of life, whereas religion interprets and organizes them. One manifestation of the transpersonal is the group mind. It is explored fully in chapter 13.

The first stage, Preforming, is included to acknowledge the existence of this spiritual realm. Young's notion of first cause, or teleology, is relevant here. The group originates from an Indivisible Unity and exists as yet unrealized potential. The potential manifests as purposive action and propels the group into the arc. The arc contains the learning stages through which this potential must pass to become actualized.

Let me clarify this idea by describing the artist Jackson Pollack's work. Pollack's work was characterized as action painting. Often he would stand in the middle of a large canvas, which he had placed on the floor of his studio, and fling paint onto it. Aesthetics aside, Pollack's stroke parallels the idea of first cause. As artist, he imparted his intention into the flinging motion. As the paint left the brush, a brief moment between cause and effect occurred "that was out of control. Like the gap in a sparkplug, this moment is what Aristotle once proposed was the potentia."[35] Potentia, for Aristotle, was the brief moment in which the spontaneous could occur. Shlain says Pollack understood "that this gap . . . is the crack in the cosmos through which all things and images enter the extant world of manifestation."[36]

This description captures the idea of first cause. In the Preforming stage, the group is part of an initial unity, albeit unconscious, with the Indivisible Whole. The original spark, manifest as intention in the group, that propels the group forward contains the realization of this connection to the Whole. Through the arc, the group exists as potentia. No two groups form, develop, or traverse the arc similarly. However, the spiritual potential of each group lies in its ability for members to merge into a generative collective that recognizes their unity with and connection to what many have described as a collective or universal wisdom.

They progress through the various stages where members struggle to gain awareness of the original connection. Throughout the arc, members are transformed at each stage, learning as they develop, gaining knowledge about the group and themselves. The "V" shape of the arc implies an indirect route to the end goal, but learning is a process that takes time. Successful group members gain full awareness of their relationship to the Whole by the Performing stage. This spiritual process indicates a vision of groups, inherent in this model, as a journey that, when complete, returns to where it began. The arc symbolizes the group's journey. Metaphorically, the arc represents Joseph Campbell's idea of the heroic journey. In this case, the group traverses the arc to discover its essence or realize its potential and returns to where it began with a new and fuller awareness.

There are a couple of other ways to consider these transpersonal ideas. One metaphor for the group's spiritual journey is the Hindu idea of reincarnation. Simply put, the soul exists as pure light or energy, in full awareness of its connection to the indivisible Whole, waiting to be reborn. Once reborn in a physical form, the soul loses this awareness. Over a lifetime, the soul seeks to regain full awareness of its original connection to the Whole.

Another way to picture this spiritual journey is to return to the image of the holographic universe. In it group members comprise the Whole and the Whole is reflected in each member, albeit individual reflections of the Whole are weak. However, when groups of individuals merge together or entrain with others, the light becomes brighter and the Whole vision is

made clearer. Groups provide one means by which we can magnify our relationship to the Whole.

Whether you agree with these ideas should not lessen your desire, as a leader, to encourage group members to engage their curiosity about the group's purpose. Why us? Why here? Why now? What am I to learn about myself? At the very least, each question stimulates attention to the group as a whole and captures the imagination of many group members. Initially, combining these questions provides a larger vision that holds members together through the tenuous forming stages.

The Spiral

The image of the spiral (Fig. 5.12) emerges as a central symbol in my efforts to integrate chaos theory with our understanding of small groups. The spiral is ubiquitous. It is found at all levels in nature: from the turbulent winds in the stratosphere to the hurricanes, cyclones, and tornadoes that churn about the earth to the small eddies that form in streams and brooks. It is the vehicle that shapes and transforms our innermost forces into creative energy.[37] This figure also appears in the works of Gottman, and Gemmill and Wynkoop.

The spiral's movement, like that of the strange attractor, is dynamic: up and down, in and out, contracting and expanding. It depicts the constant folding and unfolding of order and chaos, stability and change. The spiral signifies change, and through its image we see the relationship of all things. The connection is between opposites, the dialectic created between the positive and negative each so necessary and vital for development. The spiral functions as a powerful metaphor for growth.[38]

The spiral signifies possibility. The tension present between opposites pushes and pulls and creates emergent opportunities. Movement through

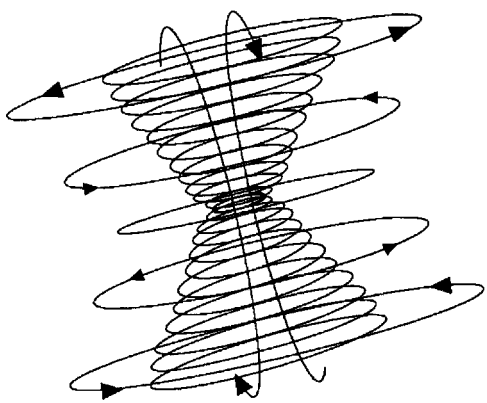

FIG. 5.12. Spiral.

the spiral is nonlinear, discontinuous, disconcerting, and disorderly. It shakes up, re-creates, and reorganizes in unpredictable fashion.

The spiral acts as a container. It helps us tolerate ambiguity, frustration, and paradox because, in its image, as we stand outside it, we recognize that its unrelenting turbulence is harnessed and constrained by the emergent pattern of the spiral. As Rico realizes too, from the bigger picture, we are able to see that change and stability are both necessary parts of life.

Rico sees a double spiral in the spherical vortex and, "like a hurricane or tornado, it is both implosive and explosive."[39] For her the implosive cycle reflects a disintegration—a movement inward signaling a "dark night of the soul" or "existential crisis." Yet she also recognizes in the collapse the emergent possibility of a breakthrough to new insight or an epiphany leading to a life change. The explosive cycle reflects the simultaneous experience of breaking apart and coming together. Rico eloquently captures this notion of synthesis: ". . . taken together we realize that beginnings are endings, endings are beginnings, which is to say all possibility is present in a given moment."[40]

At the threshold between the implosive and explosive cycles is the stillpoint or, as Rico calls it, the "gateway to possibility." Here the shift originates with the stillpoint or liminal period, where chaos enfolds into order and order enfolds into chaos. Briggs and Peat reintroduce us to the notion of nuance that can be found in the "personal subtleties of tone and meaning for which we have now words."[41] They assert that, "in experiencing nuance we enter the borderline between order and chaos, and the nuance lies in our sense of the wholeness and inseparability of all experiences."[42] This is the stillpoint. As we more closely examine the transformational process of small groups and the role played by the group facilitator, we return to these useful ideas of nuance and stillpoint.

Chapter 6

Chaos and Self-Organization in Groups

Trust, belief, faith, hope, and love all increase the possibility that one human being will take the role of the other and, in the doing, the geometry of self expands to create a "we." Feeling, thinking, and acting shared processes. If such processes are wide and deep, the boundaries of the localized "we" can expand to create a more universal we.

—T. R. Young[1]

This diagram (Fig. 6.1), by Arrow, McGrath, and Berdahl[2] is built on the juxtaposition of internal and external forces with planned and emergent forces. This intersection of forces produces four types of groups. *Concocted groups* refer to those groups in which external and planned forces predominate. Work groups that are formed to perform particular tasks or jobs that require some coordination among members are examples of this type of group. *Founded groups* are those in which internal, planned forces predominate. In this case, someone maybe decides to start a new community organization devoted to cleaning the city parks. This group attracts people with similar interests who then come together and plan and organize themselves.

Self-organized groups are those in which internal, emergent forces prevail. Some members belonging to a church group may get together for a picnic or other outing. These groups already have some existing patterns for interaction and are characterized by individuals pursuing their own self-interest; in this case, perhaps wanting to meet new people. Finally, there are *circumstantial groups.* These groups are mainly influenced by external

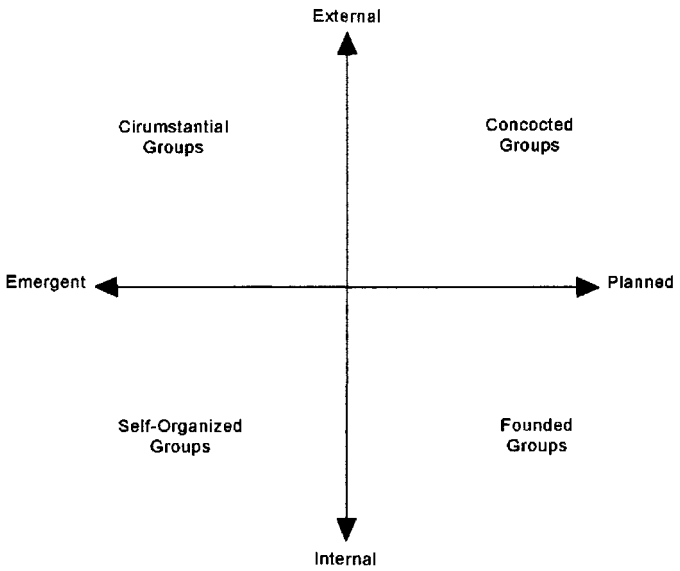

FIG. 6.1. Forces in the group formation space. From *Small Groups as Complex Systems,* by H. Arrow, J. E. McGrath, and J. L. Berdahl, 2000; reprinted by permission of Sage Publications.

and emergent forces (e.g., a group of people who get thrown together as a result of some external event, such as trapped in an office building during a flood).

From this perspective, all groups are influenced more or less by these four forces. The groups discussed in this book are training groups that were formed by leaders for the purpose of individuals who want to learn about themselves in the context of group behavior. These *self-organized* groups are initially started and guided by a leader, but eventually the group determines its own direction from leadership that emerges within the group. All four types of groups move through predictable stages of development. However, the self-organizing group has the greatest possibility to realize its full potential, both individually and collectively. This is not to say that concocted or founded groups cannot be highly successful with their assigned or chosen tasks, but they are not primary concerned with the development of their groups.

Studying the self-organizing group gives us the clearest picture of how groups change and evolve as they move through different stages of development. In addition, self-organizing groups, such as the ones discussed in this book, provide a lucid picture of how individual versus group needs get resolved over the course of the group's development.

GROUP CHANGE

Group development is characterized by periods of relative calm punctuated by intervals of chaotic activity. This periodicity is essential for growth and reorganization because, without undergoing periodic upheaval, groups cannot evolve. Although some change, described earlier as first order, is incremental and relatively predictable, the kind of change that introduces novelty into groups is discontinuous. This second-order change describes the movement from one stage to another in developing groups. Disorder precedes second-order change, and its outcome cannot, with any certainty, be predicted from previous conditions. Understanding how groups undergo this metamorphosis is essential for effective group leadership because attempts to control and limit it lead to regressive and potentially destructive solutions.

This chapter addresses four elements of change and their relation to the constructs of chaos theory. The first element considered is phase locking, the means by which group members come together to focus on a particular issue, topic, or mode of operation and how this movement is characterized by periodic disintegration and reformation. In others words, as members phase lock in one stage of development, they sow the seeds for the next upheaval that will allow reorganization and another level of phase locking and so on as the group moves through its developmental cycle.

Second, Arthur Koestler's notion of biosociation is introduced to further vivify and make clear our understanding of discontinuous change. Third, Gary Gemmill and Cal Wynkoop's ideas about first- and second-order change in groups are presented.

The fourth element to be addressed is time relative to the moment that change occurs in groups. The stillpoint or edge between chaos and order is closely examined with its implications for group work.

At the heart of what I consider to be the important understanding that we can take from chaos theory and transfer to our work with groups is the insight relative to (a) change in systems far from equilibrium, and (b) self-organization. In chapter 4, we saw how different theorists, utilizing principles from chaos theory, described the change processes in the psyche, families, and society. In this chapter, many of these ideas are further clarified and used to describe how change occurs in small groups. The critical factor in this change process, phase locking, is closely examined Combined, the ideas presented in this chapter offer an important vision of group development. At the root of successful group leadership lies the ability to recognize transition points and use them to facilitate constructive change. Let us begin this discussion of phase locking with a brief overview of how groups progress from one stage to another—in this case, from Unity to Disunity.

PHASE LOCKING AND GROUP TRANSITIONS

Phase locking, as discussed, refers to a kind of harmonic convergence wherein frequencies from individual actors are entrained, leading to a coordination of actions or collective behavior. The slime mold and spatial organization of the BZ reaction explained in chapter 3 were examples of this phenomenon. A common example of phase locking in living systems is cited by Briggs and Peat. Isolated from any changes in light, meals, or clocks, our bodies operate on a 25-hour cycle. However, once in light again, our biological clock is phase locked into the 24-hour day. When we take a long airplane trip and our bodies get knocked out of phase, we experience what we call *jet lag.*

Phase locking is also referred to as *synchronization.* Steven Stogatz has written eloquently about this phenomenon and provided numerous examples in his recent book.[3] Others like Arrow et al. have discussed the notion of coordination in groups and are empirically studying it.[4]

Phase locking offers us a novel idea about how individuals in groups might evolve toward collective action. Let us examine the heart muscle as an example of how phase locking works in the human body. The behavior of clocks and pendulums are periodic or regular and can be plotted as circles or other flat shapes. In contrast, the heart is not as regular as you might imagine from the mechanical descriptions of it that often appear in popular press. In reality, the heart is irregular, strange if you will, in that there are immeasurable chaotic variations within each heartbeat. Plotting the heart's behavior yields a strange attractor with overlapping shapes that indeed produce a rather odd shape. In Fig. 6.2, we can see the difference between a healthy and a diseased heart. In the latter, we see a more predictable and mechanical pattern. Conversely, the healthy heart shows minute fluctuations that give the heart a whole range of behaviors that allow it to self-organize and respond to almost any variation in stimulus, whether it be a fast jog, a sudden scare, or a leap out of an airplane. A healthy heart has more "degrees of freedom" than a sick heart, which over time becomes more and more inflexible and when perturbed by a stimulus, like shoveling snow, may not return to its nature rhythm, instead heading toward defibrillation.[5]

The brain also functions in a similar chaotic manner.[6] W. Ross Adey sees the brain's language as the synchronized "whispering together" of millions of neurons. The brain communicates in these wavelengths, not in impulses. A fascinating aspect of one of his studies confirms for him that individual brain cells are sensitive to surrounding electromagnetic waves. He found that if a weak electromagnet were applied to the head, "neurons would synchronize their firing to the surrounding rhythm."[7] He suspects these

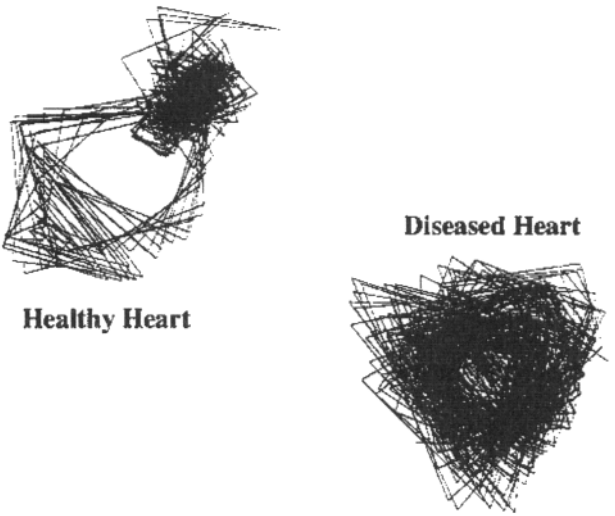

FIG. 6.2. Plots of heart rhythms from *Seven Lessons of Chaos: Timeless Wisdom from the Science of Change* by J. Briggs and F. D. Peat (1999). Copyright © 1999 by John Briggs and F. David Peat. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

electromagnetic fields may influence our circadian rhythms. Then what are the implications from all the weak electromagnetic fields in which we live? The computer screen that I am staring at now, telephone lines, cellular phones, radar installations, and microwave products all produce electromagnetic waves sufficient to alter the brain. Some research is already indicating that these waves appear to be responsible for a host of illnesses.[8] The brain's capacity to produce and be receptive to electromagnetic waves, combined with its ability to self-organize, may provide some of the clues necessary to explain the emergence of social order.

Phase Locking in Groups

What does it mean to phase lock in groups? At the manifest level, phase locking can be pictured as commitment. Commitment is evidenced by a member's willingness to invest him or herself in the group. Before the group has established common expectations, commitment takes many shapes. Manifest behaviors range from self-disclosure, to showing up on time and being in attendance, to expressive nonverbal behavior. During the descent, commitment at the manifest level is often subjectively interpreted by other members. Hence, perception commonly substitutes for reality. During the ascent, objective verification of commitment becomes

the norm. More important, overt behavior is but a manifestation of a connection at the latent level that synchronizes or phase locks members.

In the Unity stage, individuals come together to form a group. Members are being asked to invest themselves in a collective process that offers little instant gratification. The central theme each member must resolve is safety. Negotiation over goals, rules, and boundaries begin immediately as members go through the initial sorting process that will establish and secure their working environment. In the forming stages (left side of the arc), when anxiety is high, groups retreat to the latent level and conduct many of their negotiations outside of their conscious awareness. A discussion of the latent and manifest levels of group communication can be found later in the book. It is important to make the distinction between these two levels because the changes that groups undergo normally occur outside the conscious awareness of the members. This is particularly true through the initial stages. During the ascent, when members assume responsibility for the group, their ability to recognize latent-level nuances that predict change dramatically increases. Leaders and group members who become skilled at attending to the subtle nuances found in latent-level metaphors can successfully guide groups through turbulent change periods.

Much of the overt discussion in the Unity stage centers on past experiences. In this way, members are provided initial data about one another, but, more important, members can avoid the angst of the present. Occasionally, the group wades into the present, but retreats when anxiety deepens. This movement back and forth, between the safety of the past and the angst of the present, characterizes this stage. Spirals in these diagrams represent periods of phase locking or time when several group members are moving together, perhaps focused on an issue typical to that phase of group development, such as safety. The spirals (Fig. 6.3) depicts the group's movement. The chaotic, free-flowing ribbon at the top indicates an initial lack of accord among members. Members enter the group with various security feelings. Some with previous group experience understand and better tolerate the ambiguity inherent in this initial stage. Other are less secure, both with themselves and others.

As members interact, the unknown is made known. Hypothetical fears, fantasies, and projections are slowly replaced with objective data. Members learn about one another. They self-disclose, investing in each other and the group. As investment and group predictability increase, the group orchestrates its dance. The wider cycles at the top of the spiral in Fig. 6.3 depict this beginning. As group norms and rules of behavior emerge, the group enters the spiral's vortex.

As safety increases, members phase lock, depicted by the tightening spiral of the ribbon in Fig. 6.3. When a critical mass of phase-locked members is reached, the group leaps to a new level of organization—in this case,

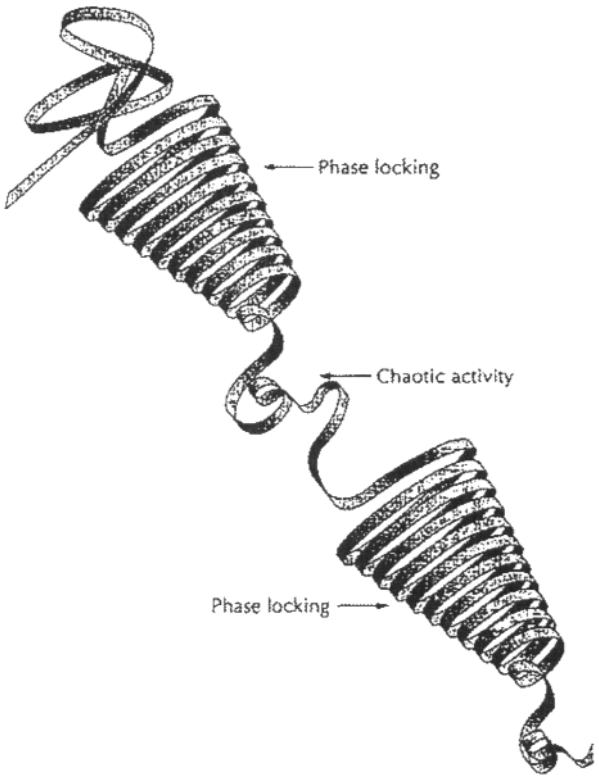

FIG. 6.3. Early stage development.

Stage 3 (Fig. 6.4). Then the process begins anew. Later stage development is depicted in Fig. 6.5 by tighter spirals that reflect a more advanced and cohesive group in the later stages of development.

Keep in mind that not all members need phase lock for the group to evolve, only a critical number. Reluctant members can be carried along until Stage 5. Critical mass varies and likely increases from stage to stage. Initially, a few members may be able to carry the group into Stage 3. At each successive stage, more self-disclosure, intimacy, and commitment are demanded from members. As such a larger critical number is probably needed to propel the group forward, until Stage 5, when all members must phase lock for the group to continue.

Constructive Interference

Suppose we consider each group as part of a holographic universe. A hologram is a three-dimensional image created with the aid of a laser. If you

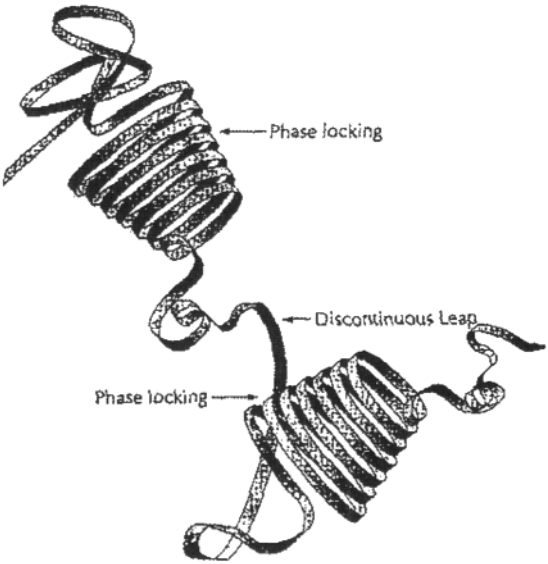

FIG. 6.4. Discontinuous change in groups.

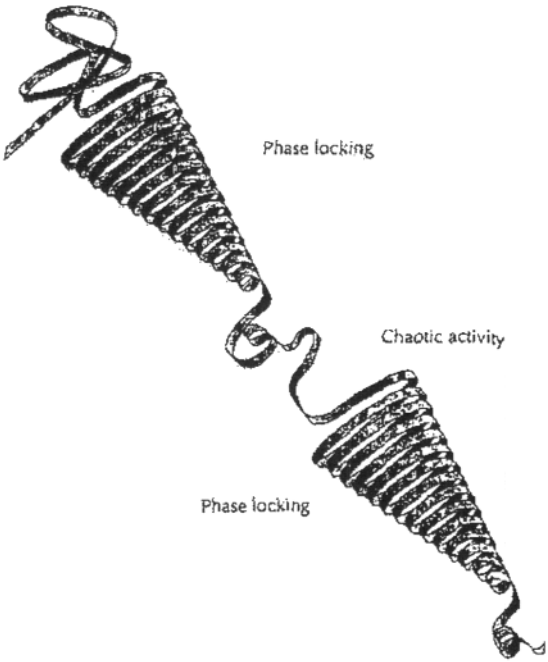

FIG. 6.5. Later stage development.

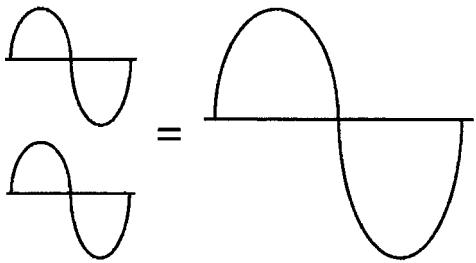

FIG. 6.6. Constructive interference.

FIG. 6.7. Aligning group members.

watched the movie "Star Wars" and then saw the figure of Obi-Wan Kenobi, Luke Skywalker's mentor who seems to materialize out of thin air, that is a hologram. Now imagine the universe in which we live as a hologram. Later in the book, this notion is more fully discussed. Now let us imagine that in our holographic universe our group would be divided into implicate and explicate orders. Were you to observe a group of people sitting in a room through the implicate lens, members would appear as whirls of color like those found in a bubble chamber. Pure energy. No distinctions among them. Through the explicate lens, you would witness what we call *objective reality:* members sitting on chairs, in a circle, facing one another. In the bubble chamber, we exist as one form of energy—a light wave. When light waves interact, interference patterns result (Fig. 6.6). Light waves that reinforce one another are said to constructively interfere; their frequencies are synchronized, and their energy becomes amplified. Constructive interference is one example of phase locking.

Applied to groups (Fig. 6.6), members begin the process scattered and out of sync with one another. As the group develops members begin aligning (Fig. 6.7) themselves with one another, they work through issues and negotiate norms.

When group members align (constructive interference) and their energies harmonize, a shared vision results (Fig. 6.8). Alignment amplifies individual energy or light into the coherent power of the laser, producing the collective vision.

Destructive Interference

When light waves cancel one another or destructively interfere, they remain out of phase (Fig. 6.9). No amplification occurs. When members are unable to harmonize, their collective energy remains dissipated (Fig. 6.10).

Senge compares this incoherent energy to the "scattered light of a light bulb."[9] Much of the destructive interference in groups is caused by fear.

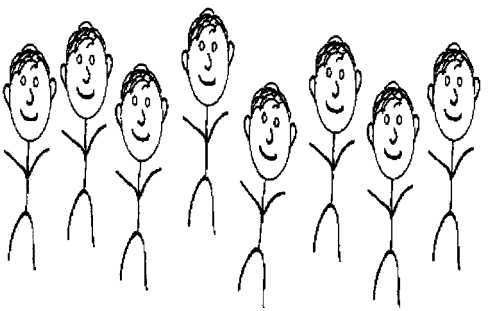

FIG. 6.8. Aligned group members.

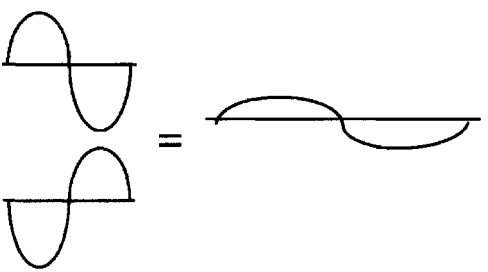

FIG. 6.9. Destructive interference.

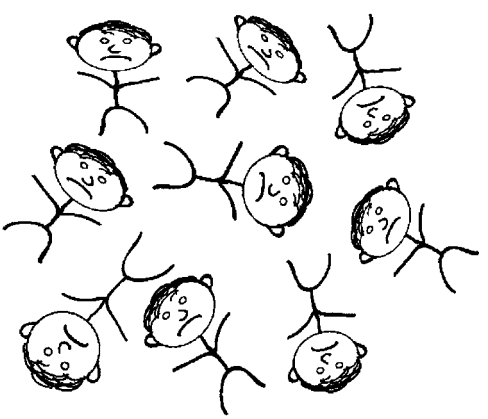

FIG. 6.10. Misaligned group members.

Gottman describes fear reactions as causing diffuse physiological arousal (DPA).[10] The body experiences increased sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system activity, increased endocrine activity, and decreased immune response. All of these interfere with the organism's ability to process information. During the descent, anxiety is common and DPA is prevalent. Remember, initially individual survival takes precedence over the collective. Members are cautious and quick to retreat when distressed. Skillful leadership is needed to contain the anxiety while the group secures itself. When groups are unable to phase lock, they remain stuck in the upper reaches of the spiral (Fig. 6.1). Group communications are recycled, roles exchanged, and metaphors created as members work to resolve their dilemma.

Musical Interference

Another way to conceive of this idea of interference is to do it auditorily. Let us consider a philharmonic whose members are tuning their instruments prior to performance. What we initially hear is a cacophony of sounds. When the concert begins, the conductor synchronizes the separate instruments into a symphony. The collective sound is amplified into often extraordinary music (e.g., Pachelbel's "Canon in D"). Were the orchestra members unable to synchronize their instruments, sound would remain as noise, and amplification would not occur.

In our musical metaphor, we might even conceive of group stages as a musical scale, with each stage requiring a different phase-locking frequency (e.g., Burbeck's "Take Five" in 5/4 time, or "Shostakovich's 6th, Leningrad . . ."). As group members progress through the stages or scales, the frequency increases or a higher level of commitment is required.

Phase locking or constructive interference increases amplification, perturbing the group toward transformation. When a critical number of members have phase locked, the group jumps to a new level of complexity where the organizing process begins anew. Leaps to new levels of organization are discontinuous. They are not linear. Discontinuous change is a peculiar notion. In *The Act of Creation,* Arthur Koestler best illustrates this idea in describing the creative process.

Koestler's Biosociation

Koestler introduces the concept of biosociation, which refers to the interface between two different frames of reference. Koestler cites the discovery of Archimedes' Principle as an example of biosociation. The story follows that Archimedes was perplexed by the problem of having to measure the amount of gold in the king's crown without melting it down. Apparently

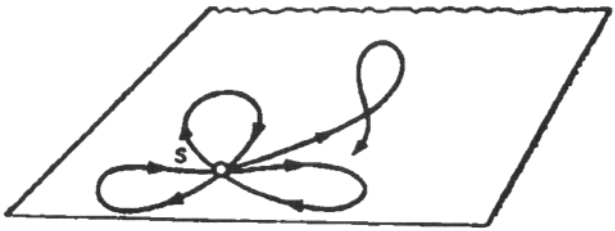

FIG. 6.11. Mind searching for solution (S). From *Turbulent Mirror: An Illustrated Guide to Chaos Theory and the Science of Wholeness,* by J. Briggs & F. D. Peat (1989). Copyright © 1989 by J. Briggs and F. D. Peat. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins.

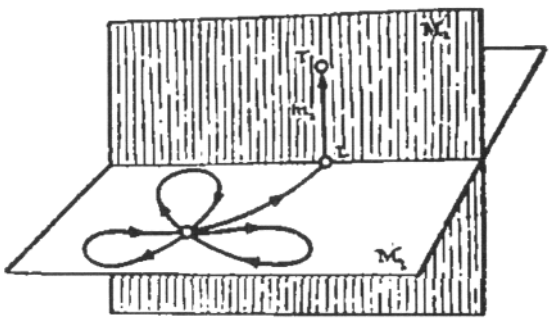

FIG. 6.12. Mind finds solution (T) in matrix 2 (M2). From *Turbulent Mirror: An Illustrated Guide to Chaos Theory and the Science of Wholeness,* by J. Briggs & F. D. Peat (1989). Copyright © 1989 by J. Briggs and F. D. Peat. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins.

a flash of insight occurred when he stepped into his bathtub one day. He suddenly realized that by putting the king's crown into the water he could ascertain the amount of gold in it by measuring how much water it displaced. Koestler believes the solution occurred as a result of the juxtaposition of the two different frames of reference—the measurement problem and Archimedes' bath.[11]

Figure 6.11 illustrates Koestler's diagram of biosociation. In it he depicts the mind's search for resolution of a difficult problem. The starting point is *S.* You can see the mind's initial attempt at resolution as it cycles through its habitual thinking patterns. However, the solution (*T*) lies in another reference frame, depicted in Fig. 6.12 by the vertical plane.

As the artist becomes intensely interested in the problem, her mind is pushed away from the initial limit cycle and toward disequilibrium,

represented by the line connecting to the letter *L*. *L* represents the link or bifurcation point between two different frames of reference. The link represents the factor that gets amplified, perturbing the mental system toward the new solution or new mental map. The leap or jump from one plane of reference to another perfectly illustrates the idea of second-order or discontinuous change.

Briggs and Peat have translated Koestler's diagrams into chaos terms. In Fig. 6.11, the initial search pattern represents limit cycles moving around a fixed point, *S*. Because frustration perturbs the mental system, it increases its erratic behavior, pushing it beyond the limit cycles toward disequilibrium. In that far-from-equilibrium state, a bifurcation point or *L* (Fig. 6.12) is reached. There a small perturbation or piece of information is amplified (e.g., water displaced as Archimedes stepped into the bath), leading thought into a new plane for possible insight into the problem. In the example in Fig. 6.12, the solution (*T*) happens to reside in that plane.

Briggs and Peat describe how Howard Gruber has taken Koestler's idea further by suggesting that the mind searches many different frames of reference when seeking a novel solution. The movement back and forth between new reference planes and the old one destabilizes habitual mental patterns, moving the mental system far from equilibrium. At that point, feedback from several new planes may phase lock, self-organize, and produce a novel solution.

One factor that seems to increase the artist's ability to maximize this mental searching process is sensitivity to nuance, which is defined as "a shade of meaning, a complex of feeling, or subtlety of perception for which the mind has no words or mental categories."[12] "In the presence of nuance the creator undergoes what might be called an *acute nonlinear reaction*" (italics added).[13] In the next chapter, we take up this idea of nuance in conjunction with the group leader's ability to effectively navigate in groups undergoing second-order change.

Discontinuous Change in Groups

These frames of reference give us another means to demonstrate the phenomenon of phase locking. The illustration in Fig. 6.12 depicts the intersection of two frames or matrixes. Each matrix refers to a frame of reference or, in Bohm's words, a "material frame." The illustration is another good image to use in depicting how groups self-organize and move between stages.

Let us consider the material frames shown in Fig. 6.13. In this illustration, the group as a whole is currently organizing in Stage 2. Suppose there are eight members in the group, each represented by a separate limit cycle. Safety is the issue of concern around which members are organizing. We

can refer back to the illustration in Fig. 6.9 and also envision the members as a nonaligned interference pattern.

Figure 6.14 depicts phase locking or constructive interference as two, then three, and finally four members phase lock. Notice how the united limit cycle has been amplified (Fig. 6.15). We assume here that, in this stage, four members represent a critical mass, although that number will always differ from group to group depending on relative circumstances.

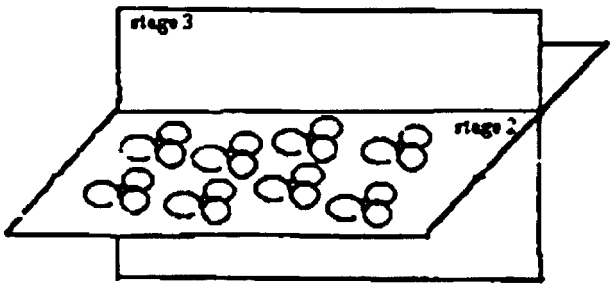

FIG. 6.13. Group organizing in Stage 2.

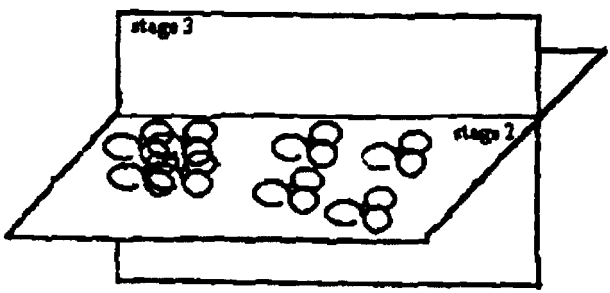

FIG. 6.14. Four member phase lock in Stage 2.

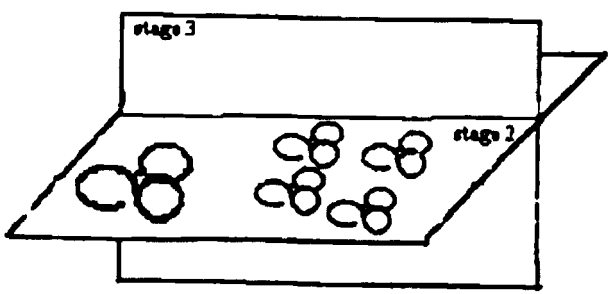

FIG. 6.15. Amplification of phase-locked members.

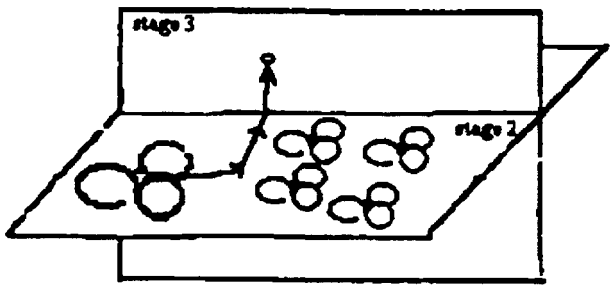

FIG. 6.16. Group leaps to Stage 3.

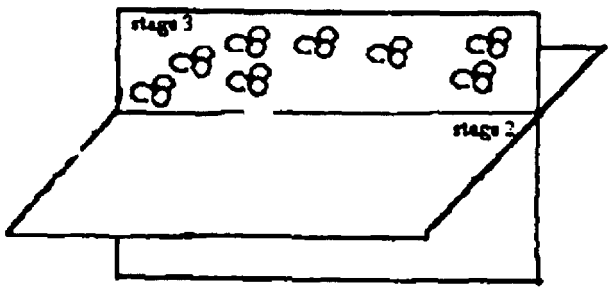

FIG. 6.17. Group organizing in Stage 3.

Once a critical mass is reached (Fig. 6.16), the group as a whole leaps to another frame—in this case Stage 3, and the organizing begins anew (Fig. 6.17). Notice how phase-locked members disunite, in this new frame, returning to their own limit cycles. Although all members are carried along to this new frame, some have not yet resolved safety issues. Resolution of both safety and affiliation can occur in the new material frame. Remember, each new stage subsumes the previous stage and adds something to it. Each subsequent stage requires more members to conjoin as a critical mass until Stage 5, when all members must phase lock for the group to jump to Stage 6.

Phase locking at the manifest level is experienced as commitment to the group. At this stage, commitment can be experienced as either hanging on for a nonphase-locked member or being securely in the middle for one who has phase locked. Movement depicted by the individual limit cycles signifies the search for commonality, security, and predictability. Although overt agreement might signal phase locking, it does not ensure it. Keep in mind that the experience of being phase locked remains outside of most members' awareness during the descent. Members occasionally might feel

it and sense its power, but usually not fully until the Harmony stage. Groups that are unable to reach a critical mass cycle endlessly in their material frame, searching for resolutions. Eventually they will stagnate into a limit cycle and possibly a regressive solution.

The change process that groups undergo between stages mirrors within stage development. Movement through the subphases of stages occurs in an identical manner. The scale of analysis has simply been reduced. We have moved closer to the shoreline, but the pattern remains the same.

FIRST-ORDER AND SECOND-ORDER CHANGE

Gary Gemmill and Cal Wynkoop described in-stage movement in a recent article on small-group transformation.[14] It is one example of how groups work, within stages, to resolve issues of concern. Their ideas are similar to the ones just presented, but they utilize a different model. Although their primary discussion centers on creating a model for second-order change in small groups, they hint at the importance of chaos theory for transforming our understanding of group dynamics. Let us begin by defining first- and second-order change.

First-order, or linear, change is gradual, sequential, predictable, moderate, and incremental. However, it constrains both inner-stage development and transition between stages. Although gradual change can have a beneficial effect, the full therapeutic potential of groups is not realized unless second-order changes occur throughout the evolution of the group.

Second-order, or nonlinear, change is turbulent and chaotic, and it results in a discontinuous transformation that could not have been described or predicted from observation of initial circumstances. The transformation of the slime mold from a unicellular amoeba to the multicelled pseudoplasmodia or the caterpillar to the butterfly are classic examples of second-order change. Second-order change can occur suddenly and dramatically, propelling a group to new levels of organization.

The torus attractor (Figs. 3.9, 3.10, 3.11) used to clarify the concept of self-similarity is also a model for first-order change. Behavior in natural or social systems (marriages, groups, religious rituals, etc.) remains similar, but not identical, over time. The slight variations that do occur in any given cycle represent first-order change. These changes do not substantially change the systems. Often they are hardly noticed. These small and local variations can be amplified to propel the system toward a more complex level of development, but mostly they are contained or damped and remain as minor perturbations.

Maintaining the integrity or current boundaries of any social system requires "some social response with which to defeat the transformation of

the torus into a butterfly attractor. In human affairs, this requires forgiving, forgetting, and treating incompatible events as if they never happened and, in general, a continuous and expert editing of the reality process as it unfolds."

So "infidelity in marriage, dishonesty of employees, disobedience of soldiers, and heresy in the priesthood"[15] are usually defined or excused as just noise in the system. My favorite example of redefining reality as just noise are teaching evaluations used by students to evaluate faculty performance. These evaluations are routinely dismissed or discounted because "the evaluation instruments are flawed, it's just a popularity contest, if you grade hard you get poor evaluations," and so on. The problem gets reframed as the evaluation process and not the teacher. Therefore, constructive change is usually thwarted. In groups, one method by which positive feedback (feedback that propels the system toward reorganization) is damped is by scapegoating.

A small change at a critical juncture can lead to second-order change resulting in the torus breaking up into two or more tori. The result might look like a butterfly attractor, in which "two quite different fates" for a person, a marriage, or a group are offered.[16] "Similar systems will have different fates depending upon their journeys through uncertainty."[17] The result of second-order change in not predictable. Figure 3.12 shows a tongue forming on the torus, which is indicative of potential second-order change. It is important to remember that any small change can be responded to as either just noise or as a catalyst for second-order or discontinuous change. It depends on the stability of the system. In stable systems, the change is damped; in unstable systems, the change can become magnified.

Second-order change is essential for healthy group development. In fact without these discontinuous leaps, the group as a whole would never progress beyond Stage 1. However, such second-order change requires chaos. During these chaotic periods, all emotional and intellectual anchors are uprooted, plunging the group through whitewater fraught with wild turbulence and powerful undercurrents.

The group experiences what Gemmill and Wynkoop accurately describe as the rampant disintegration of its current social organization. There is high anxiety, emotional distress, frustration, and anger. This disorganization is part of the process, described by Koestler, that artists undergo as they search for novel meaning.

The Vortex of Transformation

Figure 6.18 illustrates Gemmill and Wynkoop's vortex of transformation. Chaotic activity is organized around the spiral in four issue spaces that represent group-as-a-whole phases that must be negotiated for continued group

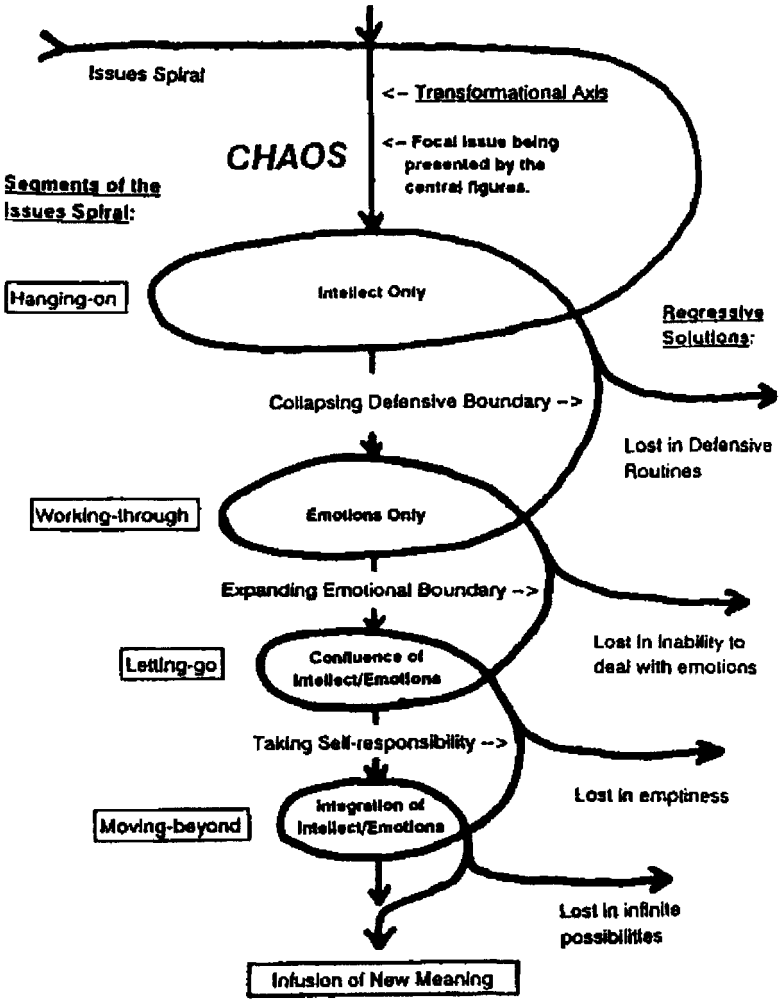

FIG. 6.18. Vortex of transformation. From "The psychodynamics of small group transformation," by G. Gemmill & C. Wynkoop, 1991, *Small Group Research, 22,* 4–23. Reprinted with permission of Sage Publishers.

development. At each phase, the group undergoes a second-order change, continuing on the downward spiral, or spins off into a regressive solution and at best a first-order change. Change, in Gemmill and Wynkoop's model, is normative because second-order change is considered more desirable than first-order change.

Initially, the group meanders, albeit unconsciously, while central figures emerge around a new focal issue. Focal issues are created when specific

emotions and attributes are split off by members and unconsciously projected onto these central figures.[18] As current group structure is found inadequate to resolve the focal issue, the group moves further from habitual patterns in seeking a solution. As critical instability is reached (a critical mass of members becomes dissatisfied), the group enters the vortex.

Successful completion of the cycle results when a critical number of group members have gained insight into the focal issue. Gemmill and Wynkoop define *critical mass* as a "point at which the synergy of the 'group-as-whole' is sufficient to support the group in its movement" to the next stage of development.[19] This definition coincides with the notion of phase locking.

The thrust of the group's movement through this vortex is collective self-awareness. Increasing awareness through each of the four issue phases makes known unconscious and preconscious issues that influence the group's behavior. As members gain consciousness, they undergo what is called the *reparation process* and reclaim their projections. With this emerging knowledge, the group learns to sustain itself toward a transformative solution. When a critical mass of members can integrate new meaning into their group, it passes through the spiral's vortex toward acquisition of the next focal issue. Then the four-phase cycle begins anew.

Gemmill and Wynkoop present an example of a group member who expresses her boredom with the group and then storms angrily out of the room. On returning she talks about her anger, and other members share their reactions to her. Previously hidden and unexpressed anger is now being addressed in the group. However, the anger is viewed as belonging to the individual. Were exploration of the anger to remain at this level, the group would experience, at best, a gradual or first-order change.

When members gain insight by becoming aware of what the meaning of this individual action has for the group as a whole, the potential for second-order change increases. In this case, the group comes to realize that the individual member is really expressing the group as a whole's boredom and anger, and her leaving reflects their own desire to walk out. Concomitant with that awareness comes more understanding about their reluctance to directly experience and express their angry feelings. New understanding of the anger's meaning transforms the group into redefining their relationships with one another.

In this example, Gemmill and Wynkoop are describing how a system is perturbed and moves from a steady state toward disequilibrium. When the member expresses her boredom, an initial perturbation occurs. It increases or is amplified when she leaves the room. On returning, it is further amplified by the group's discussion of the underlying angry feelings. Initially, the group responds to maintain the steady state by damping the perturbation, limiting its amplification by viewing the disruption as an anomaly of

the individual member. Were it to stay focused on the member, it might lead to a regressive solution such as scapegoating. However, as other members become cognizant of the larger meaning of anger for the group as a whole, further amplification occurs. When sufficient members evidence this group-as-a-whole awareness, a critical mass develops and propels the group irreversibly toward a new level of organization.

Once the group enters the vortex, current group structure is uprooted. In the ensuing turbulence, group members are buffeted between the transformational push for change and the defensive pull toward stability and order found in regressive solutions. Earlier, Gottman captured this dialectic process in his description of anabolic and catabolic family interactions.

Gemmill and Wynkoop liken this push–pull process to developing a muscle. "Just as a muscle must be exercised to build strength, endurance, and flexibility, members must exercise their abilities to build strength, endurance, and flexibility in handling emotions surrounding chaotic situations."[20]

When the group is inhibited from bringing preconscious and unconscious material into awareness, the result is a regressive solution. Ironically, if the group attempts to hide from its projected material, it becomes haunted by it. Just as a muscle atrophies from lack of exercise, so too will the group's ability to contend with future transformational possibilities if it settles for a regressive solution. If this temporary regressive solution stays unresolved, it can have detrimental effects on group members, and the group as a whole can become a destructive force.

Although the example is presented in a linear fashion, in actuality the group's movement would be uneven, hesitant, and resistant to the new awareness. Undergoing second-order change requires group members to leave a comfortable, albeit unconscious, state, uproot, experience considerable discomfort and anxiety, and then reorganize. Recall our discussion of discontinuous group movement in the previous chapter. Overall group development is progressive, and it creates time and history.

TIME

Throughout the last three chapters, the concept of time has been introduced and discussed in various forms. The here and now, critical timing, flow, the group's history, and the stillpoint are all manifestations of time or our experience of time.

Bohm, combining ideas from the physicist Hendrick Lorenz with Albert Einstein's relativity, asserts that neither time nor space are absolute. In fact he argues both are generated in "material frames" as a result of "the phase locking of matter within that frame." Therefore, Bohm claims, "time is a

measure of the amount of process that takes place, the ticks of the frame's internal clock." So if clocks are not synchronized, it is because their material frames are out of phase. Briggs and Peat speculate that the phase locking of material frames may take place with respect to individuals and cultures, which may explain why different people and different societies operate with different "senses of time."

Let me give a brief example of relative time. Bill Russell, who played professional basketball for the Boston Celtics, described how the performance of his team was maximized. "Every so often a Celtic game would heat up so that it became more than a physical or mental game . . . the feeling is difficult to describe . . . my play would rise to a new level . . . all sorts of odd things happened . . . the game would move so fast . . . but it was as if we were playing in slow motion." What Russell describes is a peak and transpersonal experience, a moment when the team was phase locked and created a "slower sense of time."[21] Sports are replete with such examples.

Chaos theory switches from linear or chronos time to nonlinear or kairos time. Remember chaos is not concerned with the linear dimensions of life. As Ainslie correctly asserts, chaos theory is concerned with the immediate, the now—"it thrives in the moment."

Before concluding these chapters, let us turn then to Leonard Shlain's most original book, *Art and Physics,* for his discussion of Minkowski's space–time continuum. The book reflects Shlain's effort to chronicle the prescient relationship between art and physics. In it he asserts that, through their works, artists foreshadow breakthroughs in science. Read this book! Given Shlain's premise, time and its representations are a central organizing principle in the book. Before we discuss Minkowski, let us consider some of Shlain's other observations.

In his description of Marcel Duchamp's painting, "Nude Descending a Staircase," Shlain penetrates to the core of chaos. "Behind the dizzying chaotic motion on Duchamp's canvas . . . lay the idea of stillness, contained within the simultaneity of time at c. . . . Duchamp's Nude can be observed as existing in the past, present, and future."[22]

The letter "c" represents time at the speed light. Shlain asserts that Duchamp's painting depicts Einstein's image of time at almost the speed of light. Of course at the speed of light, past, present, and future would exist as a single image. What is represented in this picture is the inherent creative potential found in chaos; in the whirlwind produced by the merging of time's three dimensions, infinite possibilities can emerge. Everything is present; nothing is limiting, restricting, or holding back the ability of the group to maximize its potential as it reorganizes and emerges at a new level of development. Although groups entering chaos can exit in many directions, those groups who avoid chaos severely limit their growth potential.

The stillpoint is timeless, existing in a fourth dimension. Time and space issue from it. It represents the pregnant moment when all time is conjoined into a single point from which the future unfolds. It is the edge between order and chaos and the vertex of the group development arc soon to be presented in this book. It is the transition point between Bohm's implicate and explicate orders. Koestler depicts it as the "*L*" in his illustrations (discussed earlier) at the interface between two or more material frames of reference, the simultaneous apperception of multiple points of view. This still moment occurs just prior to the "ah-ha" experience or the leap to creative insight experienced by many artists.

Our sense of present time is expanded when our full attention or awareness exists at the stillpoint. Past and future recede into the background. Bill Russell sensed the flow or elongation of present time during his peak experiences. Zen practice is centered on bringing conscious attention to a stillpoint.

This relativity of time is expressed in literature and film. Ambrose Bierce's entire story, "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," unfolds in the time span it takes a man dropped from the gallows to die.[23] The spate of "Back to the Future" movies reorients our view of time as does the recent movie "Contact." Minkowski's space–time light cone provides another view of the stillpoint.

Minkowski's Space–Time Continuum

Figure 6.19 depicts a light cone similar to Minkowski's space–time diagram.[24] By now you will certainly recognize the spiral-like shape use to depict light cones. Minkowski was a former teacher of Einstein's and formulated the original equations that established the reciprocal relationship between space and time. He fused this relationship together into a fourth dimension, which he called the space–time continuum. The point where the cones touch Minkowski labeled the "here and now" and the "stillpoint."

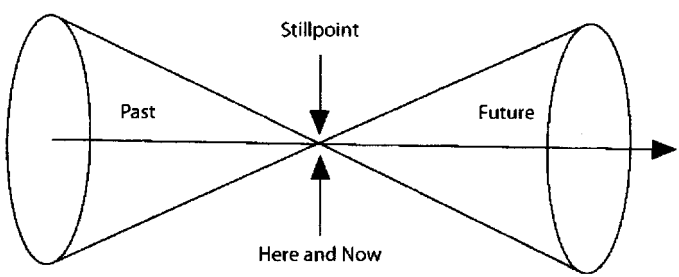

FIG. 6.19. Space–time continuum.

In his diagram, the here and now depicts both the location of a point in three-dimensional space and the exact time it is located in that space. In this case, the exact location is the "here" at the precise moment of the present, "now."

In the diagram, the left cone represents the past, the right cone the future. Minkowski believed every object that moved through space and time left a unique history or world line. The light cone contains our world and everything in it. Beyond the walls of the light cone exists what Minkowski calls *elsewhere.* As Shlain acknowledges, this is the world of the contemporary cosmologist who, with the aid of the new space infrared telescope facility (SITF) combined with the older Hubble telescope, is uncovering and mapping entire new regions of the universe. In our use of this diagram, we need not venture beyond the walls of the light cone.

From the viewpoint of the here and now, the observer can look into the left cone and see the past. The farther one looks down the cone, the more past events can be observed. As one looks into the right light cone, future possibilities exist. The closer one gets to the here-and-now, depicted by the narrowing tunnel, the fewer possibilities or options exist.

Now using your imagination and starting at the point of the here and now, bend each lightcone upward at 45-degree angles. Look familiar? Jump back to chapter 5 and examine Fig. 5.10, which depicts the stage and issues of concern arcs. In the arc depicting the group stages, the stillpoint is the Confrontation stage. From this vantage point, the group can review its past created in the forming stages and project itself into the future. At the wider end of the cone, the future appears unlimited, whereas immediate options or choices are restricted. Remember, future possibilities are, in part, determined by the group's history. As the group moves forward from the here and now, every choice or bifurcation point determines the direction of future development.

This omniscient view of the arc, with the here and now as the stillpoint, fixes the Confrontation stage as the pivotal point in group development. Keep in mind, this is a snapshot; as such, it is a static picture. As the group moves in space time, so does the locus of the here and now. However, in reference to the entire arc, the Confrontation stage offers the maximum vantage point from which to view the past and future. The arc is finite and limited to seven stages. Were it infinite, the stillpoint would always remain centered between the past and the future.

Overall group movement through the arc approximates the representation of time in this diagram. As groups collectively enter the light cone in the Unity stage, they are funneled toward the present. In the forming stages discussed earlier, much of the group focus is on past experiences and events. The group leader, as we discuss in the next chapter, works to move the group into the here and now. As safety increases, and with proper

facilitation, this movement into the present culminates at the apex in the dramatic encounter with the leader. Once arriving and fully experiencing the power, freedom, and potential of living in the here and now, the group continues to interact mostly in the present while progressing up the arc.

This discussion of time movement can also be used to understand and explain group movement through individual stages and activity in sessions. The light cone is mirrored at each scale of group. For example, in each group session, the leader works to focus the group's attention in the here and now. During sessions in the descent, it mostly means shifting attention from the past to the present. In the ascent, it mostly means centering the group's attention in the present and limiting their forays into the future.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, our focus has been on nonlinear, second-order, discontinuous change which introduces novelty into groups. Without novelty, growth and development are impeded. Koestler's ideas and illustrations helped interpret this awkward notion of discontinuous change. Phase locking was further clarified and shown as a possible explanation for how group movement is accomplished. Gemmill and Wynkoop's model of the vortex of transformation provided a vantage point from which to view a group undergoing the change process. Finally, Minkowski's space–time diagram was introduced as a framework for exploring time.

In the next two chapters, the role of the group leader is examined. His role in containing group anxiety, perturbing groups toward growth, and guiding them through change processes, all while maintaining his own equilibrium, is fully explored.

Chapter 7

Group Leadership: Working With Chaos

My experiences with groups led me to a number of conclusions about leadership that are detailed in the next two chapters. These conclusions have also been shaped by chaos theory and fit with the model of group development discussed earlier in the book.

It is important to remember here that this book primarily addresses self-organizing groups, which were discussed at the beginning of the last chapter (see Fig. 6.1). In that discussion, it was noted that the initial, self-appointed group leader must eventually recognize emergent leadership[1] within the group if the group is to successfully navigate the arc. The leadership behaviors that are discussed next refer to the tasks that are performed by the self-appointed leader, which will ensure that emergent leadership is developed and recognized as the group self-organizes.

As I consider chaos theory, I believe that leadership interventions are limited to two fundamental choices. You can either contain the group or perturb it. The basic conviction underlying this assertion and others made in this chapter is that groups are self-organizing. Once the group forms and enters the arc, its ability to grow and develop is intrinsic. Group leaders should facilitate the group's natural unfolding and not, as is so often the case, interfere with it. According to Prigogine's work with dissipative structures, living forms demonstrate the ability to self-organize naturally, so the leader must have faith in the ability of the group to organize itself.

Control is an illusion, but leadership is not without power. However, the source of the power does not come from the force of the leader's intervention, but from his timing. Just as the Aikido master harnesses the energy of

a stronger opponent with exact timing, so too does the leader contain or perturb by correctly timing his interventions.

The leader acts as both an anabolic and catabolic agent. He soothes and provokes. During the descent, he generally contains the group's energy; in the ascent, he often amplifies it. Within each stage, he does both. In actuality, the group leader facilitates, supports, and, at times, guides a process. His skills in building a safe environment, nurturing relationships, and fostering communications create the milieu in which group members organize themselves. In a literal sense, the leader "creates the space" in which the group works. Effective leadership requires a resolute sense of self, knowledge of group dynamics, an ability to recognize group patterns, and a sensitivity to nuance. When these skills combine through practice and experience, the leader learns to act intuitively. Let us first examine the parts that constitute the effective leader, beginning with his role as container.

CONTAINMENT

D. W. Winnicott's metaphorical characterization of mothering as the creation of a "holding environment" is consistent with the idea of containment. Laura Humphrey and Steven Stern provide an excellent summary of Winnicott's basic ideas.[2]

Winnicott's holding environment represents the protective care the mother provides for the infant during the child's first few years of life. The mother's holding environment secures the child in four ways. First, she communicates her love through physical touch. Only in this manner can the mother convey to the young infant that he is both protected from self and the physical environment. Second, her touch provides emotional nurturance. She soothes the child when he is frightened or in pain. Third, her "holding" contains the child's normal grandiosity and aggressive tendencies. Finally, the holding environment connotes the mother's capacity to be reliable, predictable, and responsive to the child's changing needs. As he grows and individuates, her responses must change accordingly. As the infant begins to individuate, he internalizes or introjects the holding environment. If the mothering were "good enough," the child would emerge with a strong and coherent sense of self and an innate ability for affective self-regulation.

The mother–child relationship accurately depicts the group leader's early role as container. He contains the group's anxiety through his relationship with them. This containment gives the group more freedom (safety) to experience (risk) emotional growth.[3] When the group is overwrought, the leader soothes their anxiety by regulating it. He does not diminish or deny the anxiety, but apportions it in amounts that the group can handle.

Regulating overwhelming tension in the forming stages allows the group to gradually learn to regulate and soothe itself. The group cannot grow and develop autonomously without this facility.

In holding the group, the leader is saying to them, in essence, "I have faith in your ability to work under these conditions." The holding environment enables the group to not only experience disorder, but to appreciate it as the necessary precursor to change. The therapist communicates this holding by his closeness and willingness to be emotionally present in the group. He also secures the group by managing its boundaries.

Building a safe container not only holds harmless the group's anxiety, it also harnesses its creative forces. Within the container's framework, the group's energies can be constrained and directed toward its development. I am reminded of how the poet's creative energies are constrained by the meter or rhyme scheme of the form in which he is working. The haiku, sonnet, and limerick all have particular rhyme patterns that contain the poet's talents. Within these boundaries, the artist's creativity is constrained, harnessed, and with luck focused. In many creative activities, such as writing, painting, and composing, the artist's creative energy is constrained by the medium in which he works. Containment of a group's creative forces facilitates self-organization.

BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

Boundary management is the leader's effort to create a safe container. In the forming stages, the attention of group members is focused outward as they attend to their safety needs. One way in which the leader can foster group safety is to create a predictable environment. It is accomplished by providing structure, managing both time and the physical environment, and addressing ethical obligations. Each of these areas is a basic building block in the construction of a safe and predictable environment.

Structure

During the descending stages, the leader contains the group's anxiety. He manages the uncertainty. Structured groups, those in which activities are planned and directed, alleviate some of the anxiety and uncertainty that members experience. However, prescribing the agenda fosters dependency, and members tend to rely on the leader's direction for longer periods of time. In addition, too much structure is deadening. It eliminates aliveness, spontaneity, and surprise, which are all necessary for growth.

Conversely, unstructured groups place the burden of responsibility for the group's structure and direction on the members. In the latter case,

anxiety is increased as the leader's control is diminished. Forming stages require a balance between structure and nonstructure, tension and safety. Members in groups where this initial equilibrium is maintained more readily assume leadership responsibilities when the opportunities present themselves.

An important structural facet of the leader's responsibility is to provide a clear meaning and definition of the group. The meaning will change and evolve as the group organizes, but initially the leader should provide a clear vision. The meaning or vision acts as touchstone or beacon for the group during the uncertainty and turbulence of the forming stages. The vision can also be viewed as an attractor around which the group organizes itself.

Time Management

Time management means starting and ending the group at the agreed-on times. This appears to be a simple, straightforward task, but the leader is tested by group members on his ability to adhere to it. These time boundary challenges are indirect and mainly outside the awareness of group members. The primary reason that group members challenge time limits is to test the leader's mettle, and thus the group's safety and predictability. Can the leader be trusted to do what he says? Is he strong enough to contain our anxiety? Is he predictable? Can he establish and hold to firm boundaries? How does he handle challenges? All of these questions are answered by the leader's actions, not his words. Every action and reaction by the leader is carefully monitored by the group. One anomaly of group work is that members need to experience, firsthand, any directives the leader gives them. Leader norms are established by the leader's actions, not his directives.

For example, if the leader schedules group meetings from 6:00 to 7:30 P.M. on Wednesday nights, members will test his determination to hold steadfast to those times. Only through direct experience can they gain knowledge of the leader's commitment, strength, predictability, integrity, and general fitness to lead their group. Begin groups on time. Members will quickly adapt to this norm, and late arrivals will be subject to peer scrutiny. If the leader permits the group to start at varying times, boundaries will remain flimsy, and member concern for safety will continue to be the dominant theme. One manifestation of member resistance or defensiveness in groups is tardiness, and clear time boundaries give the leader an opportunity to identify that resistance.

When groups are permitted to run overtime, members will postpone working on group issues because they soon learn that the ending time can always be extended. Furthermore, the leader cannot demonstrate predictability by being lax with the time boundaries. Ending on time encourages members to begin their work at the outset of the group session.

Additionally, the leader's task throughout a group session is to monitor the time, giving members about a 15-minute warning before the group ends. This signals the group to begin preparation for adjournment by completing issues that are being discussed and to limit the introduction of new material.

Forming groups must learn how to effectively utilize their time. In the initial sessions, members may self-disclose significant material toward the end of a meeting. The leader's task is to intercept that disclosure as soon as possible, and suggest that the issue be placed first on the agenda for the next meeting.

On the rare occasions where the group is caught up in a very emotional issue and is unable to wind down in the closing 15 minutes, the leader might use "creative" time management. If there are 5 minutes left, stretch that into 10 or so minutes if necessary. The leader should continue to push for closure while liberally permitting the plead of "1 minute remaining" to stretch into 2 if needed. This gives the group additional room for completion of their agenda while still maintaining the time boundary.

Environmental Management

The more predictable the environment becomes, the more likely members are to shift their attention from outward concerns to internal issues. This shift is similar to what I experienced when I was a runner. The route I selected dictated how contemplative the run would be. When I ran a new route, my attention was directed outward, focused on traffic patterns and hungry-looking dogs, as I attended to my physical safety. However, if I selected a route I had run many times, I was more likely to enter a meditative state. The route, traffic patterns, and dogs were all known to me. Hence, my safety concerns were minimized, allowing my attention to shift inward.

The setting is important in constructing a safe environment, too. The room should be appropriate for the size of the group, so that if members feel a need to expand their physical space, they can do so. Comfortable chairs that move with ease and permit members to shift their positions can help moderate anxiety.

The room should be secure from outsiders. Doors should be closed so that the group space does not extend into unknown hallways. Window shades or draperies should be appropriately drawn to protect the group from outside distractions.

If at all possible, the room should have its own temperature control unit. Physiological reaction to stress often manifests in broad changes in body temperatures. Helping people feel comfortable is conducive to effective group participation.

The most important aspect of environmental management is using the same room for all group sessions. This adds to the external security and eliminates the need for members to re-acclimate themselves to new settings.

Ethical Management

The leader is bound by ethical standards to ensure physical safety, restrain excesses, and protect the confidential nature of the group experience. Both the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Counseling Association (ACA) have developed ethical guidelines for counselors. More specifically, the American Group Psychotherapy Association (APGA), the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW), and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) have developed ethical criteria for group leaders. The leader should familiarize himself with the ethical expectations promulgated by these professional organizations. Some of these issues should be addressed at the beginning of the first group session. These include the following:

1. *Confidentiality.* The leader is responsible for defining and discussing with members their expectations for protecting the sanctity of the group sessions. All members should participate in the discussion so that there is no doubt in anyone's mind as to the importance of respecting and holding in confidence the revelations of others. The leader should ensure that each member is given adequate time to discuss confidentiality.
2. *Keeping it in the group.* Members should be encouraged to limit the discussion of issues generated in the group sessions to the group time. Members should be discouraged from subgrouping after the session to continue the discussion of issues raised in the group.
3. *No physical acting out.* Members have a right to physical safety. The leader is charged with conveying this principle to the group.
4. *The leader's relationship with members.* A final boundary issue is the leader's relationship with members outside of the group milieu. In part this depends on the leader's job: A group therapist in private practice, a graduate student leading a laboratory group, a psychologist in an inpatient setting all have different job expectations. Nonetheless, there are some basic guidelines that can be applied no matter what the occupation may be.

The leader should not discuss group material with members outside of the meetings. There will be occasions when the leader is approached by a member who is concerned about some group subject matter. That member should be encouraged to raise the issue during the next group session, rather than discuss it without the presence of other members. During the

first meeting, the leader can discuss his relationship expectations with the group members, stressing that he intends to honor the keeping-it-in-the-group agreement and confine his interactions with group members to the sessions. Some members approach the leader to form a special relationship, albeit unconsciously, in hopes that he will protect them within the group. Leader vigilance against forming special relationships with any group members while maintaining regard for individual needs is imperative.

GUIDING THE GROUP

While the leader constructs a safe container for the group and soothes their excessive anxiety, he must be cautious in providing direction. The group's natural capacity for self-organization should be fostered, and the group's responsibility for this organization should be recognized. Perhaps more than any other skill, practicing patience in the midst of high anxiety and disorder is the most effective leadership tool for promoting group development. The leader must allow the group to meander, at times aimlessly. This does not mean watching the group struggle hopelessly, but rather providing properly timed interventions that guide and encourage the group, not direct it.

Winnicott's notion of the child's "spontaneous gesture," which signals the mother that he (the child) is ready for separation, is at the heart of properly timed interventions. As the group develops and asserts itself, the leader must recognize and affirm the members' growing independence. This reaches a climactic point in the Confrontation stage, as power is transferred from the leader to the group. This transfer cannot take place until the group signals its readiness. Introjection of the container (the leader) occurs at this stage. The group is then freed to move voluntarily without the leader.

Sensitivity to nuance, which we take up shortly, enables the leader to detect the group's signal. The transcript in the next chapter provides an example of this signaling.

PATTERN RECOGNITION

Pattern recognition is the ability to recognize and translate individual interactions into group-as-a-whole phenomena. This ability is incrementally acquired. First, an understanding of small-group behavior is necessary. Reading and studying different theorists, watching group videotapes, and testing the accuracy of one's observations with others is good practice for acquiring this skill. The second step requires the learner to be a participant in group experiences. Not only can he observe interactions firsthand,

but he can also viscerally experience them, too. Being a group member is the best learning milieu for the future group leader. The final step in learning pattern recognition is leading groups. This is best done under close supervision and with a co-facilitator. As the potential leader acquires skills, he gradually learns to recognize the meaning of member interactions for the group as a whole. He listens for metaphor, recognizes transition opportunities, and anticipates events. After much practice, as a member and leader of groups, this ability becomes reflexive. In many ways, this acquired skill is similar to that of the chess master who, over years of practice and play, learns to recognize patterns on the chess board and not just individual chess moves.

Pattern recognition in groups is comparable to the identification of client complexes in individual work. However, it requires much greater acumen. Part of the reason is the level of noise present in the group milieu. In terms of chaos, noise means random fluctuations that deviate from the regular cycles, and torus figures, attractors, or stage attractors of the group. Specifically, noise refers to the verbal and nonverbal activity of the group, which occurs at both manifest and latent levels. Sorting through it for meaningful themes requires great skill. One means of sorting the proverbial wheat from the chaff is cultivating a sensitivity to nuance.

NUANCE

There is a delicate realm of perception referred to here as nuance. Talented group leaders exhibit this skill, and it is difficult to explain. At one level, it refers to watching everything in a group both individually and collectively. It means watching nonverbal cues such as posture, boredom, disengagement, tone of voice, as well as what it said. Nuance means more, too. David Bohm defines it as sensitivity to the subtle meanings that emerge from dialogue with others. For him, the ability to recognize subtleties is "at the root of real intelligence."[4] Peter Senge provides an overview of the distinction that Bohm makes between discussion and dialogue, which provides an understanding nuance. Discussions are interactions in which individuals are trying to influence and score points with their arguments to have the group accept their opinions or observations as "correct." The intent is to influence, not to seek, a higher or common truth. Meaning remains individually held. Discussion, although important, is not emergent. Senge interprets Bohm's meaning of dialogue as "meaning passing through the word" (Bohm, Factor, & Garrett, 1991), a flow between people in which meaning *emerges* as a result of collective dialogue.

> . . . a process is emergent between x and y if it is a pattern in the "union" of x and y but not in either x or y individually.[5]

Bohm asserts that through dialogue the whole organizes the parts. Through dialogue with one another, group members are able to access a collective wisdom or "common pool of meaning" not available to individuals. For Bohm, dialogue is emergent and generative, having a life of its own that can carry groups in directions previously unimagined. Dialogue makes collective thought coherent, like the light in our laser beam. Group leaders attuned to the subtleties of dialogue can recognize and help a group access and recognize a common meaning.

Throughout the arc, the group leader's role is to find emergent meaning. Remember group-as-a-whole phenomena is what distinguishes group work from interactions between two people. Drawing attention to the group-as-a-whole level is an early role of the facilitator.

In the descending stages, discussion occurs at the manifest or conscious level, whereas dialogue occurs at the latent or unconscious level. Once issues of concern are resolved, it is possible to create dialogue at the manifest level. In the forming stages, it is the leader's role to monitor nuance or the subtleties of emergent meaning at the latent level. As the leader draws attention to group-as-a-whole issues, he is also teaching group members about the learning potential or insight that can be gained from the dialogue at the latent level. In the ascent, when mutuality has developed, members learn to recognize the value in dialogue, and it occurs often at the manifest level.

For example, at a recent department meeting, we had a discussion of whether to buy SPSS software with a long-term contract or an annual, reoccurring contract. On a manifest level, the discussion was about the purchase of computer software. On a latent level, it might mean, "Will we invest in our department for the short term or the long term?", and, "How long will we be together?" Our department meetings are not intended for latent-level discussions, but if this were another kind of group, the leader might call attention to this deeper meaning.

Recognition of these critical moments or high-leverage points in groups is an important ability for group leaders, but the moment for prompting a transition is sensed rather than consciously observed. This is a most difficult skill for group leaders to achieve because most are oriented toward reductionistic rather than holistic thinking. Handling the multifaceted intricacies of groups requires embracing their complexity. To do this requires the leader to move beyond the linear, rational thinking of cause and effect and into the nonlinear realm. Ultimately, recognition of nuance occurs as intuition or a felt sense of the whole, a willingness to trust the "inner voice," the images, and fantasies that arise from the unconscious. Unlike more reasoned interventions, responding to the group with a felt sense will more likely entrain the leader with the group. For example, as a group leader, I may have something to say because I am feeling deeply, although cogni-

tively I am holding back and wondering if it is the right moment. Often this is an opportunity to trust my feelings and reveal them, and more often than not the group responds correspondingly. Sometimes it means learning to live with ambiguity and tolerating the attendant frustration of not knowing. In the state of not knowing, it is frequently easier to recognize high leverage points.

HIGH-LEVERAGE POINTS

A high-leverage point exists at the stillpoint, the boundary between chaos and order, stability and change. In an earlier discussion, it was referred to as a bifurcation point—the stillpoint or juncture at which the shift from order into disorder, or disorder into order occurs. Components of dynamic systems, at this point, are not quite phase locked, nor are they chaotic. For example, ice at 32 degrees exhibits these in-between stage characteristics: simultaneously melting around the edges and refreezing in the middle. The lightly shaded area in Fig. 7.1 depicts this edge of chaos or complexity.

In psychological struggles, it is experienced as a liminal point between maintaining control and letting go. This point is full of ambiguity, uncertainty, and opportunity. A small perturbation, at this point, can amplify the system into one state or another. However, if a group leader or member understands small-group behavior, and nudges the group properly at the right time and right place, that push could perturb and influence the group's movement to a new level of organization. Groups do not have to enter chaos fully to self-organize to higher levels of functioning. In fact groups or other systems that can operate effectively at the edge of chaos are

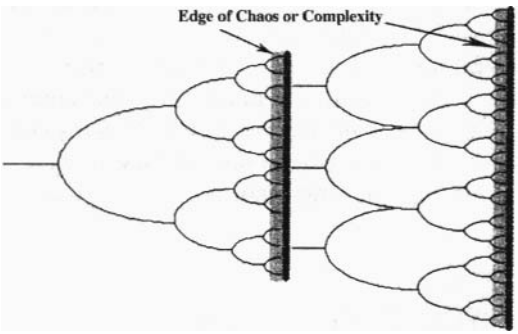

FIG. 7.1. Stability and bifurcation with complexity. From *Strange Attractors: Chaos, Complexity and the Art of Family Therapy* (p. 45), by M. Butz, L. Chamberlain, and W. McCown, 1997, New York: Wiley. Copyright © 1997 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

highly adaptable. Adaptable and healthy functioning relationships might exist at the edge of chaos, which can be depicted as the boundary between separateness and togetherness. Thus, "the repeated patterns of holding and letting go, of pulling and pushing apart, are the rhythm and breath of intimacy" in the relationship.[6] Gifted leadership is required to maintain a group at the edge of chaos because at the edge or stillpoint the group's self-organizing capacity is maximal. Recent research confirms that properly timed and subtle interventions at the stillpoint can prevent a system (i.e., group) from fully plummeting into chaos.[7] High-leverage points are non-obvious.[8] They are often small, imperceptible moments in the group. They are located in group patterns and not in details, in the group fabric and not in the individual threads. Sensitivity to nuance increases the leader's probability of recognizing these opportunities.

PERTURBATION

Although the leader will perturb the group throughout its development, perturbation primarily occurs during the ascent. Once group members have moved beyond the Confrontation stage, they are more likely to be satisfied with the group. Having survived and worked through the turbulent forming stages, the group is often content to maintain the status quo. Now the leader's emphasis shifts from containing tension to building it. Without it, the group will remain stagnant. Although the leader can perturb, he cannot impose change on the group. If he attempts to do so, it will only result in destructive group behavior. The effective leader can only invite, guide, push, cajole, perturb, and energize the group.

Leader perturbation occurs in many forms. Among them are a willingness to tell the truth, give honest and accurate feedback, and be emotionally present in the group. The leader models behavior and asserts responsibility for what he does and does not do. He encourages group members to do the same. Depending on the group circumstances, the same leader intervention may either contain or perturb the group. Process commentary is one example. Before discussing process commentary, however, it is important to make a distinction between the manifest and latent levels of group communication.

MANIFEST AND LATENT LEVELS

There are two levels of communication that operate simultaneously in groups: manifest and latent. The manifest level refers to the group's concrete level of operation, which contains the communications and stories

that are shared by the group members. For example, group members may talk of their lives, their work, their families, and other events that occur outside the group or at some other time and place.

The latent level refers to the symbolic level, which is outside the conscious awareness of group members and is often expressed through metaphor. It is the work area of the group as a whole. Attention to this level is what distinguishes group work from individual counseling. Leaders with ability to recognize the subtle shadings of group interactions or nuance are operating at this level of communication. This is the level of meta-communication. It provides information about how interactions at the manifest level are to be understood in relation to the group or the meaning that is here and now rather than there and then. It defines the relationship of members and member interactions to the group as a whole.

For example, two members are engaged in conflict. The manifest level consists of the overt communications between the two members. The latent level contains information about the relevance and meaning of this conflict for the group as a whole. It answers questions such as, "Why is this conflict between these two members taking place now? What is the importance of this conflict for the whole group? Were these individuals elected to act out conflict for the group?"

During each session, groups will fluctuate between these two levels depending on the anxiety present in the group. Movement between the manifest and latent levels is more closely examined in chapter 8, *Group Metaphors*. Comprehension of both of these levels enhances the leader's skill, particularly his ability to observe the latent level where the therapeutic potential for change is most powerful.

PROCESS COMMENTARY OR AMPLIFICATION

Process commentary is one form of amplification because it calls attention to the group in the moment. It requires the group leader to attend to both the manifest and latent levels of communication. Imagine someone in a group said, "I am going through a divorce. I wasted 10 years of my life in this relationship." Another group member then says, "But there were good years, too. You must have gained something from being together." Now imagine that the group is nearing termination so this is more than personal history. At the latent level, members might be accessing the value of the group experience for themselves and others. At an appropriate time, the leader might ask, "As we approach termination I am wondering what impact this group had on you and if you think it will be to your benefit or not?"

Process commentary recycles group communication, or output, back into the system. It allows the group to continually reexamine its output or

communications. Process comments are part of a feedback loop.[9] Individuals within the group work on particular tasks and issues that come about as the result of the interactions among members. This constitutes the forward movement of the group. Every activity within the group or interaction between or among members has potential meaning for the group as a whole. Process commentary draws members' attention to this level of meaning.

Commentary about group process can be fed back into the group directly or through observations and interpretations. During the descent, when anxiety is high and containment necessary, the leader might simply reflect member statements with little additional input. This is a simple iteration, feeding communications back into the group. It can amplify and draw attention to particular information. In the forming stages, group members will find observations or interpretations about the group as a whole threatening. Remember, group members are struggling to work out relationship issues at the manifest level. Even an initial attempt to focus the group's attention on the latent level, once a safe environment has been created, may be met with silence, confusion, and misunderstanding.

Process commentary, in the ascent, can be used to perturb the group's equilibrium in two ways: observation and interpretation. As the group matures, the leader can begin offering observations as process commentary. Although observations can perturb, they also teach. Mutual exploration, by the leader and group members, of the possible meanings of individual interactions occur when attention is drawn to the group as a whole, or latent level. The leader's task in illuminating this sometimes mysterious level of group activity is to educate the members to the additional learning potential it holds for them. Once group members have accepted the existence of the latent level, they will assume some of the responsibility for observing and commenting on it. A good method for teaching the group about the latent level is to enlist their curiosity. If the group is quiet, the leader might wonder out loud what the silence means for the group as a whole. If two members are monopolizing the conversation, other group members could be asked what this behavior might mean for the whole group. If an individual expresses boredom with the group's activities, members could be asked why the group might need to feel bored at this time.

A third method of process commentary is interpretation. Interpretation of group as a whole or latent-level meaning should be restricted, particularly during the early sessions of group. Anxiety is increased and discussion inhibited when members fear their comments and interactions are being interpreted for underlying meaning. During the ascent, the leader is free to translate events, but should not get attached to his interpretations. Sometimes the leader will find it difficult to let go of making a brilliant connection between the manifest and latent levels of the group. Yet there

are many explanations for any one event, and some may be outside of his awareness. Leaders should not get attached to being right, but allow for the possibility that there are multiple interpretations for any group behavior. Continually feeding back into the group all of its output enables it to become self-reflective and self-corrective, thus ensuring supporting the group's inherent capacity to self-organize. Many group and organizational leaders attempt to control, censor, or manipulate the flow of information, which can only result in regressive group behavior. The leader is an archivalist who chronicles the group's evolution and feedbacks their history. The more skillful the leader, the more correctly timed will be his feedback or intervention. However, even a neophyte leader continually recycling group output can effectively energize the group.

TASK AND MAINTENANCE FUNCTIONS

Two basic responsibilities that help facilitate the forward movement of groups are attending to the task and maintenance functions. The task function moves the group toward its stated goal, perhaps toward making a decision to admit another member. The maintenance function focuses the group's attention on the feelings associated with task—in this case, how group members feel about admitting a new member. Tasking directs and focuses the group toward its stated objectives or goals. It perturbs the group. Keeping the group on task is an important facilitating function. However, it should be done in tandem with attending to the affective level of the group or maintenance function. Maintenance functions are primarily containing. Too often group leaders become so absorbed in analyzing or deciphering a group task that they lose sight of the fact that there are human beings, with real feelings, involved in the process. Attending to how group members are feeling about the task at hand or about each other is critical. Maintenance lubricates the group's engine to reduce friction from group tasks and member differences. Moreover, attending to the affective level keeps members grounded in the present and helps eliminate much of the intellectualizing and abstract thinking that can distant people from one another. Disregarding the affective level of groups is one reason that many members of task-oriented organizations feel so overwhelmed, disconnected, and even discounted during group meetings.

VALIDATION AND AFFIRMATION

Two of the most effective maintenance skills are validation and affirmation. Both are closely related and serve to acknowledge the humanity of each

person. They can either perturb or contain depending on group circumstances.

Validation acknowledges the value inherent in all persons regardless of their actions or behavior. For example, if a group member is having difficulty expressing a feeling, rather than push for his feelings, it is better to acknowledge the effort. "I appreciate your willingness to struggle with this, it is sometimes very difficult to express feelings." Validation is based on the belief that all persons are essentially good and always strive to do the best they can.

Affirmation is a process of making positive declarations about a group member's actions or behavior. For example:

> Sam: (*to Sara*) I appreciate how you gave feedback to Jake. I've noticed several times, now in particular, that you give good, clear feedback. What you say and what you do match, and I marvel at that. I'm really appreciative. It's nice for me to watch that. Its feels real safe when you do that with people.

The leader will discover that much more progress is made if he utilizes these two methods. However, affirmation and validation must be genuine. The group leader should not fabricate them, but look for genuine opportunities to acknowledge the struggle, actions, and behaviors of members. Even on occasions when members appear to be sabotaging the group, searching for ways to acknowledge them may sometimes be more helpful than confrontation.

SELF-IMAGE

An effective leader must bring to the group a strong and coherent self-image. Although this may be an idealistic expectation, it is one to which group leaders must aspire. Supervision and individual therapy can be a beneficial part of group leader training. Without a mature sense of self, the leader will project his own needs onto the group. The resulting countertransference will distort the group's own emerging identity and can result in the group members' inability to tolerate frustration and hold the creative tension so necessary for independent growth. They will remain dependent on and emotionally enmeshed with the leader, never progressing beyond the Disunity stage.

Another reason a strong sense of self is so vital has to do with transference. Transference is a process where members unconsciously project onto the group leader previous experiences with authority figures, particularly parents. A common group expectation is that the leader will tell members

what to do and how to do it. Consequently, if you have eight group members, there will be eight sets of expectations about how the leader should act. With so much anticipation, the leader will quickly fall short, engendering frustration and anger from the group. The various member reactions to the leader are similar to the ways in which group members behave with authority figures in their personal lives. Focusing discussion on these similarities later in the group's development can present singular learning opportunities.

Encountering transference in the midst of forming groups can be crazy-making. Without a strong center, there might be a tendency to own member projections. When leaders feel emotionally overwhelmed by a group, it could indicate that the leader's personal boundaries have been breached. Leaders must have a healthy respect for their group role and maintain a constant vigil for projections.

CO-FACILITATION

Ideally co-facilitation should be the norm in leading groups. However, outside of training groups, few groups have the luxury of shared leadership. Economic concerns often dictate that schools, community agencies, HMOs, or private practices are unable to afford co-leaders. Nevertheless, the process of learning group dynamics is accelerated when two leaders are paired.

There is no secret in learning to work with another group leader; mainly it is accomplished through trial and error. Classroom preparation is important, yet the actual group experience is the best training format. Leaders with complementary skills should be teamed together, drawing on the strength of each of the pair members. Joining a leader skilled in task function with a strong maintenance leader provides a good working balance for the group. In addition, leaders are better able to learn in areas where they lack sufficient skills when paired with a partner who is strong in that area.

Learning when to engage and disengage with the group in accord with the movement of your partner is one of the first skills the leader will learn. Co-facilitation is a process of knowing when to lead and when to follow, much like learning to dance.

Their relationship is complementary. When one leader is actively engaged with a group member, his co-facilitator should attend to the group as a whole. Remember the two levels of group communication—latent and manifest. The nonengaged leader is responsible for monitoring the level opposite the one in which the engaged leader is operating. Also keep in mind that a leader's responsibility is to involve all members in the group process.

Leaders should monitor interactions between their partners and other group members. There is always a power imbalance between leaders and group members, so it is important that all leader–member interactions be followed carefully. The co-facilitator's monitoring role is to ensure that this power imbalance is not misapplied and that members have equal opportunity to fully express themselves.

If one leader finds himself stuck or feeling lost, he can ask his co-leader for help or clarification. If he is about to engage a member of the group and wants to make sure his partner attends to the interaction, he should ask her to do so. Not only will the leader get what he wants from his partner, but he also models open communication for the group.

Initially the safety needs of the group dictate that co-leaders present a strong, united bond. As the group matures and becomes less dependent on the leaders, they are freer to work out their differences within the group.

During the early sessions, any expression of conflict between co-leaders is best reserved for supervisory sessions if they exist. If not group leaders might seek an intermediary to mediate their differences. As the group becomes more cohesive, it is better able to tolerate leader differences. Members can sense when leaders are in conflict; pretending that differences do not exist negates members' perceptions of reality. In addition, modeling conflict and conflict resolution can serve as a catalyst for the exploration of intermember differences.

When possible, leader pairs should be gender balanced. This pairing not only provides balance for the group, but fosters images of a family. These images—positive or negative—can be explored when the group is secure.

SUMMARY

In summary, group leaders facilitate process. They secure and sustain the group, promote the common welfare of the members, and allow the group's self-organizing capacity to emerge. In many ways, group leadership can be likened to jazz improvisation. Both the musician and group leader must learn to create in real time. Although many forms of creativity, like writing, can be edited and reworked, spontaneous activities such as jazz improvisation occur as final acts. The point of similarity between the musician and group leader is in the construction of the improvisation or intervention. Both rely on two different mental components: a long-term memory for a basic set of structures, and a set of principles that apply to improvisation.[10] For the jazz musician, that means he must know chord sequences and how to employ them. Just as the jazz artist learns his craft by improvising, so too must the leader learn to lead by leading.[11]

Group leadership is also constrained by real time. Good facilitation requires immediacy. There can be no intervening mental representation or the moment is lost. When learning to lead, there is a lot of internal dialogue between the group's action and the leader's reaction as different interventions are considered. Yet as the leader acquires skill, his responses occur without the intermediate mental processing step, especially at bifurcation points where the timing of the intervention can be critical.

At other times, if the leader misses an intervention opportunity, all is not lost; groups will often recycle issues until satisfactory resolution is reached. Thus, leaders will have other, slightly different, opportunities to intervene. Good leadership requires the ability to (a) recognize group patterns, high-leverage points, metaphors, group resistance, and group stages; and (b) know when to contain or perturb, all while remaining emotionally involved in the group. It is not easy! The leader must simultaneously process and sort through his own emotions while observing the movement of the group as a whole and its members. Through practice (leading groups), he must learn to center himself, be present, and facilitate others.

Chapter 8

Women in Authority

My training did not alert me to the differences that distinguish these groups from their mixed-gender counterparts, nor did it sensitize me to the unique issues of the female in a leadership position. No wonder female students were confused when their group experiences differed from the model I was pressing them to adopt. However, after supervising all-women groups, I began to notice characteristics that appeared to distinguish them from other types of groups.

Little attention has been paid to these differences in the popular group textbooks. The absence of this discussion implies that all groups, regardless of composition—gender, sexual orientation, minority membership, or socioeconomic status (SES)—operate and develop in similar ways. The irony is striking. Books written from a male perspective that reinforce the societal view of power are used to train women whose experiences in leadership positions differ markedly from those of their male counterparts.

This led me to the relevant literature. I soon discovered that some others had reported characteristics that distinguished female-led groups from those led by their male counterparts.[1]

GENDER-ROLE FORMATION

Gender-role stereotypes influence the expectations that group members have of female leaders.[2] Women are viewed as more accommodating, trusting, fair, and empathetic. Some suggest that gender-role perceptions are heavily influenced by family structure.[3]

Fathers are the family's representatives to the external world. Their authority derives from their connection to this outside world, and they are still perceived to have responsibility for protecting the family and providing economic support. The mother's role is relegated to a secondary position of authority—responsible for the care and socialization of the children. The mother's power is derived from her coalition with the male. When the male is absent, as in most single-parent families, the woman is seen to gain the primary authority position by default, rather than by virtue of her own abilities. In groups co-led by women, there is often a search by members for a male leader. A similar phenomenon in a work group setting with a female authority figure has been observed.[4]

As a male supervisor of women-led groups, I have noticed that, during classroom processing sessions, members tend to identify me as the real group leader and seek my advice and counsel. It is difficult to overcome this predicament, but discussion of this issue and assignment of relevant reading materials help greatly in mitigating this circumstance.

Nancy Chodorow describes characteristics of the idealized mother that affect both men's and women's perceptions of the female: selflessness, total acceptance, self-abnegation, lack of aggressiveness and criticism, and nurturing.[5] These expectations of how women behave influence the reactions of group members toward a female leader, particularly when her actions run counter to those expectations. The terms *role incongruence* and *status incongruence* are used to describe the dilemma women in leadership positions face.[6] Role incongruence refers to the expectations associated with feminine roles and the resulting dissonance that occurs when women exhibit behaviors in conflict with those expectations. The same leadership behaviors that are viewed positively for men have negative connotations for women. Thus, member expectations create a dilemma for the woman. She is expected to be leaderlike while maintaining her feminine temperament. Furthermore, women leaders are more likely to derive satisfaction from assisting others rather then asserting influence over them.[7] Status incongruence occurs because the woman simultaneously occupies two roles: "female, which is the lower status of gender, and leader, which is a higher status position than member."[8] Members attempt to resolve this incongruity by distorting one position or the other. Because gender is a more diffuse characteristic, members will first tend to discount the women's leadership ability to maintain their view that women have lower status. They may "act as if someone else is the leader, try to take over the leadership themselves, or behave as if the group has no leader."[9] If ignoring the leader fails, groups will then ignore her gender. If all attempts fail, the group may then have to reevaluate many gender-related assumptions. Works by Adrienne Rich (1976), Nancy Chodorow (1999), Barbara Ehrenreich (1984), Katha Pollitt

(2001), and Carol Gilligan (1993) are excellent resources for an analysis of gender roles.

GROUP DEVELOPMENT

The early stages of group development are further complicated by member reactions to the female leader. These reactions range from ambivalence to confusion and rebellion.[10] It has been suggested that all-women groups tend to work on issues of intimacy earlier than do mixed-gender groups.[11] This concurs with my observations that higher levels of trust and safety are necessary in all-women groups before conflict can be expressed—an intimacy stage precedes conflict. Inexperience in dealing with issues of power and conflict may also inhibit the development of an all-women group.[12]

DEVALUING THE LEADER

Another phenomenon that I have personally observed and that is reported in the literature[13] is a devaluation of the group leader. Group members covertly attempt to uncover the leader's weaknesses and then console her for having them. An example illustrates this point:

> Several members of a group were . . . in concurrent therapy with colleagues of the leader. These colleagues began reporting that their patients were expressing a wish to be "helpful" to the group therapist, since she was obviously inexperienced in group leadership and probably in motherhood as well. They confided that they could not, of course, discuss their ideas about the leader's limitations in her presence for fear of hurting her feelings. Two different therapists reported that their clients had commented about them to the effect that "she seems like a good kid."[14]

The devaluation of the therapist serves several unconscious purposes: defense against ego-alien attitudes, hostility toward the leader, and quelling anxiety about the leader's perceived malevolent power. These findings were based on the direct or supervisory experience with five therapy groups oriented toward addressing "women's issues."[15]

I have noticed a similar devaluing/consoling process during observation of laboratory training groups composed of female graduate students. One of the most observable events has been the covert questioning of the facilitator's qualifications for leading groups.

In another case, a group was extremely resistant to a very competent female facilitator because she continually encouraged the group to focus on its task. The group ignored her admonitions until, out of frustration, she

expressed her anger. The group responded with confusion at her anger, attributing it to her misinterpretation of the group events. Finally, feeling exasperated and somewhat crazy in the face of the denial, the facilitator cried. Group members immediately tried to console her by telling her she was doing a good job.

WOMEN'S COLLUSION IN THEIR OWN DOMINATION

A woman's socialization may lead to her unconscious collusion to maintain a secondary authority role. She may conspire to maintain the nurturing role at the sacrifice of the group task. I was surprised to find in one university department with all male faculty that female students had been socialized to bring refreshments to the oral defense of their theses. When confronted on this behavior, it was explained away as tradition.

When women in leadership positions make reasonable task demands on the members by relinquishing their typical gender roles, members attempt to induce guilt in them. They do so by claiming the leader is "authoritarian when she is authoritative, ungiving and withholding when she is realistic, and unreasonable for expecting them to be responsible and exhibit adult behavior."[16] Further, it has been asserted that the socialization of women inhibits them from expressing anger, particularly toward males.[17] When women leaders become the objects of bitter acrimony and respond with hurt and vulnerable feelings, they often generate more anger.

The expression of conflict is difficult for many women because they have been socialized to view it as "unfeminine." Many women experience anger as hurt and disappointment, and cry or feel pain rather than express it.[18]

Although both men and women avoid conflict, women have more difficulty because of personal and social pressures. Conflict is seen as distancing behavior, and women have been socialized to value connectiveness. When conflict occurs, women leaders, like men, may experience it as a personal assault, rather than a stage-appropriate behavior and work to dissipate it.

Several strategies are offered for effectively facilitating conflict in all-women groups. First, educational sessions alerting women to the potential benefits of power struggles and conflict inherent in groups can help members understand the importance of these issues in building effective relationships. Second, group exercises or group games that focus attention on ways in which members influence one another can be instructive. Third, skill-building exercises in interpersonal communication and feedback techniques can be introduced into group sessions.[19] In all female groups, members move between idealized expectations of the leader (nurturance, acceptance, empowerment) to rejection and anger when the leader fails to

provide them.[20] In mixed groups, women's reactions to the female leader are tempered by their own relationships with males. Therefore, women in mixed groups may work to convince the male members that they are different from the leader by criticizing and rejecting her.[21]

REACTION OF MEN TO WOMEN LEADERS

Underlying the reaction of men to female leadership is a complex relationship between the psychological development and socialization of males that takes place from birth. Teresa Bernardez captures the essence of this discussion:

> . . . many males are divorced from aspects of themselves, particularly those that are early identifications with the maternal object, by a complex process of counter-identification in response to the culture's injunction against being female-like. This negative injunction with women places men in a continuous struggle with aspects of themselves that need to be warded off, and in many cases the splitting of those aspects and their projection onto women permit a temporary equilibrium. The male thus controls the female aspects of himself that he fears and devalues. The domination of women is encouraged by the culture, but its strength comes from the need of males to control and dominate the female-self in themselves. This defense is threatened when a woman in power appears to have control. Not only is the male not in control of the satisfaction of his dependency needs but he may fear the loss of control of aspects of himself that are frequently projected onto women. A woman in control is thus experienced by males in this situation as controlling them, and forcing upon them behaviors that have highly negative value for them: passivity, submissiveness, compliance, dependency.[22]

It has been suggested that men are less likely to confront a female leader because it is not masculine to fight with a woman. In addition, male fears of being castrated and rendered powerless have also been suggested as reasons for the avoidance of conflict.[23] When confrontation of female leaders by male members takes place, it is often indirect, subtle, and unacknowledged. It occurs as "covert defiance, denial of subordinancy, or attempts to seduce her out of her role."[24] Competition was also found to be diminished in mixed-gender groups led by women because they emphasize cooperation.

Women leading groups must not only address issues of conflict and confrontation attendant with the group's growing independence, but must also be cognizant of gender issues. Gender issues must be addressed when they appear in the group. Just as indirect anger is brought into the group's awareness, so too must circular references to gender issues. Sensitizing groups to these issues can help ameliorate them. Furthermore, they can

serve as a catalyst for exploring gender issues among members. Finally, keep in mind that stage development in all-women groups will be slightly altered. Women may develop more group cohesiveness before they enter the conflict period.

Chapter 9

Group Leadership: The Descent

Chapters 9 and 10 address the leadership skills necessary to navigate each of the stages in the group development arc detailed in chapter 5. Chapter 9 focuses on the leadership skills during the descent into the confrontation stage, and chapter 10 addresses those skills needed during the ascent. Example and transcripts in these chapters come from my work with graduate student training groups. These groups met between 10 and 15 sessions. Each of the student leaders had a supervisor (or I was their supervisor). The groups were oriented toward personal growth and did not have specific topics. Primarily, the groups followed a psychodynamic model, so terms like *transference* and *countertransference,* as well as *latent* and *manifest content,* are used.

In terms of process, these groups used a kind of Tavistock model, which focused on process reflections or group-as-a-whole comments. These groups were both successful and unsuccessful. Some of the groups developed more cohesiveness, whereas other languished in the beginning stages of development. In all cases, the groups were instructive for both the leader and the group members. Viewing these groups, here, through the lens of chaos theory, provides an additional perspective on the demands made on the group leader at each stage of development. Hopefully this discussion is both useful for the new group facilitator and to experienced leaders who are working to deepen their understanding of group dynamics and the art of leadership.

STAGE 1: PERFORMING

In the beginning sessions, members carefully monitor the actions and reactions of the leader to events in the group. Keep in mind that the group is just

beginning to formulate its norm of behaviors. As the authority figure, the leader is watched for clues to appropriate behavior. Members also believe that the leader can predict with a degree of certainty what will happen in the group.

Clear Communication

Because of this modeling, the leader, through example, can help establish some effective methods of communication. She should use "I" statements when she speaks, taking responsibility for what she says in the group. "You" statements should be avoided as well as "we" statements when working with a co-leader. Speak for yourself so that group members can learn to speak for themselves.

Affect

If the leader makes an affective statement, she should be sure it is a feeling that is being expressed. Too often abstract words such as *good, fine,* and *okay* are substituted for expressions of affect. Frequently, an "I feel" stem is followed by a thought or observation. Members will avoid the sometimes difficult task of identifying feelings if they observe the leader also avoiding them.

Time should be taken when expressing affect to identify exactly what is felt. Sometimes if the leader can identify the physical sensations present in her body, it can serve as a catalyst for discovering the underlying affect. A leader's request for a feeling response from a member can be strengthened if she has worked to identify her own. For example, when modeling affect, she might state "I am *worried* or I am *tense*" are more appropriate than "I don't *think* this is the direction we should be going at this time" or "The group doesn't seem to know where to go."

Anxiety

Every group leader experiences anxiety when beginning a group. Her feelings about the new group environment are no different than those of the members. However, during the initial sessions, she should hold back from sharing her discomfort with the group. This does not deny her feelings of anxiety; it simply puts expression of them on hold.

I hesitate to make this statement because I firmly believe that honest sharing is crucial for effective group leadership. However, the overriding concern in the opening group sessions is for the leader to demonstrate confidence even if confidence is not what she is feeling. If the leader tells the group during the first session that she is scared and unsure of herself,

such a statement, while true, may increase members' already high levels of anxiety. Beginning groups need to feel safety; much of that is generated by the leader. Young children depend on parents for their initial safety needs, much as the group depends on the leader.

My reluctance in suggesting that the leader reserve expression of her anxiety feelings for supervisory sessions stems from a concern that this will be read as an admonition against leaders sharing their feelings. That is not what is being advocated here. However, the group is best served in the early sessions by demonstrations of the leader's competence, not her uncertainties.

Thus, in the beginning it is important for the leader to demonstrate confidence and guidance. Providing an agenda for at least part of the group's first session can accomplish this goal. An introductory exercise or ice breaker, or other structured activity, can diminish anxiety and regulate the amount of self-disclosure from each member.

Leadership in this forming period has considerable import for the group. Much of what the leader says and does will help construct the early group norms. Perhaps at no other time in the group process, with the possible exception of the Confrontation stage, will the leader's behavior be as closely watched by group members than in this initial period.

At important junctures in the initial sessions, the leader should exercise caution. Cautiousness is a virtue in facilitating forming groups. The risk the leader takes by increasing anxiety (e.g., by requesting more self-disclosure) is to frighten members into defensive postures from which some may never recover. Some early casualties, members who leave groups after only one or two sessions, may have fallen victim to such leader enthusiasm.

STAGE 2: UNITY

The Norm of Saying "Enough"

An important norm that should be established early in the group is one that gives members permission to control the amount of their self-disclosure. To lessen anxiety, groups may single out one member and prompt that person to do much of the talking during the first session. Members keep attention focused on this person by asking him questions. Meanwhile other members are protected from having to self-disclose.

The talkative member is placed at risk because no norm has yet been established for shifting the group's attention when someone feels overloaded. The leader's role is to help members establish that norm. In the following example, notice how the leader (Brad) helps one member establish that norm for the group.

This transcript was taken from the first session of a graduate training group. Some members had been sharing bits of biographical information when Becky stated she would like to hear from everyone in the group. Notice how Brad (the leader) helps Marion establish the self-disclosure norm.

Brad: (*to Becky*) Is there someone in particular you'd like to meet or hear from?

Becky: (*laughs, pointing to Marion*) I'm kind of interested in Marion. I don't know Marion at all. (*To Marion*) You just seem kind of neat to me. I don't know why, but—

Marion: Well, I'm from Fox Wood. I grew up here. I have a B.A. degree in psychology, and I just started this program. I'm looking for a job in my field. Today I applied for a job down at Fox Wood Mental Health Center. I am waiting to hear from them in a couple of days.

Becky: What position would that be?

Marion: Mental Health Assistant

Barb: Are you pretty anxious about the job application?

Marion: I'm not real anxious. I have a pretty good possibility of getting hired. My mom works down there, and I know a couple of the people who work down there so that—I don't know if that has anything to do with getting a job or not. Also I have some good qualifications, too, to be able to do the job.

Marilyn: What kind of things would the job entail?

Marion: Hmmm. It's just basically being there for people—ah—answering the phones, and just like going around and checking on people, and see how they're doing, and talk to them, and just basically just kind of a counseling position. You don't have a title, but it's informal. You answer the phones. I'm not really sure of everything I will be doing.

Hank: You got any job experience? Are you just out of school? Just graduate?

Notice how the group moves to relieve the anxiety by exclusively directing attention toward on Marion. However, if you ask groups members about this experience, they would probably feel they had all been equally involved in self-disclosing. Much of what is happening here is outside of their awareness.

Marion: Just out of school.

Hank: Just graduate this spring, and now you started this.

Marion: I've had some informal training working at Woodland in town here. It's an abusive treatment, or abusive safe home for bat-

tered women and children. I have done some things there in the past.

Hank: Would you like to stay in this graduate program even if you get this job?

Marion: Hopefully, if everything works out.

Hank: What would you like to be doing? Would you like to be a school counselor now?

Marion: Hmmm, eventually, yea. I'd like to stick with what I'm doing now, working with women and children that have been abused because I've had a couple of years experience with it and I am just getting a good personal knowledge of it. It takes a real long time to get a really good feeling of what these women have been through in their lives. So I like to stick to that for awhile.

Hank: It is real stressful to work with these people?

Marion: Sometimes it is. Sometimes, ah, it's annoying, especially because as a volunteer I'm there, and I, I'm a crisis phone worker. I answer the phones a lot, and women will call up and just want to—want to remain anonymous—just want to talk about their problems, and it's real annoying to sit for an hour and listen to someone and it's also frustrating to try and be a helping person over the phone and just not getting a lot of things done.

Hank: Why is it important to get their names?

Marion: Well, we're there to help them, but a lot of times they're afraid to start anything, they're afraid to step forward and admit that they have been in an abusive home. And, they're afraid to do anything about it. We're just there to help them.

Hank: Well are you in a position if you found out their name would you call them back?

Marion: Hmmm. It's up to them, it's their choice to come, but we can't force them to come. . . . I guess it's their choice.

Hank: So the frustration lies more with that they don't want to do anything to change their life and you feel frustrated because you can't get them to take a step forward. Is that it?

Marion: (*restlessly*) Yea, well just the environment in which a lot of the—just over the phone if they call in—and just being a volunteer and the hours that I work, too. I can't, I can't do a lot of stuff the regular staff people do. So I always have to make referrals and—well you have to call back tomorrow and talk to someone else, because I can't do anything for you now.

Hank: So it's kind of frustrating not being able to follow through, or complete. You start the ground work and you just have to turn it over to someone else.

Brad: (*attempting to shift the focus from Marion and move it into the here and now*) I'm kind of wondering what kind of frustration is going on in the group right now, if any. I just want to check that out.

Group: (*Silence*)

Brad: I am really wondering what is going on. What's happening right now in the group?

Mark: I feel that this is a tension-reducing situation for us. We focus on something that's sort of in the past and that's outside of the group and it's a little more comfortable. It's concrete and it's easy for us to talk about.

Brad: (*trying to get Mark to own his statement*) It's more comfortable for you, Mark, to have that happen?

Mark: I don't know—maybe not for me, but I'm wondering if that's not the whole process, as far as—I'm not sure if it's more comfortable for me. (*Shifts in his seat, voice is shaky; he appears nervous, and so shifts the focus back to Marion*) I guess I'd like to hear more about how you feel now about the people you are dealing with. People who weren't able to leave their situations, weren't able to get more healthy.

Marion: I feel like maybe I haven't done the best job I could have—

Bill: (*interrupting*) You felt a certain responsibility?

Marion: Yeah. I feel responsible and I have these feelings that go with me after, after it's happened. Thinking I should have done this, or I could have said this. Maybe something I would have done would have facilitated them to come in. So I guess my feeling now about that situation would be that I maybe feel a little bit of guilt or not being adequate.

Mark: A little doubt.

Brad: (*intervenes as container*) Marion, I'm wondering how you're feeling right now about being the center of attention for this group?

Marion: I feel pretty comfortable. I feel like I'm kind of intellectualizing my talk though. I feel that we maybe should get to something here and now, and not talk about things that I've done, things that I have felt.

Brad: Does it feel like too much focus on you?

Marion: I think it would be in a few more minutes, probably.

Brad: (*Here, the leader wants to shape the norm*) How would we know that?

Marion: Uh, I suppose I could bring it up.

Brad: Say, "I've had enough," or "stop" or—

Marion: (*interrupting*) Yeah! So I've had enough!

Group: (*laughter*)

It is very important to initially help members actually phrase the words for this norm as Brad has done here. Simply leaving it with Marion, stating, "I suppose I could bring it up," is incomplete. As you notice, almost simultaneous to Brad suggesting a phrase, Marion responds. Once this norm is established, safety is increased. Members now have permission to take care of themselves.

Keep in mind that members must directly experience the establishment of a norm. Prescribing the norm is not as effective as helping group members establish it for themselves. The leader should look for an opportunity to form this norm in the first group session. It will increase feelings of safety and give members the responsibility for protecting themselves.

STAGE 3: DISUNITY

As safety increases and norms of behaviors are established, the group will begin its indirect challenges of the leader. In the initial sessions, members will often challenge the leadership, particularly when anxiety is high. The challenge occurs because members believe that leaders are responsible for controlling the anxiety in the group and making them feel comfortable.

The challenges are subtle and indirect, often appearing in metaphors. The following example occurred during the first session of a new group. The group was co-led by an experienced leader (Sally) and another in training (Mark). Although this is a clear example of an indirect challenge, the leader's response perturbed rather than contained the group. Because it was the first session, Mary and the group were pushed back.

Mary: . . . a couple of weeks ago we were in Arizona. I was looking at a program there called Family Studies, because my husband was thinking of taking a position at the university there. . . . While talking with them I discovered that if you want to go into counseling you don't even need a graduate degree. All you need is your name on the door with a little family counseling or marriage and family counseling written behind it. And that really shocked me.

To me is seems unethical to be counseling somebody without any kind of training background. What do you all think?

Mary had made several statements similar to this one in the preceding 20 minutes. Several times her gaze was directed at the inexperienced leader, as if challenging her.

Laura: I don't think you need a degree that shows you're able to help someone or able to give advice or share feelings. I don't think you need a degree to do that, but I do think you need training in counseling and knowledge of different places where you could refer them. . . . You need knowledge of the city area, and the facilities they have.

Sally: (*focusing in the here-and-now*) I'm wondering if in some way you're questioning whether the facilitators in this group—Mark or me—are qualified to lead.

Mary: (*quickly and emphatically*) Oh, no! Not at all! I'm a—I see myself as a really direct person, and if I had that kind of a problem I wouldn't go about it in a roundabout way. I would ask you directly.

Sally: So you don't have any concerns—

Mary: (*interrupting*) Oh no!

Sally: (*continuing*) About either Mark or my qualifications?

Mary: (*nervously*) I think you're highly qualified.

Mark: I wonder that, too.

Mary: (*puzzled*) Oh really.

Mark: . . . Oh yeah. I was thinking that, too. And I was thinking in particular—was wondering if you were comfortable because I—she has her doctorate and I just have my masters degree. I was wondering if—

Mary: (*interrupting*) No, not at all. It was a thing that came up a couple of weeks ago. It was really a shock to me, to think that somebody would be in a counseling practice. I'm not even thinking of this particular one—I'm not thinking of an educational environment . . .

In this example, Mary and the group would have been better served if her comments had been left alone. It was much too early in the group and too unsafe to bring this issue into the group's awareness. The leader's interventions only served to frighten Mary and push her away. A more appropriate response might have been to simply offer examples of the leader's qualifications or acknowledge that pairing an experienced and an inexperienced

leader protects the group. Either of these observations could have been offered at any time. However, to keep anxiety manageable, offering them somewhat later after Mary's remarks might be prudent. However, in the Disunity stage, when the group is safer and higher levels of trust have been established, it is more timely to bring into awareness any potential frustrations and anger with the leaders.

As the group matures, members will try out the leadership role. Generally, indirect power struggles occur among members and between the leader and members in the descent. However, on occasion a member may find herself thrust into a leadership position. The following example illustrates the difficulty members have in accepting the leader's role prematurely.

The group was in the Disunity stage. In the previous session, Molly had interceded effectively between the facilitator and another group member. Molly intervened partly because she felt the leader was too challenging of another member. For a brief period of time, she took charge and led the group. She began the following session.

Molly: . . . I feel like things went too fast for me yesterday, and maybe for the whole group, but it felt for me too much. I like—I said it felt real burdening whatever was going on so I was just kind of feeling—like—I don't want to pull back today, or just—I don't want to pull myself away from the group. . . . I feel a part and want to see what's going on but I just don't want to get out there.

Kent: (*co-leader*) It felt like you were really out there yesterday and don't want to—

Molly: (*interrupting*) Too much out, and taking too much in for me. Feeling too much responsibility or something for the group. . . . and I did feel like I was starting to be the facilitator, like taking on—trying to take your job on.

Kent: You don't want it?

Molly: No, I don't. (*Nervous group laughter*)

Kent: (*Smiling*) I don't want it back.

Molly: (*laughing*) No, I don't want it.

Kent: Who would you like to have it?

Molly: The job of leader?

Kent: (*nods*)

Molly: I would probably like you and Nancy to have the job because you are the leader (*pause*), and I would just like to kind of settle back today and be more of an observer in the group. You know kind of just—(*sighs*) you know not try and take on so much stuff. I don't think it's good for me.

Nancy: (*co-leader*) Would it seem more orderly to you if Kent and I took on the role and there would be less anxiety and less tension for the group? Took charge. I got a sense when you were talking we're supposed to take charge. We should somehow be doing more, are you thinking that? Feeling that about us?

Molly: Yeah, somewhat. Although, I feel like that's possible that you should, and yet I can see my part in that. I mean my taking on for some reason, something inside me made me want to take it on. . . . I want you guys to do it. And I guess, I guess that's what happened yesterday. . . . I didn't feel protected myself. I thought that was your job or something (*pause*).

Nancy: Do you have any anger or frustration toward him [*Kent*] that he hasn't taken on—or toward me, that's two questions?

Molly: I remember feeling more on the way home last night or as I was making sense of it all. But then too even at the group time . . . you [*Kent*] owned up. You said "You're right I was pushing Marla."

Kent: . . . You'd like me to be responsible for the members here so that it doesn't go too far?

Molly: (*Nods*) Uh huh.

Kent: And I'm responsible for the boundaries of each person here?

Molly: Yeah.

Kent: I wonder how the rest of the group feels about that?

Ali: My first thought when you say that is that I've seen you do that already with Marla. I've seen it several times you said, "well how are we going to know when to stop or how are we going to know when you're feeling bad?" I guess in that respect I see you doing that right now. (*to Molly*) He didn't do that yesterday with you, but I guess I've seen that happen, so I guess in that sense he has protected or has taken steps to do that. But I'm not sure if that's what you mean or not?

Molly: Yeah, I mean—I can see that, too. Yeah, I think he has. There were just instances where I feel I take it on myself.

Kent: (*validating her actions*) It seems to me you handled it quite well yesterday when you took that role (*leader*) on yourself.

Molly: Yeah, ah (*pause*) but I guess yesterday that's what I was feeling. I was taking on more than I really wanted to at this point. 'Cause I'm, you know, it just seems like too much. I have too much, just everything felt like a burden to me yesterday, and I went away thinking I've got enough to do without worrying about or taking care of everybody in this group and that's where that came from.

You will notice in this example how Molly had replaced the leader in the previous session and assumed the leadership position. Her struggles come from the realization that leadership means responsibility. In this session, she wants to return to being a group member, allowing the facilitator to be responsible for the group. She is also struggling with dependency issues. Nancy, the co-leader, invites Molly to express her anger toward Kent (*co-leader*), but she and the group are not quite ready. However, when anger appears in this stage in any form, the facilitators should invite its expression. The leader's skill, acumen, and mettle are tested once the conflict period is entered.

STAGE 4: CONFRONTATION

Confrontation over leadership is essential for group growth. Bear in mind that the anger and frustration is directed at the leader's group role and not at her personally. Certainly she will experience the attack on a personal level, but remember members are frustrated with her inability to meet their leadership expectations.

As member expectations go unmet, the level of frustration and anger in the group builds; without adequate expression, the group's development will cease. Many groups never advance beyond this point.

ATTACK ON THE LEADERSHIP: MODELING THE EXPRESSION OF ANGER AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As previously discussed, attacks on the leadership are over issues of power and control, dependence and independence, and transference. The group's frustration with the leader's inability to meet their expectations, coupled with their counterdependency needs, is a prime mover in the eventual confrontation with the leader. During this period, members must confront their capacity to lead.

Norms for the expression of anger and conflict resolution that are established during the Confrontation stage are authored by the leader. As the frustration over leadership increases, expression of indirect anger occurs. The metaphors that members bring to group often reflect their discontent with the leadership.

Keep in mind that no matter how effective the leader is, she will not satisfy the expectations of all members. Her task, then, during this period is to encourage members to voice their anger. This is a difficult, but essential, task. Generally groups avoid conflict. They withhold, deny, and diminish their anger. Nevertheless, once the group has moved beyond the initial ses-

sions and a minimum level of cohesiveness has been established, the leader must bring about the direct expression of anger. Once anger surfaces and can be tolerated and expressed, the attack on the leader begins.

Recall that the basis of the attack is the leader's role in the group, but interestingly it is also connected to some blind spot in the leader's personality. The group may feel the leader is uncaring, too emotive, too distant, not strong enough, and so on. The issue they choose has a basis in reality, so the leader must remain open to the feedback while remaining cognizant of the developmental necessity of the conflict. Initial reactions by the leader might be defensive. She might feel unjustly accused, hurt, or angry that the members have not appreciated her efforts on their behalf. However, it is the leader who has empowered the group to relinquish their dependency on her by constructing a safe enough environment in which to challenge her. During the conflict period, the leader should remain centered by expressing her feelings. The group can handle it. This is a critical time. When attacked, the leader must push back. As the group asserts itself and takes charge of its own destiny, the leader must remain steadfast in the face of their challenge. Her role must not be relinquished without a fight. It is only through engagement with the leader that the group can directly experience its own power.

Members must prove to themselves that they are capable of leading. The most effective means by which they can apprehend their power is by overthrowing the leader. Members must earn the mantle of leadership by dethroning the king or queen. So the leader must remain firm and engage the group in a straightforward manner. Actualization of the group's power rises from the heat of conflict while strengthening the cohesiveness among members.

The battle ends when the leader sheds a little blood (figuratively). Bear in mind that until this point group members have unrealistically characterized the leader as superhuman. You will recall that her earlier roles as container and protector were to ensure member survival during the anxiety-filled beginning sessions. Now members must see her more realistically if they are to govern themselves.

Shedding her blood means revealing her humanness through the expression of feelings and, perhaps, some personal disclosure that demonstrates her fallibility. This moment represents the stillpoint in the arc. When successfully navigated, the group power base shifts from the leader to the members.

CO-LEADER'S ROLE

If there is a co-leader, he must facilitate the attack by monitoring the interaction between the leader and group member(s) involved. The importance

of this cannot be overemphasized because the norm for future conflict-based interactions is forged here.

Attention to the affective level is essential. The all-important question "How are you feeling (about what is happening)?" must be asked. Moreover, a feeling response is needed from the individuals involved before the group can continue. It is the co-leader's role to ensure that all individuals (including the leader) involved in the confrontation are connected to their feelings. As a protective mechanism during this turbulent time, it is sometimes automatic to disconnect from one's feelings. Time must be taken to allow everyone to feel the impact of the encounter. Many groups get stuck at this point!

There are three reasons for identifying and expressing feelings: (a) to ensure that each member is fully aware and experiencing the ongoing interactions, (b) so that everyone can observe that neither the leader nor the member(s) involved were hurt by the encounter, and (c) it demonstrates that group members are strong enough to tolerate conflict and, by assumption, capable of handling any other difficult issues the group may confront.

After the confrontation, all members should be addressed to determine their affective states. This may seem a bit tedious, so let me clarify its importance. The reason for ascertaining feeling levels from each member is to ensure that they are processing their feelings about the interaction. During times of strife, some members may disconnect from their feelings. Then at some later period, usually long after the group has concluded, they experience that affect. The (co)leader's role is to help members feel them now so that everyone can process their reactions with one another and complete this experience as close to the actual event as possible.

Feelings generated by conflict are usually frightening, so individuals tend to suppress their expression. The leader must remain patient. This stage in the group's development cannot be rushed. The conflict-resolution norm that gets developed here will become the model for all future conflict-based interactions in the group. The leader should proceed slowly! During this period, the group learns that it can survive disunity, anger, and even hostility. Although it is frightening, group members will come to realize that the group did not disintegrate during conflict.

A common fear associated with the expression of anger is that it drives people away. What members will experience is that direct and honest expression of feelings, even anger, draws people together. Once the expression of negative feelings has been accepted, group members will feel safer to share more intimate feelings. The attack on the leadership may take place over several sessions. The leader must commit to work in this stage until the conflict is resolved.

Attacking Both of You

In situations where there are two leaders, the group may attempt to lump them together. This must be avoided. When co-leaders notice that group members are referring to both of them as "you," one leader must intervene and have them speak directly to the other. If both leaders get caught in the conflict, no one will be available to facilitate it. Groups will want to resolve relationships with both leaders during this stage. It should be done one leader at a time.

Member Reactions

During the attack, members' roles will often mirror their previous life experiences with anger. Some will be confrontive and lead, others will actively follow, and a few may mildly attempt to defend the leader. In many cases, the stance they take can be directly traced to their previous experiences with authority figures, most notably parents. All members, even the silent ones, to some extent are engaged in the attack and invested in the leader's eventual overthrow. Members who are more familiar (notice I did not say comfortable) with expressing anger will usually lead the confrontation. The predominant feelings during this period of chaotic activity are frustration, anger, and confusion.

Leader Feelings

During confrontation, the leader may experience a great deal of self-doubt. She may question her competence and even her desire to lead groups. She may even feel failure. Her self-esteem may be bruised. These are common feelings experienced by most novice (and many experienced) leaders at this stage in the group's development. This is difficult. Although a leader can understand how necessary this crossroad is in the group's evolution, it is still painful.

Throughout the stormy period, the leader might be confronted with many personal issues that are unclear and unresolved. However, what is paramount are her feelings about anger. Is she comfortable with the expression of anger? Can she express anger clearly? In many cases, the answer is no. What to do then?

The first course of action is to address this concern in supervision. Some questions to be answered are: How and from whom did the leader learn anger? Was previous anger associated with negative events? How does the leader feel about engaging in conflict? What happens when conflict arises in relationships with friends? Family? Is it ignored, diminished, or smoothed over? How did the leader's parents deal with anger?

This is one of the reasons that new group leaders should be in supervision if possible. Not only will the leader have to confront her feelings about anger, but many other feelings will arise during this tumultuous period.

She may find herself angry with certain group members, cool toward others, and drawn toward some. Often these feelings are based on countertransference. Her reactions to some members are triggered by feelings that may have occurred with similar persons in her personal life. Edwin Singer categorized countertransference behaviors into three groups: "reactions of irrational 'kindness' and 'concern'; reactions of irrational hostility toward the patient; and anxiety reactions by the therapist to his patient."[1] He noted that these reactions could occur either in a waking or dream state. Other kinds of feelings may occur throughout the contentious period.

Confusion

The leader often experiences a lot of confusing feelings, and how she handles them will affect the group. Supervision is necessary, along with her willingness to openly address these issues. The more unclear and muddled her feelings are, the less able she is to lead the group.

What does the leader do in the group when she is confused? She must center herself by commenting, "I feel confused." Surprisingly, this simple statement can help get her back in touch with the group. The danger occurs when she attempts to suppress her bewilderment, which only leads to more confusion. Her energy becomes focused inward instead of on the group's activities. Better to opt for expression rather than suppression.

Part of the difficulty the leader may have is exposing her underbelly—by acknowledging that she does not know what is happening. Keep in mind it is impossible to attend to all the simultaneous action that occurs in groups. Leaders do not have to be experts or right, but they do have to be emotionally present in the group. Besides, just getting present can take a lot of work. When the leader has difficulty focusing on what the group is doing, it usually indicates that some blind spot in her personality has been activated.

Boredom

A common sign of avoidance behavior is boredom. It can signal resistance to some aspect of the group's activity. It might also indicate that countertransference feelings are present. The quickest way to let go of boredom and find out what is behind it is to express it by saying, "I feel bored." Expression of boredom in the group is appropriate, but the place to explore countertransference is in supervision.

When the leader is emotionally present and the group is operating in the here and now, boredom seldom exists. The leader often helps the

group get present by addressing her boredom. A process comment such as, "What are we avoiding?" can help refocus the group's attention. Group boredom usually masks an issue that is too sensitive or unsafe for the group to address. If so, pay attention to the metaphors for clues and directions on how to proceed.

Tiredness

One of the most frequent reasons beginning group leaders give for their inability to stay present in the group is tiredness. Reasons such as, "I had a busy day, I didn't get much sleep last night, I had to work all day," are the most commonly heard justifications. Although each of these reasons may be partially or wholly correct, the leader needs to explore the possibility that she may be avoiding something in the group.

Is there something she does not want to address? Is there a member she is avoiding? If the leader can remain present in the group, she will find it an energizing experience. Often the tiredness she brought with her will quickly dissipate. Tiredness should be viewed and considered as resistance. Even if it turns out that the leader was just plain worn out, the group is better served.

Fear

Another feeling associated with leading groups, particularly in the descending stages, is fear. Fear is common. The leader might be reluctant to pursue the feeling for fear of uncovering something dreadful. I have yet to see a group leader uncover anything dreadful. There certainly are some painful issues that have surfaced, but never anything that was debilitating. Besides it turns out that letting go of the fear is quite an exhilarating experience.

The leader's willingness to address personal issues both inside and outside of the group will have a positive impact on the group's progress. As the leader expands her personal boundaries, so too will the group.

Stuck

Most often when the group is stuck, something is not being said. Someone is withholding something from the group. No matter how the group tries to resolve this impasse, it cannot and will not until the hidden issue is made known.

When the group is stuck, the leader should work to stay present (centered). Metaphors can provide information about the group's circumstances. The group should be encouraged to confront the impasse by asking, "What isn't being said?" "What am I withholding?" Scapegoating may occur and draw the leader's attention from the real issue. The leader must

examine her role and talk with her supervisor about providing answers to questions like these: What is she unwilling to share with the group? What is inhibiting her? Whatever the issue, it will affect the group's level of functioning. The leader should work to resolve it.

Being Right

When group members attack the leader, she might find herself locked in a struggle trying to convince members to subscribe to her view of reality. If so it is a no-win situation. Being right consumes a great amount of energy at considerable expense to the group. There are always competing views of reality, each one quite legitimate. Being right is about proving someone else wrong. Quite frankly, who cares who is right?

When this occurs, the leader might be covering up some insecurities about what is happening in the group. It is more honest to be insecure than to be right. If she finds herself invested in being right, she should step back and disengage. Let the other person be right. She can offer process commentary on the dynamics of the power struggle with her energy. When groups remain stuck, a member might be singled out for blame. This can occur as scapegoating.

Scapegoating

There are at least four situations in which the scapegoating response is evoked. First, feelings of frustration and anger at the leader may escalate within the group before appropriate norms for their expression and resolution have been established. The group will likely direct those feelings toward one of its members. This occurs early in the forming stages. Second, authoritarian leadership, a style in which the leader imposes her will on the group, will often elicit a scapegoating response. Third, groups in which there is unresolved conflict between the co-leaders will usually result in a scapegoated member. Fourth, where there is incongruence between the leader's verbal and nonverbal behavior, scapegoating will occur.

Scapegoating serves to focus attention away from the source of discrepancy or conflict. The scapegoat is often selected based on minimal information. This can be any incident that the group will dramatize out of proportion to the actual event.

The member who is selected as scapegoat often occupies this position in his family of origin and is quite familiar with the role. The inability of group members to comment on this dysfunctional behavior in the beginning sessions is similar to the inability of young children to comment on their parents double-binding communications. Parents, like group leaders, are imbued with survival value.

When scapegoating occurs, the focus of attention is constantly directed at one member. The leader may unconsciously collude by facilitating interactions between that member and other group members with little regard for the scapegoated member's feelings. An inability to empathize with the scapegoated member should signal the leader that some blind spot in her personality may have been activated.

Scapegoated Response

The scapegoat will be unable to understand the nature of the anger. He will feel overwhelmed and confused by the group's attack, and his confusion will elicit further attack by other group members. Without intervention, this can have damaging psychological effects on group members. Several years ago, I was asked to observe a few sessions of a training group that was stuck and experiencing, I was told, strong resistance from one of its members. For two weeks, I observed the group in action from behind a one-way mirror. It was readily apparent to me that one of the members, Judy, was being scapegoated.

The members were angry and frustrated with her inability to express feelings about the group experience, which they interpreted as fear. Her response to their inquiries and badgering was that she felt fine. However, her actions belied her statements. She sat with her legs pulled under her. Her voice was shaky, and she avoided eye contact with the others. Of course she was afraid; the entire group's attention was focused on her!

The two leaders participated in the badgering. There was no evidence of support for Judy, nor was there any apparent understanding of her position in the group. The group would attack, demand that she express a feeling, then retreat out of frustration. Judy was feeling crazy and was so defended that it was impossible for her to risk sharing any feelings with the group.

I met with the leaders after two sessions and pointed out to them what I thought was taking place. They were dumbfounded. I focused our discussion on the relationship between them, and after some effort I uncovered an area of conflict.

Peggy was frustrated by Tim's inability to demonstrate a firm resolve. She felt he was always backing down in the group, changing his position, so that neither she nor the group ever knew where he stood or what he was feeling. He never showed any backbone. Peggy felt she had to be strong for both of them.

Tim became angry at what he characterized as her dictatorial manner. He felt she was inflexible, and he was tired of her constantly monitoring his behavior. The discussion became heated as Peggy and Tim confronted their feelings about one another. After airing their feelings, Tim and Peggy were more understanding of each other's leadership style.

In the course of the ensuing conservation, Tim revealed that he was intimidated by Peggy's style and felt fearful of her. He gave specific examples of her behavior, which colored his perception. She was taken aback that those behaviors could be construed in such a manner, but remained open to the possibility that his feedback was grounded in reality. They agreed to discuss their encounter with the group.

During the following session, they shared what they had uncovered with the members. There was a noticeable difference in the group; even Judy appeared to relax, stretching out her legs. As the underlying conflict was exposed, her scapegoated role was no longer needed. Each of the group members had an opportunity to learn from the experience.

The suppressed conflict had been deflected onto Judy—a role I suspect she had occupied at other times in her life. The group focused on Judy as if it were her fear that was blocking it from continuing. The projection became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Judy became fearful of the group's accusations. Once the conflict between the leaders was exposed, the group was free to openly examine their dilemma.

If the leader believes that a member is being scapegoated, she should ask herself the following questions: "Am I avoiding anger? Am I directing the group too much? Is the group afraid of me? Am I afraid of the group's confrontation? Do I have empathy for all of the group members?" Most important, she should talk it out in supervision.

STAGE 5: DISHARMONY

When the Conflict Stage Ends

The encounter with the leader ends after revelation of her humanness. One of the first signs that the attack on the leadership is complete is the open expression of intermember conflict that has been brewing since the first meeting. Once members realize they can survive conflict, and norms for its expression and resolution have been established, they move quickly to resolve their differences.

In facilitating member–member conflict, leaders should remember to process each interaction to completion by soliciting feelings from those involved. The intent is not too evoke a particular affect, but rather to ensure that participants are in touch with their feelings as they encounter one another.

Raising affect to a conscious level ensures that members are able to stop the process when they are feeling overwhelmed. It helps limit the possibility of members being psychologically injured.

The experience of being engaged with members who are disconnected from their feelings can be frightening. The leader might find herself taking

care of them by ensuring that what she says to them is phrased in terms that she perceives they can handle. When that happens, the opportunity for mutually honest dialogue diminishes.

One remarkable event that occurs shortly after the attack on the leader is completed is the effort by group members to inquire whether she is okay. This is another signal that responsibility for the group has shifted from the leader to the members. They are now inviting her to join their group as a member/leader. They now view her as more human, having relinquished some of their unrealistic expectations about her capabilities. During this transition period, members continue to seek the leader's advice. Yet more and more they will turn to one another for direction as members assume responsibility for the group and, in turn, for the changes they will make in their own behaviors during the ascent.

Much of the leader's work is complete once conflict has been resolved. Her role in preparing a safe environment, in which members were encouraged to face and then relinquish their dependencies, is now complete.

Members now assume many of the leadership duties. During this phase, they begin to assist in facilitating group interactions. The leader can now focus her energies on preparing the group for the Harmony and Performing stages. Although the leader will never be regarded as having an equal relationship with the group members, she will be accorded quasi-member status. This means she is free, if she chooses, to share more personal information about herself. Now her role is that of consultant.

The conflict period in group development is difficult to complete for a variety of reasons. Many times the group is time limited and there are too few sessions to form the foundation needed to resolve this stage. Occasionally the group leader is poorly trained and fails to understand the role of conflict and conflict resolution. Groups are continually losing or adding members so that a stable base is never established. In each case, these groups will never reach the Disharmony stage and will continually be characterized by expressions of indirect anger, member tardiness, and absenteeism.

The conflict period in a group's development can be compared to the adolescent period of childhood, when young people are moving into adulthood. Adolescents must eventually separate from parents and assume responsibility for their lives by adopting their own rules of behavior and developing values that reflect their own personalities. This transition period is chaotic for families.

Adolescents might begin challenging existing rules by staying out later than permitted, wearing outrageous clothing or hair styles, and listening to loud and usually annoying music as a means of individuating from the family. Parents may respond to these behaviors by attempting to add more controls, which usually elicits more acting-out behavior. Many parents view the children as extensions of themselves and experience great difficulty

with separation. This transition period is filled with anxiety and anger as children move toward independence and parents struggle with letting go.

There is no easy resolution to this phase. Adolescents must do battle with their parents. Their independence must be earned; it cannot be given to them. Adolescents, like group members, need predictable figures with whom to do battle. Parents should understand that the conflict present during this period is necessary for the child's development and does not reflect on them as bad parents. This is also true for groups and group leaders.

The conflict stages give members the opportunity to resolve their safety and dependency needs. This period enables the group to renegotiate many of the earlier norms set by the leader. The earlier boundaries that were established by her can now been adopted by the group. Structure has been established, members feel imbued with their own power, and a sense of genuine allegiance to the group has emerged. A need for independence and expression of individuality now appears. The focus now shifts to fulfilling those needs.

Chapter 10

Group Leadership: The Ascent

SHOWDOWN WITH THE LEADER: CONFRONTATION

As the group moves through the Confrontation stage and into the ascent of the arc, there are additional requirements for the leader. This chapter includes a more detailed transcript of Stage 4—Confrontation—and discusses the leadership skills needed to navigate the stages of the ascent: Disharmony, Harmony, and Performing.

Once the group has progressed to Stage 4, conflict openly surfaces and challenges toward the leader occur. Those challenges, necessary for further group development, occur differently in groups depending on the characteristics of the leader. In the following example, this leader is challenged because he has failed to show sufficient feeling during the forming stages. In another group, the confrontation could center on the leader showing too much affect. This example highlights the difficulties facilitators face when confronted with an issue that is outside their awareness. In this example, Bill (co-leader) becomes defensive and thwarts the attack. Many groups and organizations never move beyond this level of development. Without the assistance of his co-facilitator, this group may never have progressed beyond this stage. Notice how the co-leader, Kate, recognizes the beginning of the scapegoating process and redirects the group's attention and attack toward her co-leader. Keep in mind that although certain members may lead the attack and others hold back, each member represents the group's voice. Different group members give voice to different options at bifurcation points during the encounter. It should be noted that a transcript is a verbal record and does not capture the multiplicity of emotions that are

swirling around the group. The analysis is provided throughout the transcript. It is speculative and attempts to frame the confrontation by examining possible underlying psychological issues. This example is also used to illustrate how groups move from one level of organization to another. As the group becomes more chaotic, the stretching (movement away from one stage) and folding (movement back toward the previous stage) becomes evident. The group's stretching and folding motion depicts the turbulence (energy) necessary for growth and development. Tracking the motion over time would yield a pattern of a strange attractor.

Kelly: . . . I can feel some of the same things that Mary feels. Ah—I find myself feeling a little bit afraid of Bill or intimidated or something. Maybe it's because outside of the group you're (*to Bill*) real spontaneous and outgoing, and it kind of scares me a little bit. So I was just, I feel kind of the same things Mary does, and in the group you seem—umm—a little bit distant. So I don't know. (*pause*) I don't really know what else to say. I just wish I could get to know you better and just feel more comfortable knowing you as a group leader and as a friend (*pause*).

The group confronts Bill, the co-leader, on his emotional distance from the group. The group feelings are intensified because Bill is perceived differently outside of the group. Kelly is hesitant as she begins the attack, which is typical member behavior at the start of this stage. The group is beginning to enter the critical apex of the arc. Progression beyond this point will require that the group members tolerate upset, conflict, and often confusion. Good leadership is necessary to help members navigate this critical period in group development. The group is now moving into a period of significant instability (stretching). As it moves further from equilibrium, different choice or bifurcation points will begin to appear that offer group members future avenues of development. Skilled facilitation is necessary to contain the group's anxiety until it can resolve the conflict with the leader(s).

Kate: (*moves quickly to facilitate the interaction between the group member and her co-leader*) It sounds like you're talking about some of what Mary was saying, too, that if you could get him emotionally connected to you that would feel better.

Kate, as co-leader, moves to assist the group in focusing the attack. Her assistance can also strengthen the group's resolve to continue.

Kelly: Yeah. (*pause*) Maybe it's my own defenses or something too that blocks up the feelings. I don't want to say that you're [*to Bill*] doing it or it's just a matter of time to get closer, but I do have these feelings. I know, I think with time they'll fade away. I hope they do.

Kelly retreats. It is difficult for her to confront the leader. She even attempts to soften or take back her observations by claiming them as her own. Movement is uneven as the group vacillates between its current equilibrium state and a new, yet undetermined one. Pressure to accept any resolution to the ensuing anxiety is greater during this period in the group's development than at any other time.

Kate: Would it be more comfortable if they did sort of fade away, and you didn't have a want or need from him?

Kelly: (*nodding*) Yeah. I don't like to be expecting you [to Bill] to be a certain way, for me, because you should just be yourself—and, so that's why I just—I don't want to tell him [to Kate] that it's anything, that you [to Bill] do anything it's more myself. (*Kelly continues her retreat even rescuing Bill.*)

Bill: I also feel my part in that, and feel that your feedback is accurate. I think that groups, this group is stressful for me and being in a facilitator role offers me an opportunity to hide more that I might otherwise . . . and that is comfortable, because it's difficult for me to show affect at times, particularly on demand. When that happens it's a reaction that causes me to stop and I get real cognitive . . . and kind of defensive and protective of myself.

While Bill acknowledges her feedback, he also deflects it. He can see that he is defended, but at this point can only comment on it. He is also telling the group that he doesn't want to be confronted ("particularly on demand"). He might be expressing a fear of emotional intimacy. His response is entirely cognitive.

The initial group movement generated by Kelly's challenge to Bill has almost been negated by this point, returning the group to its previously stable position (folding). However, the system has signaled its capacity for movement into possible new areas of development. Kate is attuned to this subtle signal and has responded by inviting the group to move forward.

Kelly: I can understand. Showing your feelings on demand. They're not true. So I don't want to demand anything from you.

Bill: At the same time, I'm also aware that I demand that of you. As I do of each of you in the group: that you are congruent; that you attach affect to your statements; and, feel, too. So I'm aware that perhaps I'm not willing to do it. So I think your feedback on that point is very accurate. . . .

Bill pushes the group back again.

Kate enlists the aid of the strongest female member of the group by asking Ann how she feels. This is a choice point for Kate. She might have chosen here to help the group by attending to Bill's lack of affect, helping him get in touch with his feelings. However, Kate may also be hesitant to take Bill on directly,

too. This is one of several bifurcation points that begin to appear in this group. At some point, movement beyond one of these critical junctures will ensure that the group cannot return to its previous state. However, at this point, the group is at the precipice of the vortex and is still quite capable of retreating. However, critical mass is slowly building as Ann now joins Kelly in the confrontation.

Ann: (*Identifies the essence of this attack. Bill is disconnected from his role as leader*) Well, I can relate to Kelly's statement. I feel that in the group you're [to Bill] the one we know the least, and that makes me feel bad. It seems like that the primary thing that's happening is the facilitator role is here and the person really isn't. I guess that's what bothers me a lot. Because I feel that everyone of us is kind of up front and revealing real emotion. And, I feel that your (to Bill) emotions are kind of within. So that's what's causing me some distress today.

Ann picks up the attack. The group is perturbed again.

Kate: (*to Ann*) What is it that you want from Bill today? (Kate encourages Ann and focuses the confrontation.)

Ann: (*cautious, and avoiding direct confrontation by demanding Bill show affect*) I guess reaction on a feeling level. Not to me particularly. I don't at this point think I need a reaction on a feeling level, but for those who need it. I know it just doesn't come naturally, but that's the frustration. I feel . . . If you [*Bill*] were totally relaxed in our group than you would just be natural. . . . I feel that you're not comfortable with us. I'd like everybody to be comfortable, that's my bias, that's my problem.

Ann makes an indirect request for a feeling by asserting that others may need it from him.

Kate: So you want to know if he's comfortable here, or how he could get comfortable.

Ann: Well, feeling I think. I think if you [*Bill*] felt a part of us that you'd just be more than the facilitator in charge of us, be yourself.

Mary: . . . what a conflict that is.

Ann: (*nods*) Yeah.

Mary: (*to Bill*) I can appreciate where you're at right now.

Ann: (*nods*) Yep!

Mary: . . . I'm not saying it well, but I think there is a fine line there. 'Cause personally I want to keep Bill the facilitator and I think I can respect his wish to, to at times or whenever draw back on

affective things. . . . I can respect that. (*To Bill*) Even though I want a feeling response from you. I was okay with you saying it just wasn't there. I mean all of a sudden I understood. I didn't take that personal. I found, at first, I was taking that so personal—a—I was okay with that. I really was. I mean I respect that because there are times that you [*to group*] do get to put your affect aside or something for awhile. And really you know every one of us can do it. Look what Doris did for me. She gave me a hug, that's affect. She gave it to me so it's not like Bill has to do everything.

Mary follows with what is probably a realization, albeit unconscious, that dethroning the leader, seeing him as human, and giving up the perceptions of him as omnipotent means that group members must take charge. However, if you keep the leader, then you relinquish your power. During the Conflict/Confrontation stage, members vacillate between dependence and independence. Gender expectations might be at play here. Mary might be willing to allow the male leader to withhold his feelings while females have been expected to share. The group partially recognizes that they can lead and attend to one another themselves. Overall they are rationalizing the leader's behavior and avoiding anger. Another critical choice point appears. Movement beyond this point would plunge the group into the vortex. This point is an example of an edge of complexity or stillpoint in a system. The group teeters between one state and the possibility of another while avoiding total chaos. A very small push by the leader or another member at this critical point could have dramatic effects. Those leaders with very keen perception and good intuition (nuance) would sense this opportunity.

Kate: You sound pleased to me that all your hopes don't have to lie with one person, that it can get spread out in here.

Mary: It is a relief. Because what I found myself doing was in a conflict—putting it all on Bill or you and feeling all this responsibility in myself for some crazy reason. . . . I see everyone having parts—so much to offer—and as a group we all have our part. I feel really good about this group.

Mary deflects the anger and distracts the group, urging them to stay away from it ("feel good").

Group: (*silence*)

Jill refocuses the attack and escalates it.

Jill: (*to Bill*) . . . But I guess I need to say something else, too. And I feel bad about it (*crying*) because the exchange between Mary and Bill was real good for you [*to Mary*]. [*To Bill*] I'm not sure

about you, because you don't show it. What Kelly said and Ann said I feel really bad. They've given you permission to behave like that. I feel that they should, and we should all let people be here how they want to be. Yet, I'm really angry at you for that because you're expecting us to give of ourselves and I don't feel that you are. So I'm angry at you.

Her point that he expects them to act in way that he is not willing to act is the crux of much of the dissatisfaction and anger with group leaders. However, their early role as the group's protector does not allow them to show much vulnerability. Hence, they inevitably find themselves caught in this dilemma. Jill directly expresses her anger! The group is moving more rapidly between stability and possible change as you can observe from the short time frame between their retreat (Mary's statement above) and advance (Jill's statement). This increased fluctuation provides the necessary energy to propel the group forward. Kelly, Ann, and Jill now comprise the growing critical mass necessary to propel the group forward.

Kate: You sound angry, like you're not getting enough emotion from him personally here.

The co-leader focuses on Jill's anger as a mean of directing the attack. Again she is at a bifurcation point. Bill has been silent and has been indirectly and directly confronted. Kate could attend to Bill here and get him involved, feeling, and back in the group. But she chooses to encourage Jill, which might mean she is avoiding Bill or abetting his withdrawal or trying to empower the group.

Jill: (*hesitant and backing down*) But I understand that that's him and [to Bill] I understand that that's you, and if you don't want to do that, I guess I don't think that you should have to. You know so I see both sides of the coin there. . . . I guess I want to know you. It bothers me that we don't see that here, and I don't know. I am struggling with that. I understand it, yet I don't like it. And that's selfish of me I guess and I don't know. I'm feeling lots of different things. . . .

Another example of the uneven movement during the attack Members move forward, then retreat. The leader's reactions are carefully monitored by the group members. Stretching and folding

Kate: Because so much has been stirred up in you?

Jill: (*crying, nods*)

Jill's emotional response to this confrontation indicates the powerful emotions that are evoked when confronting the group leader. Particularly, when the leader remains distant, and unable to respond empathetically.

Mary: I feel that too, really lots. . . . I think what you (*Jill*) did today is really—you took a risk.

Jill: . . . It feels better to get it out if nothing else.

Mary: I'm just starting to realize how capable everyone is here. You know I think I was doing a lot of underestimating of people and myself and all of a sudden I realize that.

Mary diverts the attention away from the leader to other members to reduce group anxiety. The attack can be directed and focused, but it cannot be forced. Members with proper guidance will move at a pace commensurate with their feelings of safety. The co-leader's role is to continually invite them to move forward. As with many of the interactions that take place in groups the spokesperson, in this case Mary, speaks both for herself at the manifest level and for the group at the latent level. Her hesitancy reflects the caution of the group as a whole.

Jill: . . . I really feel better having talked. . . .I feel more in control. I can talk again. I feel better.

Jill is relieved that the attention has been shifted from her confrontation with the leader. The group moves on to discuss the lack of affect from other group members, and after about 40 minutes returns to Bill, who has sat quietly during this period. The group moves to invite him to join them. On the manifest level they are asking him to participate in the group. On the latent level they are asking him to reveal himself and join them as equals.

Jason: [*to Bill*] I'm wondering if you're alright?

A male member now requests Bill's involvement.

Bill: Yeah. I've felt excluded for the last 40 minutes and not really able to participate or speak—I've been so aware of the time and the lights. I have felt very much out of the group, disconcerted . . .

Bill refers to the videotaping, which may explain part of his reluctance to reveal himself. He continues avoidance behavior.

Kate: You need anything?

Bill: No, thanks for asking.

Jill: Are you angry with me?

Bill: (*controlled*) No, I think your feedback was accurate, appropriate.

Mary: Do you feel like I'm pushing you out again? I feel like I did. . . .

Ann: (*to Bill*) . . . I want Bill to know I really do like you. I don't want you to construe my feelings as being negative toward you.

The group is inviting him back. He remains distant. Jill wants to make sure she has not displeased the "parent." Mary, too, wants approval for her actions.

Ann joins them. Again you witness the tremendous power that is projected onto this leader. His withdrawal and silence increases the group's anxiety and manipulates the group to his side. Group stability remains fragile. A small nudge at this point could send the group tumbling into chaos.

Bill: I didn't. Thank you for that.

Jason: It's almost time to go. Bill said he felt outside the group. [to Bill] Are you still feeling that way?

Bill: Yeah. I'm feeling a little outside of the group.

Bill is almost pouting here because the "children" have challenged him. Keep in mind that a blind spot in Bill has been activated and he cannot see what effect his behavior is having on the group. Kate's help is needed here. Jason has temporarily assumed the leader's role, even to the extent that he is monitoring the time boundary.

Jason: Anything we can do?

Bill: (with no feeling) . . . Thank you for asking, Jason. I feel I have an invitation to come back when I want to come back.

Jason: Okay.

Jill: (irritated) Does that mean you're choosing to be outside of the group today?

Jill's anger rises and she confronts Bill. His unwillingness to rejoin the group allows him to retain power.

Bill: Well, no. I don't think I was choosing to be outside of the group, and I feel I've had several invitations now to come back. . . .

Mary: I want you to return very much.

Mary is firmly ensconced in the placater role. Remember she also reflects the group's hesitancy to confront Bill.

Kelly: I do, too. That's probably why I mean, all of us have expressed our feelings toward you because we want to get to know you.

The session ends with the facilitator still outside the group. Anxiety remains high because no resolution of the conflict has occurred. Shortly after the next session begins the co-leader confronts Bill.

Kate: (*exasperated*) . . . I have felt—I thought a lot about the frustration people have expressed in here during the last session about not sensing emotion from you and I'll speak for myself at this point. . . . I have felt disappointed, angry at you at times for the lack of that.

Between sessions, Kate has identified her own feelings toward Bill and expresses them. She realizes, too, that Bill's distancing has neutralized the group in their

attack. Her confrontation serves as a model for the group. She has also assumed the role of group spokesperson. Kate's intervention adds to the earlier mass created by Kelly, Jill, and Ann and provides the necessary energy that pushes the group into the vortex of transformation. There is no certainty how the group will emerge from this turbulence other than it cannot return to its previous state.

Bill: (*calmly*) You would have liked more of that from me.

He deflects her anger by trying to facilitate her interaction and re-assume control.

Kate: (*angry*) And I was thinking about your statement of emotions on demand that you couldn't give that. And I didn't hear that from people . . . that doesn't mean that wasn't there. I should just say I didn't want that from you. I didn't want emotion on demand, but what I did want, I realized was some vulnerable emotion, be that anger or hurt, but something where you stretched as I and others did here. I didn't feel that you emotionally stretched here. . . . I'm wondering how you are feeling about that?

Kate is angry and the attack is now direct!

Bill: (*agitated, and stunned by the confrontation from his co-leader*) . . . I feel blindsided by that. Ah—and while it may be accurate, it doesn't feel real good to hear that from you.

Bill is caught off guard. His authority is questioned by his co-leader. He feels betrayed as if it were her responsibility to protect him from having to reveal himself.

Kate: You look like you feel hurt.

Kate presses for an emotional response. Remember up to this point, the group has no idea what Bill is feeling. They can imagine it to be rage, which keeps them distant. Bill appears hurt and attempts to counterattack Kate by chiding her for not confronting him yesterday. The group is very unstable at this point. Both facilitators are engaged in the conflict. But their earlier work in the previous stages has created the necessary norms and boundaries to contain the group during this period.

Bill: (*teary-eyed*) I do. I feel hurt, I feel blindsided by that. I don't know what you want from me in regards to that. But ah—ah—but it didn't feel clean to me ah—maybe because it didn't happen in the moment when it was occurring, it's happening now and just doesn't feel clean to me.

In another effort to divert the attack and regain his composure Bill turns the confrontation back onto Kate.

Kate: (*re-asserting herself*) . . . I'm sorry about that. I can appreciate where you feel blindsided and it wasn't until I had a day to think about it. I won't excuse myself for it. . . . It's the best I can do, now.

Kate won't be deterred. She pursues Bill.

Bill: (*nods*)

What happens next is a clear example of how group members will facilitate interactions, especially conflict between co-leaders, when proper norms and boundaries have been successfully negotiated during earlier stages. Jason leads again.

Jason: We have got to clear this up, the feelings between the two of you, right now. [*to Bill*] Are you okay with her right now?

Bill: (*defensive*) Yeah, I said what I needed to say. The feedback was heard and noted. [*to Kate*] I don't object to what you said. I don't find anything wrong with the feedback at all. Ah—just how I felt about receiving it at this time.

Jason: [*to Kate*] Why the tears, are you okay? Or is there something else?

Kate: It's like a postreaction. It was hard for me to do. . . . I felt sad. I needed to do that. That's where the tears came from.

Kate reacts to the stress from the attack.

Jason: Feel better now?

Kate: Probably in about 5 minutes I'll feel better. Thanks for attending to me.

Bill: (*calmly to Kate*) Do you need anymore from me?

Kate: No, not a bit. In fact I was real clear I didn't need anything from you except I needed to tell you that. . . .

The attack had been thwarted. Bill remains emotionally distant. Kate has been pushed back. The group is blocked, uncomfortable because the conflict has not been resolved. The group will begin to resort to destructive or regressive actions if the conflict remains unresolved.

Group: (*silence*)

During this stage, or any stage for that matter, if the facilitator remains blocked and is unable to respond emotionally or in some other way the group needs, members will begin to take responsibility for the impasse, much as children do when a simmering conflict between parents begins to heat up. They will act in ways to refocus the attention on them, creating a kind of double-bind situation.

Because children or group members are in a one-down position, unable to comment on the leader or parent's stifling behavior, scapegoating can occur.

The group will remain unstable while it searches for solutions to the impasse. Containment of the immense anxiety experienced by group members cannot be overemphasized. The group will self-organize if properly contained.

Unfortunately, most groups that reach this critical point fail to contain themselves long enough for a successful resolution to emerge. Short-circuiting this stage will then limit the group's creative potential found on the other side of the arc.

Doris: I'm feeling responsible for all the attacks Bill has had to sustain. I'm not sure how to put it into words, but as I was thinking over the group. . . . I saw myself setting up a negative norm early in the group when I cried because of the attack I sustained from Jason. [*to group*] I think because of that you have hesitated to share any kind of negative feelings toward each other, and you keep testing Bill because he seems like the only one who can handle them. I don't know how to reverse that except that I want you to know that I'm ready for any kind of negative thoughts about me I can handle them now. I just wanted you to know that.

Doris "volunteers" for the role of scapegoat. She diverts the group's attention onto herself and claims responsibility for the turmoil. Her behavior might reflect her desire to deflect attention from the parents' (Bill and Kate) fight. This may be a role she occupies in her own family. Doris' intervention offers one possible solution for the group. Although it is regressive, many groups not properly prepared for this stage will settle for any resolution to the anxiety, albeit even a destructive one. Although no outcome can be predicted, successful resolution of the major issues of concern (safety and affiliation) in the previous stages will maximize trust and establish enough group cohesiveness to help the group successfully complete this stage.

Kelly: That was certainly a big risk.

The group's focus shifts toward Doris as she asks for feedback about her group behavior. Members respond. Bill keeps the focus on Doris.

Bill: (*strongly*) I'd like to give you [*to Doris*] some feedback and [*to Kate, almost as if requesting her collusion*] I'll need your help with this.

Bill is telling Kate to get back in her role as co-leader. However, Kate recognizes that the group is moving in a destructive direction. She offers them another "more correct" solution by refocusing the energy and conflict toward Bill. This is one more example of how a very small and properly timed intervention can constructively move the group.

Kate: [*redirects the focus*] Alright. Before you do that, I need to say how I feel—the only thing I've been wondering—when you talk there is a lot of energy, and the only thing I've been wondering if you're angry at me and if you are I'd like to hear it.

Bill: (*curtly*) No, I'm not! I think angry at your, what happened, but at the same time pleased that you took the risk.

Kate: (*helping him to focus on a feeling*) So you're somewhat mad that I wasn't—you know.

Bill: That you don't do what I want.

Kate: (*laugh*) Like my husband.

The marital metaphor surfaces, which may provide clues to the underlying dynamics of Bill's and Kate's relationship.

Bill: That's what I'm angry about is that you don't do what I want.

Bill seeks collaboration from Kate, not equality.

Kate: When you want it, and that's what I was . . .

Bill: (*interrupting, loudly*) You're my co-facilitator and I expect you to cover my back and do what I want. And when you don't do that, I get angry. And at the same time after allowing for that anger to be there, I realize you're a person, too. You know, because you work with me doesn't mean you have to sell out your soul, and ah—ah—do what I want. So, yeah, I'm angry because you don't do what I want.

Bill is finally connected with his feelings. He expresses anger, which still maintains his emotional distance. He pushes Kate back, asserting, now properly, his leadership role. This is the point where leadership is earned by the group, not given away by the leader.

Kate: And I'd like to say I was mad at myself for not being quicker—I spent the night—

Bill: (*interrupting, with force*) It's hard for you to be quicker when you get caught up in trying to do what I want.

Kate: (*with energy*) Yes, it is. That's right and that's where I was mad at myself . . . and then I thought if I don't come back and tell you what I was trying to do—what I thought you wanted me to do and—ah—mince my words then I'll never get off of it. And I thought as long as you and I end up working together—if at all after this—it's going to keep coming up so I thought this is the cleanest way to do it. But I want you to know that while I was mad at you, I also had anger at me because I wasn't quick. So I can see where you're mad at me.

Bill: And also I think cleaning this up is caused—somehow we didn't—that I didn't, that I didn't get it all out with you. That I was angry 'cause you weren't doing what I wanted and that seems to me has affected the group and what's going on now. That's the other part of it.

Kate: Well, thanks for saying that. Yeah, I think . . . I'm glad you expressed your anger and said it to me.

Finally demonstrative, Bill reveals himself to the group. He speaks to Doris almost as an apology for allowing her to take responsibility for his behavior.

Bill: (*openly with emotion*) (*to Doris*) . . . a large part of how I see myself—that my emotions are not always readily accessible—is that I'm very defended in terms of how I feel about things. I'm always protecting myself against what I might hear that's uncomfortable or unpleasant. When that happens, I shut down. It's an automatic thing with me. I shut down and respond in a very calculated way, very disconnected from my feelings. So when I give feedback to people whom I see as similar to that I'm also aware that it could be a lot of my own stuff that I'm projecting over there . . . as a result of confrontation I know what happens to me. When people confront me . . . it's automatic, it's that instantly I freeze up. I stop breathing and I get disconnected from my feelings and then all I can do is think. Then when people say "how are you feeling?" it's like I'm not even breathing. I don't know what I'm feeling I've just shut down. . . . It affects my relationships now. The feedback I've heard from you and other people has been very accurate. . . .

He has revealed his struggle, exposed his vulnerable side, and emoted in the group. Bill shows his humanness. He speaks to Doris as a way to take back his role in attempting to scapegoat her. The members move immediately to acknowledge his humanness.

THE GROUP BEGINS THE DISHARMONY STAGE HERE!

The group affirms Bill and accepts him as the person he has revealed himself to be.

Doris: I just have so much respect for you right now because you've been able to admit you're not perfect. It makes me feel so good toward you.

Jill: I really want to thank you for that, too, because I was so angry with you sitting back and it seemed like you didn't care at all. That's how I felt. And today you just told me something. I've learned more about you in the last 5 minutes than since I have

known you. You know I really thank you for that. . . . I guess that's what I was looking for. It meant a lot.

Bill: Thanks. I don't know, it's always the stuff that I hold onto, that I give so much weight to, that really when I let go it seems like . . . there was really nothing to it.

Kate: I feel really warm toward you in what you said. I have a lot of respect for you for opening yourself up like you did.

Bill: I think part of the reason I push the way I do, and push each one of you in here is a way of wanting to push myself more, wanting to demand that I show more emotions, that I be more connected. . . .

Bill and Jason talk about the similarities between them.

Kelly: (*to Bill*) . . . I see the good side of you that I've never seen before and also when you talked with Jason I learned a lot about Jason that I didn't really know before either. I'm just glad I got to know that.

In this transcript, members are shown challenging Bill on his emotional distance from the group. The women who undertake this task are those who value emotional intimacy. Although the group attacks the leader on his lack of affect, another issue at the latent level may exist. The cultural influence of gender roles and their expressivity is at play in this group. Bill, a skilled leader, under stress from the group to reveal himself, regresses to the traditional male role—unemotional, unexpressive. His co-facilitator, Kate, may have taken on the unconscious role of wife. Bill expects her unquestioning support and feels betrayed when she challenges him and expresses anger at his emotional distance. Kate, here, is at some level aware of Bill's projection onto her and feels manipulated by it. She is hesitant to do more than elicit or clarify the feelings of the other women in the early part of the transcript. She does not really support them by validating their feelings for the risk they are taking in confronting Bill. As a result, most of them are reluctant to push Bill too hard. Kate avoids drawing Bill into conflict until the following session. It appears that the women, including Kate, are struggling with their cultural roles. The issue of emotional intimacy is a common one that women raise with men in their lives. So the intensity of their feelings toward Bill, and possibly other men in the group, may reflect their frustration over this issue with their husbands or fathers. What is so threatening about the conflict is that it may lead to a break in the relationship and result in abandonment, just as owning and sharing emotions seems threatening to Bill. Because of the cultural conditioning of the group members, they demonstrated an impressive amount of cour-

age and honesty in acknowledging and confronting these issues. This is surely the source of the generative potential in this group. By the end of the transcript, the conflict appears resolved to the satisfaction of everyone. In fact some role reversal took place. Bill made himself vulnerable, human (feminine); Kate stood her ground (masculine). The group sees the leaders as human and accepts that, paving the way for their own assumption of responsibility for the group.

This interpretation is one of many that can be constituted to explain the actions of this group. There are many competing and compelling alternatives. No one explanation is correct. It is offered to raise awareness to the many opportunities for learning that can take place in groups. Once the conflict is resolved, the leader might decide to share this interpretation of events with the group members. Exploration of gender roles and their influence on these group events might prove instructive for the members.

Although the transcript is one dimensional, it does demonstrate how critical mass is achieved and group change occurs. Uneven group movement evidenced by the stretching and folding that occurred is characteristic of how groups evolve. Skilled leadership was also illustrated by Kate. Her recognition and intervention at critical moments helped guide the group. During the turbulence, small, correctly timed interventions by the leader or any group member can have a dramatic impact. Once a group enters the vortex, no outcome is guaranteed because the group may retreat to earlier stages, become stuck, or move ahead through the ascent. The eventual solution the group members choose is dependent on their history—it could ultimately be destructive for them if they settle for an unhealthy, but quick, resolution to the overriding anxiety they are experiencing. Groups or organizations that are led by authoritarian leaders (who are controlling and withhold information) are doomed to failure and continue to operate well below their full creative potential.

STAGE 5: DISHARMONY

Once the group has taken power, members will sometimes conclude that their work is finished. After all, they have just successfully navigated the turmoil of the Confrontation stage. The leader's role now is to keep the group from becoming too content. Primarily, her role on this side of the arc is to perturb.

The group now sees the leader as more real, having shed some of their misconceptions about her. Members can be solicitous toward the leader during this period, so it is tempting to stay in this stage longer than necessary. It feels good, and if the leader has gotten the group to this stage, she has earned it. But this is really only the beginning. The real potential

for therapeutic work lies ahead. So the group must be pushed forward. Furthermore, it is time for the leader to relinquish some of the leadership functions to the group. To accomplish this, she should be hesitant with her guidance, giving the group time to make their own interventions. The leader's role can be limited to process commentary while the members assume responsibility for task and maintenance functions. Members should be encouraged to attend to one another (e.g., asking Mary, "Are you curious how Ellen is feeling right now? Why not ask her?").

Members should take charge of time boundaries, starting and ending the group on time. The leader's role moves from the foreground to the background, nudging when necessary. Group members will consult the leader when they need assistance. During this transition period, members may be caught between their lingering dependency on the leader and their newly earned freedom. Simple gestures like avoiding direct eye contact with members or using hand signals to redirect communication patterns are helpful in reducing the leader's central position. She should practice being invisible.

There may still be unresolved conflict among members. This must be addressed before the group is fully into the Harmony stage. This does not mean that conflict will not occur after this stage, but anger and animosities generated in the forming stage must be addressed here. All members, especially those still at the margins, should be fully included in the group. This might require additional disclosures, confrontations, or clarifications among members.

During the Disharmony stage, members act to include marginal members. The following transcript depicts a fairly common group experience. A group member who has been present at all meetings, but has not actively participated, is questioned by the group. Group members are able to recognize some level of involvement and commitment on her part, but view her silence as a distancing mechanism. The chaotic activity of the forming and conflict stages allowed her to be carried along. But now marginal members are expected to fully participate. It is the members and not the leader who facilitate this interaction, a distinguishing characteristic of this stage.

Marginal Member

Jack: . . . I'm sensing a frustration, Helen, that maybe you haven't given as much to the rest of the group as what you've wanted to when you first started.

Helen: (*firmly*) You see I think I have, but I don't think that people have perceived that I have. But I have emotionally. I felt more, parts of what's been going on. . . . I think I've had more feeling reactions, but I don't think the group has seen that, and that,

I feel bad about . . . the one thing I've learned this week . . . is that you don't always have to say anything in order to be effective. I think if, if we're really communicating people can see when there's an understanding, and reaction, but I keep thinking everybody knows me cause I'm as open as a book (*laughs*). If I'm mad people know, if I'm sad people know, I don't keep anything in.

Barb: You know though, Helen you are—ah—when you say that I know what you mean. Because just in social situations outside you're very verbal and outgoing, but you haven't been that way at all in group. So in group I don't perceive you at all like an open book. I perceive you more as a real mystery.

Helen: I feel like if there's nothing to say that contributes something about my feelings—just to speak—I think that's a waste of time. . . . I don't feel that I've been holding back, but maybe that's a defense mechanism. I don't know. I thought about that ever since I was confronted with that by you [*Barb*] maybe I have been holding back.

Barb: . . . I've missed out on getting to know you a little better in group. Although I've really respected how you could sit back and listen. And I really believe you when you say you've taken in a lot of things from the group.

Helen: (*interrupting*) But not shared.

Barb: Yeah, I guess so. . . . I didn't get to get something from you because you were quiet. So there's some disappointment there. Maybe I'm expecting too much from you.

The group continues giving Helen feedback on her participation in the group. Her obvious emotional involvement with the group had permitted her to be carried along to this stage. Now the group is requesting more.

Shelley: I have really enjoyed your presence, Helen. I have noticed the affect, except I would have loved to hear more specific explanations of what the affect was about. I can't read into your mind, what you're maybe tearing up about, or what you feel happy about. I don't know the specifics, but I can see the overall thing, somehow it makes me feel secure. Just that you're there, because I feel you're feeling. I need definition for it, more definition.

Robert: How are you feeling with this feedback?

Helen: I'm feeling frustrated (*smiles*).

Robert: The feedback seems incongruent with how you see yourself in this group.

Helen: It is terribly incongruent to me. I think there's ways of sharing that don't involve spoken communication. And my interpretation of how I feel about the group and the sharing—I think I've shared my feelings.

Shelley: I feel uncomfortable with it. If you don't explain to me what you're feeling I might misunderstand. I might read things into it that aren't exactly right.

Helen: But see that's where I think the group hasn't heard me, because when you were hurting that day I related to that. . . . I felt it when Barb risked . . . I said I really didn't do my job, I feel guilty. I think I was risking when I said that. That was a risk for me. That was a great deal to even say I felt guilty, because I had held back. And [to Shelley] relating to you, I hurt for you that day, but I sat back, but at least I acknowledged it.

Shelley: You know what I wanted from you right back then. I remember it clearly. I wished you would have given me more and said "I have a lot of empathy for you because" and then shared what it was about yourself that specifically I could tie into so that I could understand the empathy better.

Barb: . . . 'cause when I peek over at you now and then I can see that you are really involved. I can see emotion going on in there. How much you care about what's going on in there . . . but that's it. You're assuming that everyone can see that so therefore they know you better, but I don't think we do see that because usually we're all focused in, just as you are on wherever the interaction is, and we miss that unless you speak up and tell us . . . that's what I would like.

Helen opens up and shares how difficult it is for her to be the focus of group. She is reluctant to be the center of attention.

STAGE 6: HARMONY

In the Harmony stage, members may become restless, bored, and sometimes discontent with the group. This is likely to happen if they are not working on the issues of independence, intimacy, and risk taking. The group's development is not predicated on them doing so. Unlike the urgency associated with resolving safety, affiliation, and belonging issues, group members feel safe and content with the level of the group's development. However, profound and lasting change can be accomplished during the ascent. Asserting independence within the group, disclosing intimacy needs, and taking risks through self-disclosure can allow members to explore themselves at deeper

levels. The group is now free to focus on members with greater objectivity because personal relationships have been established. One means by which this is accomplished is through acknowledgment and acceptance of one's dark side—that aspect of the personality that members have kept hidden from others. Essentially, this opportunity permits members to disclose and integrate fragmented parts of self. At this stage of group development, the opportunity exists to reveal oneself fully and experience the acceptance of others. Often it is remarkable to witness group members reveal some aspect of self that they have hidden from others, only to find that the disclosure has drawn people to them, not pushed them away. These group self-disclosures facilitate self-acceptance. During this phase of group work, significant therapeutic change can take place. The change is akin to restructuring self-perception, rather than simply altering behavior.

The group is now responsible for its own direction. Leadership is shared and cooperative. Each group member has demonstrated some area of leadership ability and maintains responsibility for it. The leader is now only one source of expertise. However, there are some areas the leader still needs to attend to.

She should continue to push the group forward by encouraging self-exploration. She should help members clarify areas in which they want to do personal work. Her key role during this period is to monitor the level of group cohesiveness.

Remember during the forming stage, when the leader had to contain the group's anxiety to ensure that members were not overwhelmed? Now she must balance the cohesion in the group between too much collaboration and too little tension. The leader now works to increase tension when necessary.

A critical source of personal learning that takes place during the ascent is the result of feedback from one member to another. Too much cohesion among members inhibits feedback, too little makes it unsafe. The leader helps maintain a healthy balance. Giving and receiving feedback is a primary source of therapeutic growth in groups.

Feedback

Feedback is a process whereby members share their experiences of one another. It is another unique feature that distinguishes group work from other forms of therapy. In the group milieu, members have a rare opportunity to find out how their actions impact others. Furthermore, they are afforded opportunities to reciprocate the feedback.

Feedback is an important aspect of group development in the ascent. Once a group has established a climate of trust, feedback no longer needs to be couched in cloudy, ambiguous language so feedback can be more

direct and specific. Here are some steps the leader can follow in teaching group members how to give and receive accurate feedback:

Step 1. *Create a receptive environment.* Members should be asked if they want feedback. Ensure that the member has latitude to say no.

Step 2. *The feedback should be specific and directed toward a behavior that the recipient can do something about.* Telling a group member you do not like the color of his or her hair is hardly productive.

Step 3. *The observed behavior should be drawn from actions that have occurred in group.* The more examples, the easier it is for the recipient to understand the feedback.

Step 4. *Feedback should be phrased in a language that can be heard.* Blaming statements should be avoided. The use of "I feel . . ." statements rather than "You make me feel . . ." statements creates acceptable feedback. In addition, ownership of the statement is maintained by the sender.

Step 5. *Share impact.* The member giving the feedback should also share how the actions of the recipient impact him or her. For example, if one group member gives feedback to another by telling her that her loud voice gives him the impression that she is angry, he should complete the feedback by sharing how that behavior affects him. In this case, he might say, "I feel intimidated by your loud voice and I find myself avoiding contact with you." This step validates the feedback. It lets the recipient know what impact the specified behavior has on another person.

Step 6. *Process feelings.* Once the feedback is given, it is necessary that the recipient be given the opportunity to respond, particularly with a feeling statement. The feelings statement lets the group know that the feedback had been received. Occasionally the member receiving the feedback gets defensive and is unable to immediately experience its impact. The leader's task is to help the member connect with his feelings. On occasion members will leave the group and go home after having received feedback and felt its impact, but are left to process it alone. Sometimes it is essential that members be given this time and space, and at other times the group must be slowed down so that the feedback can be processed in the here and now.

Step 7. *Get other opinions.* If the feedback seems unwarranted or unfair, or if the recipient wants to hear from other members, have him ask the group. Remember to ensure that each interaction gets fully processed. If each interaction is processed to completion, emotional overloading can be avoided.

Step 8. *The leader should avoid giving feedback first.* Other members should be encouraged to begin or take the lead because the leader's feedback can carry more weight. Frequently, members will turn to the leader when something difficult needs to be said to get the group moving. Group members

are supported in taking the initiative. Here is one example of how feedback can be initiated.

Betty: I'd be willing, if anyone feels any, to take some feedback. . . . I've heard some very nice things about myself from many of you . . . and that felt good . . . but if anyone has some feelings they previously felt uncomfortable saying and want to say those now I feel really okay about it being directed to me. Because it would be helpful to me. . . . I'm not perfect and if there are some other things people notice . . . I want to know. I think I've identified for myself what some of those are, but I'm interested if anyone else sees some things that they find are obstacles for me in relating to other people.

Betty asks Gina for feedback.

Gina: . . . I was going to say something, trying to put words to the obstacle I felt with you and there's no fancy way to say it. Your voice is very soft, that's how I hear it, and that's an obstacle for me in communicating with you. It's hard for me to hear you sometimes. It's frustrating for me to ask you to speak up and mostly it's an urge. What I want to say to you is—"So what, just own your strength and get out there." You know (*slaps hands together*) that's like what I want say. I've been really impressed in here with your strength and that's the only obstacle I felt. . . . it doesn't seem like an obstacle, but I felt wanting, that's a better way to say it. I've wanted you to sort of rise up at times and your voice is the way I heard you being quiet.

Betty: And, I can recognize that theme from day one. I was the one no one could hear . . . yep, I can see that, because I do often feel more, or a strength and conviction about some things, but it's difficult for me to express it that way. Sometimes I say it, I do say it with such a quiet little voice that I suppose it's not very congruent. . . .

Gina: . . . Sometimes I fantasize, and I am now. Gee, Betty you have definite views and perceptions on things and I think you would be a very powerful woman if you'd just gave it that—you know put it into fourth gear and went for it. That's it!

Betty (*louder*): I really hear what you're saying. It makes sense to me and that's real helpful for me. . . . I've come to the point, and I'm really glad, where I can take some negative things and see how much good that can do me to listen to that, 'cause in the past . . . that's when I really often tuned off and got such hurt feelings and said, "Oh, don't criticize me and don't say anything

bad." Yeah, I feel good about that. I guess that's what I was asking for today is to test that out. To take some criticism, and take it with an attitude of how it could help me to grow, rather then become upset about it.

Others offer feedback to Betty, and Sam, the co-leader, urges Robert to share his reaction to Betty's quiet voice. A critical and often forgotten portion of the feedback cycle lets Betty know the impact of her behavior on one member.

Sam: (*co-leader*) Robert, how does Betty's behavior affect you?

Robert: I think the feedback is accurate. When I hear you speak with a quiet voice, I sometimes check out. In other words, it's hard for me to stay with you when your voice is soft, so while you may be saying things that are powerful, I find myself sometimes drifting off. . . . So my part in that is sometimes I don't hear what you're saying.

Betty: Yeah. I can see that, too. Earlier in the group I remember experiencing that—that's where my feelings of isolation come from that I don't feel heard. Well, I'm hard to hear when I don't speak up—so I can understand that and I've been told that before but I never connected that up until now.

STAGE 7: PERFORMING

Many group models include a separate termination stage in which the group reflects back on its own process. Ideally the issues that brought group members together are resolved, and the group can look back on what it gained individually and collectively during its experience. The leader's task in the final stages is to bring the group to closure and address issues of loss and grief that can be associated with groups ending. More important, there is another stage prior to termination that has not been discussed in group development models because it is seldom attained. However, this level of group development can have a profound effect on the group and it members. Groups at this stage may enter a spiritual realm, or a feeling of oneness in the group that represents a broader connection to the universe. As noted, few groups achieve this level of development, and few group leaders have actually experienced this stage in groups. Therefore, I briefly outline this stage of group development here and then more fully explore the possibilities inherent in it in chapter 13.

This last stage in the arc is somewhat of a mystery. Individually group members may have had peak experiences that represent a kind of self-transcendence—a loss of self-consciousness or self-awareness—but few have ever experienced that same kind of phenomena within a group that

can be generally characterized as being totally present, absorbed, and fascinated with the experience at hand. This kind of transpersonal experience takes place in Kairos, rather than Chrono, time.

As a research assistant in graduate school, I had numerous timeless experiences while working in the computer center. It was a cinder-block building with no windows. I would sometimes enter the building around noon and become so absorbed in my work that I was totally unaware of the passage of time. On numerous occasions, I left the building and found that it was 3 A.M. There was an unreal sense to it, walking outside into the night, thinking I had just been working for a couple of hours and finding that it had been 15 hours. On rarer occasions, with my writing, I can experience a loss of consciousness by becoming so absorbed with my work. Unfortunately, the occasions are not frequent enough. However, many groups experience a glimpse of this phenomenon, which is reflected in statements like, "The evening went so fast, it felt like we just started."

Self-transcendence is the Taoist state of acceptance, letting things happen, rather than making them happen. It is a state of nonstriving, nonwishing, noninterfering, and noncontrolling—the state of having rather than not having. It is possible for group members to achieve this state, but it is rare, although there are times when a group may become so focused in the moment that a loss of self-awareness occurs. However, what I am talking about here is a sustained state that is achieved by the group as a whole and provides transcendent experiences for the members. I have only experienced one such group. In that group, I felt transported into another dimension of space and time, and larger meaning emerged for me that quite literally changed the direction of my life.

Inclusion of this stage in the arc represents the possible fulfillment of the group's potential. Although it is important to acknowledge that most groups will never reach this stage, they will catch glimpses of it throughout their development. Leaders should recognize the possibilities inherent in this stage and hold fast to a vision of groups that incorporates the transpersonal realm.

Chapter 11

Group Metaphors

Arthur had a dream that functioned to crystallize his own as well as the group's shared dilemma. In the dream, he is traveling with a group of people inside a station wagon. His fellow travelers are acting strangely, "as if they have been invaded by an alien force." Arthur finds himself feeling pressured and trying to act like others, with little success and no reward. He becomes frightened and wishes he could find a way out. He realizes that to do so, he would have to leap from the vehicle to his own and the others' peril.

The group listened intently to Arthur's recitation of his dream. Prompted by the therapist, members related personally to the dream material, elaborating its significance for themselves. Some identified with the inherent fear that the dream expressed and talked about their own catastrophic losses and abandoned pursuits. Members also explored the dream together as a metaphor for the shared and current group experience.[1]

This chapter addresses group metaphors as a kind of strange attractor in groups. Guidelines for group leaders are offered for working with metaphors, and numerous examples, drawn from a variety of groups, are provided.

The group process, whereby members are able to alleviate anxieties and fears, by indirectly addressing issues of concern that are too risky or threatening to openly address, has been called by many names: the group "theme,"[2] the "group mentality,"[3] the "group fantasy,"[4] and, more recently, the "group metaphor."[5] Group metaphors represent words, analogies, nonverbal expressions, and stories in which "thoughts and feelings about an emotionally charged situation have been transferred to an analogical situation that preserves the original dynamics."[6] Similarly, *metaphors* are

defined as analogies that permit group members to substitute "a nonthreatening external subject for a threatening internal one, enabling them to experience affectively charged worlds of meaning from a safe distance."[7] A primary function of group metaphors is to provide relief from excessive anxiety. Metaphoric language shifts the group's focus from the manifest or conscious level to the latent or unconscious level, where the group can work through shared problems and anxieties. This movement from one level to another enables the group to remove the affect from the discussion and use figurative "as if" language. As anxiety increases in a group, so does the potential for metaphoric language. It becomes a safety valve for group expression. The metaphor is used by group members to communicate situational difficulties,[8] indicate group resistance,[9] confront group leaders,[10] confront group members,[11] reveal personal identities,[12] promote insight,[13] explore cultural differences,[14] and provide future direction for the group.[15]

CHAOS

In the language of chaos, the group metaphor is the strange attractor of the group's collective unconscious. It reflects the pattern or topography of the group's psyche organization. The pattern is ever changing, never repeating, and constantly evolving as the group works to resolves its issues and unfold its future. At any one moment, the emerging metaphor provides a glimpse into that future, however any interpretation provides only one of many possible meanings. As Jung realized, "the symbol is alive only so long as it is pregnant with meaning,"[16] and any attempt at defining it discharges its energy.

Metaphors are constantly stretching and folding, appearing and disappearing, as the group randomly searches their collective psyche for resolution to immediate issues while organizing themselves for the future. I imagine the collective mind weaving beautiful strange attractor patterns that are pictures of the metaphors. Group metaphors provide us with glimpses, albeit small, of the collective mind organizing itself.

Eventually metaphors, if properly contained, differentiate from the collective psyche and emerge at the manifest level of the group. Here again the ability of the group leader to construct an effective container that enables the group to tolerate ambiguity and frustration will permit metaphoric development to unfold fully, without the group becoming emotionally overwhelmed and, thus, settle for a regressive solution.

The leader is charged with the early group responsibility of identifying unifying themes from among the many different narratives that individual members bring to the group during the descending stages. Group

metaphors provide the clues to creating a successful group vision that will carry the group through the initial stages. The vision becomes the attractor that provides meaning and pulls the group members toward building a sense of cohesiveness. During ascension of the arc, group metaphors provide generative meaning and creative opportunities for the group. Generative metaphors are discussed in chapter 13.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A GROUP METAPHOR

There are three characteristics of group stories that indicate they are serving as group metaphors.[17] Group stories are those that individual members bring to the group; they are related to both outside events and those occurring within the group. First, these stories from outside the groups are often distorted to conform to the present group situation. Second, the language used in these stories appears drawn from the current ongoing group. Third, the "characters and plot of the story frequently correspond with events and relationships in the immediate group."[18]

FUNCTIONS OF METAPHOR IN GROUPS

Comprehension of metaphoric language can provide therapists with an additional leadership tool as well as information about the group. Some methods of utilizing metaphors are listed next.

1. It enables the group leader to verify the stage of group development[19] and guide the group through it. At times this can become confusing, particularly if there is no co-leader with whom to discuss the group's progress. Metaphoric language serves as a map for the therapist. Given the unstructured nature of most groups and their resultant ambiguity, a vehicle such as metaphoric expression is unconsciously generated to determine a course of action. Metaphoric language becomes the staging area for preparation of the group's future course of action. It symbolically enables the group to try out new behaviors, ideas, and feelings, helping it to decide on norms for future interactions. Careful attention to metaphoric expression will help the group leader navigate during these times of transition.

2. It provides information about members' identities. Metaphors provide members with an indirect and safe method of self-disclosing without incurring personal responsibility that often accompanies such disclosures. "Members frequently encode important messages about themselves in statements they make about themselves or in stories they tell about animals or

other characters; . . . the metaphoric framing enables one to make important statements about one's own identity or the identity of another while at the same time denying that a serious statement was made."[20]

3. It provides a method for directing the group's attention from a past- to present-centered focus. The unique healing power found in groups stems from their potential to reflect the larger world; that is, groups represent a microcosm of each member's personal reality, and thus provide a more realistic environment for counseling.

As members participate in an ongoing group experience, it becomes evident that the issues and concerns that have brought them to therapy are soon reflected in their group behavior. Successful group work integrates the members' cognitive understanding of their particular concerns with the experiential awareness of their reenactment of these issues within the group. This integration addresses the two primary domains of group therapy: a past, or there-and-then focus, versus a present, or here-and-now focus. Both are necessary for successful resolution of client problems. Illumination of metaphors can provide the bridge by which group members move from a cognitive there-and-then understanding of their problems to a more here-and-now experiential awareness.

4. It offers a method of creatively generating feedback about the group's processes. Two ingredients have been suggested as essential for effective group functioning—here-and-now focus and process commentary, which were discussed earlier in the book. Illumination of metaphoric material generated by group members can stimulate creative ways for the group to examine its ongoing interactions.

METHODS FOR UTILIZING A GROUP METAPHOR

Once a metaphor is recognized, the group leader can proceed in several ways. First, a metaphor provides information about the group's progress. The leader can treat this information as feedback and influence the direction of the group accordingly. Second, the leader may amplify the metaphor (e.g., continue within the framework of the story and allow the story to offer solutions for the group's dilemma). Third, he may illuminate the metaphor and ask group members to provide meaning for it. Finally, he may choose to interpret the metaphor and suggest possible meanings for the group's current situation.

The aim of metaphoric analysis is to utilize the information contained in the metaphor to facilitate the group's development. Therefore, it is not always necessary to call the group's attention to the metaphor. However, as the group develops, some members begin to take on more roles in the

group, and teaching the benefits of metaphoric analysis can provide them with yet another tool for therapeutic insight and personal growth.[20]

There are two simple guidelines to follow when working with a metaphor. In the beginning stages during the descent, the leader should proceed cautiously and treat the metaphor as feedback about the group's progress. Second, when high levels of cohesion exist, as in Stages 6 and 7, illumination and interpretation might be used because members are better able to tolerate the anxiety associated with directly struggling with the metaphor's manifest meaning. Although each of these methods of utilizing group metaphors has validity, the preferred intervention strategy is amplification of the metaphor, and this can be used at any stage of development. Amplification of the metaphor is less threatening to group members because it maintains the safety of symbolic language and avoids the reduction required by interpretation or illumination. It is impossible to know exactly what message is being conveyed by a metaphor.[22]

Metaphors serve vital functions throughout the life of a group. In addition to offering retreat from emotionally charged situations, they transcend the limits inherent in language and permit a group to rapidly process complex and diverse information, consolidate ideas, and generate solutions to group problems as well as prepare the group for its future. Therefore, careful deliberation should be undertaken before deciding to interrupt what appears to be a natural part of a group's functioning. Three related areas should be assessed before deciding to illuminate or interpret a metaphor: group safety, clarity of interpretation, and leader intentionality.

First, related to group safety, metaphorical language occurs in response to group situations that are too risky or threatening to address openly. In these instances, the group moves to the latent level, attempting to distance itself from the affect while working to resolve the issues. The leader should not attempt illumination or interpretation of the metaphor until the group has made repeated efforts to resolve the issues at the manifest level. If strong resistance follows such an intervention, further latent-level exploration of the metaphor should be considered. Second, interpretation of a metaphor reduces it into language, which is inadequate to convey its full meaning. Unlike metaphor, "language is often insufficient to capture the intricate structure and dynamics of the group-as-a-whole."[23] For example, the *station wagon* metaphor, at the beginning of this chapter, could hardly be reduced to ordinary words such as "feeling uncomfortable or out of place in the group."

Therefore, any interpretation offered by the leader may impede the natural therapeutic process by calling attention to only one aspect of the metaphor. "No one ever completely understands all the ramifications of the metaphor as it is occurring—the images resonate and reverberate in the unconscious, and the work being done continues, even after the meeting

is over."[24] Interpretation should be restricted to those occasions when the group has exhausted the metaphor's potential at the latent level.

Third, the leader should consider his intent in interpreting the metaphor. Answers to the following questions can provide some insight into the motivation behind any interpretation and may help in deciding the appropriateness and timing of a metaphoric intervention. Who is best served by the interpretation? Will the interpretation have a negative impact on any of the members? Does the interpretation serve to facilitate the group's progress? Can the group be better served by allowing the metaphor to continue uninterrupted? The benefits of group counseling are negated by a leader who is too directive or persuasive. Members are inhibited from acting, sharing insights, and, in general, assuming responsibility for the group's functioning and ultimately their own.

Leaders must also exercise caution in interpreting metaphors. Forcing examination of the metaphor before the group is ready can have deleterious effects. It can inhibit the group's progress, their willingness to self-disclose, and alienate the leader from the group. Mishandled metaphors might even cause members to be absent from group sessions.[25] A metaphor is a privileged communication between a group member or the group and the leader and should be accorded all the rights of such an interaction. Only after all indirect means of exploration have been exhausted should illumination or interpretation be attempted.

The amount of time spent in working with the metaphor depends on the level of anxiety present in the group. Remember, the metaphor acts as a safety device that offers group members retreat from highly emotional situations.[26] If the group responds to the metaphoric intervention with confusion and misunderstanding, wait until a safer group climate develops. In some cases, when the leader has attempted a direct intervention and the group resists, experimenting with amplification may allow the group to proceed with the metaphor. Examples of group metaphors selected from various groups highlight the preceding discussion.

The Metaphor of a "New Birth"

During the first session of a new group, one member talked about the recent birth of his daughter. He shared his enthusiasm about the birthing process, and the novelty of the experience as well as his fears and concerns about infancy. Other group members added their own experiences of raising children. At the individual level, the member began to reveal personal information about himself; additionally, he was sharing something deeper and more immediately relevant—that he was both excited and frightened by the newness of this group experience. At the group level, within the symbolic safety provided by the metaphor, members, too, were able to express

their trepidations about this new experience. The facilitator has several choices at this point: (a) simply note the metaphor and allow the group to continue; (b) bring the group into the here and now by asking the member if he is both excited and frightened about what might happen during the course of this group; or, (c) ask the group if there are any similarities between what is being discussed and what is happening in this group right now. Because the choice often involves a variety of factors, the facilitator must trust his or her own instincts as to what approach to take, keeping in mind the timing and level of group trust that exists.

The Metaphor of the "Faulty Muffler"

Midway through the second session of a group, one member told of the difficulty she had experienced when the muffler fell off her car earlier in the week. She expressed her frustration and embarrassment about the noise her car was making. During the first meeting, she revealed a considerable amount of personal information about herself that had gone unchecked by the facilitator. The latent level of her communication addressed her concern that, the previous week, she had revealed too much about herself and was feeling frustrated and embarrassed. Again the facilitator has several choices: (a) he or she could bring it into the here and now by asking her if she felt she had revealed too much about herself in the previous session; (b) the facilitator could ask the group to explore any similarities that exist between her story and the group; and (c) (requiring more skill) the facilitator could develop the metaphor about the muffler. Exploring ways she might have prevented her muffler from falling off and/or discussing her feelings about that event might provide the group member a less threatening opportunity to resolve her anxiety.

The Metaphor of the "Snow Storm"

In the following example, the metaphor documents the group's stage of development. Before the fifth session, a group had been experiencing the facilitator as cold and distant, responding to her in primarily a cognitive mode. At the beginning of this session, one group member, seated to the immediate right of the facilitator, related the following story:

> I sometimes feel that if I were in a cold, winter snowstorm, a complete whiteout, and my car was not working, I would have to find a way out of that situation by myself. I would either have to fix my car or find a way out of the storm. It would be very difficult for me to ask for help.

The facilitator that evening was wearing a white dress. At the manifest level, the individual was revealing something about himself—his difficulty

in asking others for help. However, at the latent level, he was confronting the facilitator (*white out*) with her lack of affective expression (*cold*) and her inaccessibility to the group (*very difficult to ask for help*), and moving the group toward Stage 4—confrontation.

The facilitator could ask the member if he has been experiencing her as cold and emotionless or she could ask the members to explore possible meanings the story may have for this group. Metaphors confronting the facilitator are often difficult to comprehend because some blind spot in the therapist's personality is usually activated; however, time spent in reflection, after the therapy hour, can often produce insight into its meaning. Remember, if the group feels stuck, examine the metaphors for clues to the stuckness. Stuckness and lack of direction are often reflected by an increase in metaphoric expression. Fantasy and metaphor as well as other novel approaches in the use of language seem to be natural responses to ambiguity. These fantasy episodes tend to occur when members fail to have a clear sense of what is going on in the group and when communication and understanding seem blocked.[27]

The Metaphor of "What to Wear"

Another example illustrates how one metaphor can develop throughout the lifetime of a group. During the first session, a member introduced the theme of *dress* as a metaphor for working or not working in the group. She related an incident that occurred several weeks before this group meeting. Heading home from work, she had had a flat tire that she was reluctant to change because she was dressed up and fearful of ruining her good clothes. That evening, in the group, she was wearing a dress.

The following week, she wore an old sweatshirt and blue jeans. One member commented that she came "dressed to work tonight." Throughout the lifetime of that group, dress served as a metaphor to indicate member willingness to work within the group. During the seventh session, the metaphor was used by the facilitators to assist a member who was struggling with ways to change her behavior at work. She was feeling overwhelmed and stuck by the amount of change she felt was necessary to enhance her relationship to her job, particularly with her boss. The facilitator suggested that, instead of immediately buying a whole new wardrobe, she should consider trying on one piece of new clothing at a time.

The Metaphor of "Giving Birth"

The following example demonstrates how a metaphor can develop over the lifetime of a group. The group was comprised of 10 women (8 participants and 2 co-leaders) who were part of a self-analytic group designed to help

students learn about group dynamics and interpersonal behavior by studying themselves.

The group was co-led by two women who were members of an advanced group class. They had both completed the beginning group course and had led two other similar groups. There was an absence of a formal group agenda, and the leaders' roles were to promote intermember communication and provide safety for members by monitoring the group's development while encouraging the members to provide their own direction.

The Group. The group was tentative during the first two sessions; they were searching for meaning and structure. Repeated attempts to have the leaders set the group's agenda were frustrating for group members because anxiety levels were high, and members were uncertain how to proceed. Susan, a member, began the third session by informing the group she was willing to take a risk and share something of herself. She told the group she had been giving serious thought to getting pregnant and having a child next year (she was neither married nor involved in a current relationship). She asked them for their reaction to her decision. The group responded politely, but it was evident that several members were upset by her decision, which they perceived to be irresponsible (confirmed by their weekly journals). The one issue that was not discussed by the group, surprisingly, was who would father this child.

The group members moved cautiously during the next several sessions as the leaders urged more involvement through sharing and self-disclosure. During the fifth session, another member commented that all the "pushing and pulling" by the leaders felt like the group was in "labor."

Susan began to push group boundaries by confronting members with their tentativeness about fully participating in the group. Conflict began to surface as group members cautiously asserted themselves and confronted the co-leaders. A third member noted that the group was beginning to take "baby steps" toward controlling their own future. The conflict continued; during the next two sessions, group members openly confronted the leaders for their lack of leadership in setting the group's agenda. Throughout the 10th and last meeting, the group members were able to share many of the frustrations they felt during earlier sessions when the group lacked specific direction on how to proceed. Members shared that the group was finally beginning to work and were regretful that it was ending. At the very end of the session, one member turned to Susan and asked her how she felt about the group now. She responded, "I feel like a mom."

Analysis. Susan's concern about getting pregnant served as a metaphor for this group—a vehicle through which members communicated their concerns about the group without exposing their accompanying vulner-

able feelings. Susan, who had previous group experience, became the spokesperson for the metaphor, whereas other members contributed to its development as the group progressed. A literal translation of the metaphor reveals that the members were questioning how they would form as a group (become pregnant) without direction and guidance (father figure—i.e., structure).

In addition, they were confronting the female co-facilitators, asking whether they had the necessary skills (potency) to help the group develop (impregnate the group) into a cohesive, working unit (give birth). The question asked of the leaders was, "Will our group develop without a strong, guiding leader?" (the father figure).

The metaphor expanded (pun intended) and tracked the group as members became less anxious and more secure in their group roles. Although the group was still struggling at the half-way point, the reference to labor suggested that they had indeed found some direction (become pregnant). However, it was still too unsafe to openly and directly address the leaders with their concerns. Later, as the group became more predictable and uncertainty diminished, conflict surfaced and was expressed. The member characterization of the group as taking "baby steps" confirms that this emotionally charged issue was beginning to be addressed at the manifest level.

Finally, group members expressed their frustration and confronted the leaders over the lack of direction they had provided for the group. Confirmation that the group had shifted from the latent to the manifest level occurred in Susan's closing statement—"I feel like a mom."

When groups struggle and avoid addressing emotionally charged issues, examination of group metaphors can provide clues to the "stuckness." In many instances, the metaphor offers suggestions for resolving the dilemma. Clearly, this group was experiencing some anxiety that was communicated by both the use of metaphor and its message. In this case, the leaders could have used the information from the metaphor to provide more direction for the group. Although members eventually took control, some of their anxiety could have been abated by careful attention to the metaphoric language. The group would have blocked interpretation or illumination of the metaphor. In the third session, one of the leaders asked the group members whether they thought this discussion of pregnancy and having a baby had any meaning for the group's present situation. The request was met with silence.

The leaders could have chosen to explore the group's anxiety by amplifying the metaphor. One possibility may have been to discuss the issue of mother-headed, single-parent families. Subsequent discussion could have addressed particular problems faced by single-parent families when mothers are confronted with dual-parenting responsibilities. Other discussions could have focused on contrasting styles of parenting: one that encourages

children to become self-supportive and responsible for their own development, another that is more directive, and a third that is some combination of the two. Amplification of the metaphor may have served as a nonthreatening method of exploring the positive and negative consequences of various leadership styles.

Almost without exception, illumination or interpretation of the metaphor during the early stage of a group's development will be met by the members with resistance in the form of confusion, withdrawal, and puzzlement. Even in the later stages of a group, after high levels of trust have been established, there is still reluctance to explore direct interpretations of individual or group metaphors.

The Metaphor of "Parenting"

In the first two sessions of a training group, the co-leaders allayed their anxiety by dictating rules to the group about being on time, using "I" statements, subgrouping, operating in the here and now, and maintaining confidentiality. The imposition of these rules without the benefit of discussion and process by group members stifled the atmosphere. In supervision, the group leaders were given feedback about their authoritarian behavior and its resultant effect on the group. During the third session, they sought to redress their behavior by soliciting feedback from the group members on the imposed rules and the manner in which they were presented. Group members were very hesitant to comment directly on the leader's behavior and offered comments such as, "I hadn't felt one way or another about the rules. It seemed fine to me." Several members responded that they could not remember what the rules were. When pressed on this point, the members were surprisingly able to recall the rules in full detail. No comments were offered on the manner in which the rules were imposed on the group with the exception of one member, who said she felt "it was necessary for the leader to take charge." Shortly after this exchange, a group member related the following story. It pertained to a high school student who had been on an athletic team coached by him. He told the group of how little support the student had gotten from his mother. She felt athletics were a waste of time and wanted her son to be more productive and find after-school employment. She had made it difficult for him to practice by prescribing a list of rules he must follow to continue with the team. The coach felt she was totally unsupportive of her son, and he (the coach) was unable to effectively approach her because of her dictatorial manner.

Other members began sharing similar experiences about nonsupportive parents, particularly the traditional role of mothers, which is usually one of nurturance and support. It should be noted here that this particular group was being co-led by two women. One of the leaders illuminated the meta-

phor by asking the group if they felt there was any relationship between the story and this group experience. The silence was deafening. She then attempted an interpretation of the metaphor by exploring her role as the perceived mother of this group. This was met with confusion on the part of two members, and the group quickly returned to the safety of the metaphor.

A less threatening method of utilizing the metaphor would have been to stay within the narration and amplify it, perhaps exploring the difficulty mothers have in providing structure for their children while creating a supportive environment for them. In addition, the leader could have used the safety of the metaphor to explore how group members felt about mothers (referring to the group leaders) who were perceived as controlling authority figures. In fact at one point, while participating in the ensuing discussion, the leader offhandedly (not as an intended intervention) stated that she felt many mothers had demands on themselves that children could not appreciate.

Shortly thereafter, one member said to the coach, "you know maybe that mother was doing the best she could." There is considerable agreement that working within the therapeutic framework of the metaphor is more effective and productive than attempts at interpretation.[27] "Discussion and intervention within the metaphor takes place on different levels of reality at the same time, embodying both the concrete patterning of events and their symbolic equivalents."[28]

The Metaphor of the "Living Room"

The following example demonstrates a method for amplifying the metaphor and underscores the effectiveness of such an approach. The transcript that follows was excised from the 11th session of a personal growth group of high school peer counselors who were being videotaped. They had been carefully informed of the group requirements, and each had volunteered for the experience. The group was co-led by a school counselor with considerable group experience (Bob) and a graduate student (Julia). The group was confronting Bob's preoccupation with the task: the technical aspects of the videotaping, the seating, camera placement, microphones, and his lack of expressed concern for the group members. Therefore, the group members began to explore their own obligation to the group, which required about 4 hours of their time each Monday night. This included travel to and from the TV studio and dinner. The group began the session by replacing the straight-backed chairs that had been used in previous weeks with sofas and chairs that were stored in the TV studio.

Cathy: It feels more comfortable with these chairs.

Tim: It feels like . . . someone's living room.

The group members began to talk about their struggle with wanting to spend more time with their friends while still feeling obligated to be with their families (i.e., obligation to the group).

Tim: It is difficult deciding between them.

Bob: (*staying within the metaphor*) Family is more of an obligation, more of a duty.

Tim: When something has to be crossed off my list, it is usually family.

Cynthia: It is scary.

Bob: Do you feel your parents (*using the word parents to represent authority figures, e.g., group leaders*) have an appreciation for the struggle you are going through? What do you do with your parents?

Tim: I ignore them a lot. Just lately I'm aware of it. When I was younger, I was afraid to go out, to abandon them. I don't talk to them much anymore. I don't look at things from their point of view, they don't know what's going on with me.

Bob: What about your dad? (*Within the metaphor, the leader begins to explore how Tim views his role in the group.*)

Tim: In a way I feel real close to my dad. But at the same time he's a guy I don't think in a lot of ways I'm very different from and some ways we are alike. There are some things I can talk to him about, and others I don't think he'd understand. . . .

Julia: (*co-leader*) Have you thought about trying once with your dad? Giving him a chance?

Tim: I've learned through experience. I have already tried, but maybe it's time to try again.

Bob: It sounds to me like you're trying. This struggle, leaving home, moving away. Also I hear you saying that you have ignored him. . . . How do the rest of you feel? (*looking at Julia*) Do you feel that same struggle with your family? (*now working to include the rest of the group in the metaphoric discussion*).

Julia: I guess our family doesn't always get together. My sister comes home on Sunday and I try to be there to spend time with the whole family. It's hard to balance between family and friends.

Bob: How do you handle your mom and dad (*e.g., leaders*)? I hear how Tim does it. On the one hand, you kind of do what they want; on the other hand, you are beginning to do it your way.

Julia: I basically agree with what they believe so there's not much conflict. I do wish we were a lot closer. It's hard to talk to them.

Bob: It's certainly hard if you'd like to get closer, to say you'd like to get closer.

Julia: Yeah, especially with my dad.

Cynthia: My dad is too, kind of weird, in a way. My dad and I are alike. . . . He likes to be around people and so do I. . . . But he just changed jobs, like he went from doing something, he's a lawyer and he didn't want to go back to private practice, but he didn't know what else to do, so he's really stressed out. Last night he asked me four times how school was. I'm like, "dad you already asked me," and I felt real bad. I wonder if he just doesn't remember or if that's just the only thing he can think to ask me. I feel kind of bad if it is. . . .

Cathy: (*who has gotten a lot of support from this group*) My family is up there. My family has been really important to me . . . they're always there for me. I find myself sometimes crossing them off too and I feel kind of bad.

Bob: It's like somehow you know your family is always going to be there so sometimes it's okay that you take them for granted. But maybe not for much longer. You're at a point in your lives where that relationship with the family ends, at least the way it is now (*group was ending in two sessions*).

Cathy: Those rebellious teenage years.

(*More discussion*)

Bob: (*to Cynthia seated to his left on the sofa*) I was thinking while you were talking earlier, if you could say something to your dad or ask him something, what is it you'd like to say to him? (*within the metaphor, asking her for direct feedback on how she perceives his role in the group*)

Cynthia: To my dad?

Bob: You were saying you felt that. . . .

Cynthia: I just want him to be happy, not be so stressed out. I'm afraid he's going to have a heart attack. I just want him to be more relaxed.

Bob: So you don't feel like you can pursue that with him.

Cynthia: I really like when my sister Ann comes home and he does too. . . . Because my dad and my sister have a close relationship. One thing my dad is trying to let me know right now is just that it's okay that I'm not doing the things my sister, Ann, did.

Bob: Somehow he is letting you know . . . that it's okay to be different from Ann.

Cynthia: He is, he's really sweet, he really is. . . . Like my birthday he left a note on the refrigerator that said "Happy Birthday Cynthia" and went on to say that all great people were born in September. His birthday is in September, too. He lets me know he cares. It's just when he's stressed that I don't know what to do.

Tim: I can identify with Cynthia so much when she's talking. . . . My father is an attorney, too. So we're kind of in the same situation. I think about how hard my dad works. He works harder than anyone should work. And I know he works for me, so our family has a nice home, things like that. . . . He works hard and I really want to let him know I'm grateful and it's hard for me. I think he knows. I think we kind of share that, we don't talk a lot. I know it's hard for my dad to talk to me, too.

Bob: (*in response to Cynthia*) It's funny how dads write letters and write things down . . . somehow you don't feel they can say it.

(*The leader had been writing and sending weekly summaries of the group to the members. The letters had a more caring tone than the group was obviously experiencing from him in person. Indirectly, through the letters, he was letting the group know he cared about them.*)

Cathy: That's kind of like my dad. I mean we never talk. But in ninth grade I was having a lot of trouble. . . . My dad knew it and it was kind of weird he bought me this stuffed animal. He just gave it to me and said that he hoped everything would work out, and I was just overwhelmed 'cause he just never showed much affection or anything. Ever since then we've gotten along a lot better. Sounds like a fairy tale doesn't it? (*Here again the reference to an indirect means of caring, i.e., he does things for me so he must care.*)

Bob: My own father and I never had a good relationship. I could never live up to his expectations. He was a driven man. And he had a stoke at 67, 5 years ago. He has changed in the last few years, and it took me 4 years to realize. . . . He's become a very loving man with a real spiritual quality that I never saw before, and it was interesting that he had been changed, but only in the last 6 months have I seen him differently. It was me. There he was wanting to love me now and I was still holding onto that picture I had of him a long time ago. I really found out that it was me who was holding him out of my heart. A real shock to me. . . . I have tried to understand his struggle. To see

his side that I never saw as I was growing up as his son, being so absorbed with my world. (*within the metaphor the leader self-discloses about his own struggle as a son*)

(*A long silence during which members sat quietly and drew inward, avoiding eye contact with others in the group*)

Bob: But it was real hard for me to tell him how I really felt, 'cause he was always in charge. It always seemed to me that it should come from him to me. And it was really me who had to see him differently. (*Continuing within the metaphor, reiterating how difficult it is to directly confront father, i.e., group leader*)

Julia: I'm just wondering if you are not asking people here to see you differently than they see you. (*interprets the metaphor and the group responds by discussing it at the manifest level*)

Cathy: (*to Bob*) It's funny you say that because I do see you differently. You seem a little more interested in us. . . . I mean in more the person than in how the group is progressing the way it should.

Bob: I think I have seen it tonight and it feels different to me, a real sudden awareness.

Julia: Yeah, I've seen a side . . . here tonight. I like it a lot better than how you were.

Bob: Thanks.

Jan: It's weird discussing this tonight how it has changed. It's neat.

Julia: Are you feeling different?

Jan: Yeah, I really like it a lot. I'm wondering, like, beside the topic of love, the chairs feel more comfortable more at ease. . . .

Bob: It's like being in a living room. (*reference to family, i.e., group*)

Jan: At home.

Cathy: I haven't noticed the cameras once tonight.

Cynthia: I really like it. I just feel so comfortable sitting here. It's not like a group. It just seems like I'm . . . talking to a bunch of my friends . . . at my house.

Tim: (*sitting between two group members*) I feel so enclosed by this sofa. The other chairs always felt like you could just fall off.

Jan: It's like you really want group to continue. (*to Julia*) Can you talk about how you get along with your dad or is that too personal? (*returning to the latent level, Jan asks the second facilitator about her relationship with the male leader*)

Julia: No, I think we've really struggled throughout the years, there have been times when we have been close. I don't know that

I've ever felt filled by my dad. I know he has loved me dearly, but he doesn't always know how to say it. I just want more than I get.

Bob: (*to Julia*) Dads have such a powerful influence over us. (a reference to her role as co-facilitator and graduate student)

Julia: (*to Bob*) Sometimes you remind me of my dad. Sometimes I feel close and sometimes distance. (*manifest level*)

Bob: (*responding at the latent level to the whole group*) It's hard being a father so responsible. You have to take care of the family and take care of everybody and make sure that everyone is okay. The responsibility gets in the way, and care and love get expressed through it rather than directly. (*turning to Cynthia*) That's why it's nice sometimes that kids can figure it out, what he really means.

Tim: I just feel so bad. It just took me 'til last weekend to figure that out. I just feel like I wasted so much time.

Bob: It took me 40 years to figure it out with my dad.

Julia: Maybe we want to hold onto what we have left because it (*group*) will be ending for us soon.

Cathy: . . . it should go on. It seems like it just started.

Bob: A student wrote in a paper for me once "just when you figure life out it's over."

Amplification of the narration and staying within the safety of the figurative language allowed for multiple processing. In the preceding example, the group members were able to simultaneously address family of origin and group issues. The group was effectively able to confront the leader, thus seeing another side of him, all within the safety of the metaphor.

This group demonstrates how it is possible, through the use of metaphors, to undergo significant change while operating at the boundary between order and disorder. In this example, the co-leaders effectively work at the latent level, maintaining a necessary balance to push the group forward while preventing extreme turbulence. Working with the collective mind is an art that depends on a finely tuned ear to hear the group's collective voice that is expressed through metaphor. The metaphor is not static, and as the group develops during this session so does the metaphor. Tracking this dual evolution of the group and the collective metaphor requires an ability for parallel processing by the leader. This skill is very necessary in the later stages of group development.

This chapter has introduced a power tool—the group metaphor. It has also identified some areas of concern associated with the illumination and

interpretation of spontaneous metaphor in groups. Caution was urged in directly interpreting metaphors. The preferred method introduced was amplification as a more natural and less intrusive means of metaphor in groups. It is hoped that as group leaders become familiar with the therapeutic potential of metaphors that they remain sensitive to its function, power, and complexity.

Chapter 12

Regressive Groups

A group is impulsive, changeable, and irritable. It is led almost exclusively by the unconscious. . . . Though it may desire things passionately, yet this is never so for long, for it is incapable of perseverance. . . . It goes directly to extremes; if suspicion is expressed, it is instantly changed into an incontrovertible certainty; a trace of antipathy is turned into furious hatred.

—Gustave LeBon[1]

This chapter addresses regressive groups. From the perspective of chaos theory, these groups are stuck in limit cycles. They do the same things over and over again. The group must, of course, endure chaos if it is to develop. However, regressive groups have not developed sufficient fixed points to which they might anchor to contain themselves as they experience the anxiety and upheaval necessary for reorganization to the next stage of development. The group shuts down, limiting energy exchange or feedback from other systems. As the group becomes more isolated, opportunities for constructive reorganization decrease. The limit cycle or back-and-forth motion of the pendulum characterizes the group's movement as novelty is damped.

If self-organization is blocked, the group will still change. However, the resulting structure will not be self-generating or self-maintaining.[2] Group members, similar to the slowing pendulum, will move toward the middle or collective mean as energy dissipates and difference is diminished.

In this chapter, the characteristics of regressive groups that can be explored include the collective shadow, psychic numbing, abdication of responsibility, narcissism, avoidance of conflict, and acute stress. Leadership attributes necessary to avoid regression in groups are examined.

This description of mob behaviors by Lebon, highlighted at the beginning of the chapter, characterizes the regressive and psychologically immature aspects of groups. These groups are primitive, impulsive, unintelligent, restrictive, and potentially destructive. In these groups, members remain unconscious, minority voices are repressed, and internal conflict stays unresolved.[3] The psychological forces that keep group members stuck in the early stages of development have been described as ". . . threats to the loss of one's individuality and autonomy, the revival of early familial conflicts, and the prevalence of envy, rivalry, and competition."[4]

This chapter examines the dark, denied, and unacknowledged behavior of groups and organizations. Of particular interest are those groups where members remain dependent on the leader for direction, ignore or deny their negative attributes, and lack a common positive identity or sense of esprit de corp that binds them together. These groups have been labeled *regressive.*[5] Typically, regressive groups are stuck in the forming stages of development and exhibit four general characteristics: (a) avoidance of conflict and dissent, (b) abdication of responsibility for the group's behavior and dependence on the leader, (c) group narcissism, and (d) psychic numbing. When combined, these traits inhibit the maturation of groups and result in a kind of "group mindlessness," wherein members distort their inner and outer reality to conform with a dominant group view.[6] This chapter examines the development of regressive group characteristics and offers suggestions for transforming these rigid groups into more productive organizations. Finally, leader behaviors that can liberate regressive groups are considered.

To illuminate the discussion and highlight the manifestation of regressive group characteristics, two examples are provided. A consulting assignment provided me with the first example—a college faculty department. This group clearly illustrated the predominant form of regressive groups.

NATURE OF REGRESSIVE GROUPS

The Collective Shadow

Regressive group characteristics are most pronounced when threats to a group's survival, actual or perceived, exist.[7] Promotion of fear in groups can be used to heighten the group's sense of survival. As noted in chapter 2, Jung discussed a collective unconscious that included archetypes such as the shadow. All groups contain a collective shadow consisting of the unexpressed emotional negativity that group members experience as threatening. Additionally, personality characteristics and emotions that members are unable to accept in themselves are also hidden in the collective shadow.[8]

Group Size

As groups or organizations develop safety and trust, a collective identity emerges.[9] However, the level of intimacy established among members in these groups depends on at least two factors. If the size it too large and/or the purpose unclear, there is a greater likelihood of a regressive group developing.

Counseling or therapy groups foster high levels of self-disclosure and intimacy among their members. Group size is usually limited—6 to 12 members—which facilitates the intimacy-building process.[10] Task-oriented groups or organizations range in size from several members to several hundred members. These groups usually meet on a regular basis with a specific agenda that focuses almost exclusively on conducting the business of the organization. Little time or effort is directed at maintenance or affective activities within the group. Large collectivities such as neighborhoods, communities, or nations may share common characteristics based on ethnic, religious, or geographical identification, but never hold a formal group meeting. Although there has been considerable debate about the nature of large groups, there is common agreement that they manifest a collective identity and at times share a collective agenda.[11]

The larger the group, the more difficult it is to address and resolve member difference. In fact many argue that large groups or crowds are inherently regressive.[12] Hence, the individuals who comprise them are prone to relinquish their individual identities in favor of feelings of anonymity, unaccountability, and invincibility, thus making them more susceptible to "collective behavior."[13] In large groups, it is often the group leader who can promote tolerance, cultivate well-being, and invite the expression of conflict and dissent. In a sense, the actions of the group leader can greatly influence the expression or repression of shadow material.

Regressive Group Characteristics

As mentioned previously, there are four dominant traits that characterize regressive groups: psychic numbing, abdication of responsibility for the group's behavior and dependence on the leader, avoidance of conflict and dissent, and group narcissism.[14] H. Scott Peck in his treatise on evil called attention to these regressive group characteristics. Recently, we have again witnessed this brutality on the attack of the World Trade Center in 2001, and earlier in the former Yugoslavia as Serbian and Croatian solders committed acts of barbarism. To some extent, all groups contain one or more of these regressive characteristics. Yet the mature group has acquired the necessary skill to bring to light to the shadow material that may be impeding its growth.

Psychic Numbing

Over time, regressive group members anesthetize themselves to contradictions within the group. This psychic numbing process deadens feelings aroused by agonizing decisions that group members are required to make, which are often in contradiction to their individually held ethical and moral principles. When numbing is complete, member values become synonymous with those expressed by the group, enabling members to participate with little or no noticeable discomfort in the group's activities. However, the physical, emotional, and spiritual damage done to members is often considerable.[15] As group members repress and internalize the contradiction between their own ethical values and those of the group, illness, depression, and anxiety are often the result.[16] Yet this numbing process that members undergo is critical for the continuation of the group. It allows members to participate in acts of violence against others without the earlier dissonance they might have experienced. Members who are unable to conform or deaden their awareness are customarily shunned and ultimately excluded from the group. This shunning continues long after the group's atrocities and complicity in violence is brought to light because these dissenters remind the other group members of their moral cowardice.

Abdication of Responsibility for the Group and Dependence on the Leader

Abdication of individual responsibility in groups is a particularly dangerous trait. Members avoid leadership roles in regressive groups, thus abdicating direct responsibility for the group's actions. The inability to collectively challenge the leader during the forming stages inhibits the group from effectively redistributing the power. H. Scott Peck speculates that the role of follower is much easier than the role of leader. As such, he summarizes, one need make no decisions, plan ahead, initiate action, or risk unpopularity.[17]

For example, the turning point in many therapy groups rests on the leader's ability to confront group members on their dependencies within the group. The leader must then relinquish the leadership position so group members can experiment with assuming that role and learn "how to exercise mature power in a group setting. . . . The ideal mature group is composed entirely of leaders."[18]

The group's reluctance to take charge is one factor, but more likely the leader's ignorance of group dynamics or unwillingness to relinquish control is what causes members' inertia. Clearly, the two are interrelated. The leader's need for control and group members' willingness to cede their own power frames the notion of dependence on authority figures.[19]

In many cases, regressive groups are led by authoritarian leaders who, as Arthur Deikman describes, emphasize obedience, loyalty, and the suppression of criticism.[20] These leaders are often charismatic and adept at manipulating their followers' idealism to serve their own ends. The members readily invest their power in such a leader because it fosters their dependency fantasy—the wish for the idealized parent—that was not abandoned during the initial stages of group development.

This fantasy, which remains beyond awareness in adulthood, is seductive because it cultivates the mistaken belief that one is cared for and protected. The fantasy is insidious and a primary factor in group members' willingness to cede responsibility for the group behaviors. Yet the leader becomes trapped by the illusion too because leaders must continue to fulfill the group's expectation of the powerful parent or the group may annihilate them. In fact, the leader also wishes to believe in the powers of an idealized and omnipotent parent.[21]

If members do not gain autonomy, participate in decision making, and assume responsibility for the group, they will remain in the role of the child with only one responsibility—obedience.[22] The dilemma, of course, is that in the role of the child, members surrender their own critical thinking capacities, projecting them onto the role of the leader whom they follow blindly.[23]

Group Narcissism

Potentially the most destructive consequence of regressive groups is group narcissism. Groups are bound together by a force called *cohesiveness.* In productive and healthy groups, cohesiveness is generated from within as a manifestation of group pride. Pride develops from the synergistic interactions, accomplishments, and successes that result when members value, respect, and trust one another. The malignant form of group pride is group narcissism.

Narcissistic groups develop cohesiveness by encouraging hatred of an out-group or by creating an enemy.[24] As a result, regressive group members are able to overlook their own deficiencies by focusing on the deficiencies of the out-group. Ironically, it is often the group's own shortcomings, frustrations, anger, rage, and hostility that are projected onto the out-group.[25] Thus, characterizations of the out-group are more often reflective of the disowned negative attributes of the in-group.

By splitting off and projecting outward their dark, shadowy side, regressive groups maintain an illusion of harmony. A public myth is created by the group that disguises any internal conflict.[26] Members of regressive groups often describe themselves in glowing terms. As members numb themselves to the apparent contradictions between the public myth and the

group's true nature, their ability to perceive reality is severely diminished. The greater the pressure in regressive groups to suppress critical thinking and deny their own dark side, the more likelihood dehumanizing actions against their perceived enemies will occur.[27] Extreme examples are terrorist groups, the Nazis, and the Ku Klux Klan.

Avoidance of Conflict and Dissent

To protect their myth, regressive groups will not only commit physical and psychological violence against out-groups, but will silence members who seek to expose the group's own shortcomings.[28] Because regressive groups have been unable to successfully negotiate effective norms for the expression of conflict and its resolution, they avoid it. Criticism is muted, and disagreements are damped. Access to information that challenges group beliefs and its public myth is severely limited. Media are often complicit in limiting or censoring information, as was the case in both Iraq wars. Without dissent as a corrective and stabilizing factor, regressive groups, in the extreme, are capable of vile acts of cruelty, coercion, and domination.

Because minority views are repressed and labeled as *corrupt,* the range of opinions to which regressive group members have access are restricted.[29] Often, group dogma is simplified into slogans that are mindlessly recited, further curtailing critical thought.[30]

Nongroup views are discounted, and access to nongroup members is limited. Eventually regressive group members self-monitor their contact with outsiders and self-censor reading or other materials that conflict with the group's dominant view. This self-censorship lessens emotional discomfort, facilitates psychic numbing, and permits group members to tolerate the coercion and punishment used to stifle dissent.

Stress

Regressive groups maintain the appearance of normalcy under nonstressful conditions. However, there is little flexibility in these systems, and stress increases their destructive potential. In a situation of prolonged discomfort, humans naturally, almost inevitably, tend to regress. Our psychological growth reverses itself; our maturity is forsaken. Quite rapidly we become more childish, more primitive. Discomfort is stress. What I am describing is a natural tendency of the human organism to regress in response to chronic stress.[31]

Chronic stress is also caused by perceived threats to an organism's survival, whether construed as an individual or group. When threats occur, a group will resort to primitive, nonrational methods of defending itself: scapegoating, projection, and even violence. William Golding's classic

novel, *Lord of the Flies,* provides an excellent example of the development of a regressive group. His story, which some suggest is a commentary on society, centers on a group of boys marooned on a tropical island and traces their regression to primitive levels of behavior.[32]

Golding demonstrates that under periods of extreme stress groups are capable of violent and barbaric behavior, ultimately leading to their own destruction. Many regressive group characteristics are reflected in this story: scapegoating, group narcissism, suppression of divergent thinking, inability to articulate feelings, inability to resolve internal group conflict, and self-interest. The story illustrates that ultimately two factors are instrumental in the perpetuation of regressive groups: ignorance and fear. Stress exacerbates dysfunctional behavior. Examining behaviors of groups under stress will often disclose their regressive nature. Regressive group examples abound in academia,[33] business organizations, religious communities, governments, and larger societal systems.[34]

REGRESSIVE GROUPS: A CASE STUDY

The most prevalent type of regressive group embodies the following attributes: exclusively task oriented, stuck between the Disunity and Confrontation stage, poor levels of performance by its members, and a strong sense of group narcissism. Nevertheless, under nonstressful conditions, these groups function at moderate levels of effectiveness. However, in times of stress, the group's destructive potential is exacerbated. The following example, from my consulting with a university department, clearly illustrates the predominant form of regressive groups.

The group was task oriented. Its primary function was to negotiate the month-to-month activities of the department. It never addressed the maintenance or emotional aspects of the tasks faced by its members. Over a period of years, the tensions, conflicts, and anxieties that went unexpressed caused what little group cohesion that existed to become malignant.

The group had no norms of behavior for addressing the inevitable differences and negativity that existed among its members. Subgrouping and scapegoating occurred as methods of dissipating the anxiety experienced by members. The pervasive atmosphere of the group was one of mistrust. As a result, the group never progressed beyond the second stage of development. The absence of critical and divergent thinking resulted in the deterioration of each member's level of professional performance. It steadily declined over the years until the mean level of performance was poor. Deviation from that norm was not tolerated.

The department existed in a rather closed and geographically isolated university. It served as the repository for many of the unwanted projections

of other departments, and thus was functional for the university at large. When new faculty members were added, they were often shocked by the harmony illusion that existed. It was evident that there was little basis for harmony among this group. New faculty were subtly warned to hide their competencies, particularly any research or writing they were doing.

The department was insulated from exposure from its new members by the retention process. New members were voted on yearly by tenured faculty members. The voting was presumably based on the candidates' professional development, teaching ability, and service to the university and community. However, no objective procedure existed for evaluating these criteria. In fact tenured faculty never talked with new members about their professional development.

A collusion of silence developed where the message was implicitly communicated to new faculty that they were free to do little or nothing if they chose, and would be retained as long as they did not become too competent, or comment on the group's dysfunctional behaviors. Deviation from the group competency norm or exposure of the dysfunctional nature of group, a form of professional suicide, would have been met with a nonretention vote.

New members subgrouped and discussed the contradictions that were apparent within the group as means of lessening their anxiety. Those who stayed and obtained tenure after 7 years had been so acculturated to the group norms that they were unwilling to confront the group's destructive nature. In many ways, they had become psychically numb to survive the psychological trauma from the many contradictions within the group.

Over the years, a group shadow developed from all the disowned and negative aspects of the department. By projecting the shadow onto other departments and faculty members within the university, a sense of cohesion was maintained.

The department was responsible for training teachers, but never examined or discussed their own teaching techniques. Members of the university community and many of the college's own students were appalled at the ineptitude that existed in many of the department's classrooms. However, many of the department's meetings consisted of faculty venting their anger and frustration at the poor quality of teaching that existed throughout other colleges in the university. Any negative feedback by students was discounted. Peer review was nonexistent. Accreditation reports were ignored or discounted. The department had effectively cut off any source of feedback.

In times of extreme stress, the group was able to insulate itself from criticism and attack the potential threat. A new dean of the college was hired and quickly became aware of the department's reputation, which now contained the former dean. During his first year, the new dean instituted open

college forums. These were opportunities for faculty to meet and discuss the future direction of the college. Emphasis was placed on research and teaching. The department members were discursive and disruptive during the meetings. Afterward they were openly critical of the dean. He became a new target of projection during their faculty meetings. During his second year, the open meetings stopped.

The department chair retired, and a recently tenured faculty member was elected to replace him. The new chair was clearly aware of the dysfunctional nature of the department, but during his early years remained silent. He was perceived by the older faculty as their heir apparent.

Shortly after assuming the job, he began to institute new policies. The department meetings were conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order. Objective criteria were established for retaining new faculty, and an explicit review process was put in place.

The former chairperson had never addressed student complaints about faculty incompetence. Yet the new chair responded to those complaints by informing faculty and placing letters in their permanent files. He found incompetence beyond anything he had imagined. The emotional pressure on him to conform to established norms was intense. Finally, when he realized that some very difficult decisions had to be made regarding the department's professional comportment, he resigned. He summed up the regressive and destructive emotional atmosphere of the department when he described his fear of what might happen if he pushed for change: "I felt like they would murder me."

This example illustrates many of the common characteristics of regressive groups: avoidance of internal conflict, creation of a group shadow, inability to tolerate self-examination or self-criticism, and abdication of individual responsibility for the group's actions. The members of this group, each for their own psychological reasons, chose to live less than authentic existences. For the most part, they were good people who had become numb to their individual and collective potential. Although the shield of tenure and geographic isolation protected this group from exposure, variations of this theme are carried out daily in many business and community organizations.

As noted earlier, groups develop through a series of stages. Beginning with the Disunity stage, effective groups resolve conflict, develop a sense of "we-ness" or belongingness, become highly cohesive and productive, and, for some, end in a termination stage. However, many groups never sufficiently work through their differences and evolve beyond the initial stages of development. Not only are these groups unable to maximize their full creative potential, but they develop destructive or regressive tendencies that remain largely outside the awareness of the group's members.

THE CONFRONTATION STAGE REVISITED

The expression and resolution of conflict has been stressed in this book as the most critical period in group development for several reasons: The group must untangle its preconceptions of the leader, resolve dependency issues, develop a norm for successful conflict resolution, and establish genuine cohesiveness. The group must come to terms with the leader. Members bring to groups preconceived notions of how leaders should act. Many of these perceptions are based on earlier experiences with previous authority figures including parents. Often the most pervasive and unrealistic fantasy, albeit unconscious, is that the leader is omnipotent and will somehow parent, protect, and satisfy each member's need. Obviously, no matter how competent the leader, he or she will fail to meet these expectations, thus members will become frustrated and angry. The leader's inability to be real or vulnerable, admit mistakes, share the power by promoting autonomy and independence, and encourage conflict and dissent results in validating the omnipotent parent illusion.

Underlying this disappointment is a second critical factor that must be resolved in the conflict stage: dependency versus counterdependency or members' need to be taken care of versus their desire for independence. Fostering the omnipotent leader illusion inhibits group members from reclaiming the power they have invested in the authority figure. The more willingly members are to recognize the leader's limitations, the more able they are to realize their own potential and capabilities. Successful resolution of this dilemma initiates the shift of responsibility for the group and its functioning from the leader to the group members.

Group cohesiveness is primarily developed during this conflict stage. Together, as group members undergo this period of anger, frustration, and chaotic activity, the relationships among them are strengthened. This stage serves as the forge in which the group bond is heated to white-hot temperatures.[35] Successful completion solidifies cohesiveness, whereas ineffective or incomplete resolution results in a brittle and fragile bond.

Groups that fail to effectively address or resolve conflict stagnate. Their creative potential is severely limited. They remain stuck, are unable to handle conflict, and develop a kind of malignant cohesiveness that enables them to maintain the appearance of harmony. In many cases, these groups are able to function effectively, but they lack flexibility, and under stress their noxious behavior is exacerbated. Once a regressive group has remained chronically stuck for a period of time, their destructive tendencies become reified. Then any perceived or real threat to their illusion of harmony (survival) will be met with angry resistance.[36]

Groups can regress at any stage of development, but mostly it occurs during the confrontation stage. In the early stages of development, if anxiety is too high and not sufficiently contained, if norms are too strict, if conflict is not allowed, group development is thwarted. As noted, groups that enter conflict but retreat because the leader is too strong and will not permit dissention or confrontation may develop regressive behaviors.

Although at one time or another most groups exhibit regressive tendencies, healthy and mature groups are able to endure periods of high anxiety without regressing to destructive or injurious behavior to themselves or others. What distinguishes the mature group from its regressive counterpart is its ability to openly express conflict, encourage divergent thinking, and nurture diversity and difference among its members.[37]

LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGING REGRESSIVE GROUPS

There are opportunities that occur in the life of regressive groups where a change or transformation is possible. These can develop as impasses in the group or places at which the group is unable to proceed. If the group can focus its attention on the impasse and explore the intrinsic meaning of the stuckness, an expansion of group consciousness is possible. These moments present opportunities for major turning points in the group. However, attitudes are extremely difficult to change. It requires significant work and often considerable pain. Self-doubt, an openness to self-examination, and the willingness to suspend beliefs about what is right and wrong are necessary for a regressive group to evolve.

To change, groups must undergo a period of uncertainty and chaos, the point at which most groups got stuck. In this state, where rules are suspended, boundaries ambiguous, and members anxious, the possibility for transformation to a new level of organization is possible. In many ways, this environment is analogous to one aspect of the creative process described by artists as a period of intense frustration endured before insight or enlightenment can be achieved.

However, chaotic groups have difficulty tolerating the anxiety and ambiguity inherent in such situations. Often, groups reestablish equilibrium or dissipate the energy created by the moment before it has time to reflect on its dilemma. Regressive groups never progress beyond the fourth stage of development—confrontation. This is true of many task-oriented groups. Although these groups function adequately and never regress to impulsive or primitive levels, their creative potential remains untapped.

Many regressive groups are incapable of resolving their own predicaments. Once a group has reified its regressive tendencies, change becomes

extremely difficult. In some cases, the inflexibility of these groups eventually leads to their dissolution.

Intervention by a trained group consultant is usually the only method of facilitating movement in these groups. Selecting an individual the group trusts and inviting him or her to observe the group and offer feedback can help. However, short of outside intervention, there are some options that members of regressive groups might utilize to effect change. This section examines those strategies and suggests several methods for preventing the growth and activation of the collective shadow.

Contrary opinions could be shared. Group members need to become aware of their potential to influence the group.[38] Often silent members have similar discordant views and can be empowered to share them if others take the lead. However, dissenting members must be prepared to face serious resistance in the form of confusion, denial, and anger. Even scapegoating and expulsion from the group are possible. However, research has shown that dissenters who persist over time in their views can influence the direction of the group.[39]

Tolerate Ambiguity

Yet to change, group members must be prepared to undergo a period of chaos where rules are suspended, boundaries become ambiguous, and members experience anxiety. It requires a committed effort, considerable pain, an openness to self-examination, and a willingness to suspend beliefs about what is right and wrong. This period can be compared to the time of intense frustration endured by artists just before creative insight is achieved.

Unearth Conflict

Conflict must be uncovered and addressed. The group must recognize conflict as a healthy catalyst for change. Norms for its expression and resolution must be developed. Once conflict is openly addressed, members sometimes discover that it was the fear of conflict that was debilitating. Its expression is quite cathartic.[40]

Reclaim the Shadow

Another area of reconstruction the group must undergo is the reclaiming and integration of its dark side that has been projected onto outgroups. The group must consciously acknowledge its negative aspects. A place to start is by examining the characteristics the group assigns to competing or

enemy groups. Careful examination of those traits will often yield hidden information about the group's own behavior.

Furthermore, efforts at developing a more comprehensive and compassionate understanding of the outgroup can also help illuminate the group's own denied attributes. The more conscious groups become of their negative aspects the less prone they become to manipulation.

Examine Metaphors

Identifying the source of a group's intractability can be aided by examining the group's metaphorical language. Regressive group metaphors are generated in response to threatening situations. They usually appear in the form of stories introduced by group members and are attempts to resolve the group's dilemma at an analogical level.[41] Even solutions to the group's stuckness are often embedded within the metaphor. Several methods for utilizing the information contained in the metaphors have been detailed in chapter 11.

Defining a Purpose or Having a Vision

The nature and purpose of a group dictates, to a large extent, the specific role of the leader and its membership. Usually in therapeutic groups, the relationship between the leader and its members is reciprocal, marked by an intensified level of intimacy. In larger task-oriented groups, the relationship is less personal and more unilateral as the leader, for the most part, provides direction for the group. However, in either case, the freedom to express diverse opinions, air dissenting views, and respect minority beliefs can be fostered by both the leader and group members.

Creating Awareness or Fostering Group Mindfulness

Group mindfulness[42] characterizes an open group, wherein exploration of different and diverse opinions is encouraged along with critical questioning that challenges the group's frame of reference. Leaders are initially charged with creating and fostering this tolerant environment. This is best accomplished through allocation of authority by inviting group members to share and participate in the group's decision-making process. In large groups, this can be accomplished by delegating authority to small task groups that are empowered to act on behalf of the whole. All information on which a decision is based should be made available to all group members. Composition of the small group is critical and should reflect the diversity of opinion in the larger group. Group membership in these decision-making groups should be rotated as often as possible.

Promote Partage

Group building based on the French word *partage,* meaning both to divide and to share,[43] reflects an attempt to build group cohesiveness on diversity rather than consensus. Underlying this somewhat unorthodox idea is the notion that group consensus promotes conformity "that rules out the other, substituting one set of beliefs for another, brings us the regime of yellow ribbons and American flags as the test of patriotism. It leads students to condemn dissent, . . . as treasonous and un-American."[44] The notion of partage recognizes that differences are often irreducible, and group rules for coexistence should be developed that do not presume the necessity of consensus. "Partage accepts diversity as a condition of our lives."[45]

Assume Responsibility

Group members must assume personal responsibility for the group's actions and be willing to voice opinions that may run counter to the majority view. Viewing the leader realistically can inhibit the development of the omnipotent parent image. Yet perhaps the most important aspect of personal responsibility is to develop an independent knowledge base of the group's activities. This is particularly true if you belong to a large organization. Sharpen your critical thinking skills by listening to minority positions and reading alternative sources of information about your group. Avoid groupthink! Remain open to the possibility that there are multiple realities. During the first Iraq war, it was determined that those people who got the majority of information about the war from the major TV networks actually knew less about it than people who obtained there information elsewhere. During the second Iraq war, a study conducted at the University of Maryland again found that those people who relied on TV and cable news were more likely to be misinformed about the actual facts of the war, especially those who watched Fox News, whose promotion of the war was unabated.[46]

Appoint an Ombudsman

Research has demonstrated that when groups are continuously exposed to dissenting viewpoints, they are likely to think more actively and creatively.[47] All ongoing business, community, and organization groups should consider appointing an ombudsman or critical evaluator to monitor the group's activities and critically assess its behavior. Periodical feedback should then be included as an integral part of the group's activities. Another means to accomplish this goal is to assign, on a rotating basis, the role of critical evaluator to each group member who then plays the "devil's advocate."[48]

All groups have regressive tendencies that develop from their avoidance of conflict, denial of negative traits, suppression of critical thinking, and damping of dissent. Healthy groups are able to recognize these inclinations and summon the courage to confront them openly. Inflexible groups ignore them hoping they will just go away. They never do! All regressive group characteristics that are denied or suppressed will continue to haunt the group, in one form or another, until they are acknowledged.

SUMMARY

As mentioned in chapter 1, I recently assumed a leadership role as chair of the Psychology Department. I had worked in the department for many years, but like other faculty I was overwhelmed by the regressive nature of the group and tried to detach myself from the chaos. There are many reasons that academic departments find themselves in this predicament, but essentially it evolves around one primary issue.

Academic departments are structured almost entirely around tasks. Interpersonal dynamics are seldom addressed, and there is little attention to the process, so the group functions only at an intellectual level and leaves emotional issues unaddressed. Further, many faculty members lack the interpersonal skills to function effectively in small groups, and still others, like in other organizations, are mentally or emotionally dysfunctional.

This latter issue is an important one that must be addressed for a group to move beyond their regressive state. Unfortunately, in the academic milieu, as a result of tenure, it is nearly impossible to remove these people from the institution. A second strategy is to have them reassigned within the university or other arrangements made, where they are at least removed from the group. Without doing so, there is no chance that a faculty group under any kind of leadership can effectively repair a regressive group.

This group example could be extended to many workplace environments, especially those in which the employees feel little valued by management. In those cases, individuals must develop firm boundaries to protect themselves from the potential emotional damage done by the group.

On a better note, it is possible to restore vitality to an otherwise dysfunctional group, and a knowledgeable leader can patiently and skillfully re-lead a group back through their early stages of development where healthier norms of behavior can be developed.

Chapter 13

Generative and Transpersonal Groups

. . . in an infinity of universes every one of us to a millimetre lies right at the very heart of the whole of creation. Narcissistic characters have always known this, and they are right!

Where should we look for God in all of this? Is chaos God? Is God chaos? I am inclined to think that the godlike plane of mentation is a higher order of creativity than the mindless ordering or particles to make matter. Indeed I have long believed that the truest locus of god-like sentience emerges when two or more are gathered together in reverent reflection. . . .

It is increasingly apparent to me that the highest from of consciousness develops through the processes of group interaction. This requires the establishment of favourable conditions. In short what is needed in the group is an interface between order and disorder wherein authentic chaotic processes can emerge.

—Jeff Roberts[1]

This chapter addresses the highest level of group functioning or the seventh level of the arc. In this transpersonal state, the group becomes more than the sum of the individuals who comprise it, and that emergent aspect is referred to in this chapter as the group or collective mind. With respect to chaos theory, this stage is the result of many successful bifurcations in which the group moved from a lower level of functioning to a higher level.

The concept of the group mind is not new and was described by LeBon and McDougall in the early 1900s, but the idea disappeared through the intervening years as analytic, positivist thinking emerged, in which the group was seen primarily as no more than a collection of individuals. In

this conceptualization of groups, much is lost because the group as a whole has qualities beyond any of the individuals who comprise it.

More recently, the concept of group mind re-appeared in the transpersonal literature, and much of that literature cited in this chapter comes from that perspective. Although group mind is rarely witnessed in pure form, group leaders should understand that the group has the potential to tap into a universal consciousness, and this is always present in the life of a group. This aspect of groups is encountered in those rare moments when the group seems larger than itself, when the dynamic of the group is beyond explanation, or the group becomes creative in ways no one would have previously imagined.

Although there is considerable agreement that a collective mind does emerge from the interactions of a group of people, exactly how that mind manifests itself is in question. Two schools of thought become visible. The first suggests that the group mind assumes an identity greater than the sum of its parts,[2] while the second implies that the emergent mind is equal to or less than the aggregate of its parts.[3] The type of group mind that emerges is predicated on the group's level of development. Hence, groups stuck in the forming stages will manifest a less developed mind than those groups in more advanced stages. These less developed or regressive groups were examined in the last chapter.

To differentiate between groups that mature and those that do not, it is helpful to picture a continuum. At one end of the continuum is the regressive and least developed level of group. At the opposite end is the generative and highest level of group development. This chapter describes the characteristics of mature (generative) groups, and it speculates on the attributes of the group mind. The phenomena of the group mind are not discussed in the contemporary literature. Among earlier theorists there was considerable speculation, but in recent years little has been written about it. However, the notion of a universal mind or consciousness occupies a central position in transpersonal psychology.

More recently, literature has appeared describing collective intelligence in small groups and workplace settings and the importance of developing and fostering a collective vision. This vision becomes emergent when all members of an organization are seen to have value and can contribute to the "collective learning" that is possible in these work groups.[4] The following describes how these groups might evolve and the mechanism by which they can access collective intelligence.

Many theorists from various disciplines[5] have "argued in one form or another that groups, institutions, and culture have a life or existence quite separate from the individuals" who comprise them.[6] This emergent entity has been called many names: group mentality,[7] group theme,[8] group metaphor,[9] universal mind,[10] and, simply, the group mind.[11]

The group mind has been described as "individual minds, forming groups by mingling and fusing, give birth to a being, psychological if you will but constituting a psychic individuality of a new sort."[12] However, it has also been rejected as "ill-considered and scientifically pretentious psychomysticism, quasi-fascist nonsense" and dismissed as "a metaphysical assumption with no scientific justification."[13]

The group mind concept eventually lost much of its influence because it was too unwieldy and amorphous to be of any use.[14] It fell subject to what Gordon Allport[15] described as the group fallacy, "the error of substituting the group as a whole as a principle of explanation in place of the individuals in the group."[16] Allport explained that no psychology of groups existed that was not actually a psychology of the individuals who comprised the group. The individuals, he concluded, were the proper locus of explanation.

One of the recurrent problems faced by pre-Allportian social psychology was that of describing the relationship between the individual and social—of forging a conceptual bridge between the two. Group mind theorists found this a difficult issue. Durkheim viewed the individual as superfluous in sociological analysis. Wundt had no clear answer as to how important phenomena of community life affected individual consciousness, and McDougall was forced to postulate a sympathetic mechanism and social instincts that linked the individual to the social.[17]

Despite the many interpretations by theorists of differing philosophies, there emerges a prevailing description of the collective mind as an "autonomous and unified mental life in an assemblage of people bound together by mutual interests."[18] However, others not only support the idea, but advocate that earlier definitions be expanded:[19]

> the unanimous expression of the will of the group, contributed to by the individual in ways of which he (sic) is unaware, influencing him (sic) disagreeably whenever he (sic) thinks or behaves in a manner at variance with the basic assumptions. It is thus a machinery of intercommunication that is designed to ensure that group life is in accordance with the basic assumptions.[20] One theorist argues that the group mind not only transcends the sum of the individual minds that form it, but each mind is altered as a result of belonging to it.[21]

UNIVERSAL MIND

Transpersonal psychologists have long championed the idea of a cosmic or universal mind.[22] It is described as a *helping potential* or *creative force* that manifests itself in "works of the human spirit: heroic or spiritual actions, science, art, and philosophy."[23] It has been personified as a welcoming and loving entity with directing capabilities.[24] The universal mind has further

been portrayed as capable of providing harmony, meaning, and growth, and it has been associated with the creative force behind the cosmic design.[25] Michael Grosso believes that,

> Mind at Large resonates with the idea of God as love, Eros, agape, karuna and with the idea of a friendly intelligence somehow hidden in the secret byways of a dangerous world. . . . Mind at Large doesn't refer to a thing; it points to a process. That is part of what is meant by saying that Mind is creative.[26]

A further description of mind compares it to that of an evolving god—a god who exists within us and who can only emerge through us. Moreover, this "Helping Potential lies hidden in the deep grain and texture of being."[27] Unlike the conventional religious concept of God, which posits a one-way relationship between creator and creature, it has been suggested that the cosmic mind is capable of learning and growth through interchange with the individual minds comprising it.[28] This distinction between mind and traditional definitions of God is clarified by Randall.

> Mind that reveals itself in the development of life on this planet is clearly not omnipotent, otherwise it would have assembled perfectly designed organisms . . . without having to go through the long process of trial and error which we call evolution.[29]

From the discussion, it appears that individual and group minds are interacting elements of a larger mind. Likewise, as James Lovelock asserted in his Gaia hypotheses, the earth is one large living system composed of smaller interdependent systems.[30]

INTERMIND COMMUNICATION

The ability to communicate between minds has been explored by transpersonal psychologists.[31] McDougall's notion of the group mind led him to speculate on the possibilities of "telepathic interaction" among group members.[32] This idea of telepathic communication found support among many of the traditional theories of extra-sensory perception (ESP).[33]

Arthur Koestler was interested in this area and likened the group mind to a "subterranean pool," accessible to individual minds through which they can communicate with one another. He notes,

> It looks as if telepathically received impressions have some difficulty crossing the threshold and manifesting themselves in consciousness. There seems to be some barrier or repressive mechanism which tends to shut out from consciousness, a barrier which is rather difficult to pass, and they make use of all sorts of devices for overcoming it. Sometimes they use muscular mechanisms of the body and emerge in the form of automatic speech or writing. Some-

> times they emerge in the form of dreams, sometimes auditory hallucination. And often they can emerge in a distorted and symbolic form. It is a plausible guess that many of our everyday thoughts and emotions are telepathic or partly telepathic in origin, but are not recognized (sic) to be so because they are so much distorted and mixed with other mental contents in crossing the threshold of consciousness.[34]

The individual mind is connected with the universal mind when each person is viewed as potentially a mind at large, capable at each moment of "remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe."[35] The primary function of the brain and nervous system was seen as eliminative rather than productive. This system functioned to protect the individual from inundation by a mass of irrelevant information. Thus, it allowed through only knowledge that was practically useful and necessary for survival.[36]

> The individual mind mirrors in miniature the group mind, yet no individual mind . . . can subtend the whole range of awareness of the group mind. Nor can any individual mind, however great its feeling or desire to act, equal the power and intensity and richness of feeling included in the group mind.[37]

Erich Jantsch[38] conceived of intermind communication as the result of a kind of resonance among individual minds. Earlier we discussed this resonance process as phase locking. This commingling of consciousness has also been characterized as the link between the social and spiritual spheres.

In his book, *The Final Choice,* Michael Grosso speculated that in times of crises, when the rational, conscious self reaches an impasse, the potential for receiving help from the universal mind is increased. For support of his arguments, he draws many examples from psi research, out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, and helping apparitions.[39]

MIND AS CONSCIOUSNESS

Carl Jung divided mind into four levels: ego consciousness, personal unconscious, collective unconscious, and the psychoid level. These levels roughly correspond to the various levels of mind that are discussed in this chapter. Thus, using Jung's framework, ego consciousness and the personal unconscious compose the individual mind, the collective unconscious reflects the group mind, and the psychoid level is equated with the universal mind. There are, of course, conscious aspects to the group and universal minds that are known to their members.[40] However, this chapter is only concerned with that portion of the collective mind that is outside the conscious awareness of its constituent members.

Each level of the unconscious is whole and part of the larger unconscious that subsumes it. An individual's view of self as a separate entity contains the first two levels: ego consciousness and the personal unconscious. Together they form the conscious and unconscious halves of self. Jung, however, postulated that beneath the personal unconscious there existed the collective unconscious—"a vast realm wherein our minds are, like the threads in a tapestry, linked with other minds."[41]

The collective unconscious links past and present minds and is the repository of racial and evolutionary memory. David Loye metaphorically likens it to DNA, which transports the genetic code from our past that influences our present and future. Likewise, the collective unconscious is transmitted, perhaps in a similar fashion, to or through DNA, from generation to generation, bearing with it all of the cumulative past evolutionary experiences that humans share. Similarly, it shapes our present and future lives. Below the collective unconscious is the psychoid level. It represents the melding of mind and nature: indistinguishable, inseparable, one. It is synonymous with the universal mind. According to Loye,

> The Psychoid Level . . . is open to influences of every possible kind. It is accessible to whatever forces and factors happen to be present at a given moment in the continuum of the Self, whether these are factors operating within one's own psyche, within the psyche of others, or whether they are forces of any other kind active in the universe.[42]

The terms *group mind* and *universal mind* are less cumbersome than the labels *collective unconscious* and the *psychoid level.* Therefore, they are used almost exclusively throughout this chapter.

THE OMEGA POINT

Teilhard de Chardin's vision of the universe suggests the interrelatedness of all things, particularly the physical world with that of consciousness.[43] His cosmos contains an exterior, material world lined with an interior reality or consciousness. He labeled this inner side of nature the *noosphere* or *sphere of mind,* equating it with the biosphere or organic side of life on earth.[44] Teilhard de Chardin believed that as the external world community developed and moved closer toward centralization, there would be a corresponding commingling of minds that would form a global consciousness or omega point.

The omega point is to the individual minds that form it as the individual human mind is to the neurons that form the brain:

> it unifies and centralizes the activities of its constituent minds in a fashion not unlike that in which the activity of the individual human mind draws together and centralizes the activities of the nerve cells of the brain.[45]

The commingling of minds occurs in a manner consistent with the transcendent moments that arise in generative groups, "not through loss of individuality but through a mutual enfolding of the most personal inwardness of each individual with other individuals."[46] The end result in both cases is the experience of love.

MIND AS HELPER

Teilhard de Chardin's notion of the omega point or global consciousness is comparable to Michael Grosso's view of the universal mind as an organizing influence and helping potential in the world.[47] Yet many questions remain. How does this universal wisdom or cosmic mind communicate with its constituent minds? Or intervene in times of crises? By what mechanism or mechanisms does mind at large make itself known?

Theorists have proposed various means by which information is transmitted from or access gained to the universal mind. Dream analysis, guided imagery, meditation, zen, and yoga have all been suggested as means for establishing intermind connections.

The triggering of synchronistic events[48] emanating from the activation of an archetypal theme can also be seen as a manifestation of the universal mind, and precognition has been proposed as evidence of a higher consciousness.[49]

SURRENDER

In each of these cases, the connection to mind or more encompassing levels of unconsciousness represents an internal rather than an external experience, usually preceded by surrendering or letting go of control. In the words of Alcoholics Anonymous, this constitutes "turning it over to a higher power." This surrendering process of moving inward and downward corresponds to the commingling of individual minds or consciousness with the Collective Unconsciousness depicted by Jung. It has been likened to a diver descending into the ocean's dark reaches.[50] As Carl Jung noted,

> The deeper "layers" of the psyche lose their individual uniqueness as they retreat farther and farther into "Lower down," that is to say as they approach the autonomous functional systems, they become increasingly collective until they are universalized and extinguished in the body's materiality, i.e., in chemical substances. The body's carbon is simple carbon. Hence "at the bottom" the psyche is simple "world."[51]

O'Hara and Wood speculate that this ability to "surrender fixed and partisan patterns in favor of a more fluid and spontaneous interplay of autono-

mous yet 'globally aware' persons seems to be a crucial factor associated with the achievement of more subtle levels of consciousness."[52]

EMERGENT MIND IN GENERATIVE GROUPS

The emergent mind, in generative groups, manifests as individual members surrender control to the group. This surrender is a kind of letting go, a trusting in something larger than oneself—in this case, the group. Trusting in the group's safety, members are able to relinquish their ego boundaries and connect not only with one another, but with the universal mind. It is important to note here that individuals do not lose their identity to the group, but integrate the "I" with the "We." Through this surrender, group members become spontaneous, rather than autonomous, and are engaged and carried along, often experiencing moments of transcendence.[53]

The word *transcendent* is perhaps a misnomer when used to describe the process by which individuals gain access to the universal mind. In this case, transcendence means descendence. The process by which the ego is surpassed is literally one of turning inward and descending to deeper, more encompassing levels of unconsciousness or mind. The same is true for the collective process that occurs in generative groups until ultimately the psychoid level or omega point is reached, where mind and matter are indistinguishable. Here everything is pure energy; past, present, and future states co-exist. At "these moments of isomorphic integration the individual gains access to a vastness of possibilities which is of cosmic proportions."[54] These moments have been described as

> being in harmony with nature . . . this ability to yield, to be receptive to, or respond to, to live with extrapsychic reality as if one belonged with it, or were in harmony with it.[55]

One means by which psychic energy, released or tapped at the psychoid level, takes form is the archetype.

ARCHETYPES

Carl Jung assumed the existence, within the collective unconscious, of an amorphous energy force that is part of the inherited structure of the psyche. These thought forms or archetypes, as Jung called them, are based on ubiquitous motifs or themes that, because of our common evolution, transcend racial and cultural boundaries. These themes have existed throughout the evolution of humankind.

Jung emphasized that the content of archetypes is not predetermined. They represent dispositions or forms that "draw the stuff of experience into their shape, presenting themselves in facts, rather then presenting facts."[56] In other words, the content of these primordial images becomes manifest when "filled out by the material of conscious experience." Although archetypes are universal themes for humankind, their manifestations or content are unique, each given text from an individual's personal experiences.

Jung's major archetypes include aspects of the personality: the persona, the shadow, the anima and animus, and the self. Other common archetypal images include the wise old man, the hero, the great mother, the Earth Mother, and the divine child. In addition to these images, there are a multitude of archetypal themes often expressed through fairytales, folklore, or religious or mythological motifs. Archetypes represent major themes of human life, death and rebirth, and good and evil—the devouring monster, the divine child, the eternal return, magical effects, paradise and the fall, transformation, and so forth. Archetypes are not necessarily discrete and oftentimes overlap, so it is difficult to quantify them.

Archetypes represent predispositions to respond to certain experiences in specific ways.[57] They are often activated in times of stress or crisis, and are experienced as a "sense of transcendent validity, authenticity, and essential divinity."[58] Combs and Holland contend that

> For the individual caught up by the power of an archetype, the symbolic meaning of his or her life is no abstraction but a powerfully felt and utterly convincing reality which, with or without the individual's conscious participation, directs and forms the nature of the world.[59]

HELPING POTENTIAL OF THE ARCHETYPE

This directing or helping potential of the archetype seems akin to Michael Grosso's notion of the universal mind. When describing the properties of helping apparitions, as one manifestation of the universal mind, Grosso concludes that their appearance occurs during times of transition, crisis, and danger:

> They arise, for instance, when the rational, conscious self faces an impasse; we might say that helping apparitions tend to arise when reason can no longer come up with a rule for coping with a crisis. A willingness to admit helplessness seems to clear the way for the helping function.[60]

The external appearance of a helping apparition may be an internal manifestation. During times of crisis, a reflection of an inner self may be hallucinated outward to bring forth knowledge or wisdom buried in the

collective unconscious. On these occasions, activation of an archetypal image or theme is projected outward in the form of a helping apparition.[61] Combs and Holland note that,

> In Jung's thinking, the activation or awakening of an archetype releases a great deal of power, analogous to splitting the atom. This power, in the immediate vicinity of the psychoid process from which the archetype takes it origin, is the catalyst for the synchronistic event. . . . The idea is that the activation of an archetype releases patterning forces that can restructure events both in the psyche and in the external world. . . . The power that is released is felt as numinosity—literally a sense of the divine or cosmic.[62]

These forces manifest themselves as synchronistic events and, in groups, through symbolic expression as generative metaphors. In both instances, they promote understanding, offer resolution to the crisis, and suggest possible future outcomes. In generative groups, the synchronistic events and the generative metaphor are organized around a similar theme. Combs and Holland believe that "meaningful coincidences frequently involve several events which, though radically different in form (one may be an idea, another a physical object) are tied together by a common pattern or theme."[63]

SYNCHRONISTIC EVENTS

An often cited example of synchronicity, linking the activation of an archetype within the psychic with an outer event, comes from Jung:

> A young woman I was treating had, at a critical moment, a dream in which she was given a golden scarab. While she was telling me this dream I sat with my back to the closed window. Suddenly, I heard a noise behind me, like a gentle tapping. I turned around and saw a flying insect knocking against the window-pane from outside. I opened the window and caught the creature in the air as it flew in. It was the nearest analogy to a golden scarab that one finds in our latitudes, a scarabaeid beetle, the common rose-chafer, which contrary to its usual habits has evidently felt an urge to get into a dark room at this particular moment.[64]

The circumstances, at a critical moment in analysis, an impasse, may have activated this archetypal image, thus triggering the synchronistic event. This meaningful event was the turning point in this woman's therapy. As Jung points out, the scarab motif is a symbol of rebirth, and subsequently this woman underwent a renewal.[65] The triggering of synchronistic events is rooted in the psychoid level, where both inner and outer reality, past and future possibilities, and psychic and physical worlds co-exist.[66]

Synchronistic events present a common learning opportunity that most people have experienced: the simultaneous appearance of two seemingly unrelated events. Assume for a moment that the name of a friend who lives in some distant city enters your mind. You ruminate about that friend for a few minutes, perhaps puzzled by what brought the name to your attention. Suddenly the phone rings and it is her. Usually it is dismissed as a chance occurrence. Yet what if you regard it as a message from the collective unconscious—a message that signals to you a learning opportunity symbolically connected to your friend?

This learning opportunity is similar to what occurs in generative groups through the development of a collective metaphor. In this case, each member is simultaneously connected with the collective theme, although the learning potential is different for each member.

GENERATIVE METAPHORS

Archetypes are expressed to individuals through their dreams and fantasies. In groups, Jung notes, the archetype is transmitted through myth and by extension metaphor.

The function of metaphorical development in groups was examined in chapter 11. Primarily, group metaphors in the forming stages of groups provide members with relief from excessive anxiety by creating a symbolic safety valve through which they can communicate their concerns about group issues that they deem too unsafe to openly discuss. Yet what role, if any, does metaphor play in the advanced stages: where conflict has been successfully resolved; where high levels of safety and trust exist; where strong cohesive bonds have been established; where members are able to transcend their own ego needs in the service of others; where cooperation has become the norm rather than the exception?

Metaphors in highly cohesive groups may serve as a communications link between the group mind and the larger universal mind. Messages from the psychoid level or universal mind may be communicated through metaphors to the group, whereby group members are able to tap into a collective wisdom and experience perceptions beyond the reach of their ordinary senses: Healing may occur, and the future may be glimpsed. "In short, many of the phenomena referred to as 'psychic' or 'transpersonal'" may appear."[67]

In keeping with the nomenclature used to describe highly cohesive groups and as a means to distinguish between previous discussions of metaphors and those in this article, the term *generative metaphor* is used. The generative metaphor, like Jung's symbols, can be seen as a means to transmit wisdom from one level to another. Ralph Metzger writes that,

> The unconscious speaks to the conscious in symbols and analogies; the collective unconscious, the ancient storehouse of the accumulated wisdom of the human race, speaks to the personal consciousness in stories and parables; the Higher Self speaks to the ego-personality self in the language of myth and metaphor. This great spirit, or Atman, has access to the buried strata of our psyche, where it can awaken the sleeping memories of long past experiences; and being beyond time, it can send us messages from the future. . . .[68]

Hence, generative metaphors represent a shared consciousness among group members and with the larger universal mind, and they offer extraordinary opportunities for the group and its members. One description of the process by which fantasy themes are generated in groups seems comparable with how generative metaphors are developed.[69] Bales thinks it is suggestive of a larger consciousness at work when a psychodramatic image presented by one person is picked up and elaborated by others despite ample opportunity for other images to have been presented (and for the first image to have dropped out of attention); then one may suggest that there is some motivational incentive in the selection and elaboration that is not confined to the original presenter of the image, and that those persons who continue to elaborate the fantasy theme are somehow reinforcing each other.[70]

Metaphors, like myths, signal possibility: a potential for learning, insight, and discovery; an invitation to turn inward and uncover the personal meaning contained within the symbols. Joseph Campbell, like Jung, has written compellingly about the potential of myths. He contends that "myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life."[71] ". . . Myth is a manifestation in symbolic images, in metaphorical images, of the energies of the organs of the body."[72] ". . . Myths and dreams come from the same place. They come from realizations of some kind that have then to find expression in symbolic form."[73] Combs and Holland write that the language of experience is often translated into the language of myth:

> . . . a language that bridges the space between the conscious and unconscious, a language that speaks of the meaningfulness of events both within the mind and within the greater world in which each of us lives our day-to-day lives. Myth draws us into meaningful relationships with our entire world, an arena that encompasses both our minds within and the objective events of the world without.[74]

The generative group metaphor, too, serves as a bridge between the group mind and universal mind. Not only does the metaphor bear symbolic messages, but it also acts as a harbinger that allows group members glimpses into the future. The generative metaphor, in a sense, facilitates precognition or an anticipated future. However, the future that is glimpsed is not fixed, but exists as possibilities, potentialities, or suspended alternative states.[75] To better understand this notion of precognition and provide

an overall framework for this thesis, we turn to David Loye's model of the holographic universe.

THE HOLOGRAPHIC WORLD

Loye presents two different views of a holographic universe: one vertical and predetermined, the other horizontal and encompassing free will. The former is based on David Bohm's worldview, whereas the latter represents an extension of that theory developed by Loye. Loye's models draw on the works of psychologist Carl Jung, neuropsychologist Karl Lashley, neurosurgeon Karl Pribram, and physicist David Bohm. Loye creatively weaves their ideas of the collective unconscious, synchronicity, the hologram, and implicate and explicate orders with the notions of free will and determinism. Before elaborating on Loye's theories, it is first necessary to understand the hologram. David Bohm and his mentor Albert Einstein were both motivated by the ethical implications of viewing the world as fragmented and disconnected. Both were impassioned with the idea of discovering a unified field theory that would demonstrate the underlying connection of everything in the universe and solve the problem of order.[76] Unlike Einstein, who placed the human observer outside of his or her objective universe, Bohm sought to eliminate the subject–object dichotomy by visualizing the universe as a single, unbroken whole containing both "thought (consciousness) and external reality as we experience it."[77]

From his interest in the lens and its role in science of "providing images of things that couldn't otherwise be seen,"[78] Bohm posed this question: "Is there an instrument that can help give a certain immediate perceptual insight into what can be meant by undivided wholeness, as the lens did for what can be meant by analysis of a system into parts?"[79]

The answer was the hologram—an image produced by splitting a beam of light so that a whole image is reproduced rather than the usual "flat surface illusion."[80] What was particularly intriguing about the hologram was the way in which information was spread throughout the image as a whole rather than in parts. In other words, each part of the hologram contains the whole, although the clarity of the whole diminishes as light is projected through smaller and smaller fragments.

Karl Pribram, building on the early works of Lashley, Gabor, and van Heerden, applied the holographic idea to his brain research. In doing so, he was finally able, among other things, to postulate how memory was stored throughout the brain.

Bohm began collaborating with Pribram to describe a holographic theory of the universe that showed how "separate objects could in fact be connected together in the underlying, interpenetrating way that physics

already indicated was operating in the universe."[81] For Bohm, the hologram suggested an interacting relationship between the seen or explicate order and the unseen or the implicate order.

The implicate order (or nonmanifest reality) and the explicate order (or manifest reality) exist side by side. Loye borrows Alice's Wonderland to help us understand the two interconnected realities. From our side of the looking glass, we would "be aware of ourselves and everything in this 'real' world of ours as being solid kinds of things separated by space and living according to the ticks of time."[82] Peering from our world into the implicate order (Wonderland), "all we can see is a big blur to which bubble-chamber photographs and the theories of physics give us some slight clues."[83]

However, Loye speculated that this would look very different if we observed ourselves from the Wonderland side of the looking glass. Now we would find ourselves within a "superrich reality in which everything was interconnected in a 'ball' of spacelessness and timelessness."[84] Looking to the other side, we would see "what appear to be a number of awfully funny shapes and sounds produced by an interface between our worlds of holographic waves, which come racing into and out of being within every other moment, much as pictures are projected on a movie screen."[85] In Wonderland, the transmission of information is no problem because everything is contained or embedded within everything else. Yet in the "movie world," the "sights" and "sounds" must cross barriers of "empty space" or "time."

Loye next asks these questions: "How is the gap bridged between the two worlds?" "How do we move from one ordered universe into one of spacelessness and timelessness?" Bohm speculates that the vehicle is "insight." We are part of the implicate and explicate order, so our consciousness is connected with both sides. Although the mechanism is unknown, at least Bohm's theory provides a rationale for the association between the two worlds.[86]

THE VERTICAL HOLOGRAPHIC ORDER

Loye labeled Bohm's paradigm the *vertical holographic order.* It is similar to the self-organizing, hierarchical universe described in the chaos and systems theories of Ilya Prigogine, Erich Jantsch, and Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Each theorist depicts a hierarchical world starting at the smallest level and moving upward to ever increasing levels of complexity (e.g., the organs, the body, the individual, the family, etc.), with each level self-contained yet forming the building blocks for the next level of organization. Each level operates according to its own internal laws while participating in a greater whole.[87] Perhaps the best depiction of this multilayered universe comes from Arthur Koestler:

> The living organism and the body social are not assemblies of elementary bits; they are multi-levelled, hierarchically organized systems of sub-wholes containing sub-wholes of lower order, like Chinese boxes. The sub-wholes—"holons," as I have proposed to call them—are Janus-faced entities which display both the independent properties of wholes and the dependent properties of parts.[88]

This notion of a vertical universe leads to the inevitable conclusion that everything is predetermined, existing within a single giant hologram.[89] The future, in this state, like many of those in Eastern religion, is fixed, and precognition is a matter of discovering it.

THE HORIZONTAL HOLOGRAPHIC UNIVERSE

Loye proposed a rather elegant alternative paradigm incorporating free will: the horizontal holographic universe. He speculated that each of us is individually and socially bound with those meaningfully connected to us within, which from a "celestial eye" would appear to be large, amoeba-like, holographic entities that exist side by side with similar entities. Within these entities, or interholographically, everything is predetermined for a time. By glimpsing the implicate order within the hologram, one could foresee the predetermined future. However, Loye proposes that as these restless, shifting amoebas move, they bump into one another, engulfing "small bits of substance," and occasionally one holographic entity completely swallows another one. We seldom notice the amalgamation of small bits of substance that produce microscopic changes, but as Loye suggests we are "jolted" by the engulfment of our entire entity or by our own absorption of other whole entities, which causes the macroscopic changes in our lives. Interholographic conversion would be akin to first-order change, whereas changes that occur as a result of engulfment seem similar to notions of second-order change. Precognition in this second situation occurs intraholographically. As Loye explains,

> precognition would act as a leap (hololeap) across the gap between the jostling holograms, A and B. Or at the first contact it might, with some heightened burst of excitement, range out from someone in A throughout the engulfing mass of B. The purpose would be to provide a reading as to the personally or socially meaningful contents of B, the engulfing mass, to this person A who would be acting as both seer and engulfee.[90]

In this second scenario, free will is engaged and reality is created all

> . . . set in motion by aspiration, by curiosity, by desire, by boldness, openness, and courage—by that belief that it can be done, which paranormal research

> has shown is such a constant in successful telepathy and healing—might lie the opportunity both for the seer to perceive and for the activist to influence the shaping of futures that are not predetermined.[91]

Thus, as we bump into other amoeba-like entities, we may catch glimpses of possible alternative futures that each exist in a present suspended state.[92]

SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT

Additional support for this view comes from the quantum physicist Erwin Schrödinger and his mental puzzle about his hypothetical cat. The cat is placed in a sealed box with a device that, if triggered, will kill it. An electron is introduced into the box whose action may or may not trigger the device. Prior to opening the box, the question is asked, "Is the cat dead or alive?" Of course we do not know the answer, but one of two outcomes is assured—either the cat is dead or alive. Yet viewing the situation from a quantum perspective, the cat is neither dead nor alive. Both possibilities exist side by side until the box is opened and one becomes manifest.[93]

Sometimes engulfment is random, reminiscent of the existentialist Sartre's thrown condition, for which there is neither explanation nor cause. However, there may be occasions when the particular entities that we engulf or are engulfed by are future conditions that have been influenced or created, as Loye suggests, by our curiosity, desires, wants, and needs. In these cases, we have participated in the creation of our future condition.

MIND OR CONSCIOUSNESS

In our vertical, multilayered universe, the relationship among individual minds or consciousness, group minds, and the universal mind is easily understood. Each holon is a self-contained, self-organizing, mindful unit. Within each level, mind is a whole and simultaneously part of a more complex, more encompassing level of mind. For example, the individual mind is both whole and part of a larger group mind, which in turn is subsumed by the universal mind.

If we are each parts of a larger whole—that is, if our minds and bodies are, in effect, holograms within the larger hologram of the universe—then there is no transmission problem because the information is already within us![94]

Aldous Huxley described each person as potentially mind at large, capable at each moment of "remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe."[95] He contended that the primary function of the brain and nervous system was eliminative rather than productive. This system, he suggested, functioned to protect the individual from inundation by a mass of irrelevant information. Thus, the brain and nervous system only allowed in knowledge that was practically useful and necessary for the individual's survival.

In the horizontal universe, the relationship between individual and group minds or consciousness can be viewed similarly to that in the vertical world: Individual minds within each amoeba-like structure collectively form a group mind. Yet what about the universal mind or psychoid level? Where does it reside? I suspect that it exists within and without each amoeba-like structure. Inside each entity, the individual minds and the group mind they produce are both pieces of the larger universal mind. Like the holograph, the universal mind is contained within other minds. Outside the larger mind creates the atmosphere through which each amoeba-like entity moves.

These amoeba-like entities literally swim in the larger mind or, in Teilhard de Chardin's words, *the global consciousness.* The relationship between the constituent minds and the larger mind are similar in both Loye's and Bohm's hypothetical worlds, with one exception. In the vertical world, the universal mind is totally contained. In the horizontal world, the larger mind is both part of and contains the world in which it exists.

The horizontal world fits comfortably, too, with the notions of Bohm's implicate and explicate order, and Teilhard de Chardin's exterior material reality lined by an interior reality or consciousness. Inside each holographic entity exists the conscious, manifest, physical world. The outside lining to these entities, in which it swims, consists of nonmanifest reality or the noosphere. "All physical phenomena—such as sunlight, molecules, trees, and stars have two parts, a field aspect and an energy aspect."[96] These halves correspond to the inner and outer parts discussed earlier.

Returning to our holographic metaphor, individual and group minds are elements that compose the universal mind; as such, each element literally contains the whole, albeit less defined, less clear, and perhaps buried deeply in the individual's or group's unconscious. In both the vertical and horizontal worlds, the function of mind is similar, and the means by which individual minds, group minds, and the universal mind communicate are identical.

Changes in the horizontal holographic world sometimes occur spontaneously, sometimes are triggered by events inside the entity, and sometimes by events outside the entity. The noosphere or mind at large occasionally intervenes in the process of global evolution. Sometimes entities and their

constituent members influence their own futures by their wants, needs, and desires; occasionally collision of entities is random.

TRANSPERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN GROUPS

When a transpersonal event is experienced within a generative group, it is often precipitated by the need or needs of one or more of the group's members. The context for that event is the group in which each member participates in creating synergistic conditions that make it possible. On occasion it is likely that the entire group will share in the transpersonal experience. Individually or collectively, when the psychoid level is accessed, future conditions can be influenced. Activation of an archetypal theme, contained in the larger mind pool, represents the disposition or form the future event may take. Manifestations of the themes in the group occur psychically through synchronistic events and symbolically through the generative metaphor. These manifestations provide the bridge by which future conditions are glimpsed.

GENERATIVE GROUPS

These highly evolved and cohesive collectives where phase-locked members can realize their connection with a greater mind are known as *generative groups.*[97] Generative groups are highly conscious collectives that have reached the Harmony or Performing stage. Members in these groups are no longer preoccupied with safety needs, boundaries, or roles. Norms of behavior have been negotiated, and the expression of conflict and methods for resolving it have been established. These groups are highly productive and capable of producing second-order change in group members.[98] There is a sense in these groups that all members are part of something that is quite literally bigger than they are, and this connects them with the accumulated wisdom of humankind.

Generative groups consist of individuals who are altruistic, trusting, responsible, cooperative, and peaceful. Group characteristics are goodwill, respect, humility, curiosity,[99] love, trust, and a willingness to open to the outer world, relinquishing the need for power, symbol of the ego.[100] Collectively these individuals are capable of a kind of group transcendence in which each member transcends his or her own self-interest for the good of the group.

At this level of development, the group mind is more than merely additive. This mind is analogous to the Higher Power that emerges from the

cooperative and altruistic interactions of members of addiction treatment groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

EXAMPLES OF GENERATIVE GROUPS

John Phillips, in his autobiography of the Mamas and the Papas, a 1960s rock band, characterized this emergent quality of generative groups when describing a rare moment when the band was performing and all four of its members were singing in harmony. He related, "it was almost as if you could hear a fifth voice." This glimpse into the potential of generative groups suggests the emergence of a collective spirit or mind.[101] Rowe et al. depicted this emergent mind in a generative group of six researchers who met over time to discuss and synthesize the research data they had collected:

> . . . through dialogue with each other, our interpretations were enlarged. It is clear that the interpretation was not simply the aggregate of the six people's ideas. The scope of the understanding and the direction that emerged, while obviously dependent on the six individual perspectives, was not merely additive: like a tapestry the interweaving of perspectives, led to a richer and fuller picture than six individual threads. . . . As a result we were never stuck for any length of time, the level of energy and excitement remained high, no one felt unduly burdened, and we were able to move through the process more quickly than if this had been an individual endeavor. In a real sense the project seemed to have a life of its own and was a support for us rather than a chore.[102]

Augustus Napier and Carl Whitaker provided an example of a generative family group and its emergent mind. A family member described one particular therapy session:

> But there was also something—a kind of electricity—going on between us Brices. Always. And it always felt intense, as though something important were at stake. What struck me that day was that this process that was happening between us was bigger than all of us, that it had a life of its own. I remember the moment so clearly, sensing the power in the room and feeling a little anxious in the face of it.[103]

Finally, in describing the relationship artists develop with their work, we can see this emergent force. The painting having "a life of its own"[104] can involve artists such that they find themselves in a special state where the work seems to be doing itself through them.

> We are merely the medium, the empty tunnel for the connection between a powerful source and the work in progress and we feel very humble and very powerful at the same time. . . . We become connected, energized, or "in the rhythm.[105]

GENERATIVE GROUP MIND

In generative groups, individuals are capable of achieving integration with other group members and with the collective mind. "The collective mind is also integrated within itself and with the larger world of which it is a part. In these moments of isomorphic integration the individual gains access to a vastness of possibilities which is of cosmic proportions."[106] These transcendent moments are described as "being in harmony with nature . . . this ability to yield, to be receptive to, or respond to, to live with extrapsychic reality as if one belonged with it, or were in harmony with it."[107] In these moments of connection, group members can sense the magnitude and power of this collective force. They often describe it as overwhelming, frightening, omnipotent, and as having "a life of its own."

Mind, described here, is synonymous with consciousness. Individual consciousness and group consciousness are but aspects of the universal consciousness. The mind or spirit that emerges in generative groups occurs when members phase lock. The fusion of individual consciousnesses creates what has been described as a group mind. However, it does not exist "out there." It is an internal connection sensed in the body by each member and experienced as a moment of transcendence, individually and collectively. O'Hara and Wood note that,

> In these groups there is an experience of oneness, where individual and group consciousness become unified. . . . There is a true meeting, an I-Thou encounter between group members. In this state of oneness dreams can be shared, people may experience perceptions beyond the realm of ordinary senses, healing often occurs, the future is sometimes glimpsed. In short, many of the phenomena referred to as "psychic" or "transpersonal" often appear.[108]

Group members do not lose their identity to the group when individual consciousness combine, but integrate the "I" with the "We." Group members become spontaneous, rather than autonomous, and are engaged and carried along not in spite of themselves, but beyond themselves.[109] Group members do not lose their identity, but integrate each identity within the larger whole. As a result, the group actualizes its intrinsic learning potential. It becomes wise.[110]

THE GENERATIVE GROUP: A CASE STUDY

To highlight the collective potential of generative groups, I have selected a fascinating study conducted some years ago by members of the Toronto

Society of Psychic Research.[111] There are other more temporal examples, but this clearly demonstrates the potential of a generative group mind.

In a group psychological experiment, eight people met for two hours a week for one year and attempted to conjure up a ghostly apparition of a mythical personage whom they called Phillip. The members had no prior psychic ability and described themselves as ordinary people. During the initial meetings, they meditated on Phillip and embellished a fictitious storyline that had been created by one of the members.

A product of these weekly meetings was the strong feeling of rapport and group cohesiveness that developed among the members. Members characterized their relationships as open and trusting. An atmosphere developed that fostered the expression of very personal feelings. Above all, members felt the freedom to give voice to any opinion. Participation in the experiment gave members a sense of well-being and a greater tolerance and sensitivity toward other people and their feelings. Although the members worked all day and met for two hours in the evening for what at times was boring work, they expressed a sense of empowerment and exhilaration as a result of their participation in the group, and they in no way felt drained by the experience.

One member described an essential characteristic of generative groups when he related that the desire was always for the group's success rather than any individual achievement that might be gained by association with this project. One characteristic that indicated the enormous trust and safety that existed within the group was the childlike atmosphere that was created in many of the group meetings. Members were able to suspend their adult behaviors and recapture the creativity, curiosity, and wonderment of childhood. This childlike creativity was probably instrumental in the ultimate success of the project.

Eventually the group achieved its goal. A manifestation of Phillip appeared through a table in the room by which Phillip communicated with rapping sounds. In addition, on numerous occasions the table moved throughout the room. For the skeptics among you, this experiment was documented by observers on live TV and was recorded on film, which is available for viewing. Further discussion of the experiment is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the interested reader is referred to Owen and Sparrow's book.[112]

The experimenters concluded that Phillip was solely a creation of the group as a whole, the group mind; an expression of their shared subconscious and conscious thoughts, wishes, feelings, and emotions.[113] Phillip was not a disembodied spirit. The responses to the questions asked of him were the responses that the members expected to hear. His personality was a creation of their own minds. Although at times Phillip's responses differed from the outward views expressed by members, closer examination

revealed that they were consistent with individual members' subconscious views.

The group factors that contributed to the success of this project, characteristic of generative groups, were complete rapport among the members, an air of harmony, a common motivation and goal, a sense of heightened expectancy, tolerance of differences, open mindedness, lack of prejudice, and a childlike quality that created an atmosphere where anything was possible.

For transformative acts to occur, an essential condition must be established in generative groups: Group members must experience an absolute sense of safety. When members feel safe and completely relaxed, then and only then can they relinquish self-interest and work in concert to achieve a common goal.

However, the self-surrender described here is different from the mindless resignation and abdication of autonomy that occurs in regressive groups. Generative groups nourish autonomy and individual expression; the surrendering experience is to a larger entity. The ability to "surrender fixed individual and partisan patterns in favor of a more fluid and spontaneous interplay of autonomous yet 'globally aware' persons seems to be a crucial factor associated with the achievement of more subtle levels of consciousness."[114]

SUMMARY

This chapter has rekindled the discussion of the group mind and sought to bring clarity to it. All groups develop a collective mind, but the manifestation of that mind is dependent on the group's level of development. At the least developed end are psychologically immature or regressive groups. In most cases, these groups are psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually limiting. The inherent potential of these groups and their members remains untapped. At the other end of the continuum are generative groups. The mind that emerges from these groups transcends the individual abilities of their members. This manifestation of mind has direct access to the universal mind thorough which the group and its members can be empowered to extraordinary acts of courage, creativity, and compassion. The therapeutic potential of groups can be maximized by utilizing the transpersonal realm.

CONCLUSION

As I reflect on my own spiritual journey, I realize that my interest in families and small groups has led me to an interest in large groups and nations.

Those same forces that prompt small groups to remain trapped by regressive forces can impact nations, which fall into collective shadow behavior. To prevent this devastating effect, groups must remain open to the natural progression or the emergence of a higher order. From chaos new solutions can emerge. However, this cannot happen when people become isolated from each other and project their own deficiencies onto imaginary demons. A higher order cannot happen if we create in-groups and out-groups, externalizing our problems onto others, or if group emergence is stymied by a leader who controls access to information and promotes subgroups through racism and hatred.

During both Iraq wars, I have been involved in protest movements, and during Iraq II, I created a group called UMD Faculty Against War. Along with thousands of people nationwide, and a vast international movement, we added our voice to the protest of this senseless war. In times of protest, it is fulfilling to witness the spontaneous emergence of large groups of people coming together with a shared vision of peace and tolerance for all of humanity. Conflict is a stage in which the group will confront the leader, and I believe we must now do so.

As we think of chaos theory and groups, we recognize the terrible consequences of regressive group behavior, but we must also face the fear and anxiety associated with moving through chaos to a new level of organization. To make that leap in terms of social action, we must be like members of a small group, facing our own insecurities, accepting the dark side of our own nature, and yet taking the risks necessary to trust each other as we move forward. My own journey has taught me not to run or hide, but to proceed with faith and courage. We need to face uncertainly and chaos with firm conviction, knowing full well that within the turbulent spiral of our current world crisis there are emergent forces, advanced by those of us who seek world peace, at work in the universe. Over time and with determined effort, the vision of peace on earth may indeed prevail.

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