THE EVOLUTION OF A PSYCHODRAMA TRAINING GROUP FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE GROUP PROCESS

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Abstract
In our study we deal with the process of group evolution and structuring, which are one of the key elements of group dynamics. We are presenting the main theories regarding group development. We demonstrate our hypothesis that a training group undergoes the same specific development as other groups do through examples taken from the life of a psychodrama training group. Knowing this process is important since it gives a better understanding of different group events. In the history of groups, the development of the group as a whole and the development of the individual as part of the group go on simultaneously. We are able to deduct at which stage of group development is the team-formation, problem period (riots), consolidation, actual operation, ending - from the way the participants talk about their attitude towards the group and from the way they define their problems. In this study, we examine the process of group development through the attitudes of the members towards the group. We have included in tables some of the subjects discussed in the group and we have pointed out the latent content of these manifestations, and also, what these manifestations tell about the internal needs of the participants.

Keywords: group dynamics, stages of group development, manifest content / latent content

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Theoretical Introduction: the development process of groups

The psychodrama training group, constituted with developmental aim, will undergo the same developmental stages as other groups in which participants are interdependents, they have interactivity and a common purpose. Every elements of the group dynamics are also found in the function of these groups organised with the goal of self development for their participants. What we name group dynamics is in fact the force field, vectors born from the impacts of the power relations, and also from the emotional tensions of attraction and rejection which are born along the group process (Tenner & Toro, 1997).

Training groups are considered as „living” organisations because they have the capacity of self-organisation, self-management and potential of inner development. Their development can be characterized by some dynamic actions which occure in a particular period of time and have as result the consolidation of the group, ensuring a frame in which the process of learning can be accomplished. It is a social learning of roles, models of action, models of problem solvings which lead to the harmonization of the ego, the self development.

Therefore psychodrama training groups behave like any other group of small dimension, like Rudas (1990) also shows:

- their purpose is the development of the group members: self development, stimulation of self-knowledge, development of social abilities and interpersonal skills, and also broad social learning;
- they are not formed spontaneously, but are organised deliberately for the aims presented above - can be considered institutionalized groups;
- they are undergoing in a planned way the main stages of life: birth, growth, production, cessation;
- their goal is accomplished even by the group itself, the group interactions are causing the desired changings, the development.

In this study we would like to present the way in which a psychodrama training group is evolving and emerging in a unitary structures, well defined over the developmental process. To theoretically substantiate our topic, first we will present some theoretical models of group development based on scientific references. In the second part of our study we will pursue the process of
development of a training group starting from the basic level. We will follow this process through the mature, the “production” and the conclusion stage.

*Theoretical models of group development*

The formation of the group to a unitary functional structure a result of the force of the group dynamics. This process takes place simultaneously with other visible events, psychodynamic phenomena like: transactions, so called group reactions, - for example: homeostasis, conflicts, the forming of the subgroups, isolation, the generalisation of the emotions (Kutter, 1982) - roles in the group, resistance in group, group-cohesion, the transmission-contratransmission. On the latent level these phenomena are sustained by the motivational structure of the participants, by needs, aspirations, unconscious fears.

As an independent domain, the theory of group dynamics appeared at the end of the '30s in USA. Kurt Levin (1947) was who introduced the term „group dynamics”, in 1945 he founded the first institution for research in the domain of the group dynamics. Group dynamics is based on the situational and social tensions caused by the interactions between the group members. These at their turn generate trans-, inter- and intrapersonal phenomena, stimulate communication, give life to some curative (therapeutic) forces which stay at the base of group development, and over this acts like integrating forces at the level of group members. During networking and cooperation of the group members changes are produced also at group level as global system as well in individual psychic, changes which are influencing each other and presents a certain parallelism. Due to these dynamic processes the group is forming a collectivity, moreover this force camp is producing changes at individual level. In order to achieve positive results, the group leader must understand the events at group level, as well at group members level. The recognition of drivers and their evaluation can lead to interventions which permit these to be used to serve development.

The dynamic events (group structureing, roles hierarchy, cohesion formation) are based on value system and the existing group standards, as well as group culture. An adaptation process begins for finding the balance which permits the inner psychic work. The personal accommodation processes' result is the formation of the group-spirit representing a solid, secure base and
permitting the pursuance of the collective purpose, raising the awareness of interdependency, delivering the sense of community and the responsability for each other, loyalty with the group even in conflictual situations with the external world. If this harmonization, adaption is not produced, the group and its members will be in danger and no development will happen.

According to Bagdy & Telkes's (2002) studies, group-dynamics can be divided into 5 main events:

1. **Process of formation of the group** – The group, as a cooperating colectivity, is performed through a forming and organizing process, persons who got together follow a well defined purpose, they have a common activity. Specific behaviour manners, scale of values, systems of opinions and needs are formed, the „collective spirit”-group identity is borned.

2. **Group Structuring** – forming of the roles, of norms and differentiation of roles in the group.

3. **Process of group-formation as an independent entity, system** – the repeated meetings structure the group as a system, the group is self-organising; the process of making decisions is elaborated, feed-backs are becoming more and more opened, confrontative, group opinion is being formed, group culture is being crystallised.

4. **Process of group-development in stages** – can be differentiated: orientation stage (socialization), roles structuring, work stage, closure stage.

5. **The personality development effect caused by the group** – by learning the personality is modifying and developing to the direction of the chased goals.

There are different theories about the stages of group-development from which we will present only the most important models. In most of the models we can be observed three stages of development: group formation meaning the meeting, forming the structure of the group meaning the formation of the values, norms, interactions, as well as the process of closing meaning the separation.

According to the studies of de Tenner and de Torro (1997) the process of group-formation can happen in the following stages:

- **Formation (pre-formative):** the period just before the actual formation. The group is formed officially but is not functioning as a real group.
Period of the problems (agitation, disturbance): group members are getting to know each other, conflict, rivalry appears.

Consolidation: formation of norms, shared values, allocation of roles, tasks, collaboration.

The actual functioning: work stage, effective functioning. Subphases of the work stage are:
- the understanding of the norms;
- conscious integration, acceptance;
- personalisation of standards, requirements.

The theory of group formation in four stages was elaborated by Sara K. Winter (quoted by Rudas, 1990) in the '70s. According to this theory, in the life of a group can be identified four stages.

1. Meeting: behavior oriented towards the tasks, formation of safety, solidarity, integration;
   2. Differentiation, conflicts, forming the norms: fight for roles in the group;
   3. Propduction: roles are formed, norms of the group are consolidated;
   4. Detachment, separation: trying to understand the happenings, solidarity on the second level.

Tuckman (1965) talks about the stages of group-development differentiating two plans: the level of group structure (interpersonal relations, mutual interactions between the group-members) and the level of tasks (work in group).

1st stage:
- group structure: experiments and dependancy (the members are trying to find the behavior types accepted by the group),
- action oriented towards the tasks: orientation, efforts (the group members are trying to discover the limits in an indirect way).

2nd stage:
- group structure: conflict in the group (hostile manifestations between the group members as well with the group leader, hierarchy),
- action orientated towards the tasks: strong emotional reactions (resistance against the need of self-exploration, it is contesting the need of the group).

3rd stage:
- group structure: forming the cohesion of the group (group members are accepting each other and the group itself, harmony is becoming the most important value),
- Action oriented towards the tasks: discussions about themselves and the other members of the group (discussions about the personal problems, communication between them becomes open, transparent).

4th stage:
- group structure: cristalisation of the structure and hierarchy of the roles (high grade of development, roles oriented to the functions, minimal emotional interactions during the execution of tasks),
- action oriented towards the tasks: appearance of results (realization of their own problems, understanding their own behaviour).

Concerning the stages of group formation, W. R. Bion (1961) refers to three emotional states; from these, by the analysis of the group-processes, can be distingished three basical hypothesis. He, who lived and worked at the early 1900’s, doesn’t make the difference between the stages of group-development, but already shows that group activity runs on two levels. At one of the levels conscious interactions can be observed, and at the other level, the latent one, psychical needs are manifesting which are moving the interactions. In his opinion the group is doubleing itself and functioning on two levels:
- the visible, manifest group level which is functioning with a precise destination, for solving the tasks (objectives, real tasks),
- the group of the basical hypothesis, the level of the latent, unconscious behavior which can be characterized by the following behavioral ways:
  a) dependancy: the members consider the leader as the group supporter, the one who makes it to function,
  b) the stage of the struggle, the run: the purpose of the group is self-preservation, maintanance,
  c) couple formation: the purpose: the group should get rid of of fear, anxiety.

These methods of operation are amplifying especially when tension grows in a group (author’s note). Thereby these are characteristical especially for the first forming, structureing stages.

Garland, Jones and Kolodny (quoted by Rudas, 1990) created a model of group development in five stages:
1. Contacting: the greatest dilemma is getting closer and distant again,
2. **Power and control**: there is a hierarchy based on status which characterises the group, there are three trends: revolt and autonomy, indulgence and respecting the rules, defense and support,

3. **Privacy, work**: development, healthy rivalries,

4. **Differentiation**: is characterised by clarification and efficiency,

5. **Closure**: finding new resources.

In the perception of Albert-Lőrincz (2004), group development follows the logical line of human development: *birth – fulfillment, ascension, culmination, and closure*. The author makes the connection between the group-developmental model and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. She considers that all developmental stages are characterized by interactions, specific ways of functioning and events which happens in group are defined by individual needs updated in certain moments. The mentioned author’s approach is illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. Actions characterising the group-process and the system of needs which are keeping them active (Albert-Lőrincz, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of development</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Needs supporting the process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I. Meeting            | - Testing the limits, mutual exploration between group members  
                        - Acceptance and selfassertion  
                        - Interactions to reduce pressure  
                        - Integration problems, searching the adequate behavior  
                        - Dependency on the group leader  
                        - Demand of safety, distance and optimal closeness  
                        - Struggle to keep identity  
                        - Attempts to solve problem situations | Activating the need of safety |
| II. Structuring       | - Formation and revision of values and norms  
                        - Elaboration of conflict solving methods  
                        - Struggling for role hierarchy  
                        - Attitudes for the group leader’s expectations/care/help  
                        - Needs harmonization  
                        - Group homeostasis (regulation of the grade of tension of the group)  
                        - Compromises | Activating the need of love and belonging |
C. Rogers (1970), the father of encounter groups (method used for development of personality, for perfection of self-knowledge and collective existence, for the release of self-expression and creative fulfillment) has also expressed his ideas about group development models. His ideas can be easily applied even in the case of developmental cycles of psychodrama training groups. Based on his observations, Rogers (1970) specifies further important moments during the development of a group. The events reported by him can be interpreted as moments of maturisation, of demand of independence, cystalisation of identity. The final result is the clarification of an autonomous personality, capable of developement. The stages of this process are the following:

_Wandering, agitation towards all directions:_ the facilitator starts the group, but does not set the tasks, leaves the group alone. In the group appear questions like: who tells us what we have to do? Who is responsible for us? What is the group’s purpose?

_Resistance to self-expression and exploration:_ what we know about ourselves and what we can show to others. There is no self-disclosure, yet.

_Discussions about old feelings:_ disclosure of feelings from the past, outside the group, intelectual discussions about „then and there” instead of „here and now”.

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Table 1. Actions characterising the group-process and the sytem of needs which are keeping them active (Albert-Lőrincz, 2004) - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of development</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Needs supporting the process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| III. Work stage        | - Collaboration  
- Task orientation  
- Demolition of taboos  
- Resolution of intra- and interpersonal problems  
- Enjoyment of collective revelations | Activating the need of esteem and acceptance |
| IV. Presentation of results | - Cohesion  
- Mature participation in solving problems  
- Practicing the new roles | Activating the need of self-realisation |
| V. Detachment          | - Living the loss  
- Reintegration and consolidation: finding the effective and harmonious way of work  
- Independence, autonomy | |

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Expression of negative feelings: feelings „now and here” are manifesting for the first time, the individual experiments his freedom, the safety offered by the group.

Expression and analyzation of personal things: the individual experiments safetyness, the confidence in group, feels that he is accepted, talks about positive feelings, too.

Expression of direct interpersonal feelings in the group: expression of negative and positive feelings.

Development of healing capacity of the group: the group members are facilitating the pain and suffering of the other members.

Self-acceptance and the beginning of changing: the source of all changing is self-acceptance.

Breaking masks: a deep relation is created in the group which doesn’t accept that any of the members could wear a mask, the group sometimes may have quite a violent reaction towards the quitting of the mask wearing or self-defense.

The individual gets feedback: during the process of free interactions, the individual gets quickly many informations about how others see him.

Confrontation: feedbacks are getting tough and gets to the level of confrontation. This can be positive, but it is negative very often.

The basic meeting id est encounter: establishing a much closer and more direct contact towards the day by day events, physical reaction to suffering, other’s pain, what in fact is a manifestation of the encounter.

Expression of positive emotions and privacy: it is forming a warm and real group-atmosphere, full of confidence.

Personality and behaviour modifications in the group: gesture, tonality, intonation are changed, participants will relate to others with a surprising care, understanding, sincerity and goodwill. The effect of this experience in group will also have effect on relations outside the group.

In conclusion we can affirm that all the models above are based on the same principles, they try to imitate the orbit of the ontogenetical development of the individual from birth to death. For an easier orientation we consider important the illustration of the theoretical part by practical examples.
The evolution of a psychodrama training group - through the prisma of themes which indicates specific developmental stages

The training group started its activity in February, 2007, with 12 members, but from the 5th meeting one of the members abandoned the group, so training was continued with 11 persons.

The meta-analyses of the group themes has as purpose to draw attention to the fact that the specific group developmental stage defines characteristical operating modes, exposes personal themes specific of that stage. This way, in different group developmental stages appear intereactions, roles, resistance forms, specific transfers. The detailed descriptions of these would exceed the limits of present study. In this case, by the analyses of the group-themes (themes which involves member attitude towards the group) we would like to present the developmental stages which the group goes through. We emphasize those unconscious needs of the participants which manifest in different stages of development. Through these we wish to emphasize for the fact that group developmental stages are determineing specific modes of action, attitudes characteristical to every stage. The group-developmental level defines the operation of the group as a whole, and determines the profundness of individual work (work with conflicts). The profoundness of individual work can be seen from the focal conflict (the basical conflict), id est from themes presented and processed. In practice the stages of group development are succeding almost unobserved, many times they overlap, their differentiation is important only from methodological point of view. The purpose of our analyses is the more profound undertstanding of the events which happen in the group. The group leader wins by the decoding of these. He can plan his interventions better and can pay more attention to the group harmonization.

In the table below we wish to present the themes on which the group worked, the different stages of development which the group crossed during its formation.

The first column of the table contains the stage of the group development, in the middle one - the most important - we included the affirmations of the participants of a training group, themes which were related to the attitudes towards the group (the group development could be also followed by selecting intarpsychical themes, individual theme). All assertions presented in the table represent symbolically the events spent in the group in the different
stages of development. In the third column are presented the needs which gave birth to the themes, ie the metaplan of the group process.

Table 2. Presentation of the themes related to the different stages of group development: the latent and manifest level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of group - development</th>
<th>Manifest level - themes which talks about the life of the group</th>
<th>Latent level, metaplan of the group-process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Orientation Meeting</td>
<td>„My confidence in this group has inclined”</td>
<td>Seeking safetyness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I have never supposed that the group leader would abandon us”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„For me the leader is the mother of the group”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„People are impredictable”</td>
<td>Integration problems, anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I feel that I can’t work with my relationship-related problems in the group”</td>
<td>Harmonization of the individual level with the one of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I asked myself: what will happen from now on?”</td>
<td>Seeking safetyness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I feel myself stable with you even if I stand on one foot”</td>
<td>The measurement of limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„Who will cheer me up when I am indisposed?”</td>
<td>Dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Structuring</td>
<td>„I remembered how many times I have revolted, buckled in the group leader until I have devoted and accepted”</td>
<td>Attitude towards the group-leader, The measurement of the current situation, seeking for support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I am not perfect and I wish you to accept me as I am”</td>
<td>Need of esteem, seeking compromises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I often observe that I look to other from outside and I realise that as much as I wish, I can’t connect, I cannot release as they do”</td>
<td>Cohesion, seeking support, need of intimity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I seek the interior sources in myself, I study my soul as the resource of my old ego. I seek those means with which we can get over the problems”</td>
<td>Formation of the values and norms Building the cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I am afraid not to overload others, to not bore them, I need to hurry to end it as quickly as I can”</td>
<td>The level of characteristic tension of the group (the measurement of homeostasis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Presentation of the themes related to the different stages of group development: the latent and manifest level - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III. Work stage</td>
<td>„I agree with double leadership. It is important that for me this evokes the image of my parents and the fact that my father was absent of my life, I need this thing”</td>
<td>Finding the safetyness, activating the potential of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I feel that every instrument needs to play its own music”</td>
<td>Collective revelations, self-determination</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„It was great to experience the feelings of others in the individual plays”</td>
<td>Collective revelations, Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„It is hard for me to show my feelings, I will ask your help to change this.”</td>
<td>Collaboration, Confidence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>„I wish to get to know better the child existing in me. I meet this child mostly through my feelings”</td>
<td>Struggling with inhibitions and traumas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I wish I had more informations, to get detailed confirmation, because I have lack of objective feed-back”</td>
<td>Task orientation, Need of changeings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I transmit to you (I mean myself) that you are strong, you are capable to struggle with negative powers! If it was possible with you, I will succeed by myself, too”</td>
<td>Detachment, Relation with the interior sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Presentation of the results</td>
<td>„I was surprised that in fact we played our lives. But this isn’t a game!”</td>
<td>Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I can give up some things to have a person beside me who I can trust. I understood this here”</td>
<td>Seeking compromises</td>
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<td></td>
<td>„I don’t like to be shepherd, I can’t accept this”</td>
<td>Need of autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I need to confront my problems related to my mother. I am safe with you”</td>
<td>Need of autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„In this thing (beeing part of a group) what I like best is that we do everything together”</td>
<td>The power of „new consciousness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„It is great to know that you listen to me in any circumstances”</td>
<td>The power of „new consciousness”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„I realised that in fact I do not know if I have a couple life”</td>
<td>Responsible participation</td>
</tr>
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<td>V. Detachment</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Living the loss</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Presentation of the themes related to the different stages of group development: the latent and manifest level - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Reintegration and consolidation: finding an effective and harmonious way of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I need to stubborn and to come back down to earth&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I solved my problems related to my mother, I feel that I can listen to her. It doesn’t hurt me. I think I accepted her the way she is&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finding the effective and harmonious way of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I don’t know what will happen from now on, but I think I am much more optimistic that I’ve been for years&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

The meta-analises of the group themes from the table above shows the paralelism between the development of the group and the members of it. From the exploratory, unsafe condition they got to a mature collaboration level. In the metaplan of the group themes (attitudes towards the group) we find the line of the individual development from the exploratory phase to the responsible participation. In the moment when the group reached to the detachment, its members also became capable to execute their interior work independently.

**References**


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