Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that 2009 has arrived and that the ACA Convention is right around the corner. I would like to take this opportunity to address several ASGW-related convention events and to highlight some important Association news.

As you plan for the 2009 ACA Convention to be held in Charlotte, North Carolina, please keep our ASGW-sponsored events in mind, including six education sessions spaced throughout the convention. In addition, a pre-conference workshop, Using Creative Arts in Group Work, will be facilitated by Dr. Pam Paisley from The University of Georgia on Friday, March 20, 2009, from 1–6 p.m. The cost is only $50 for ASGW members and $35 for students ($70 for all others), and the pre-registration deadline is March 1, 2009. For additional details about the program and Dr. Paisley, please see the registration information in this issue of The Group Worker.

Some other highlights of the convention include two receptions (one is the joint reception with Counselors for Social Justice, Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, and Association for Creativity in Counseling scheduled for the evening of Saturday, March 21) and the ASGW Awards Luncheon, which will be held on Saturday, March 21, from 12-2 p.m. If you did not purchase your luncheon ticket and would still like to attend, then please check with ACA to see if any remaining tickets are available. Please note, however, that our deadline to notify ACA about guaranteed numbers for this ticketed meal event is February 9, 2009.

ASGW also has scheduled during the convention a 2008-2009/2009-2010 leadership team meeting. If you are not presently serving as a chair or member of a committee and would like to find out how to become more involved, then please feel free to join us. We will sponsor a general business meeting, as well. It will meet immediately prior to the joint reception, so I hope you will be able to attend. Also, please plan to visit the ASGW booth in the convention exhibit hall. In addition to information about ASGW news and events, we will have group-related products for purchase.

The events noted above address only a few of the ASGW ancillary meetings that are scheduled for Charlotte. In the last issue of The Group Worker, we published the finalized ASGW ancillary schedule. Please reference that issue for the complete schedule of ASGW events and/or consult the ACA program guide, when available, for more information.

In other news, preparations for the 2010 ASGW conference are still in the initial planning stage. Don Ward’s column in this issue shares an update of our progress to this point. We are looking forward to being able to provide more specific information soon about dates, location, and submission of program proposals.

Last, but certainly not least, I am pleased to note that prior to the end of 2008, we finalized our journal contract to continue publishing with Taylor & Francis. This issue of The Group Worker is being bundled with JSGW as part of our new agreement. I would like to say a very special thank you to George Leddick for his service to ASGW in facilitating this contract renewal process as the chair of the JSGW Task Force. In addition, our partners at Taylor & Francis have been most accommodating throughout this process, and we are fortunate to be able to maintain this collaboration in the coming years. Again, thanks George and Taylor & Francis!!

Best wishes to all of you for a healthy, happy, and rewarding 2009. I hope to see you in Charlotte in March!

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A Message from the President-Elect
Donald E. Ward

I hope that your holidays were wonderful and that you are all well as we progress into the new year. As I examine the membership figures provided by ACA, I am very pleased to note that ASGW membership appears to be holding steady. I want each of you to know that I value your continued membership and believe that our organization will continue to provide excellent service and opportunities for involvement for our members through our revised webpage, journal, newsletter, books and DVDs, and personal connections through conferences, meetings, and conventions. Please continue to use all of the resources that fit your needs and consider contributing and or becoming involved in ASGW. We are and always have been a very welcoming and inclusive organization, very consistent with the current zeitgeist of a global community of people working together to strengthen others, while celebrating and learning from our differences.

One of my interests is in increasing our efforts to offer evidence of the effectiveness of the groups that we conduct. Evidence-based approaches to the practice of counseling and psychotherapy are fraught with challenges and problems. However, in the current climate, we cannot avoid working to demonstrate accountability in our work. I would like to invite us to move to even greater efforts to measure and report the effects of our work in groups, increasingly tying excellent group work practice, which is of most interest to the majority of ASGW members, with evaluation and research of our methods. Cognizant of the challenges research on working with humans and especially research on groups present, I am consulting with the ASGW Research Committee and others about how to stimulate and reinforce future efforts toward showing others what we already know, that professional group workers make a significant difference in the lives of individuals and the functioning of groups and organizations.

Some of these initiatives to meld practice, evaluation, and research may serve as part of the theme of the 2010 ASGW Conference. Initial plans are already underway to finalize a site and dates, most likely in February of 2010 in warm weather. Please plan to join us for another great group work learning and fellowship experience. I invite you to continue to benefit actively from your membership and consider beginning or continuing to participate even more in ASGW and its activities. If you have not done so already, you will find us a very inclusive and welcoming organization, always looking for ways to involve our members in the activities and governance of our division.

Finally, I want to again express my appreciation for having the opportunity to serve you as President-Elect. Please know that I value your work and interest in providing quality group work and that I will work to the best of my ability to support your continuing efforts. I hope that I will be able to meet or communicate with many of you over the next several years.
Teaching Group for the First Time: Reflections and Questions
Submitted by Caroline Perjessy
Doctoral Candidate, Kent State University

When I realized that I would be teaching Group Counseling for the first time, I reflected on my own experience in taking the course, and found myself awash in anxiety and excitement. My reflection immediately took me to the most anxiety producing part of the class: the experiential component, which required role playing in groups as a member and/or a group leader. I was able to immediately empathize with my future students as I recalled my own instructor teaching a didactic portion and then, during the second half of class, guiding the students through simulated role plays that allowed them the opportunity to experience a group counseling situation. Several years and significant group experiences later, it was my turn to teach these future counselors the beauty and mysteries of group counseling, with one caveat: there were separate instructors and settings for the didactic and experiential components. The experiential component took place in a separate room, after my lecture, and I was not involved in this aspect of their learning. I had to walk past their classroom, shortly after our lecture ended, and I longed to see what they were doing. I felt that it was my duty to understand how they were using the lecture in practice, but I also knew that infringing upon their group would be crossing a boundary. Naturally, I understood the rationale behind the decision of this separation in that it protected the students’ confidentiality if something were to come up during the group lab and as a result, kept the lines from blurring between counselor and teacher. However, to me the experiential part of group was the most exciting and rewarding. Learning occurs in many ways, but I firmly believe that experience is one of the best teachers.

To gauge how their experiences were unfolding, I often relied on feedback that the students gave me, which was from their perspective of course. I also kept in contact with the lab instructors, but our conversations were informal in nature and didn’t always offer me the insights I was looking for, namely whether or not the students were using the group counseling skills that we discussed in class. Moreover, since the lab section and didactic section had separate syllabi, class requirements, and grades, it occurred to me that this separation did not lend itself well to collaborating with the instructors. I wondered if there were other, better ways for me to assist them in understanding group dynamics and counseling working within this sometimes awkward arrangement.

During my lecture, small group work was used to facilitate discussion related to group work. For example, an early group activity topic was: “group brainstorm all of the different types of groups (voluntary/involuntary) you could lead in your specialty area now/ and when you graduate”, or “what are some advantages to group work versus working with individuals?” The smaller group would then report to the larger group, offering the whole class various ideas related to group work. Another early assignment was to observe groups in the community and later on, to write up a proposal for a group counseling program in their school or community agency. This gave the students the opportunity to put their readings into practice, and offered them a practical way of conceptualizing how to create a group counseling program. Several students told me that observing a group counseling situation was very beneficial for them and gave them unique insights into the process. Throughout the course, students watched group counseling videotapes that demonstrated many of the techniques we covered in class, often showing more difficult group counseling scenarios. Discussion questions followed the videos, offering the students a chance to discuss what they noticed the group leaders and members do and how group processes can unfold.

Throughout the semester, I was left with the nagging feeling that something was missing when it came to tying together the lab and didactic portions of this class. My lectures were to be used in conjunction with the experiential component, but I was never sure how that occurred, if it did. Although I feel that the overall experience was a good one for the students, as a future counselor educator, I am interested in how their learning occurred within this context and how I could help to improve it. Toward this goal, I pose two questions to more seasoned group counseling instructors:

1. How can I best tie an experiential component in with a lecture component without forcing students to disclose what they said or did in their lab experience?
2. If using the same format as described above, how can instructors for the separate classes work together to ensure that students are understanding and applying the important group concepts effectively?

Teaching Group for the First Time: Two Responses from the Experts

Response #1
By Dr. Carmen Salazar

When grad students teach a course they typically follow a syllabus designed by someone else. Initially it is a relief to have guidelines to follow. But you may also feel like a guest in someone else's house, cautious about imposing or violating boundaries. And you would like to be viewed as a "good guest" and invited back again. As a new assistant professor with my own syllabus I felt awkward when teaching a class for the first time. Even now, it often takes several semesters until a new course feels like it is truly mine. Not only must I understand the subject, I must use techniques that feel natural to me and fit the needs of the specific students at hand. Experimenting sometimes takes me out of my comfort zone, but also keeps the class fresh and interesting for me. I am
continuously “tweaking” and modifying how I present material, thinking of new ways to involve and excite students.

You asked how you could include an experiential component in your class without violating the privacy of those same students in another class, and how instructors for both classes could work together. Your two questions are interrelated (much like the two parts of the Group Counseling class you describe); my answers will be as well. My guess is that Group was originally a single course, and the "didactic versus experiential" components were separated into two distinct classes to protect privacy and provide an authentic group experience. So if you had not known the two syllabi were once the same course, would you have the same questions? It is a good idea to know how your class (and the lab class) fit into the overall curriculum. Questions you could ask are: What knowledge and skills can I expect of students enrolling in my class? When my colleagues subsequently encounter students who passed my class, what knowledge and skills can they rely upon? An effective curriculum is the responsibility of the entire faculty, in a continuous process of communication. Those most aware of the ability of students from the Group Counseling class would be faculty who teach the practica or internship sections in which students would be expected to co-lead a group under supervision. It might be useful to ask these faculty members: What skills are essential for students in your class, and what red flags signal their absence? What are the challenges students typically encounter when co-leading for the first time? What skills and abilities best equip them to meet these challenges? What are the normal steps in their skill acquisition development? Answers to these questions will help you gain a sense of context for your students’ next steps beyond your Group class.

My hunch is that when the course was separated into two, there was no intent to forbid all experiential activities in the “didactic” course. Luckily, research tells us there is absolutely no correlation between knowing what to do and being able to do it. The initial rounds of the TV show "American Idol" illustrate that some people believe they can carry a tune but prove themselves wrong as soon as they open their mouths. They would be well advised to work on basic skills, while other contestants are ready for advanced coaching. You need not tie your hands and describe leadership skills or membership behaviors in a vacuum. Ask instructors of the experiential component to name the skills good citizens of their group must have; then teach those skills by allowing your students to perform in a variety of ways. If the curriculum is arranged so students arrive at your class already possessing the ability to restate, reflect, and confront others, perhaps their new repertoire might focus on linking and drawing out, and diversity-competent leader skills. Engaging in and processing icebreakers, energizers, and role plays in your class allows students to practice, and provides you with a way to gauge skill acquisition first hand. One time-efficient technique might be to ask students to write a weekly journal in which they named a skill they had used in the other (or any) group and perform a self evaluation for appropriateness, accuracy and timing. They are responsible for protecting the privacy of their group by altering the context, not using names, and focusing on their own skill performance.

There are many levels of experience. Your class will include students with differing levels of experience, acuity, and perception. Finding ways to challenge each student to grow is an art. And it’s fun!

Response #2
By Dr. Allan Dye

As I read this article I was struck by the author’s enthusiasm for teaching the course and her determination to provide a comprehensive learning experience. Her thoughtful analysis of the course and her role suggest that she is industrious, conscientious, and committed to her students’ achieving the fullest possible understanding of group work in general and group counseling in particular. Her immediate challenge is finding a way to link the didactic and experiential components of the group counseling course she has been assigned to teach. Realizing that her experience has not prepared her for this dilemma she has chosen to seek consultation. In taking this action she demonstrates both presence of mind and creativity.

Before addressing the author’s questions I want to clarify my views on the purposes and structure of the introductory course in group counseling:

In many programs this is an introductory course that will be followed by one or more didactic courses and perhaps a practicum. There may also be a required group counseling component in the practicum and/or the internship. In a program of this sort, there is a training sequence so that the first course is appropriately designed to achieve beginning levels of both knowledge and competency. In a first course the emphasis is upon knowledge more than competency because knowledge is easier to achieve and can more effectively be assessed. There would be little emphasis upon competency in a first course; instructors typically provide some form of group experience either through simulation or a brief member-centered group led by someone other than the instructor.

In other programs there is only one course devoted to the entire domain of group work, including all the distinct types: task/work, psychoeducation, counseling, and reconstructive/therapy. Some courses attempt to demonstrate or provide brief experience in each of the formats while others limit the experiential component to a format usually designated as “counseling.” In programs having only one group course it is virtually impossible to accomplish all that must be done. Any time devoted to ‘experiential’ activity reduces the size of the didactic component which includes the four major types of group work in addition to theory and methods associated with each. Such a course can best be regarded as a ‘sample’ or ‘survey’ course. It is unrealistic to expect that even entry-level competencies...
can be achieved during a course of this type, regardless of how the course is designed and conducted.

**How can I best tie an experiential component in with a lecture component without forcing students to disclose what they said or did in their lab experience?**

You are correct in suspecting that you can’t make this happen in a way that can be documented and assessed. Fortunately, you are wise enough to know that your students are making connections between what they read and hear in your lectures with what happens during their lab activity. Be aware, however, that in their semi-voluntary lab experience they may actually experience only part of all that happens in a fully voluntary, self-selected counseling group. The lab is intended as a brief, introductory sample of group counseling experience and does not at all address membership in other forms of group work.

**If using the same format as described above, how can instructors for the separate classes work together to ensure that students are understanding and applying the important group concepts effectively?**

Instructors should concentrate on conducting their portion of the course in the most effective manner possible but there is no need to collaborate in the promotion of “…understanding and applying the important group concepts effectively”. The learning tasks are multiple and complex in the field of group work and they cannot be attained in a single course. Rather, the didactic component should provide for maximum breadth and as much depth as time permits. The experiential component must be conducted with due regard for varying levels of willingness to participate, recognition that members are not voluntary in the traditional sense, understanding that members may well feel competitive as students in the graduate program and thus hesitant to disclose, and acceptance of the fact that full confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in the narrow confines of a graduate training program. Many of the foundational characteristics of an interpersonal learning experience can be provided. If this happens both instructors can rest assured that understanding will occur.

Instructors of both components gain from knowing in general terms what is currently transpiring in each. The didactic instructor can be advised of the group’s developmental progress and on such group characteristics as participation, conflict, sub-grouping, and the like. Leaders may sometimes have to use discretion in revealing the existence of in-group problems when it would be impossible to protect members’ identities. Leaders of the experiential component can be kept informed of reading and lecture topics, in-class demonstrations, field observations, and the like, any of which may influence members’ behavior in their group.

Finally, my recommendation is that the two parts of the course be conducted separately, that the design and conduct of each needn’t be influenced appreciably by the other. In a master’s level program having only one course this is the most certain way of providing the best experience for the largest number of students. Assessment in the didactic segment can take any of the usual formats. Evaluation of student performance in the experiential component should focus on how the student performed using such factors as attendance, promptness, alert/distressed, responsiveness, disclosive/refusal to disclose, and the like. I recommend that the course grade be based primarily upon performance in the didactic component. The downside to my recommendations is that there is no way of knowing whether students can apply the concepts effectively. This question is better suited for a laboratory course in group methods, a practicum in group counseling, or a group assignment during the internship.
News from the Journal for Specialists in Group Work
Submitted by Sheri Bauman

Following the signing of a contract with Taylor and Francis to continue to publish the Journal for Specialists in Group Work, the editorial team (Sheri Bauman, editor, Kim Asner-Self and José Villalba, associate editors) visited the publisher’s office in Philadelphia. Lia Falco, editorial assistant, was unable to attend. We met all the personnel who work on the journal, and had an opportunity to ask questions and strengthen professional relationships. We learned about the production process and the marketing efforts, and had an opportunity to problem-solve with the Manuscript Central coordinator there. We expect communication to be smoother all around after meeting people in person. We all felt that the visit was extremely productive, and hope that readers of the journal and authors interested in publishing in JSGW will see the benefits of the meeting. The JSGW is interested in receiving quality manuscripts for consideration for publication. The Manuscript Central manuscript management system makes the review process very efficient; average time from submission to first decision letter is 62 days. The journal is also interested in receiving proposals for special issues. Of particular interest are issues focusing on online group work, and groups for persons with disabilities.

For questions, contact sherib@u.arizona.edu or ldfl@u.arizona.edu. To submit an article, go to http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/usgw

Nominate Your State Branch for the ASGW State Branch Award for 2008

Tell the ASGW members about the important things that have been accomplished in your state branch the last year. We want to hear about your workshops, publications, membership services and all your special activities.

What: Tell us what your branch has been doing this past year. Feel free to submit supporting material. ASGW wants to recognize your branch for your contributions.

When: Send your letter of nomination and supporting materials by March 1, 2009.

Where: The branch award is given at the ASGW luncheon at the ACA Convention.

Who: Please include in your nomination materials the name and contact information of the person who will accept the award at the ASGW luncheon.

How: M. Carolyn Thomas and Kamela Kennedy, the ASGW State Branch Co-Chairs, will select the award recipient. Submit materials to:

M. Carolyn Thomas
9360 Vaughn Road
Pike Road, AL 36064
mthomas@aum.edu
334/244-3437
This Practice Ideas column is based on Burt’s reflections from his election as an ASGW Fellow in 2008.

How can longstanding group norms intentionally be changed in an intact and on-going workplace group? This article provides a summary of a group work consulting project that addressed this issue. Additionally, through the description of this consulting project, I will highlight how group work skills can be utilized to respond to the needs of a group in a business setting.

Discussion of the importance of group norms, how they should be established and/or maintained are standard fare for anyone conducting groups or teaching/supervising group work. These discussions inevitably underscore the importance of intentionally establishing group norms at the outset. Every group work text deals extensively with the importance of the process by which the group leader, in collaboration with group members, determines norms which will govern the behavior of members and the role of the leader. Considerable effort is also given to discussions of how a group leader can respond when members challenge group norms. Within the ASGW community the “group” is typically a counseling or therapy group, perhaps a psycho-educational group.

In this article, I want to invite you to think about a different type of group and a different challenge related to group norms. Recently I was asked to assist a group in transforming their norms to support a fundamental change in the purpose of the group. Group work professionals often work with task groups in business and community settings. Typically task groups are time or project limited; there is a beginning and an end to the activities of the group. The group comes together to accomplish a certain task; once the task is complete the purpose of the group has been fulfilled; the group is dissolved. The workplace group I was asked to work with was in a business setting but was not a task group. It was a leadership group that was intact, permanent and on-going, the membership of which would not likely be altered in the foreseeable future. Thus the usual methods for norming a task group would not have been appropriate. Let me describe the group as well as the specific challenge.

The Group

Since its inception 39 years ago, Alan & Associates, a financial services company, has been led by the founder/owner. He is approaching retirement and has offered to sell controlling ownership of the company to the five top “sales producers.” For the past five years these five sales producers have met as a group once each month to discuss customers and business development strategies. They have participated only tangentially in decisions affecting the overall operation and management of the business. Sales producers typically focus on increasing sales commission income for themselves; concerns about the overall operation of the company are generally related to how the administrative functions of the company are or are not supporting the producers’ efforts to service their customers. During the monthly meetings, the producers “endured” the two hours, coming to life only when they “had a dog in the fight.” In fact most of the norms in the monthly group were built around cooperating “just enough” to “appear helpful” without diminishing any competitive advantage the producer might have in terms of their “book of business” (the clients they were serving).

The offer to gain ownership of the company resulted in a cosmic shift. If these five producers were to become business owners they must find a way to work together. They must become a leadership team in spite of years of interactions that had created norms that were, in many ways, directly contradictory to group cohesion and teamwork. The group members could not articulate what they needed; yet they all agreed that something had to change. They finally concluded to retain outside assistance in order that the functioning of their group could change.
The Challenge
The challenge was to create a new normative structure within an on-going work group without changing group membership while the group grew into its leadership function. Unlike a counseling or therapy group where discussions of norms can easily be considered the “business of the group,” members of this group were keenly aware that “time is money.” They wanted a solution that was efficient in terms of consulting fees and in terms of the investment of time. They were apprehensive that devoting time to discussing group norms, identifying new group dynamics, and imagining/rehearsing new behaviors would really be worth the investment.

I’ll describe how I undertook this project in the hope that it may prompt you to consider how you might apply group work principles to the professional groups; workplace task and staff groups; and neighborhood, community, and religious groups that are important to you.

What then was a reasonable approach to working with this group?

When the group of producers contacted me they had in mind a training solution. They thought I could teach them teamwork principles and they would simply apply the principles during business meetings. As we know from our own experience with group process – you can read about group process and it makes some sense, but it isn’t until you have lived the group experience that you really understand the powerful dynamics at play. With that in mind I proposed to provide a cognitive construct and then coach them as they attempted to re-norm their group process.

The cognitive construct I utilized was developed by Patrick Lencioni in his popular business book entitled The Five Dysfunctions of a Team. Lencioni (2002) created a five level pyramid (see figure) to reflect what he calls the dysfunctions of team. You will note, the five levels are presented as negatives:

- the absence of…,
- the fear of…,
- the lack of…,
- the avoidance of…,
- the inattention to…

(p. 188-190).

Therefore, when considering this model I have found it helpful to turn the negatives into positive attributes:

- Trust – the ability to be vulnerable within the group,
- Openness – the ability to passionately debate ideas and challenge thinking,
- Commitment – the ability to fully invest in decisions and plans of action,
- Accountability – the ability to hold each other responsible for delivering action,
- Attention to Details – the ability to focus on the achievement of collective results.

I asked the group members to read the book before our first meeting. During that first training session we discussed the five levels. Most members expressed their belief that the group was functional and productive. However, as the first session unfolded there were early indications of trust issues (given the competitive nature of their relationship I could not have imagined it otherwise). By midway through our second meeting it was clear to everyone that there were major trust breaches. Conflicts and tensions had gone unresolved (sometimes even unacknowledged) for years! Even in this re-norming process, the “storming stage” (Tuckman,1965) was fully present and could not be ignored.

Over the next 6-8 weeks we worked through several conflict-filled group meetings coupled with individual coaching sessions with members. Lencioni’s model began to gain crediblity and traction with the members. They could see that in the absence of trust, honest conflict (as opposed to passive-aggressive acting out) was not possible. Without the ability to express honest differences and disagreements and work-through the inevitable tensions, the group could not provide real leadership to the company. So long as lack of trust and fear of conflict governed the group norms, members would withhold their full commitment; they would continue to live the old group norm of being just cooperative or committed enough. During those early meetings, group members were tempted to flee from the conflict; tempted to re-embrace the inauthentic communication norm. Fortunately, the members stuck with the process and as they worked through the layers of conflict their commitment to each other and the company grew.

The test would come around the issue of accountability. Under the old group norms members were accountable to themselves to generate a book of business that would result in commissions suitable to support their lifestyles. As owners they would continue to be compensated through commissions but additional income would come from the overall profitability of the business. However, maximizing company profitability meant that members had to balance short term commission rewards against the capitalization and human resources needs of the company. Everyone had to do their part to ensure the overall viability and growth of the company. One of the old norms (score-keeping) had to be challenged and re-crafted. Under the old system, score keeping was very consistent with the competitive nature of sales producers. Every month was a contest to see who sold the most and inevitably there were winners and losers. As owners, they needed to find a way to consistently guarantee the success of the company even if it required sacrifice in terms of their monthly
sales commissions. Ultimately they came to understand that each member had to be accountable to the other owners not just in terms of their sales volume but also accountable in terms of investing time and energy into non-commission generating activities. Such non-commission activities include staff recruitment (interview, selection, and hiring); staff development and training; human resources; capital equipment (research, decision-making, and installation); and agency marketing. Score keeping as a norm had to be re-crafted to include tracking each member’s contribution to these non-commission business owner activities and holding each other accountable to participate in non-commission activities.

The Re-Norming Process
In this section I want to provide a brief outline of the re-norming process I employed. Please understand, while the list appears to be linear, the living process was not remotely linear.

Process Observation – Raising process to awareness
Process observation of group dynamics was an essential activity throughout the project. This was vital in the beginning as it provided me with an opportunity to not only learn about their process but also to non-judgmentally comment on what I was observing and to ask “not-knowing” questions about how the normative behavior served the old group and how they imagined it might serve or frustrate the purpose of the new group.

Facilitating Awareness – Encouraging exploration
As group norms and process were identified members were encouraged to talk with each other about the process observations. Facilitating awareness was what led to the outbreak of unspoken and unresolved conflict. Facilitating awareness also was utilized to give language to the growth of trust and safety in the group.

Storming – Building trust through productive conflict
I reference the storming process earlier but what I didn’t describe was the caldron of rage, confusion, suspicion, fear, and anxiety that overflowed into this group. Each time we met the story took a new twist revealing yet deeper levels of betrayal and hurt. The group with active modeling by the facilitator had to become a holding container for this raw emotion. If that could happen, the conflict no matter how ugly had a real chance of being worked through. On the other hand, had these issues not surfaced and not been given the air time they deserved the re-norming process could never have been successful.

Cognitive Construct – Utilization of a cognitive model of group functioning

Reading Patrick Lencioni’s *The Five Dysfunctions of Team* (2002) provided members with a cognitive construct upon which to understand what was occurring in their group. It also provided a model for what was possible if they would stick with the process.

Old Group Norms – Discussion of implications
All along the way whether from process comments or as group members became more conscious, old group norms were identified. This awareness led to important discussions of the implications of the old norm in terms of its affect on the functioning of the group.

New Group Norms – Identification of new purpose and supporting norms
At first, the powerful significance of the differences in the purpose of the old group as compared to the new group seemed to run off their backs. But as time passed members became increasingly aware of the profound shift in the purpose of the group and with it a recognition that new norms would be required to support the new purpose.

Shift to Task
In a business setting, there is a point at which continuing to explore interpersonal conflict is counter-productive. Before reaching that point it is critically important to shift the focus of the group to a task; not just any task but something relevant and important to the purpose of the group. Shifting to task allows people to return to the business of the group secure in the knowledge that they no longer need to fear or avoid disagreement or conflict. Focusing on the business of the group also provides an opportunity to experiment with new norms.

The shift to task in this group involved the creation of a Vision and Mission Statement. This task activity was accomplished over three additional meetings. During those meetings new/different group norms were evident.

Two examples were particularly important;
1. members were present and engaged; they intentionally gave each other their full attention during the vision and mission discussions (this was a very different group norm) and

2. all members actively participated in the vision and mission discussion even when the process became tedious (as is inevitable during the vision and mission development process).

Permission – Challenge unproductive normative behavior
Laying the groundwork to establish a group norm that gives both...
Using Creative Arts in Group Work with Pam Paisley

Spend an afternoon with Pam Paisley in a Small Workshop Setting at the 2009 ASGW Pre-Conference Workshop at the ACA Conference in Charlotte, NC Friday, March 20, 2009, 1:00-6:00pm

Register early as seating is limited to 30 individuals!
ASGW members $50 — Students $35 — All others $70
(Onsite registration, add $15 if space is available)
5.0 contact clock hours for continuing education have been approved by ACA

Preregister by March 1, 2009

Registration Form

Presenter:
Dr. Paisley is a Professor and a Program Coordinator in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at The University of Georgia. Dr. Paisley has been at The University of Georgia since 1994. Previously, she lived in North Carolina and worked as a teacher and counselor in public schools for ten years and as a counselor educator at Appalachian State University for seven years. She has won teaching awards at both Appalachian State University and The University of Georgia, has been principal investigator on a national grant to transform school counseling preparation and practice, and has previously served as President of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), a member of the Governing Council of the American Counseling Association, and an Associate Editor for the Journal of Counseling and Development. Her research and clinical interests include school counseling program development, issues related to children and adolescents, promoting development for the adults in children’s lives, and the use of expressive and creative arts in counseling. She has coordinated institutes and developed courses on using expressive arts and play media in counseling across her career. Dr. Paisley is committed to principles of social justice and is active in related initiatives at the local, state, and national levels.

Title:
Using Creative Arts in Group Work

Description:
This workshop will provide opportunities for participants to explore the use of creative arts in group counseling. Often, children, in particular do not have the vocabulary or experience to conceptualize issues. Sometimes, adolescents may have experienced a trauma that causes a developmental block and a subsequent inability to be reached through traditional therapeutic interventions. Even cognitively well-defended adults may not be best served by “talk therapies”. Creative approaches provide an alternative method for communication, offer a sense of bonding with others, and are appropriate in multiple stages of group work.
permission and encouragement to challenge unproductive behavior sounds like a good idea; and it is. However, learning to remain mindful of the process when deeply engaged in the content is not easy for anyone; and surely not for members of this group. However, encouraging members to stay tuned into process so that unproductive interactions could be challenged remained an aspiration norm in which there was some evidence of progress.

**Closure – Preparing the group to be self directed**

Because the group was intact, permanent, and on-going there was not a point of closure in the traditional sense. Much as I would have preferred it we did not have the luxury to debrief the overall experience and integrate the learning. The group achieved what we might call a “good enough” group. At that point members made a business decision (which often happens in a business setting). They decided there was sufficient anticipated return on their investment of time and money for continued assistance. My involvement was concluded.

**Summary**

How can longstanding group norms intentionally be changed in an intact, permanent, and on-going workplace group? The task of re-norming a pre-exiting group that has a history and will continue into the foreseeable future presents unique challenges. Many of the traditional dynamics affecting group norms apply to such an effort. However, the extra wrinkle in a re-norming process involves the unlearning of old norms (well reinforced habits) while at the same time identifying new norms that are supportive to the new purpose of the group and accomplished all this while the group struggles to fulfill its purpose. The success of this project seemed to turn on at least four variables; 1) members understood the importance of changing the purpose of the group, 2) members were willing to acknowledge and work-through intense conflict, 3) members had an opportunity to “practice” new norms while engaging in an important task activity consistent with the purpose of the group, and 4) members were motivated by the promise of ownership and increased income if they could become a functional leadership team. Finally, I hope this has given you some insight into how group work skills, common to every group work professional, can be utilized to respond to the needs of a group in a business setting.

**References**


ASGW Committee Update: Graduate Student Committee
Submitted by Jonathan Orr

I am excited to share with you a brief glimpse of the Association for Specialist in Group Work (ASGW) Graduate Student Committee. There is an adage among group workers that a group is only as good as its members and the same can be said of the Graduate Student Committee for ASGW. Perhaps more than any other committee in ASGW, the Graduate Student Committee represents an investment in the future of the association. Students bring vibrancy to the association and ensure that ASGW continues to represent excellence in group work. Whether providing scholarships for conference attendance or contributing to the ASGW Emerging Leader program, the activities of this committee seek to involve masters and doctoral students who have particular interest in group work. The committee serves as a gateway for graduate students to learn more about ASGW and it provides opportunities for students to be involved in service to the profession. Currently the Graduate Student Committee offers scholarships for students attending ACA and ASGW conferences. In exchange for these scholarships, students are asked to work as volunteers at the conference. Twelve scholarships were awarded to students attending the 2007 ASGW conference in Florida and typical volunteer tasks included A/V support for presenters, general presentation room setup, and assistance with conference registration.

Looking forward there are many areas in which the Graduate Student Committee can grow; however, that growth needs to respond to the needs of graduate students. In my experience, most of the greatest ideas for change and innovation in an organization have come from those who have looked with fresh eyes. It is in this spirit that I ask for your input to strengthen this committee’s mission:

- What types of support or resources would you like to see this committee provide?
- How can we utilize your unique knowledge and perspective to strengthen the overall organization?
- How would you like to be involved?

I have many more questions, but I’ll stop at three for now; likewise, I am hopeful that many of you have input or answers for me. If you are interested in hearing more of the questions or providing some responses, I invite you to contact me at jorr@gsu.edu.

Welcome

Tanner Babb, Indiana
Frank Varnado Jr., Alaska
Pam Kennel, Colorado
April Schottelkorb, Idaho
Donald Belau, Nebraska
Patricia Klemmensen, Nebraska
Jana Walker, Nebraska
Maria Aguirre, Oregon
Daniel Stroud, Oregon
Patricia Baranczyk, Wisconsin
Michelle Davis, Michigan
Alicia Warren, Michigan
Deborah Beaupre’, Michigan
Richard Auger, Minnesota
Theodore Hostikka, Minnesota
Esther Bass, Virginia
Liane Paulison, Virginia
Teresa Maisonet-Menendez, Virginia
Mary McCormac, Virginia
Sharon Lamy, Maryland
Fredina Powell, Maryland
Shelita Thompson, Maryland
Chyla Carter, Maryland
Chad Yates, Ohio
Michelle Loring, Ohio
Michael Skoda, Ohio
Jennifer Waugh, Ohio
Jaime Armstrong, Ohio
Brian Dukes, Illinois
Steven Perry, Illinois
Lynn Mitchell, Illinois
Claire Mendenhall, Illinois
Linda Eaton, Texas
Ruby Trevino, Texas
Yvette Castillo, Texas
Brian Sharp, Texas
Cheryl Boyland, Texas
Janet Rollings, Texas
Nadezda Kholomeydi, Mississippi
Angela Chappell, Mississippi
Charlie Wilder, Mississippi
Emma Griffitt, Kentucky
Wayne Blanchett, North Carolina
Rebecca Jorgenson, North Carolina
Paige Williams, Oklahoma
Stefanie Lindlau, Florida
Sierra Kehoe, Florida
Kathleen Bazel, Florida
Sarah Douglas, Florida
Mary-Ethelbert Langston, Florida
Heather Croteau, Florida
Shellie Caplinger, Georgia
Kristi Burgess, Georgia
Jessica Malley, Georgia
Lisa Townsend, Georgia
Willis Curtis, Louisiana
Lawrence Ross, Alabama
Aurelio Duarte-Encinas, Arizona
Therese Hamilton, New Mexico
Jennifer Dvoskin, New York
Dana Fallon, New York
Olga Mostova, New York
Sara Morrow, New Hampshire
Jennifer Fisher, Pennsylvania
Mary Alice Campbell, Tennessee
Aliya Edoo, Tennessee
Jenenne Howell, Montana
Raul Reyes-Bonilla, Puerto Rico
Nelissa Dominguez-Davila, Puerto Rico
Stavros Dragatakis, Greece