Exploring Conflict in Groups:

Creating an Awareness of Self and Others

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ABSTRACT

This thesis takes up the issue of conflict as experienced by educators and consultants working with adults in groups. In particular, what is explored is a view of individuals which takes into account how location and position influence their behaviour in groups. It suggests the importance of recognizing not only differences among individuals, but also the notion of people's fundamental similarities.

In addition, this thesis provides a theory of group development which describes the contribution individual members make to group process and accepts the normality of conflict within groups. An analysis of how we understand conflict, as educators and consultants, reveals how we are likely to respond within learning environments. Do we shy away from conflict or do we explore it to seek its meaning?

This author refers to two bodies of literature, critical pedagogy and psychotherapy, and explores how the joining of these two disciplines can enrich and inform the process of working with conflict within groups. Such notions as locatedness, basic healthiness, group dynamics, and the normality of conflict are offered as the basis for an enhanced practice for educators and consultants willing to confront conflict within groups. Together, they offer rich possibilities for dealing with the realities of individual location and the social manifestations of power. The author's experiences of working with groups help guide some of the explorations with conflict.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My introduction to working with groups of adults came as a French language instructor. Although I was a rather shy person, I enjoyed the interaction and challenge. Over the next few years, I began to explore new ways of channeling my experience and attraction to this field.

As I embarked on my new career as a consultant, my hopes were that I was going to be able to use my experience and training in education while using the knowledge I had acquired about the intricacies of relationships and how they affect our working environment.

Soon after discovering what kind of work I did want to do, I was offered a contract to teach about changing workplace realities to a group of women who were re-entering the workforce. This contract included exploring the role of the individual within a changing work environment. I was pleased and enthusiastic about the opportunity to do exactly what I had hoped for.

From the beginning of the workshop, I realized that the members of the group did not want to hear about the realities of the workforce, nor did they want to hear of how people relate to each other in that environment. Their main focus was about finding a job that would provide some security for them and they wanted me to tell them how to find it. The information and process that I had prepared would probably have been quite valuable for the transition that they were going to be facing. Yet, their attention was on an entirely different objective.

Even though we were able to negotiate something that had value for both objectives, I experienced quite a bit of tension as a result of what I considered to be the participants' unwillingness and resistance[1].

This story is similar in one aspect or another to many experiences that I and other educators and consultants have had. As a matter of fact, when I was working as a language teacher, I also encountered this same tension as a result of the participants' resistance when I was trying to implement new and interesting ways of learning to speak a new language. The enthusiasm I had in my new role as a consultant was dampened by the fact that I was starting to recognize a familiar type of conflict and tension within my work.

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[1] In several parts of this thesis, appearing in italics are anecdotes from my own life that serve as starting points for discussion and which locate the thesis within my life experiences.

I began thinking of ways to discover more about the fact that the same type of conflict seemed to repeat itself. I became intrigued at the possibility of becoming clearer and more aware of what contributed to this repetition. At the beginning of this exploration into conflict within my work, I was only able to scratch the surface. As time went on, I was able to take a deeper look at the root of some of the conflicts that arose during group work. Looking back, I realize that I needed to develop skills and avenues that would enable me to begin thinking and talking about it with some depth and insight.

At present, my training, experience, education, and sense of community allow me to research and write about the thoughts and ideas that I have been acquiring through encountering resistance in my work. With these skills, I will explore in this thesis ways to organize and make sense of the learning experiences that have been presented to me through conflict in group work.

The purpose of this thesis is to learn about conflict within groups in order to be able to work more constructively with conflict. I hope to do this by exploring patterns of conflict that occur within groups and by identifying possible meanings of conflict for members of a group. Conflict is very much related to how people interact with each other. The examination of how people are situated in relation to the world and to each other will serve to deepen our understanding and awareness of ourselves and others.

Choosing the Direction of This Thesis

In the story that began this chapter, it is possible to find a multitude of issues that might have contributed to the tension that I experienced as early as the first session. Further, the tension and dissonance I felt as a consultant seemed similar to the issues that affected my work as a teacher. With this idea of repetition of familiar themes in mind, as a first step in directing this thesis, I list below three components and discuss how they arose as central for this thesis.

Issues of Particular Importance

The role of **conflict** within groups is of particular interest to me mostly because of my lack of comfort around it. When I speak of conflict in this context, I am referring to the resistance of the participants and to the tension that is felt around this resistance. The most common questions I have about conflict refer to why the conflict arose, what the conflict means, and why people tend to respond to conflict the way they do. In order to address these questions, conflict will be the main topic of this thesis.

When I encounter conflict in groups, the first thoughts I have are about the **methods** that I chose to use. As I review the events of a group, I try to remember what the process of the group was like and how the activities I introduced influenced this process. I also wonder how I introduced the content and when I started to notice that the participants were resisting what I was presenting to them. My purpose for these questions is to find out if I could have done things differently in order to minimize the tension and resistance. I would like to explore if and how the process and content of groups contribute to the conflict.

The exploration of issues such as conflict and methods identifies the importance I place on my role and contribution to the outcome of the group. I wonder about how my own agenda and my history with groups influence my practice. Exploring my **locatedness** as a consultant and educator may allow me to review what I brought with me that shaped my theory and my method. In the story of my experience as a new consultant, my enthusiasm for doing the kind of work that I wanted certainly influenced the content of the workshop. I had decided what kind of outcome I wanted for the group before I ever met with them.

How I Arrived at These Issues

When I look back at any of the groups that I worked with, I can usually identify the relevance of each of these three issues. Discovering that these three aspects of my

practice were important to me was an evolutionary process which was developed over time.

As a student, I often asked myself what it was about the teacher/educator that made the difference between my enthusiasm for a class or my lack of interest in it. I understand now that the conditions of my life at the time made a real difference to how I approached the class. Yet, even in the most challenging period of my student life, there were educators who made learning enjoyable for me. At first, I imagined it was something about their personality, and I wanted to learn how to capture it for myself. This was the beginning of my ongoing search for interesting and engaging ways of conducting groups.

As a language teacher, workplace training offered me a collection of activities and methods that were meant to motivate learners. I enjoyed trying out my new acquisitions but found myself wanting to know why some groups were more difficult to work with than others. I also wanted to understand what it was that I was trying to accomplish by applying different methods to my classes.

When I first encountered resistance and conflict in my role as a teacher, I tried to find quick fixes. I thought that if I found solutions to the problems that were coming up in the classes, then everyone would get what they wanted. This approach felt like damage-control and made things more difficult for me.

It reminds me of when I first started to teach. My classes were mostly made up of military men. I used to blush very frequently while I was teaching. The more I tried to make it stop, the more self-conscious I felt and therefore, the more I blushed. I needed to find another way of coping with this blushing. When I started to look at blushing as a fact of life for redheads, it seemed to get easier for me. Now, it is no longer a problem for me.

This example describes my tendency to see things as problems to be solved. Most of the time as a language teacher, I was focussing on decreasing the amount of conflict in my practice rather than understanding what was going on and how I could benefit from it.

Trying to find activities that would not result in conflict or that would minimize it did not address the nature of conflict, nor did it enhance my practice. Studying adult

education provided me with theories that explained many approaches to working with groups. Within these theories I found words and a language to describe what it was that I was seeking. I found many of my ideas woven through both critical and feminist perspectives on education. My thoughts and my professional goals were finally starting to take shape as I examined the work of other people.

As I began to understand that it might be threatening to try something new in the context of learning, I wanted to find a way of making the transition easier for the participants. I had hopes that the adult education programme that I was enrolled in would provide me with ways to make learners feel at ease with new ways of learning. Wanting skills and tools for this transition is normal, but part of my search was also related to the desire to control the outcome and come up with solutions. As in the story of my blushing, my main focus was on stopping something (conflict and tension) that I now understand to be normal and highly probable.

While the study of adult education gave me insight into theoretical perspectives of working with groups, my studies in psychotherapy offered me insight into working with individuals. It is the latter which has created for me a whole new dimension of my exploration of group process. I have discovered the wealth of information that is available to me by paying attention to the reactions and responses of the participants and by heightening my awareness of the nature of my own responses.

In accepting that conflict does happen and in learning to decipher the messages behind the participants' and the consultant's reactions, I have found many possibilities for growth as a consultant and educator. By respecting the message and the messenger, I am open to recognizing that the reactions of the participants and the consultant offer valuable information and clues to what is needed and wanted. Being open and listening for this information takes me one step further in my search for ways to conduct groups which honour the wants and needs of everyone involved. In the story above, accepting blushing as natural allowed me to go beyond trying to correct something within me.

Organizing the Thesis

As I step back and review the evolution of the issues that are important to me, I notice that the questions I was asking as an educator and consultant began with what was external and ended with an internal examination of myself as an educator and consultant. First, I asked questions about what I did as a consultant: the methods. Then I asked questions about why I did what I did: the theory. Lastly, I asked questions about who I was: my locatedness. Developing my practice in these steps enabled me to get a more in-depth analysis of my practice. When I began applying the insight that resulted from my questioning process, I found that I was using my locatedness to develop my theory and, in turn, using this theory to shape my work and methods.

Since I wish to use this thesis as a way to further develop my practice, I have chosen to keep in mind the way that methods, theory, and locatedness have been interconnected for me. The body of the thesis will explore each of these sections in detail. By the end of the thesis, I hope to be able to, once again, link these three together in order to give me added insight into my practice.

Thesis Overview

Chapter Two (A View of Individuals) explores two key concepts: "locatedness" and "basic healthiness". The first part of Chapter Two defines "locatedness" through the work of other authors, examining what individuals bring with them when they either participate in a group or lead a group. The purpose of this section is to familiarize the reader with the term as well as to show the meaning it has for educators/consultants and participants. The second part of the chapter explores the notion of basic healthiness. This notion serves a parallel function to locatedness. Because this concept has helped me develop a respectful perspective towards individuals, I wish to examine its similarities and its differences to locatedness as well as its benefits to education and consulting. By the end

of the chapter, the reader will have been shown the importance and usefulness of both locatedness and basic healthiness.

Chapter Three (A View of Groups) provides insight into how groups work, in particular presenting background on what type of dynamics and conflict can be expected within groups. Learning about the likelihood of how things happen within groups supports the belief that some group processes and some forms of conflict are normal and common within groups. The first part of this chapter provides a view on group dynamics, outlining predictable stages of the development of a group. The theory of Group Imagoes[2] describes how the development of the group is influenced by each individual's perceptions and images of the group. This theory supports the importance of locatedness within a group. The second part of the chapter explores different attitudes and concepts towards conflict within groups. The purpose of this exploration is to provide a way of seeing conflict which does not necessarily imply negative outcomes.

Chapter Four (From Theory to Practice) explores ways of bringing theory into practice. This chapter will demonstrate how locatedness and basic healthiness (Chapter Two) and ideas surrounding group development and conflict (Chapter Three) help shape an awareness that guides the educator's and consultant's practice. The first section of Chapter Four will suggest ways for educators and consultants to examine their relationship to the concept and the reality of power in order to understand how this plays out in their work with groups. The second section will explore how to use the opportunities implicit in our authority as educators and consultants for the benefit of the participants. In the third section the philosophy of positive intention will be described in two different applications: as a reflective tool and as a skillful means of asking questions. The chapter will end with

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2 Julie Hay (1996) refers to Eric Berne's use of the term group imago which first appeared in Freud. Berne described group imagoes as "any mental picture, conscious, preconscious or unconscious, of what a group is or should be like." He figured that even though as members of groups we may not be conscious of this image, it still affects behaviours and attitudes within the group. (Berne, 1963, p. 321)

an example of applying the theories of locatedness, basic healthiness, group imagoes, and the normality of conflict to create a beneficial learning environment for the participants of a group.

In **Chapter Five (Conclusion)**, I will re-examine the goals mentioned in this Introduction. I will also use the notion of the feedback loop as a way to reflect on and develop new aspects of my practice.

CHAPTER 2

A VIEW OF INDIVIDUALS

"Experience never simply speaks for itself. The language that we bring to it determines its meaning." (Giroux, 1992, p. 17)

When I reflect on my experiences with conflict and resistance in groups, I am curious about two aspects in particular that have presented themselves in almost all of those experiences. Those aspects are a) that the participants seem to resist ideas and methods that are foreign and new to them; and b) that I tend to respond to conflict in almost the same way each time (i.e. by trying to fix, solve, or get rid of a "problem"). In both of these cases, what individuals bring with them either when they participate in a group or when they lead a group has captured my interest.

When I step away from my experiences in order to analyze them, I find it easier to identify the different parts that may have contributed to those particular experiences. This thesis then, is part of a process of stepping back and identifying the many parts. The way that most enhances such a process for me is finding words and concepts that best describe my experiences. With these concepts I can begin to see how the pieces fit together and how other educators and consultants have discussed some of the same aspects of their practice. In the end, exploring new language leads to useful information about my relationship with conflict in my role as educator and consultant.

A teacher and friend once told me about her interest in wine. For many years, she really enjoyed the taste of wine, but could not understand why wine tasters had lengthy discussions on things like bouquet. Her interest was such that she quietly enjoyed trying out different types of wine. As her interest and curiosity grew, she joined a wine-tasting association where she began to learn about the terms and how they related to her experience. By familiarizing herself with her tastebuds and the new language, her

experience of drinking wine was heightened. Even though she has not continued to pursue the tasting to a professional level, her experience of drinking a glass of wine was forever changed, as was her ability to discuss its many aspects.

As I am learning a new language that relates to my own experiences as an educator and consultant, I am heightening my awareness of my practice. Increased awareness is part of what I need in order to see my particular experiences in a new light. New language and new awarenesses both will contribute to the development of my critical reflection. It is through critical reflection that I will better equip myself to respond to conflict in my groups. In particular, concepts such as "locatedness" and "basic healthiness" will sharpen my critical reflection and help me to see what is happening in the here and now. Most particularly, they will help me to see what I might be bringing to the situation, as well as what others might be bringing. The description of these two concepts will be the heart of this chapter.

This defining and familiarizing chapter will rely on two bodies of literature: critical pedagogy and psychotherapy. I am proposing that principles of pyschotherapy can enhance the theory and practice of adult education and consulting. Education of course is not therapy, but the conceptual frameworks are supportive of each other.

The first half of this chapter explores the theory behind the concept of "locatedness". Through the work of other authors, I will examine different aspects of what individuals bring with them to the education setting and where they are situated in relation to others. Then, in the second half of the chapter, I will look at a similar notion used in some psychotherapies. "Basic healthiness" will be defined and its relevance explained. Bringing locatedness and basic healthiness together has significant value to this thesis. It is within this merging of disciplines that most of my interest lies. The significance and possibilities of this merging will be explained so that the reader can begin to understand the value of these explorations in relation to conflict.

Locatedness

Joan Borsa (1990) states that exploring our identity through the process of politics of location (locatedness) will not lead to simple ways of changing our circumstances,

> . . . but, by articulating our specific experiences and representing the structural and political spaces we occupy, we offer concrete accounts of where and how we live, what is significant to our experience of cultural identity, how we have been constructed and how in turn, we attempt to construct (and reconstruct) ourselves. (Borsa, 1990, p. 37)

I mentioned earlier that, as an educator and consultant, I was curious about why participants resist and why I was responding to their resistance the way I was. If the study of locatedness accomplishes what is suggested by Borsa, then it will offer me valuable ways of clarifying and gathering information about myself and about participants. I can then begin to answer some of my questions about my work in groups.

The Definition

Most of the information gathered for this thesis on the topic of locatedness has been found through research on politics of location. In what follows, I clarify how the politics of location assists in defining locatedness.

Locatedness refers to the social state or condition of a person. Many people think of "location" in simple categories such as gender, class, race, ethnicity. However, it is more complex than that. Much like "willfulness" and "happiness", the notion of locatedness indicates one's state of being in relation to the world and to others. One author who has written extensively on locatedness is Henry Giroux, a well-known figure in the field of critical pedagogy. Giroux's (1992) description of politics of location, summarized below, addresses how an individual is situated in the world in relationship to others, to knowledge, and to power. Since politics of location and locatedness both describe the relationships to others, to knowledge, and to power, I plan on using the description of politics of location given by Giroux as a compatible description of locatedness.

The term "politics of location" suggests that identifying one's location has political implications. "Locatedness" also has this implication; those who use the term intend to examine power relations and how these affect knowledge and individuals. Locatedness is a political concept.

Before diving into a detailed description of the central concept in this discussion, it is useful to think about locatedness in relation to three interconnected components: individuals, knowledge, and power. The following is offered as an introduction and a guide. Let us begin with the notion that every individual can have multiple and contradictory descriptions of her/his identity. Kathleen Weiler (1988) states that "[t]he concept of "multi-layered" subjects points to the sometimes contradictory nature of [identity]: that the power of gender, class, or race may be employed to counter oppression suffered through another aspect of our being" (Weiler, 1988, p. 126). This means that people may use one part of their identity in order to achieve a goal or need of another part of their identity.

As an example, one woman may have three ways of identifying her location in the world: as a mother, as a student, and as a professional. Other people may notice additional aspects of her identity, such as her racial and classed locations. Her identity may shift depending on which need and role she is fulfilling and on how others see her. There are times when being a mother as well as a student creates difficulties and restrictions for her. There are other times when people make assumptions about other aspects of her location and those assumptions may be experienced as difficulties or oppressions. When faced with oppression, she may choose to use the power she does have through another part of her identity to overcome it.

A second aspect of locatedness is that individuals are "knowers" and their "knowing" is always partial. The partiality is due to the fact that people interpret the world through their own experiences and perceptions. This means that as people's experiences, perceptions, and locations change, so will their knowledge of the world - and vice versa. It

also means that there is a strong likelihood that one individual's knowledge of the world may contradict someone else's. This idea is stated clearly by Antonia Darder (1991) in Culture and Power in the Classroom:

> . . . [teachers] must come to recognize that knowledge as a historical and cultural product is forever in a creative state of partiality. And, as a consequence, all forms of discourse represent only one small piece of the larger puzzle that constitutes all possible knowledge at any given moment in time. (Darder, 1991, p. 110)

This brings us to a third aspect of locatedness: the way that power influences both individuals and knowledge. "Power mediates and structures the pedagogical relation between teachers and students, the politics of knowledge production, . . . and the social and cultural forms in which student subject positions are made available" (McLaren, 1995, p. 47). This means that it will be important for educators and consultants to identify how social conditions contribute to or take away from a person's privilege by virtue of how power infiltrates knowledge.

Keeping these thoughts in mind, we can now undertake an exploration of the concept of locatedness, beginning with a summary of the "politics of location" as described in Henry Giroux's book Border Crossings. In certain places, I will be weaving the work of other authors through Giroux's description in order to provide a more complete look at the politics of location.

In the first two chapters of Border Crossings, Giroux examines the uses of the politics of location. As educators, the nature of our work is such that we often find ourselves working with students from " . . . different communities located within asymmetrical relations of power" (Giroux, 1992, p. 26). The politics of location offers educators a new language that acknowledges " . . . multiple, contradictory, and complex subject positions people occupy within different social, cultural, and economic locations" (Giroux, 1992, p. 21) and raises awareness of many otherwise invisible factors that play a

role in the process of education. Joan Borsa's definition of politics of location supports the importance of examining locatedness:

> [P]olitics of location [describes] those places and spaces we inherit and occupy, which frame our lives in very specific and concrete ways, which are as much a part of our psyches as they are a physical or geographical placement. Where we live, how we live, our relation to the social systems and structures that surround us are deeply embedded parts of everthing we do and remain integral both to our identity or sense of self and to our position or status within a larger cultural and representational field. (Borsa, 1990, p.36)

Politics of location, as described by Giroux, gives educators a way to explore how authority and the status quo play a role in their practice. This exploration of power raises questions about and challenges political, pedagogical, and language choices. The politics and pedagogy are challenged through an examination of where and how power and privilege are exercised in the relationships between students, educator, and the institution. Questions relating to " . . . who speaks, under what conditions, [and] for whom" (Giroux, 1992, p.26) combined with questions pertaining to the choice of methods and curriculum aim at exploring political and pedagogical practices for the purpose of discovering the treatment and experience of people of different communities. Language and knowledge are challenged by examining the language that is used; by asking how the knowledge claims are established; by identifying what exclusions are made by the knowledge claims and how those exclusions lead to the language that is used. This kind of questioning is necessary because of the fact that language is never neutral. Weiler explains that language is very much a way in which people identify themselves in a group. "Teachers and students use language to assert their own power and to try to create sense for themselves out of a complex social setting" (Weiler, 1988, p. 129).

Challenging and questioning established educational practices in this way serves to explore the relationship between power, knowledge, self and others in order to determine

if the educator reproduces or transforms the status quo. An educator who has taken these steps towards identifying the nature and meaning of his/her practice has already begun the process of transformation because s/he has become aware of how many different issues do affect education. In turn, this awareness leads the educator to an informed practice in which s/he is more likely to acknowledge and respect the diverse community that is found within the meeting space. Acknowledgement and respect translate into a choice of language, methods, pedagogy, and politics that includes the multiple backgrounds that are found within a group.

Henry Giroux explains that one of the most common interests within various discourses on politics of location is the questioning and remapping of the boundaries of knowledge (Giroux, 1992, p. 26). According to Haraway, feminists and postmodernists express most of this interest by " . . . recognizing the situated nature of knowledge, the partiality of all knowledge claims, the indeterminacy of history, and the shifting, multiple and often contradictory nature of identity" (as cited in Giroux, 1992, p. 26). Within a framework that studies knowledge and identity, it is believed that power, history, and culture affect identity in such a way that the multiple intersections result in the many different ways individuals are situated within our society. Each person's body, desire, need, and psyche also contribute to her or his location. Borsa explains that these facets of our identity allow us " . . . to be able to name our location, to politicize our space and to question where our particular experiences and practice fit within the articulations and representations that surround us" (as cited in Giroux, 1992, p.26).

The politics of location includes many aspects of who we are. It is surprising and enlightening to realize how many different backgrounds can be present in a room at one time. To add to the extensiveness with which feminism and postmodernism address this subject, these discourses have also "pointed to how social identities occupy contradictory and shifting locations in which it becomes possible to open up new spaces for conversations and forms of solidarity" (Giroux, 1992, p. 26). The inclusion of shifting and

contradictory social locations means that issues of power and privilege will also be considered as shifting and sometimes contradictory.

With a post-modernist frame, a human being is understood not as an autonomous subject but as a multiple and fully social subject situated in shifting and contradictory locations. When thinking about the character of knowledge in relation to multiple locations, we are led to a rejection of universality. Instead, Haraway suggests that we encourage discussions that are " . . . interpretive, critical, and partial...[where there] is a ground for conversation, rationality, and objectivity which is power sensitive" (as cited in Giroux, 1992, p. 26). Interpretive, critical, and partial discussions are significant to Giroux's book Border Crossings because he claims that new public spheres can be created when theorists from different discourses cross over to other discourses in order to hear the wisdom in their ideas. Being aware of the partiality of our own discourses as well as accepting the benefits and drawbacks of other discourses allows for a more complete vision of transformation.

A last, but important mention is how postcolonialism has extended the discussion on politics of location. I draw here from McLaren's description of postcolonial pedagogy, as discussed in Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture:

> A pedagogy informed by a postcolonial narratology shifts the relation of the social actor to the object of his or her knowledge and the problematic in which identity is defined and struggled over . . . . (It) encourages the oppressed to contest the stories fabricated for them by "outsiders" and to construct counterstories that give shape and direction to the practice of hope and struggle . . . (McLaren, 1995, p. 105)

Giroux discusses some major contributions of postcolonialism to the topic of politics of location. He describes the importance of "the unlearning of one's own privilege" (Giroux, 1992, p. 27) in order to understand how the legacy of colonialism has given us authority that at times disables others to speak. Privilege passed down to one from colonialism is

often overlooked if one does not fit directly within the descriptions often used to identify power. Thinking of privilege in the sense of disabling others helps identify our location in reference to other people.

Giroux also discusses the postcolonialists' goal of understanding how privilege is embedded in historical and institutional structures. Just as it is often difficult for individuals to be aware of and acknowledge their own privilege, historical and institutional structures need to be examined through a process that questions if and how they have disabled or disenfranchised individuals.

An example of a specific educational institution comes to mind. There is a private school in Halifax which claims and promotes that their student population includes children of different races. Yet, the reality is that there is one Asian student and one African-Canadian student enrolled in the school. Their claim and their reality seem to be at odds. There could be many reasons to explain their enrollment. One is that it is a private school and therefore there is a high registration fee in order to attend. Only financially privileged children attend the school. If racial diversity is something that is important to the administrators and the school, it seems necessary for them to undergo an exploration of how privilege is embedded in their institution and whether or not they want to do something to change that. It may be useful for the administrators of this institution to examine the multiple and contradictory nature of the school's identity. They want to encourage diversity, but it may be that aspects of their identity are inhibiting the achievement of their goal.

So far in this discussion we have discovered through literature within feminism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism that the politics of location asks us to examine the following issues that are relevant to becoming transformative educators: the way that power and privilege affect individuals and existing structures; the way language and knowledge are acquired and used; the way pedagogy and politics are influenced by power, privilege, language, and knowledge; the indeterminancy of history; the shifting nature of

identity; the way that culture, bodies, desires, needs, psyches, and social and cultural status affect the way we are situated.

The Usefulness of Locatedness for Students and Educators

The focus of my thesis is to develop ways in which my practice can be enriched especially when I face conflict and resistance within a group. With this in mind, one of the most important ways in which studying a concept like locatedness can be useful is that it has the possibility of changing the learning environment for a student or participant. Learners bring a variety of different backgrounds and histories with them to a class room or a group room. If educators and consultants understand the complexity, the multiplicity, and the partiality of what makes up people's identity, it will be easier for them to be aware of and sensitive to how specific circumstances or activities take away from certain individuals' opportunities to learn while it contributes to others' privilege within a group.

I once introduced to a group the notion of "cold calls" used for the purposes of contacting possible employers. I was aware that confidence was going to be the main challenge for most of participants. Therefore, I designed activities that would help develop telephone skills and some that would aid in building confidence.

This worked for most of the group. Yet, there were two participants who would not do any of the activities because they had decided they would not use "cold calls" in their job search. This bothered me at first because I believed that they were not willing to try. After some probing, I realized that what was stopping them was something altogether different from lack of confidence and skill. These two participants had very strong beliefs about people who are in hiring positions. They thought that managers and owners were people who were very different from themselves. These beliefs negated their own wants and needs.

Looking back, I don't think that I could have predicted or anticipated the type of challenge the two participants were facing. They had developed a belief system about employers which was very different from my own belief system. I do think that being aware of the multiplicity, complexity, and partiality that affects the location of individuals, including myself, would have opened me to the possibility of a variety of challenges. This

would possibly result in a more inclusive learning environment. I think that the time it took me to respond to these two participants could have been considerably shortened.

The awareness I could have gained by understanding multiplicity and partiality of identity could be restated as having respect for people and where they come from. This includes people's backgrounds, histories, social status, culture, bodies, needs, race, and sexual preference. The respect is shown by the efforts the educator makes to include different locations. The inclusion I am referring to is not just participation within the group. It also means that the educator and consultant notices the varying locations, takes these into account when planning the content and process of the group, and examines how her/his location, thoughts, and actions benefit or limit the particular locations of the participants.

Respect may be an effective way of explaining the goal of locatedness. Often with the notion of respect, people want to discuss the reciprocal aspect; that is, whether the learners, in turn, show respect towards others. This is a valid consideration and is certainly a desired outcome. But I believe that to expect people to show respect because they have been shown respect misses the point about locatedness. For me, the goal of studying locatedness is to increase my awareness and understanding of individual differences and how I relate to others. Awareness, then, becomes part of my basic goal in relating to others. How the participants respond is important, not because I want a certain outcome but because they will provide me with information about themselves.

The exploration and the understanding of the diversity of the participants and their location will enrich the process of negotiating conflict within a group. Some of the components that are relevant to understanding conflict in groups include: how people position themselves and how they are positioned by others; how learners and participants position themselves in relation to the educator and consultant; how individuals position the educator as in a position of power; and the ways that positioning ourselves discounts our abilities. More will be said on this subject in the second part of this chapter.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, locatedness is about individuals, knowledge, and power. Understanding that individuals are located in complex and multiple ways may be a big part of changing the learning environment, but the inclusion of the partiality of knowledge and the way that power affects our world and our actions is also important.

Within a learning environment, choosing which language or knowledge that will be used may show to what degree the educator or consultant is aware of partiality of knowledge claims, for example. On the other hand, this will not help the learner become familiar with the limitations of knowledge. If an educator includes her/his thinking process around the choice of knowledge and language as part of the sessions with the learners, then there is a better chance that the participants will learn critical thinking themselves. Critical thinking about knowledge and language will be seen in use and from that it is possible that learners might begin to understand the significance of exploring the boundaries of knowledge and language. The recognition of partiality of knowledge will also affect the content of the groups. With this recognition, there will be a greater likelihood that different perspectives on the same topic will be included. This will make it easier for individuals to find themselves reflected in the classroom knowledge.

Questions about our world, our environment, reality claims, and how people come to be situated differently from others are questions relating to "context". These questions address how and where things fit in relation to other things and other people. This is an important aspect of locatedness, yet it is incomplete.

What is missing is how we affect other people and how knowledge and language affect people. This is often an issue of power. Exploration into power issues may lead to an examination of who we are and how we got there, but it can also show us how we act towards others and how others act towards us. Through this exploration of inclusion/exclusion and enabling/disabling, we can begin to recognize how the world is organized and who benefits and who suffers because of this organization. Once this

recognition has occurred, we can, as educators and consultants, have a better understanding of exactly how different we can all be. We can also understand the possibility that other people can have disabling experiences at a time and place where we would not expect or imagine possible.

"Context" and "locatedness" are similar terms that have the purpose of situating people in relation to others. For the readers who are more familiar with "context", I would like to note how locatedness is different from context. Both notions provide a point of reference between individuals and between knowledge and the world. What I believe "context" is missing and what I think is the real strength of "locatedness" is the pursuit of information on power and privilege within our interactions with others and within our institutions. Only because of this pursuit can we begin to be aware of our own contributions and participation in power structures in which we are so fully embedded. Through this awareness we can hopefully understand our responsibility in making the changes necessary in order to transform our teaching and learning environments.

How will educators and consultants benefit from the process of learning about locatedness? My thought is that awareness is both the process and the goal for the educator and consultant. Learning about what histories and locations I bring with me as well as what the learners bring with them will give me more knowledge and acceptance of others and myself. When I understand and accept my goals, wants, and needs as an educator and consultant, it is my belief that it will then be easier for me to incorporate those in my work and in my relationships with learners.

Instead of having to push my own locatedness aside, including my goals and desires about how and what to bring to the group, I will be able to use this information as a means for conducting groups. In other words, as an educator and consultant, I will not only provide conditions that make it easier for learners to speak and to have a voice, I will use a voice that speaks about my own locatedness. In this way, I can be dedicated in unveiling my own ideal of education as opposed to someone else's.

Locatedness will also help me respond to conflict in such a way that the learners' stories and my stories will be more important than the resolution. Instead of trying to get rid of conflict, I will use the theory of locatedness in order to discover where people are coming from in relation to a particular difficulty. Instead of trying to quickly move on to something that seems less threatening, I will explore what the different expectations are around the content and process of the learning situation. As a result, I will probably have more accurate information about what the root of the difficulty is. With more accurate information, the process of negotiating a useful outcome will be simpler and probably more inclusive and effective.

When I begin to think of my role as an educator and consultant in terms of listening to people's stories and exploring their expectations, I realize that I borrow ideas and knowledge from my background in psychotherapy. The process of wanting to hear from the different individuals in a group and wanting to understand where the root of a conflict comes from is familiar to me. It is part of the basic theory of the training I have been receiving in Transactional Analysis.

When I think about using locatedness as a tool for working with conflict, I think about the hurdles that I need to overcome in order to make the transition from *trying to resolve conflict quickly* to *wanting to find out about people's location in relation to conflict*. Those hurdles have to do with my own experiences and comfort around conflict. They also have to do with my perception and beliefs of other people. These hurdles are things which I can become aware of and I can change in order to make working with people in groups more effective. The philosophy of Transactional Analysis addresses these specific issues. In order to explore how my experience and knowledge in psychotherapy can enhance the concept of locatedness as a tool for educators and consultants, I now turn to the exploration of key concepts that I have learned from Transactional Analysis. Central

to these concepts is "basic healthiness", which is the focus of the second half of this chapter.

Basic Healthiness

"Hippocrates in the fifth century B.C. taught that health was a natural condition and that illness was a deviation." (Porter-Steele and Steele, 1997, p.143)

I have studied the theory and practice of Transactional Analysis for the past four years. For the purpose of this thesis, my interest lies in understanding how Transactional Analysis can be combined with educational and consulting theories in order to produce a more informed practice. I am curious about this combination because TA (Transactional Analysis) offers simple and effective information and tools concerning human personality, communication, and behavioural change, which I have found to be useful when working with groups.

Transactional Analysis (TA) has guided my exploration into the theory of individuals, relationships, and communication. Now that I am examining the role of conflict and resistance in my work, I turn to TA to give me ideas for understanding, accepting, and relating to what is inevitable and normal when a number of individuals gather to study and learn together.

The Philosophy of Basic Healthiness

"[Transactional Analysis] is many things. First, it is a *philosophy*- a point of view about people. Second, it is a *theory* of personality development, intrapsychic functioning, and interpersonal behaviour. Third, it is an ever-expanding system of related *techniques* designed to help people understand [feelings] and change [behaviours]" (Woollams and Brown, 1978, p. 3). It is the philosophy and theory of TA which I will be focussing on in this section because it has the potential to complete the discussion on locatedness. The philosophy of TA will address some of the issues concerning the hurdles that educators

and consultants have to overcome in order to begin using locatedness in their work. One of the theories of TA will speak to the issue of hearing the learner's stories and location around conflict.

Transactional Analysis is based on a philosophy which views people as having basic healthiness. Most TA texts use the term "OK" or "OKness" to describe this concept. In the seventies, this term became popular due to the release of such books as I'm OK, You're OK (Harris, 1967), The OK Boss (James, 1976), and Raising Kids OK (Keepers and Babcock, 1986). Along with this popularity, and perhaps as a result of it, there has also been a discounting of the importance and significance of both the notion of OKness and the theory of Transactional Analysis. I believe that the discounting occurred as a result of the somewhat shallow familiarity that the general public gained about the notion of OKness. I also believe that the misleading simplicity of this theory led to contempt for its relevance and significance to human relationships and dynamics. In contrast, I believe what I am presenting about Transactional Analysis has great relevance and significance to my work as an educator and consultant. I will show to what extent this belief in basic healthiness can affect our relationships with people and can also affect which course of action we choose as educators and consultants.

Stewart and Joines in TA Today: A New Introduction to Transactional Analysis (1987) describe "the most fundamental assumption of TA is that *people are OK.* This means: you and I both have worth, value and dignity as people. I accept myself as me and I accept you as you. This is a statement of essence rather than behavior" (Stewart and Joines, 1987, p. 6). A similar definition is given by Woollams and Brown in Transactional Analysis: A Modern and Comprehensive Text of TA theory and Practice: "TA begins with an assumption that we are all OK. This means that each of us, regardless of our behavioral style, has a basic core which is lovable and has the potential and desire for growth and self-actualization" (Woollams and Brown, 1978, p. 1).

The term "basic healthiness" is used by my Transactional Analysis instructors and teachers Nancy Porter Steele, Ph.D. and Curtis Steele, M.D. in order to describe the same fundamental assumption and philosophy of TA, as stated in the previous two definitions. The word "healthiness" refers to the state we were all born in and the capabilities with which we were born due to the fact that we are human; it is innate. The word "basic" is used to pinpoint that this healthiness is one that is fundamental to the fact that we are human. "Basic healthiness" is therefore a statement about the essence of what it means to be a human being.

Nancy Porter Steele and Curtis Steele's definition begins with the beliefs stated by Woollams and Brown: "we are all OK," and we have "a basic core which is lovable and has the potential for growth and self actualization." My instructors believe that it is helpful to add to this definition that everybody has the ability to perceive and feel; that we all have the capability of rational, logical thinking; and that we all have the inherent potential to be naturally kind and helpful whether or not we have developed in that way.

The reasons for these extensions to the definition of OKness are to include the capabilities of the different ego states of each individual as well as to point out that as human beings we do have these basic capabilities regardless of whether or not they have been developed. The importance of such a clarification partly lies with what results from approaching the world with these beliefs, that is, respecting ourselves and others in relation to ability and capability. Modelling and projecting to others the belief in their abilities and their power for change quite often results in them behaving in that fashion. Alternatively, questioning people's autonomy is a controlling factor in what they believe they have the ability to do.

It is important to restate that this philosophy of basic healthiness refers to each individual's essence as human beings and not to their behaviours. Behaviour will be addressed at a later time.

Having described the concept of basic healthiness, I would like to explore the conditions under which it is worth talking about the use of this concept in educational and consultational settings. In thinking through the usage of this philosophy, I have assumed that educators and consultants are willing to be open to how they view themselves and the participants. My belief is that the willingness to be open comes from the understanding that learning happens within each individual and that it is not something that can be caused to happen by the educator or consultant. When an educator and consultant views learning in this way, s/he will be empowered to support participation on the part of the learners as an important goal of group work. Participation involves the individuals in the process and is therefore more likely to create learning opportunities. When I speak of using basic healthiness (and later, positive intention) as a tool for educators and consultants, I will be doing so under the assumption that these practitioners have the participation and involvement of the learners as one of their main goals.

How One Views the World

The philosophy of Transactional Analysis can become the basis for a world view that accepts each individual as having the same basic, healthy capabilities and essence.

When the belief in basic healthiness is applied to specific people within a relationship the result is the belief that you are OK and that I am OK, or otherwise stated as "I'm OK, You're OK." This means that I accept my essence and capabilities as a human being and I accept your essence and capabilities as a human being. "I am not one-up to you, and you are not one-up to me. We are on a level as people. This is true even though our accomplishments may differ. It is true even though we may be of different race, age or religion" (Stewart and Joines, 1987, p. 7).

As an educator or consultant, if I operate from the belief that each of the participants in essence and capabilities is equal to me, then on at least one level I can enter the relationship as an equal partner. The essence (having needs, wants, and feelings) and the capabilities (to feel, to think, and to be kind and helpful) of each of us is not up for

debate, nor is it up for judgement or measure. As a practitioner, when I come from a place of understanding and acceptance about the essence and capabilities of being human then I will probably not view my role as giving or taking power but of recognizing the presence of power that exists due to the capabilities of each individual.

Often in educational settings the educator or consultant has skills, experiences, and tools that the participants don't have. But when this stance is applied to the educator's capabilities and essences by either the educator or the participants, the power dynamics will always be unbalanced. In Transactional Analysis terms, the educator or consultant often believes "I'm OK, You're not OK." This is often accompanied with beliefs from the participants that "You're OK, I'm not OK."

In this case, the educator or consultant has most of the power, while the participants have little power. There are certainly aspects of educational settings where this type of power imbalance makes sense. For example, it can make sense that the educator or consultant prepares the basic curriculum rather than getting the participation of everyone involved. If we are committed to the participation of the learners, it is important to restrict this power imbalance to behaviours and accomplishments. This can happen if we separate people's essences and capabilities from their behaviours and accomplishments. If we believe that all people have needs, wants, and feelings and that they all have the capacity to feel, think, and be helpful, then we can begin to limit power issues to the behaviours of individuals.

In participatory situations, education can be a process involving decision-making, discussion, and negotiation which includes everyone within a particular educational setting. If participation is the goal of the educator and there is a power imbalance that questions the essence and capabilities of the participants, they will probably be unwilling to participate or have little confidence that participation is appropriate or safe.

It is important to note that the issue of power dynamics is one which involves all of the people within the educational relationship. In the previous section on locatedness, I

mentioned that some components that are relevant to understanding conflict within groups include how people position themselves and others in the context of education. To reiterate what was discussed earlier, the way people position themselves and how they are positioned by others, the way learners and participants position themselves in relation to the educator and consultant, the way individuals position the educator in position of power, and the ways that positioning ourselves discounts our abilities, all of these are directly related to what people believe about their own basic healthiness and others' basic healthiness. In educational settings, it is common that people give away their own power as they embark on a learning role. Likewise, educators take power and are given power by virtue of their educating and consulting role.

> In educational settings, it is especially likely that people may be expecting symbiosis[3]. This expectation may even be overt in some cultures, where teachers are traditionally pictured as playing the Parent and Adult role while the student plays Child. Current approaches to education agree with TA in viewing this as a discount of the abilities of both parties. (Stewart and Joines, 1987, p. 282)

For the educator-learner relationship to stay level in relation to each person's essence and capabilities, it is helpful when all members of the group, including the educator, are willing to see the other and themselves from the perspective of being basically healthy.

Positive Intentions

This section brings us to the question of behaviour. In the definitions above there has been mention that basic healthiness is not always obvious within the behaviours of human beings. This is because some individual behaviours may not represent the developed capability of the individual. For example, an employee may have a difficult time

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3 Symbiosis refers to grown-up relationships which replay relationships we had as children. Unaware that we are doing this, one person takes on the role of Parent and Adult while the other person takes on the role of the Child. Another way of stating this is that one person wants the other to look after her/him, while the second person takes on the role of making decisions and acting for the benefit of the other.

being logical and rational at work and may spend most of his time acting from a place of fear. From the perspective of other co-workers, this person might seem incapable of making decisions and therefore may appear unproductive. This does not mean that s/he does not have the capacity to develop logical and rational thinking. It might mean that s/he has learned how to go through life putting off making decisions when the situation is risky or unsafe.

In Transactional Analysis, there is a theory about behaviour that is closely linked to the philosophy of basic healthiness. This theory states that most behaviours have positive intentions behind them even though they may not seem to reflect our capabilities as human beings (i.e. the ability to perceive and feel; the capability of logical thinking; and the capability of being kind and helpful).

> You and I are both OK. We may sometimes engage in not-OK behavior. When we do, we are following strategies we decided upon [before we became adults]. These strategies were the best ways we could work out as infants [and children] to survive and get what we wanted from a world which may have seemed hostile. As grown-ups, we still pursue these same patterns at times. We may do this even though the results are unproductive or even painful for us [and others]. (Stewart and Joines, 1987, p. 7)

The behaviours we continue to choose as adults may be inappropriate and unacceptable. Usually, behind these behaviours are positive intentions. In the example given above, the employee is unproductive because s/he is not using rational thought to perform as an adult. Instead, the actions are like those of a child in fear. This way of relating to the world worked at some time in his life. Even though this behaviour has a positive intention, i.e. survival as a child, it is now inappropriate in the workplace. But, there is a benefit to understanding this positive intention.

The theory of positive intention helps us clarify the separation between what people do from who they are. As educators and consultants, this helps us find effective

ways of dealing with conflict and resistance. First, we can remain focussed on the basic healthiness of individuals. This focus will mean that we will be less likely to dismiss the conflict at hand because it might have originated from a person whom we dislike. It will also mean that we will be less likely to dismiss ourselves and our capabilities as educators or consultants. Second, with the skilled application of looking for positive intention we will be more likely to see past the immediate difficulty. This may allow us to get beyond our habitual way of responding to conflict and to look for the message that the conflict is carrying. We can wonder about and question the usefulness of the conflict that is presented.

With this philosophy of basic healthiness and theory of positive intention, we can develop and utilize a frame of mind that accepts ourselves and others as basically healthy (or OK). We can also be ready and willing to find out more about behaviours that tend to make us react. And third, with this openness to the positive intention of conflict, we can be ready as educators and consultants to take into account the locatedness of individuals. When we wonder about and question the positive intention of conflict, we can take steps towards understanding the location of the individual that is bringing forth a difficulty.

I believe that the philosophy of basic healthiness which includes the belief in the positive intention behind behaviours provides an opportunity to learn what makes people different. It provides us with a way of getting past behaviours in order to discover more about individuals. Basic healthiness and positive intention have a particular emphasis on accepting as OK what we will discover about ourselves and others. Using these tools has the potential of letting us spend less energy reacting to others and spending more energy discovering information about the conflict at hand and how it relates to specific individuals.

Relating Basic Healthiness to Locatedness

Locatedness describes people in relation to others. In most of those descriptions, some locations are more privileged than others. How does basic healthiness address social relations and power/privilege that are part of educational and consulting settings?

So far, we have seen how basic healthiness and positive intention aid in developing our views of individuals within a group. In this next section, I will be focussing on how these concepts can be used as tools in analyzing social relations and social identities.

Education and training are tools for individuals to increase their effectiveness in problem-solving as adults. This problem-solving includes the use of feeling, thinking, and helping capabilities.

> (It) doesn't only imply thinking to work out the solution to the problem; it means also taking effective action to bring the solution about . . . . the expression of authentic feelings also serves a problem-solving function. When someone is problem-solving, he is accurately perceiving and responding to reality. (Stewart and Joines, 1987, p. 268)

One of the skills offered by education and training is the development of the thinking capabililties that we are born with. "Autonomy implies clear thinking and effective problem-solving. The educator aims to help her students develop these abilities" (Stewart and Joines, 1987, p. 281).

On the one hand, education strives to develop some of the basic capabilities of participants. On the other, education is a social activity characterized by hierarchies and relations of power. By virtue of their organization, content, and process, these learning environments may also limit the development of basic capabilities. As children and as adults, social location has contributed to the degree to which we developed our rational and logical thinking skills, for example. Often, girls have been considered less rational and logical than boys. Therefore, boys have often been more encouraged in subjects such as science and math, girls have learned to discount their rational and logical skills, with the

result that there are fewer opportunities to practice and to develop these skills. Our involvement in an educational and consulting setting has the potential to reproduce these same social locations. As educators and consultants, we too are part of these influences which limit or enhance the learning opportunities of participants.

It is fair to say that being part of a group will almost certainly involve some reproduction of a previously encountered social setting. There will probably be power imbalances where someone is set up to win something and someone else is set up to lose something. If we have experienced power and privilege in this type of setting before, we will most likely experience it again. If we have experienced disabling or disenfranchisement, this will most likely reoccur also. Women who were discouraged from developing rational and logical skills as children, will probably discount these skills as adults. The learning environments that they will join will most likely reproduce similar conditions which will also discount their skills.

Locatedness clearly helps us identify the many ways individuals are positioned differently and the way these multiple locations in relation to power and privilege has shaped their lives and shaped their potential. With each difference there is the potential for privilege and disenfranchisement and therefore for some type of benefit or loss. When looking at these potential outcomes of our participation in a group, it is easy to lose track of how the acknowledgement and development of basic healthiness can make much of a difference in people's experience of a particular learning event.

When working with groups with the goal of involving participants in the learning process, it is important that as educators and consultants we observe what types of social locations are involved. To be aware of power dynamics, we need to note where both participants and the educator/consultant position themselves and are positioned. This awareness is really the first step in developing the type of learning environment that is conducive to having participants involved in the process. It means that there is someone

within the group who is dedicated to the conscious awareness of how social locations are being developed and what can be done to speak about them and begin to change them.

As we become aware of patterns of behaviours and of social locations that occur within groups, we are thinking mostly about how people act and how they are situated within a social structure. Our concern is thus focussed on each individual and their place within the group. So, where does basic healthiness fit? I believe that basic healthiness is a condition of our basic goal as educators and consultants. I mentioned previously that one of the basic roles of education and training is to encourage the development of thinking and problem-solving. The development of these skills has the purpose of being able to use our thoughts, actions, and feelings to solve problems. The way that we will encourage this development as educators and consultants is based on our beliefs about how learning happens and on our beliefs about individuals. When we believe that learning is fundamentally an internal process rather than one imposed from outside, we will want to encourage participation. The philosophy of the basic healthiness of all individuals will serve to strengthen this goal for us and help us keep focussed on the importance of creating an environment where everyone's basic capability can be developed.

One problem we will run into in creating this type of environment is the barriers that are present by virtue of everybody's different and shifting locatedness. Once the educator has become aware of social locations that might be inhibiting the development of some individual, the second step for the educator and consultant will be to address behavioural and social manifestations of the group members' (including the educator/consultant's) involvement.

Addressing issues relating to how social locations influence groups need not be confrontational. As educators and consultants we will use our own problem-solving abilities including our thoughts, actions, and feelings to clarify and define which conditions cause some people to have privilege while they cause others to be disabled in their learning opportunities. Sometimes misinformation is the main source of why people involve

themselves in specific social behaviours and patterns. Defining and clarifying what effect behaviours and patterns have on others is often very useful and helps begin a process of change. One person's location in relation to another person's sometimes sets up positions of I'm OK, You're not OK (or I'm not OK, You're OK, and I'm not OK, You're not OK).

Sometimes an educator or consultant wishes to confront conflict directly in order to work through limiting or oppressive behaviours within the group. In this case, then, pointing out to participants how certain locations bring about privilege while other locations bring about oppression could be a way to decontaminate and clarify the effects of people's thoughts or behaviours. However, knowing that addressing people's locations in relation to others will most likely bring about more conflict, educators and consultants will want to choose which issues to take up with the group.

To sum up, I have named two ways in which basic healthiness can aid in identifying and addressing social relations within a learning environment. First, the belief that everyone is capable of developing feeling, thinking, and helping capabilities provides extra incentive for the educator and consultant to follow a goal of participation and involvement by all of the members of the group. Second, basic healthiness is important in the clarification and definition of people's positioning in relation to others. Due to their attention to group process and participation, educators and consultants who follow the goal of participation and who are sensitive to the theory of locatedness will be aware of what type of social relations are going on and the effect of people's locatedness on each other. To address and confront behaviours and patterns which contribute to power dynamics within a group, the practitioner will want to discuss the positioning of individuals and how it discounts people's basic capabilities. If we want to initiate a process of change where individuals begin to see how their beliefs and actions affect others then discussing and modelling the concept of basic healthiness is a good place to start. Analyzing locatedness can then help us determine what people often use to create winning and losing positions.

CHAPTER THREE

A VIEW OF GROUPS

Discussions on group dynamics serve the purpose of understanding the forces at play within groups as well as the types of interactions among the different members of the group. "Basically, people act differently in groups than they do by themselves" (Gladding, 1995, p.29). In the book Group Work, Samuel Gladding points out that the way people act in groups is related to the social influences that occur for all of us as we engage in group work. When we identify strongly with a group we feel more influenced by the group and when we identify less strongly we feel less influenced. According to this author, when we understand the forces and the influences that affect how people operate in groups, we are better able to understand how and why people act the way they do towards each other (Gladding, 1995, p. 28). As an educator and consultant, studying how and why people come to act the way they do in groups serves to further develop my awareness of my role, my influence, and my limits when I am working with groups.

There has been over thirty years of research done on group development. For me, this suggests that people who work with groups are trying to make sense of what is common between groups. My interest in group development was certainly sparked by the patterns and behaviours that I was noticing in almost all of the groups I was involved in. Most group theorists who have described the development of groups in terms of stages have identified either four or five stages. These stages describe interactions among members as they a) meet for the first time as a group; b) begin to relate to each other; c) encounter challenges; d) find ways of working together or of not working together; and d) conclude their learning or working relationship. Tuckman (1965) identified four stages which he named "forming, storming, norming, and performing" (p. 384). This theory of group development is well known in the training field. Another stage theory of group development is characterized by Ward (1982) as "power, cohesiveness, working, and

termination" (p. 224). An interesting observation about these two theories of group development is the way that conflict is recognized as part of the normal pattern.

Due to my interest in the theory of Transactional Analysis and the contributions that it can make to education and consulting, I have chosen to explore one of its theories of group development, developed by an author who has compared her work to that of Tuckman's. She has noted several parallels between their theories.The depth with which I describe this author's work also reflects the relevance this theory has to my experiences. For readers who wish to explore group development from another point of view, I suggest reading Tuckman's work on group development.

Transactional Analysis has a theory of group dynamics which describes how participants develop attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs about groups based on their own thoughts, ideas, and responses to being part of a group. In the first part of this chapter, I will examine group dynamics through the work of Julie Hay (1996) who describes the variety of influences that play a role in determining how participants view the group. This author examines predictable processes by which members define the group and also examines the types of conflict which result from these processes.

I have found Julie Hay's theory helpful to my thesis because it validates the importance of paying attention to what people are bringing with them when they join a group. According to this theory, people's behaviours and attitudes in groups are directly related to what each of them brings as perceptions and experiences. In the context of this thesis, an acknowledgement of the differences amongst participants serves to re-emphasize for the educator and the consultant the importance of the locatedness of each member of the group.

In studying how Hay's theory points to the role of locatedness in the development of attitudes and behaviours in groups, I found that I began to regard conflict within a group as part of a normal and predictable evolution. When a group forms, it typically consists of different types of individuals with different experiences and different

perceptions. What makes each person different also contributes to the variety of ways each participant can view the group. This will probably mean that there will be divergent opinions of what the group is like, of what the objectives of the groups are, of what each member should contribute, and of what the qualities and role of the educator/consultant are. Each person's image and idea of each of these issues will have the potential of clashing with some other person's image and ideas, including that of the educator or consultant. Implicit in accepting and paying attention to differences of background, experience, and perception, is the realization that some conflict is inevitable. Clashes originating in the different ways stakeholders view a particular group and the way it functions become an important contribution towards the dynamics of that group. Group process will be affected as members of the group involve themselves in struggles and psychological games. Clashes due to differing opinions and ideas about the group can overtly and covertly affect the learning success of one or more individuals.

Being aware of how people come to form an image of the group and how many different ways the image of the group can be affected increases an educator's or consultant's ability to work with so many different experiences and expectations. Being aware of the wide divergence of experiences and expectations possible in one group can lead to the acceptance that conflict is normal and to be expected in groups and to see this as an opportunity. It is my belief that because conflict is such a predictable occurence in the learning environment we, as educators and consultants, need to learn how to turn it to the group's advantage. The last section of this chapter will offer an examination of the different layers of conflict which may make it possible to regard conflict as a learning opportunity within groups.

A View on Group Dynamics: Group Imagoes

In this section of this chapter, I will look at group dynamics through the work of Julie Hay, who describes trends that are likely to occur when a group comes together for the purposes of learning or training. Julie Hay offers us insight into which types of dynamics and positioning to expect when working with groups. According to Hay (1996), the dynamics and development of a group depend largely on the perceptions of the people within it. These perceptions include current ideas, opinions, and information concerning groups as well as information gathered from past experiences of belonging to groups of many kinds; i.e. groups such as families, school classes, and work groups. The perceptions of each member of the group, consequently, influence how they choose to participate and involve themselves in the group.

Julie Hay explores in some detail the way in which perceptions can influence participants' attitudes and decisions regarding their level of involvement. Here, involvement refers to how people position themselves in relation to others and how this will affect their physical and psychological participation. She provides a description of how and why people make positive and negative associations with others in a group, how preconceptions and prejudices affect involvement within the group, and some possible reasons why participants engage in unhelpful behaviours when part of a group. In this following section I will include an overview of the process by which people decide on their involvement within a group as well as how this involvement can lead to struggle. Following our discussion on locatedness, it is easy to imagine how the participants' involvement in a group will probably be affected by the multiple and shifting identity.

In the book Transactional Analysis for Trainers, Hay begins her discussion on group development by describing how participants use their perceptions to define a group. She uses the term group imagoes as a way to understand " . . . group processes from the perspective of our individual perceptions" and to understand how these images affect our behaviour (Hay, 1996, p. 178). Group imagoes will be different for every person. They

will be based on our past experiences, on what we have read or heard about groups, and on thoughts, expectations and rumours that we have heard about the particular group that we are joining. "The imago will be personal to each of us, so that we enter a group with different expectations, leading in turn to different perceptions" (p. 184). People's imagoes of themselves, of the group as a whole, of the educator/consultant, and of other participants will have an impact on how they choose to position themselves and others. These imagoes will affect their thoughts about who is "one-up", "one-down", or on the "same level"[4] as they are. These thoughts will, in turn, affect their behaviour and attitude in the group. Although imagoes are directly related to each individual's perceptions and experiences, they will also be related to the dynamics of the group as a whole. Each individual will be forming mental images of the group, and therefore the group process will be influenced by the information and decisions that result from the formation of imagoes. Because of the fact that people's perceptions can change and develop over time and the fact that group dynamics are largely affected by the members' perceptions, group dynamics is found to be developing and changing constantly through the duration of the group.

Imagoes, according to Julie Hay, are developed in a series of four stages. She describes these stages as having broad patterns and flexible boundaries. For the educator or consultant, the identification of the beginning and end of each stage seems to be of less importance than the awareness of the existance of a multi-leveled process. Understanding that there is a process of defining and positioning that unfolds for each member of the group gives the educator/consultant information about what type of process happens naturally for people within groups. Below is a brief summary of Hay's description of how

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[4] The terminology "one-up", "one-down", and "same level" is used by Julie Hay and other authors to indicate the way people think of themselves in relation to others. "One-up" indicates a belief that a person is more competent than another. "One-down" indicates less competency. "Same level" indicates that all parties have similar or equal value competency.

each participant might develop a group imago. The description includes a definition of each stage; the possible difficulties that go along with the development of each imago; what the meaning of the imagoes might be for the educator or consultant; and the best case scenario of that stage of the process. This description also includes an example which I have added in order to present a clearer picture of the development of groups.

Provisional Group Imago

Even before joining a group, a participant begins to form an image of the group. This image is developed no matter how much or how little information the participant has about the group. The image that is formed allows a slot or a space for everyone in the group. The slot for the participants who are forming the image will include past experiences of being in groups, ideas about this particular type of group, their own objectives about joining, and their opinions in regards to their own competence. The slot for the educator/consultant will contain attitudes and memories of previous people who have held this role. There will be a third slot which will include all the other participants unless one or more of those others is known, in which case the known members would have their own slots. According to the author, "(o)ur behaviour and attitudes as we join the group will be structured by the provisional imago" (Hay, 1996, p. 186).

Provisional stage: an example: Diane is excited about joining a professional development training group recommended by her employer. She has always done well in this kind of environment because she is motivated by the prospect of applying her new skills when she goes back to work. She has met interesting trainers who have had an array of different backgrounds. She often thinks that she wants to go into the field of training so she wants to learn as much as possible from the person who leads the group. She doesn't know anyone else from her office who is taking this particular training, but she hopes the group will work well together so that they can accomplish the whole curriculum. When Diane goes to the first session, she will be ready to start working. She will be interested in

what the trainer has to offer. She will want to form working relationships with the other members, but she hopes that they will be as ready as she is to jump into the course.

Possible difficulties: According to Hay (pp. 185-186), there are particular types of dynamics and difficulties that have their origin within this stage. Because much of this imago will be based on past experiences, the chances are high that the image of the group and of the members in the group will not reflect reality. Rather, based on what they have decided about people in the past, participants might develop imagoes which allow slots for people who are more or less competent than other people. This type of hierachy begins to discriminate between members of a group before everyone has even had a chance to meet.

In general, individuals will fill the slot they have alloted for themselves with thoughts and beliefs they have about themselves. In my experience, these thoughts might range from lack of confidence in their ability to do the work to a belief that they will be more competent than most and will be more like the educator/consultant.

The participants' expectations of the educator or consultant will also be closely related to previous experiences with other educators. Their confidence in the educator/consultant will depend on their positive and negative experiences with other people in such positions. Participants will also have their own ideas of the best format for this particular type of group. If the educator does not follow the format that they expected, they will probably feel disappointment towards the educator right from the beginning.

Participants have a tendancy to compare themselves to the other members in the group before they even meet them. Some participants believe that others will perform better at the tasks and the social aspect of belonging to the group. Other participants may believe that the others will not be as competent as they are.

Considerations for the educator: Hay (pp. 190-191) is clear to point out that the predictions about how participants create imagoes that often limit learning opportunities also apply to the educator or consultant. We have seen that the Provisional Group Imago

sometimes contributes to the formation of hierarchies and affects the openmindedness of the participants in relation to themselves and others. The development of an imago at this stage has the same potential for educators and consultants. Images about their own competency and about the type of participants that normally join their groups affects how much of an open mind the educator will have in regards to what might actually happen. Past experiences along with beliefs about oneself and others will play an important part in what the educator or consultant expects to accomplish with a group.

The best outcome one might expect from the Provisional Group Imago is that members of the group will have an open mind about themselves and others. This occurs when people use their past experience along with the knowledge they have about themselves in order to choose a way of acting which will benefit their learning experience. During the stage of the Provisional Group Imago, openmindedness becomes the best way to achieve useful learning experiences. Examining which prejudices and preconceptions we have about ourselves and others allows us to be able to let go of the expectations and fantasies and enables us to start gathering information about the reality of the individuals in the particular group that we are joining.

Hence, there would be benefits to the awareness of issues arising from social locatedness as well as to the awareness of the tendency to form ideas and attitudes about others before meeting them. Both educators/consultants and participants could monitor their own thoughts and attitudes about others in order to see how they fit reality. This could be done before people engage in interactions with others and before they begin to reproduce familiar social atmospheres.

Adapted Group Imago

Once a participant has joined the group, the imago begins to be edited. In this stage, one begins to differentiate between individuals by collecting data about everyone in the group. According to Hay (1996), this data is gathered through the use of conversational rituals, passing time, and involvement in learning tasks. Involvement in

seemingly trivial exchanges such as small talk as well as involvement in learning tasks provided by the educator/consultant become testing activities which every member uses in order to form early opinions of others. These opinions are used to modify the original group imago. "This stage in the life of a group is a time of testing, to see what the others are like, and to think about whether and how we might fit in" (p. 187).

Adapted stage: an example: I would like to continue with the previous example in order to describe what might happen during this second stage. Before the beginning of the first session, Diane involves herself in small talk with a few of the other members of the group. She asks them about where they work and about other training groups they have participated in. These topics are acceptable small talk for people who don't know each other. Acceptability is very important to Diane because she wants to get along with other participants. Part of the reason for asking the questions she did is to find out how serious and dedicated these people are and what kind of answers they give. She is gathering information about who the other members are and what they are like. Diane also gathers information as she engages in the first activity given by the trainer. She uses the data that she has collected to identify the different members of the group as well as to update her imago. As she asks and answers questions, other members update their image of her as a co-member of the group.

Possible difficulties: In Hay's view (p. 192), this time of testing may happen in the first few minutes before the beginning of a session. Participants use this time to find out who they want to get to know and trust. They also want to find out who would make the best partners in any of the psychological games which they are used to playing when they are in groups. In this case, the "best partner" would be a person willing to engage in the type of interactions with which they are comfortable. For example, a person who likes to criticize how things are structured might seek others who are willing to play the role of compliant listener.

When some participants refuse to engage in such rituals as small talk, conflict arises between members. It is as though members take it personally that someone is unwilling to engage in the process of familiarization. When there is no time allotted for testing, it takes participants longer to go through this time of testing. Therefore, they function from a Provisional Group Imago for a longer period of time. This means that they continue to make assumptions about others rather than using first hand experience to update their information.

Considerations for the educator: Hay (p. 192) points out that educators and consultants also update their imago to an Adapted Group Imago. Some may use this time of familiarization to seek out partners for the games that they are used to playing. Some educators like to seek out allies with whom they can team up. Other educators use the time to compare the group to groups with which they have previously worked.

It is important to realize that seemingly useless ways of spending time such as talking about the weather or about politics can be beneficial to educators/consultants and to participants. This is a time when all the members of the group can begin to substantiate their imagoes of other members. This time of testing is needed in order for people to begin to engage fully in the work. "The more we help participants develop an adapted imago, the quicker they will complete the testing process and settle down to work together" (Hay, 1996, p. 192). Julie Hay makes an important suggestion that it may even be beneficial to schedule in a time for this process in order to get the participants ready for the work and learning (p. 192).

Operative Group Imago

In this third stage, the main concern is the relationship between the participant and the educator/consultant. Members of the group explore their relationship to the educator/consultant and then use this information to guide their relationships with other members. The information gathered in this stage is largely related to power, control, and leadership in order to determine " . . . where we fit in the pecking order" (Hay, 1996, p.

188). Through learning tasks and activities, participants try to figure out how to behave with the educator/consultant and then with the other members. It is helpful for the educators/consultants to be clear about the way they wish to proceed with the group. Clarity throughout the duration of the group helps the members develop and refine an accurate image of how the group functions and the roles of everyone involved.

Participants are filling the educator/consultant slot with information gathered throughout this stage. Some early information about past experiences may be dropped, but it is important to note that some previous experiences with other educators/consultants will also be kept in this slot. Information regarding authority figures such as bosses and parents will also be kept. This means that even at this stage, members of the group will still " . . . model their own behaviour to suit a fantasised (sic) leader" (p. 188).

Operative stage: an example: During this stage, Diane pays attention to how the trainer conducts the sessions. She likes punctuality so she hopes that the trainer will make clear boundaries around beginning and ending times. She notices that the trainer likes to involve the members in discussions and she likes this. She hopes that this type of participation will not lead to off-topic discussions the way so many discussions have a tendency to go. She decides that if conversations do stray from the training topic, she will use her skills to bring them back to where they started. She will do this without stepping on the trainer's toes. She is aware that trainers have a tendency not to like participants to get too involved in leading the group. Diane already knows that some other members of the group seem to be the type who adhere to the main topic of conversation. She knows that she can probably count on them to support her if she chooses to steer the group back to the original topic of conversation.

Possible difficulties: From Hay's point of view, some of the difficulties that arise in this stage are due to the fact that participants are still using some of their experiences with past educators and trainers to establish how they will relate to their current educator. Often in educational settings, the experiences and feelings that participants had as children

going to school play an important role in how they view the current educators and consultants. When the patterns and setup of the learning environment remind the participants of being in school, they tend to view the educator as the dominant figure and themselves as the subordinate. "The danger of this is reinforced by the way being in a classroom triggers memories of school, . . . Sit us behind a desk, looking up at a trainer/teacher standing in front of us, and we feel like children again" (Hay, 1996, p. 95).

Considerations for the educator: Hay suggests that when educators/consultants are unclear about their role and what they expect from the participant, this provides ambiguity and confusion for the participant. When participants have to guess or assume their own roles, they often fall back into patterns of interaction with which they are familiar. Their Operative Group Imagoes would be strongly influenced by their own experiences of power and leadership. These patterns would determine how they act towards the educator/consultant and other members of the group. Having said to what extent the educator's choices affect the imagoes of the participants, it is also important to note that even when the educator/consultant models healthy behaviours and communication, some participants still hold on to their own preferred way of operating.

Another way in which the educator/consultant's choices about group process may create difficulty and conflict is if they lead to unhealthy competition and unworkable tension between the participants. In my experience, participants are alive to clues about how the educator/consultant views the basic healthiness of everyone in the group. If the educator believes that some people are "OK" while others are not, then this hierarchy will influence the way that participants choose to act with the educator and with each other. In my opinion, educators and consultants who are aware of the power and authority they have and who choose to use it constructively can make a difference to how participants view people in places of authority.

Adjusted Group Imago

In this last stage, Hay describes how members of the group have a clearer view of the others. Each person makes decisions about whom they like, whom they do not like, and whom they will tolerate. The members believe they have sufficient information to guide how they will act towards each other. By this stage, the members of the group will have some shared expectations of how the group will proceed, and still, many of the imagoes developed by the individual members will reflect their own experiences and perceptions. By this time, the issues that affect leadership, control, and power are clear. Each member probably has an image of where they fit in relation to these issues.

Adjusted stage: an example: Diane realizes that most of the members seem to be very efficient. There is only one member who likes to talk on and on. This doesn't pose a threat to Diane's wish to accomplish the whole curriculum because the other members of the group are pretty well in-line with her way of participating in discussions. She decides that she will probably not have to intervene. Most of the participants seem to work very well together. The trainer likes discussions, but seems to have a good way of directing them so that they are on-topic most of the time.

Possible difficulties: According to Hay (p. 192), after the process of developing a group imago, some groups become more focussed on the games (such as power struggles) that are played among the members than they are on the tasks to be accomplished. The success of the group is being sabotaged by the distraction of the psychological games. It is possible that some groups never reach the level of trust that is needed in order for members to be willing to work together constructively.

Considerations for the educator: "The worst case result will be a group that is sabotaged by psychological games, with conflict and power struggles" (Hay, 1996, p. 189). The best case would be a group willing to work together with trust and openness in order to achieve its goals. It is my thought that if an educator or consultant realizes they

are involved with a group which has been sabotaged by games and conflict, then it will greatly affect the choice of the direction or intervention to take.

This stage theory helps in the analysis of many different aspects of groups, but my particular interest is in looking at conflict. There are important considerations to take note of in regards to these stages. The length of the group will greatly affect the time spent in each stage. For example, a residential weekend training group may have the chance to work through all of the stages and form trusting relationships. On the other hand, a group that meets for a one-day workshop may only have the opportunity to quickly skim each stage in order for them to begin to attend to the task of the workshop. In on-going groups, some of the stages may repeat themselves in order for the group to develop a new level of trust. At any time, it is possible for the group to move back to a previous stage. This may happen when one or more of the participants believe the safety of the group is in question for one reason or another.

These stages of development of group imagoes and the process which the group goes through are not clear and distinct. Individuals and groups go through the process of defining slots for members at their own rate. From my experience as a student and as an educator, participants of a group may reach decisions about their involvement in the first session. Sometimes, these decisions are not made until two or three sessions have gone by. Because of people's shifting and multiple identities, it is possible and highly likely that participants may re-edit their imagoes even after they have made decisions about their role within the leadership issues. Many of the changes that are made to change an Adjusted Group Imago rely on the willingness of the participant to question how they have positioned themselves and others and how they have been positioned. These changes also reflect the participants' awareness of how their behaviour and the behaviour of others contribute to the achievement of their learning goals.

If an educator or consultant strives to involve the participants in as much of the learning process as possible, understanding how group imagoes develop can be helpful in

becoming aware of how people form their ideas and attitudes about the groups they join. It can also point us towards an understanding of what may be behind some of the behaviours of the participants in the group, making it easier for us to modify the process and content of our groups in order to include more of the participants. For the purpose of my thesis, the concept of group imagoes helps us identify the relationship between individual perceptions and group dynamics. Specifically, it shows how each person's locatedness will affect the attitudes, behaviours, and positioning that go on within a group.

Discovering Different Attitudes and Concepts towards Conflict

I would like to begin this section by presenting the meaning and image of conflict that I once held. I believe this would be a useful point of reference because, through speaking with other educators and consultants, I understand that many people have similar views about conflict in their work.

Following this definition, I will explore a number of different layers of conflict which will have the purpose of providing a different outlook on conflict. By laying out some of the different aspects that may be present for members of a group experiencing conflict, my hope is to begin to see conflict with a new set of eyes.

A Common View of Conflict

The definition of conflict found in The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1973) describes what I had understood about conflict. This dictionary states that a conflict is "(a)n encounter with arms; a fight; esp. a prolonged struggle." It also describes the verb in a similar light: "1. To fight, contend, do battle . . . . 2. To come into collision, to clash; to be incompatible" (The Shorter Oxford, 1973, p. 396-397). With this definition, there is an implication that conflict is about right or wrong, or at least results in one party being the winner and the other being the loser.

Before I started teaching French to adults, my personal and professional encounters with conflict had often resulted in someone feeling hurt or victimized. I used

these experiences and a version of the above definition to guide my objectives and goals as an educator. To avoid having anyone feel hurt or uncomfortable, I attempted to create an environment where conflict could be smoothed over quickly and with as little friction as possible. My hope was that when conflict did arise with one or more members of the group, I could find a solution by changing something about the content or process of the class.

Basically, the message I gave myself was that if one of the participants displayed resistance or struggle within the group, then there must be something wrong with what I was doing. In the case where a participant continued to show resistance to the process, I attributed the conflict to something in the person which made interactions difficult. When conflict arose, I tended to believe that there was something about me and my teaching that needed to change. I attempted to find solutions to conflict as fast as I could in order to avoid uncomfortable situations.

The imagoes that I developed of individuals within the group were conditional imagoes. That is, my belief in the OKness of the participants was conditional on whether or not the participants found something conflictual with the way I conducted the groups. I also believed that, once in a while, I was going to encounter some people who were going to be difficult and that they were going to cause the group to function less constructively. The imago I had of these people stressed their difficult behaviours and their "negative" effects on the group rather than their OKness. The imago I developed of myself was conditional on how much conflict arose in my groups. I perceived myself as a fairly competent educator, whose classes were sometimes not prepared as well as they could be. When there were conflicts and resistances to something I was presenting, I had the ability to act quickly to find a solution that would smooth things over for most people in the group.

These notions guided many aspects of the way that I conducted my groups. I believed that I had to have most of the answers to challenges and questions put forward by

the participants in order to offer them a useful learning experience. This meant that I was, in a compliant way, taking on most of the control and leadership of the group. Even though many of the activities I provided were interactive, I still held on to most of the control over content and process. Many participants worked well in this type of environment, but there were some who wanted and needed more involvement. This also created a source of conflict.

In my work with groups, my view of conflict was as a negative. It made people uncomfortable and it sometimes caused pain or hurt. My goal was to avoid conflict. If that was not possible, I wanted to deal with conflict as quickly and painlessly as possible.

A New Attitude Towards Conflict

Most of my behaviours in response to conflict in groups aimed at minimizing hurt and discomfort for everyone involved. This is the way that I had learned to work with conflict in many areas of my life. It could very well be that I became successful at minimizing the effect of conflict on the participants, but with hindsight it is clear that I was minimizing the meaning that the conflict had for the people involved. I began to have thoughts about the meaning and importance of conflict for participants when I noticed that most of the conflict arose when I was introducing methods and content that were foreign to them. Trying to fix or eliminate conflict did not explore what the participants wanted or needed in order to fully participate in new processes and activities. Minimizing conflict did not explore the locatedness of the participants in relation to the conflict. It is also possible that it discounted the participants' capabilities and essence.

A new way of thinking about conflict seemed necessary to me when I realized that I was developing a pattern of dealing with conflict which was led by my own unwillingness to work through uncomfortable feelings. The pattern of behaviour that I had adopted, based on my own past experiences of feeling uncomfortable or hurt, led me to feeling unsatisfied about the way that I had dealt with the issues at hand. Because I felt unsatisfied with some aspects of the teaching and training that I was doing, I wanted to learn more

about the types of conflict that were repeating themselves in my groups. I also wanted to begin to explore my locatedness by looking at the pattern of responses to conflict that I had adopted. I believed that the best way to do that was to first look at the way in which I viewed conflict in a negative light. The following exploration of attitudes and concepts relating to conflict describes some of the thoughts and research that were part of my process of becoming more comfortable with myself in relation to conflict.

In the first part of this chapter, I described group development in relation to the development of the members' group imagoes. This description explains part of my process of forming imagoes about who I am as an educator and consultant and who the participants are. Furthermore, it is within the Adapted stage of group imago development that I discussed the presence of conflict due to the testing that occurred between members of the group. Participants test each other in order to find out where they will fit within the group and how their position will be defined by themselves and by others. Their questions identify parts of their locations and they are exploring the location of others. I have chosen this stage of testing to examine the layering of the different aspects of conflict within a group because this is when members of the group are becoming familiar with the group and with other members. As I have described above, this is confirmed in my own experience.

When participants begin their interactions with others, they are operating with a provisional imago which is based mostly on past experiences and life histories. In order to update imagoes, people begin testing how well other people and the group as a whole fit their imago. Many people experience tension and anxiety through this stage because they are still faced with unknown aspects of the group and of the other people within the group. Others may experience tension because they are busy testing others rather than paying attention to the group and the process of the group.

The factors that contribute to an environment of tension and anxiety as participants move through this testing process are numerous. Letting go of assumptions made in the

provisional stage in order to update imagoes can be an uncomfortable proposition. There can be more comfort in operating from an imago created from past experiences than in adopting new views based on current reality. Interacting with people who are strangers is another cause of anxiety or tension in the early stages of a group. Concerns about potential criticism and judgement from group members is a factor. Most of us want to be accepted and perceived as competent. The " . . . fear of losing control, being misunderstood, looking foolish, or being rejected" (Gladding, 1995, p. 105) creates tension for many participants and educators/consultants. Added to these relationship tensions are questions and uncertainties involved in figuring out the content and process of the group. Many participants have preconceptions and prejudgements about the validity and usefulness of the groups they are joining. This can be a source of tension as participants test their needs and wants in reference to the objectives and goals of the group. If group members have had problematic experiences in previous groups, they may anticipate the same problems arising in the current group.

Many of these tensions may be experienced by both participants and educators/consultants alike. It may be reasonable to suggest that anxiety, tension, and resistance are typical in any group in its beginning stages. Corey and Corey (1992) refer to the uncertainty and disarray of this period: "(a)nxiety, resistance, defensiveness, conflict, confrontation, and transference are frequent feelings that surface at this time" (as cited in Gladding, 1995, p. 104). If it is the case that this atmosphere is common within groups, it is possible to see that, in this environment, participants and educators may not be comfortable until they have figured out their place within the group and have updated their imagoes. This is why Julie Hay suggests that this stage is important if the group is to settle down to work together (Hay, 1996, p. 192). Ward (1982) also echoes the importance of this period of a group: "(i)f the group successfully weathers this turbulence, it moves on to a . . . period in which there are resolutions, cohesiveness, and the opportunity to move forward in growth" (as cited in Gladding, 1995, p. 104).

This exploration of causes of tension is meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. Once a group has moved through the initial tensions and members of the group have developed an Adapted group imago, it is then possible for the group to begin to work constructively together, according to Hay and Ward. Yet, in order to move from this place of tension and anxiety towards a ground for working together constructively, the group and its members may still have much discord and conflict to work through.

Julie Hay notes that the Adapted stage of the group imago has similar qualities to the "storming" stage of group development described by Tuckman in 1965 (cited in Hay, 1996, p.189). Gladding attributes the reasons for conflict which arise in this storming period to the fact that " . . . members start to compete with others . . . . involv[ing] struggles over power and control that may be both overt and covert" (Gladding, 1995, p. 104). The way people establish their place within a group reflects issues of power and control. Some people establish their place by remaining silent while others are more open and assertive (p. 105). Again, the way that people involve themselves in groups is directly related to their locatedness, in particular to their past experiences within groups.

Mistrust is often a starting point in how people define themselves and others in the group. "There is usually a good deal of mistrust in others during the storming period" (Gladding, 1995, p. 106). How people choose to relate to issues of control and power has much to do with their level of trust in the other people in the group. The higher the level of trust, the more people are inclined to speak up. Some mistrust in others is a natural response to dealing with so many unknown aspects of beginning a new group. Some mistrust stems from prior experiences with other groups which have not had a positive outcome. Trust and mistrust are thus strongly influenced by the locatedness of the members and their history with conflict.

If people have had experiences within a group that have been hurtful or that have limited their learning opportunities, it is highly likely that they will bring a sense of threat to their safety and to their opportunities within the group. To the extent that this sense of

threat and fear leads to mistrust in others, it will inspire behaviours around control and power issues whose purpose is to maximize safety for themselves. Safety can refer to physical, psychological, or emotional safety. People experiencing some kind of threat tend to resort to patterns of behaviour with which they are familiar. "At first, members will attempt to resolve power concerns in ways that resemble those they have used outside the group, for example, fighting or fleeing. If these strategies work, they will continue to be employed" (Gladding, 1995, p. 106).

Choosing a fighting or fleeing pattern of behaviour in response to conflict in groups has the purpose of keeping a person from getting hurt. The actual behaviour often results in setting up positions in which it is possible to win, to lose, or to attempt to "save the day"[5]. These positions may be occupied by different people or by the same person at different times. The results are shifting positions based on control and power issues. This type of conflict often results in someone getting hurt and creates a hierarchy amongst members. Setting guidelines for process at the beginning of a group sets standards that will create some level of safety for the participants. This is a way for the educator or consultant to use authority to help create a learning environment which reflects the needs and locations of participants.

Conflict and discord are sometimes covert and sometimes overt. The reason for conflict may be as simple as the fact that people have differing opinions about the same subject. At other times, as mentioned above, conflict results when people feel threatened. Conflict becomes a problem when it inhibits the group from developing a working relationship. Forsyth (1990) suggests that "(a) group may become arrested by either dwelling on conflict or ignoring it" (as cited by Gladding, 1995, p. 104). The most

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[5] These positions refer to the "Drama Triangle", a diagram for analyzing games devised by Stephen Karpman(1968). The three positions suggested by Karpman are: persecutor, a person who puts others down; rescuer, a person who offers to help because s/he knows better; and victim, a person who portrays himself or herself as being "less than" others (as cited in Stewart and Joines, 1987, p. 236).

common way of dwelling on conflict is when members of the group engage in " . . . repetitive but unsatisfactory interactions with others . . . . that lead to negative payoffs" (Hay, 1996, p. 157). In these interactions, one or more people end up feeling bad or hurt.

Here is a summation of the different layers of conflict which I have identified. During the testing process in which members of a group define their position, tension and anxiety arise from the many unknown aspects of being involved in the group. This atmosphere of tension is a common trait of many groups and is understood to be present until a workable relationship is developed. Another common trait of the testing period is competitiveness[6]. The competition for positions within the group raises issues of control and power, which in turn often lead to mistrust. Driven by mistrust of others and of unknown situations, many people choose old behaviours which are familiar to them from previous situations involving conflict. Familiar behaviours used to achieve some level of safety for the member, may be inappropriate and unbeneficial in relation to the group as a whole. These non-functional, often repetitious behaviours take place within a shifting hierarchy, and often result in painful feelings for some participants. This process takes much of the attention away from the work which brought the group together and focusses it on the conflict and hurt feelings of the members involved.

It is not the case that all groups will handle differences and tensions in the same way. Even though competition, power, and control issues are probably inevitable within groups, they do not always lead to overt struggles that disrupt the group. It is also not the case that people's mistrust of others in new situations automatically leads to behaviours which harm others or which arrest the group's process. What I have presented above is the portrayal that common occurences such as tension, competition, and mistrust may lead

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6 It is important to note that sometimes participants join a group with the intention to participate and collaborate, but when disappointment or hurt arises, these people adopt a strong position in order to protect their location or identity. This strong position may be confused with competition. If it is, the educator/consultant might have missed these participants' locatedness and positive intention.

members of the group to respond to conflict with familiar behaviours. These behaviours are often the cause of an interruption within the group. When working with groups, it is possible to distinguish between conflict which happens as a predictable part of the process when people join in group work and conflict which leads to inappropriate and non-functional behaviours.

This particular exploration of conflict has opened up several avenues for me. When I think about conflict in groups, I now think about how it relates to tension and anxiety, to competition for a position in the group, to trust and mistrust, to the use of familiar behaviours, to the search for safety, and to where the focus of energy is. It has become clearer to me which issues lead to conflict and the reasons why people choose certain ways of handling conflict. I believe that it is an awareness of this logic and purpose that has enabled me to become more comfortable with the idea that conflict is OK, and that it can tell me something useful about the participants, the group, and my role. The area of greatest opportunity that I have identified as a result of this exploration is in the identification of habitual behaviours which people choose to handle conflict. As an educator and consultant, I have learned that being aware of and alert to such behaviours prepares me to discover new ways of communicating the presence of tension, competition, control, power, and mistrust. Some of these opportunities I will be exploring in the next chapter.

The exploration into the development of group imagoes and into conflict has shown how individuals can affect the process of a group. Locatedness affects the way people create images of themselves, others, and groups. It also affects the behaviour that people have towards each other and towards themselves in the face of control, power, and conflict.

I have researched and constructed these discussions on group development and conflict to demonstrate the normality and commonality of how people define and position

themselves and of the occurences of conflict within groups. Understanding the normality of these two parts of group process may help educators and consultants to find different methods to apply to practice. The next chapter will identify some possible methods of applying the issues identified in Chapters Two and Three.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

> *[Due to familiar] patterns in the classroom . . . [educators] are lured into believing that they . . . should be copying the behaviour they saw their own teachers adopt. This may happen regardless of our current view of the effectiveness of our teachers. It is rather like when we swore we would never act as our parents did, and then find ourselves treating our own children in just the same way. The likelihood of us falling into this trap is increased when our participants make it so clear that they expect to be told what to do.*
> (Hay, 1996, p. 95)

The purpose for my studies in adult education, for my training in psychotherapy, and for writing this thesis has always revolved around my desire to enrich my practice as an educator and consultant. When I began teaching French, I wanted to find enjoyable and different ways of teaching so that the learning environment in which I was working would be less hierarchical and controlled than what I had experienced as a student. Since that time, I found adopting different ways of teaching a difficult task due to the expectations I felt from the people who hired me and from the participants. I also began to notice how my own identity, experiences, and history were contributing to doing things in a different manner. My own project to find different ways of being and acting in the workplace was defined and limited by my locatedness.

I still desire to find new ways of behaving when working with groups. At this time, instead of reacting against and trying to do the opposite of what I had experienced, I want to learn a new language, new tools, and new outlooks on educating and learning. Understanding notions such as locatedness, basic healthiness, group imagoes, and the normality of conflict has contributed to the progress toward achieving this new goal. One

next step for me is learning how to apply these newly discovered ideas and theories in order to begin a transition in my practice. I do not want to view these methods as solutions to problems, but rather as a continuing discussion on learning a new language that will enable me to begin to think and act differently.

As suggested in the opening quote, often the ways in which educators and consultants practice is related to the way they themselves have been taught. It is useful for me to see these old behaviours as an old language. Since the language of my practice has been problematic for me in the past, I am learning new words so that I can begin to speak a new language. A similar and less complicated version of choosing a different language is demonstrated in the following story.

There was a time when using the word "should" resulted in my feeling critical about the choices I made. This word often led to judgemental thoughts in even the most trivial actions. For example, I was driving along the shore one day and thought to myself "you should have taken the other road". I began feeling uncomfortable about the choice I had made for my leisurely drive. At that point I chose to limit my use of this word and instead to replace it with the word "could". This ended up being one of the most freeing choices I had ever made. I then decided that I could have taken the other road, but since I hadn't, I was going to enjoy the road I was on.

In this section on practice, I want to discuss a variety of tools that can make the adoption of a new language possible. I want to show that when faced with conflict in groups, there are methods that can lead to new ways of thinking about, acting, and responding to conflict. The effects of a change of language can be numerous. This new language will hopefully provide educators and consultants with principles by which to understand conflict and the people involved in conflict. For their participants, it may mean that the educator and consultant can use a new understanding of conflict to clarify with participants different ways of viewing conflict. The educator or consultant might use the opportunities created by the conflict to discuss and/or model new information regarding conflict, power, group dynamics, locatedness, and basic healthiness.

As a way of informing one's practice I will combine some of the conclusions made about locatedness, basic healthiness, positive intention, group imagoes, and conflict.

Applying Locatedness and Basic Healthiness

Locatedness is clearly important because it names the many factors which play a role in developing an identity and in positioning people in relation to others. We also come to understand that one person's position is defined not only by that individual, but also by other people, and by institutions. Through the notion of locatedness, we discover the underlying role of power in defining people's identities and positions in society and how some people benefit from a power structure while others are limited by it. Locatedness not only allows us to identify what influences people's positioning, but also gives us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of differences among people in groups.

Basic healthiness refers to the belief that everybody has the same basic essence (having needs, wants, and feelings) and capabilities (to feel, to think, and to be kind and helpful). At this level of essence and capabilities, individuals are considered as equals. The power structures found in the historical, social, political, and economic realms of people's lives are not denied in the theory of basic healthiness. Rather, those power structures which have influenced people's positioning and identity are discussed in terms of how they have affected the development of capabilities.

The distinction which is implied through the notion of basic healthiness is the separation of essence and capabilities from behaviours and accomplishments. We are asked to take the essence and capabilities of each human being as a given. According to this theory, these capabilities and essence do not vary from individual to individual. This attitude about people is then a good place to start the examination of the locatedness of each individual.

What makes people particularly different is due to how power, privilege, language, knowledge, history, culture, economics, bodies, desires, needs, psyches, and social factors have affected our identity and our location. This long list of influences on identity and

positioning helps clarify how, within a particular hierarchy, power has privileged some people while subordinating others. In a learning environment some people are given power, some take power, some have power taken away, and some give power away. For example, the locatedness of individuals in classrooms will affect who speaks, who is spoken to, who is encouraged, whose language is spoken, and who will succeed. Power seems to be a necessary condition of all of these results.

The theory of basic healthiness may be used to keep the issues of power (which define locatedness and contribute to what people accomplish and how they behave) from contaminating our beliefs about the essence and capabilities of each individual. This seems to be a worthwhile request given how power plays such an important role in working with groups. If power is always a present condition of groups, defining the limits to which we will let it affect identity and positioning within our groups gives us a way of working with people which is guided by the boundaries of our beliefs.

Let us explore how the theories of locatedness and basic healthiness might become useful and visible when working with groups. I have included the following example in order to illustrate how locatedness and basic healthiness may inform an educator or consultant's practice.

In this example of working with a training group, my role as a facilitator and educator was to engage the learner in job and "life" skills activities. What I knew about the women who were taking this training course was that they were all unemployed. When I first met the group, I discovered that all of the women were from similar backgrounds and that there was a wide difference in age within the group. The range fell between early twenties to late fifties.

This group of women worked and learned well together. All of the activities that I proposed to the group were welcomed. There seemed to be a fair amount of trust amongst the members of the group which was reflected in their willingness to participate in activities which involved taking risks and being vulnerable. Some members spoke more often than others. Some members only spoke when it was their turn.

While spending three hours a week with the group members over an extended period, I learned a little about their economic and social conditions based on information that they volunteered. Based on how each individual acted with me and with other members of the group, I came to understand in a limited way which behaviours the

members tended to use when they were within a group situation. My interaction with each member guided my thoughts about influences which had affected their locatedness.

Dissecting My Definition of Power

A woman from this group, Tammy (pseudonym), was quiet, reserved, and only participated when it was her turn. I understand that I made assumptions about her locatedness as well as others' locatedness. It could be that Tammy had not experienced negative conditions in her life. But, based on my own experiences I guessed that the level at which she participated in the group had been influenced by some type of subordination. I interpreted her posture, her soft and timid voice, her use of conditional language, and other social factors in order to create a picture of her locatedness which was directly related to my own experiences with those behaviours, language, and social factors.

Through writing this thesis I have identified many of the influences on locatedness and have understood that positioning and identity of a person may change. My understanding about locatedness is richer and I have come to realize that my picture of any one person's locatedness will likely be incomplete. Even though I may only begin to understand the uniqueness of individuals such as Tammy, my learning about locatedness will alert me to the many ways that power can affect people's lives. In the example above, my awareness of the issues surrounding locatedness helped me to understand the possible ways that power and privilege may have affected Tammy's experience in a learning environment.

In this thesis, we have seen that power and privilege are the central aspects of identifying the locatedness of individuals. As an educator and consultant who wants to understand how power affects people in learning environments, it then becomes very useful for me to understand my experiences, my history, and my definition of power. If I know how I think, feel, and act in regards to power and authority, then I can begin to understand how I am modelling power within learning groups.

My definition and understanding of power will probably influence my interactions with people in groups. A way to begin the process of understanding my definition and experience of power is to ask myself questions keeping in mind the different aspects which influence the locatedness of individuals. Below are sample questions which could be used in dissecting our own stance on power. These are based on similar questions used in Julie Hay's dissection of imagoes (Hay, 1996, p. 193).

1. In which aspects of my life have I experienced subordination or privilege?
2. How are those experiences influencing my attitudes and behaviours as an educator and consultant?
3. Do I construct a hierarchy that includes myself and the participants?
4. Where do I position myself in relation to the participants?
5. Do I position the participants differently?
6. Do I position people differently based on gender, race, culture, occupation, class, or any other discriminating factor?
7. Do I believe that some people have different learning, thinking, or feeling capabilities than other people?
8. If I am positioning people differently, is there a reason behind it?
9. Do I have evidence of why this type of position is useful?
10. Is it possible to set aside the criteria that separates people?

As I review these questions, I wonder about my interpretation of Tammy's location and how my own locatedness has affected my thoughts about and attitudes towards her. I have identified that she may have experienced oppression in other group s. Is it possible that, because I have identified her in this location, I am creating other limits on her learning opportunities? Is it possible that I am ignoring my own locatedness or that of other people's? Joan Borsa (1990) states that it is possible to "overemphasiz[e] our circumstances and become so self-centered and insular . . . or on the other hand [we] becom[e] so preoccupied with what is happening elsewhere . . ." that we ignore our own

position (p. 36). She cautions that we focus on either one or the other location when we are attempting to find ultimate solutions to problems or difficulties. This caution reminds us that what we are seeking when we explore our own issues of power or when we identify other people's locatedness is a better understanding of how people relate to each other in learning groups and how we, as educators or consultants, help define learning environments. Our role is to begin a transition in how we create learning environments in relation to individuals, power, and knowledge. It is important to do this with knowledge of our own location in mind as well as with other people's location.

Working With One's Authority

Within learning environments, the role of the educator and consultant undeniably comes with some level of authority over the participants of the group. Bringing an awareness of that power and an understanding of how we think, feel, and act in relation to it will be a central part of our practice in groups, one that will help us choose how to utilize authority in a way that will help us achieve our goals.

My intention of how to develop an awareness of power will be threefold: to be aware of the way it creates limiting conditions within a specific group; to bring power dynamics to the attention of participants when it would be useful to do so; and to use my own power to create some positive learning experiences for the participants.

Tammy's involvement in this particular learning environment may be reproducing familiar conditions for her. Since I don't want to create learning environments which will reproduce subordinating experiences for the participants, then it will be important for me to examine if and how I am contributing to the reproduction of the same conditions that have limited Tammy's learning opportunities in the past.

With the notion of basic healthiness in mind, I recognize that Tammy has the capability to think, feel and perceive, and be kind and helpful. The theory of locatedness helps us understand ways in which her opportunities to participate in groups might have

been limited because of her experiences with power. The fact that she is quiet within this group does not negate her capabilities.

In order to create positive learning experiences for Tammy, I can use the power I do have as an educator or consultant to pay respect to her basic healthiness and to her location. As an educator and consultant, I can also respect Tammy's basic healthiness by making sure that I do provide opportunities for her. She may choose to utilize these opportunities to develop different ways of participating in groups or she may not. Providing different opportunities for people who we think may have been limited in their learning experiences may be controversial for people who believe sameness of treatment to be the best solution. The notion of basic healthiness does not ask us to erase differences, it asks us to honour everybody's basic essence and capabilities. bell hooks (1992) suggests a way to "(affirm) the voices of the oppressed: teachers need to give the marginalized and the powerless a preferential option" (as cited in McLaren, 1995, p. 138).

With this in mind, a possible way to provide opportunities for Tammy is in observing the ways in which she is comfortable in participating. If small group participation better suits her needs, then I can make a point of including such an activity as a regular part of our sessions. In doing so, I do not pass judgement on her present level of participation by asking her to do something else.

Positive Intention

There are times when people's behaviours are difficult to understand. For an educator or consultant who is an extrovert, for example, participating in groups might come as second nature. For this person, it might be difficult to understand the benefits or reasoning of being quiet or reserved the way Tammy is. Because we understand the likelihood that one person's location will be very different from another person's, it becomes important that we, as educators and consultants have a way of putting into perspective the behaviours of the participants.

Positive intention may be used as a tool for reflection that enables educators and consultants to begin to understand the behaviours of participants. The theory of positive intention states that most behaviours have positive intentions behind them even when the outcomes seem negative or non-functional. As a tool, this perspective allows us to think about the possible needs or wants of the participant that led to the choice of a particular behaviour. We want to remember that the choice of actions was directed by the participant's desire to achieve something positive. This is the case, even when the behaviour had the opposite result.

In Tammy's situation, one of the possibilities is that she chose to restrict her participation because she wanted to be liked by everyone and did not want to offend anyone by sharing her opinions. For some of the other participants, Tammy's reservation and quiet presence offered them no signs that she wanted to be part of the group; therefore, they had a difficult time getting to know her. This would be an example of the behaviour creating the opposite outcome to the intention.

When we think about some of the reasons behind a participant's behaviour, we begin to entertain hypotheses about that person's locatedness. If Tammy were trying to be liked by everyone as mentioned above, she might have believed that sharing ideas and opinions could offend someone and that offending someone could mean that she will be rejected. Tammy might well have learned these beliefs through involvements in other groups. As an educator, exploring positive intention in this way will become a significant part of my effort to create a learning environment which will not reproduce other limiting and subordinating experiences for Tammy.

Sometimes conflict stalls group process and then it becomes important to address the conflict with the group. Positive intention may be used as a tool to examine and confront behaviours within a group and is a way for an educator and consultant to use authority for critical assessment. In this case, an educator or consultant would use the exploration of positive intention in ways above and beyond the means of reflection. The

educator can use this tool as a way of questioning a particular individual (in private or in a safe manner) or as a way of questioning the whole group.

When using positive intention as a method of questioning, the respect of other people's locatedness and of their basic healthiness sets the parameters within which to question the participants. Questions related to behaviours which influence the conflict need to be non-critical, non-judgemental, and non-accusatory. Even though an educator or consultant will most likely have opinions, advice, and feelings in relation to the behaviour and conflict, it is important that these be put aside or that they be named during the process of asking questions about the positive intention of behaviours.

The reason for putting aside or naming one's own biases is so that they don't add to the conflict. The method of positive intention is meant to help participants question their own participation in a given situation. All participants have the capability to think, feel, and be kind or helpful. Therefore, if they are given the appropriate guidance, tools, and secure setting to critically examine the possible reasoning behind actions, most participants will come up with ideas and opinions about the nature of behaviours.

If Tammy's behaviour and participation were to be a trigger for conflict in the whole group[7] and it became necessary to address her behaviour, I would probably talk to her in private. My questions and comments might go something like this:

I would like to understand your participation in the group. Would you tell me how you understand things to be going? I would like to achieve this task and these guidelines by the end of the month: do you think it is possible? What do you think are the difficulties in achieving this? Would you help me understand how we are getting to the accomplishment of the task? Are things going in the direction that you want or need them to go? If so, how; if not, would you tell me what you need as a participant in the group? Do you see ways in which you can achieve your goals within the group? Do you see the group achieving its goal without jeopardizing your own goals?

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7 I would like to take the example of Tammy one step further in the exploration of positive intention, though I realize that the following situation is unlikely given what we know so far about Tammy.

Following this type of interchange, I would also ask similar questions of the group. Relating individual behaviours to the group behaviour is important because it follows the belief that relationships don't happen in a void. Often, when a conflictual power dynamics has arisen, it is most likely that it is part of a social manifestation of power rather than something caused by an individual.

The Joining Together

To conclude this chapter, I would like to give an example of a way in which I was able to create a rich learning activity during a training group. In this example, I have been able to combine my understanding of and my beliefs about locatedness and basic healthiness. I have also used my authority as an educator and consultant in order to encourage the interrogation and critique of a text, and I have modelled how to look for positive intention in things which are sometimes difficult to understand and relate to.

I had been hired to help a group of students make a transition into the workplace. One of the texts that I was given to accomplish my tasks was a booklet on the "new" conditions of the workplace. This booklet had very rigid ideas about how people should be at work.

The participants reacted strongly against this booklet. They also reacted against me for introducing the material. In reponse to these reactions, I began to question myself and my abilities. The tension and anxiety that I felt at the time was similar to how I felt in other experiences with conflict. My first thought was to forget about this booklet, yet I knew that my boss had positive intentions for handing out this publication.

So, I sent the booklet home with the participants telling them that they were going to have only one assignment from it. I also gave them a list of questions that I wanted them to answer so they would be ready to discuss the booklet at the next session. Here are those questions:

1. What is the first thought and feeling you have while reading each chapter title?

2. What do you want to say to the author of the booklet?

3. These titles might have been chosen with a good purpose in mind. Can you come up with what that might be?

4. How could they have titled the chapters differently and still followed their same purpose?

At the next session, the participants were energetic about discussing the assignment and the publication. I was happy to have found a way of empowering myself and the participants in working with material that had the potential of triggering conflict.

I have presented this example because of the success I had with the activity. I felt great accomplishment due to the fact that I had used my ideas, attitudes, and location as an educator, including that of feeling uncomfortable with conflict. I had also incorporated the participants' locations and their resistance to the material. In addition, I was able to work within the parameters which were set by my employers. Even though I felt much tension about introducing an activity without knowing what the outcome might be or how the participants might respond, I had a sense of balance between my uncertainty and my wish to follow a method of working which I believed in.

This chapter has explored creating an awareness of our locations in relation to power and how they influence practice; recognizing constructive ways of using power and authority; and questioning the positive intention behind situations and circumstances that are often viewed as difficult and challenging. These ways of incorporating theory into practice encourage the educator and consultant to recognize the influences which have shaped their identity as well as their behaviours. From there, educators and consultants can use their knowledge to define how these influences can be used to shape the kind of practice they want.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

As I have mentioned, this thesis arose from my work as a teacher, facilitator, educator, and consultant. Within these roles, I became aware of my own discomfort and lack of knowledge about working with conflict within groups. An important aspect of my time in these roles is the relationships between my co-workers and myself and also with the people who hired me. In the workforce, I was surprised at how often interactions with people triggered difficulties. I began to wonder what it would look like if people brought interpersonal skills and tools with them to work. It was through my training in psychotherapy that I noticed the willingness of many people to follow the path of personal development and personal awareness. I was fascinated at the possibility that people might also want to engage in development and awareness in relation to working and learning relationships.

This intriguing possibility led me to examine the way I dealt with conflict within groups. I set out to increase my awareness of what conflict meant to me, of how I viewed my role in a conflict, and of how I perceived other people's role in a conflict. I chose to make my thesis an important step in developing awareness of and skillful means in working with these issues. The organization and intention of my thesis is intended to reflect this goal of awareness and skillful means.

An Overview

The main goal I had for the content and process of this thesis was to develop a different way of thinking, feeling, and acting towards conflict by untangling what it meant to me as an educator and consultant. Because of the social nature of conflict and the social implications of my role as educator and consultant, the process of deciphering my own beliefs about and attitudes towards conflict was done on two levels. The first level

required examining the way individuals, myself included, relate to others and to the world, while the second level mandated an examination of people in groups.

Locatedness and Basic Healthiness

Chapter Two dealt with the first level, the relationship between individuals and the world. In this regard, the concept of locatedness has proven to be an important tool for sharpening my understanding of what I bring to my role as educator and consultant. It suggests how history, social status, culture, bodies, needs, sexual preference, and race play roles in shaping my identity as well as the identities of others. Not only does the study of locatedness heighten our awareness, but also the process has shed light on the complicated nature of naming specific positions and locations.

A most significant benefit of exploring locatedness has been a deeper understanding of how power and privilege affect all aspects of our interactions with others, as well as the nature of knowledge itself. The implication for educators and consultants who wish to maximize learning opportunities for participants is the need to become aware and begin to change the ways in which their practices produce and reproduce power structures.

Learning about how power and privilege affect my identity and the way I relate to others has made it easier for me to understand that I see others through a particular set of "glasses" which are coloured by my own locatedness. To take this analogy further, I can see the blue of my locatedness now rather than seeing the world as blue without knowing that it was my locatedness that made it this colour. When I look at others and the world with the awareness of the blue tint in my glasses, I can begin to understand how what I see may look different to others. Other people almost certainly have glasses of a different hue to mine. In order to begin to understand how they see the world, I imagine trying on other coloured glasses. Even though I realize that the blue will always affect what I see, I now know that there are other colours for me to be aware of.

Being aware of the colour of my own glasses also gives me a tool with which to speak to others. I can discuss what it is like for me to experience the world through this set of lenses. As well, I can listen to others describe what it is like for them to experience the world from their point of view. Understanding the blueness with which I see the world has the added benefit of helping me realize that not only my experience and perceptions but also my feelings and actions have been influenced by my particular perceptions. It is this enlightened awareness of the role of blue in my interactions with others which will inform my future practice as an educator and consultant.

The examination of basic healthiness served a parallel function to locatedness in that it provides a way of developing a respectful perspective towards others. Locatedness described a way to respect differences amongst people, whereas basic healthiness provides us with a theory that respects what we share in common. Basic healthiness is the belief that as human beings we are all born with the same basic essence and capabilities (to think, to feel, and to be helpful). Using this theory to inform our practice does not encourage us to eliminate differences within groups, but instead encourages us to remain open to the value of each individual.

When we believe in the capability of other people to think, feel, and be helpful, our behaviour towards them is more likely to include rather than exclude them. Thus, our belief in basic healthiness will influence how we choose to exercise our authority as educators and consultants. It will help us remember that each person is fundamentally capable, while an understanding of locatedness will encourage us to identify ways to provide diverse opportunities for each unique member of the group.

Group Dynamics and Conflict

In writing about conflict in groups, I hoped to find a way to reframe what it means to work with groups and what it means to encounter conflict. The definitions from which I had previously been operating had negative implications and limited my understanding and

behaviour. My goal was to understand groups and conflict in a way which provided opportunities for me to develop as an educator and consultant.

I chose to examine the theory of group imagoes as a way of understanding and predicting the development of a group. Based on this theory, individuals form a mental picture of themselves, others, the educator, and the group based on their own experiences and perceptions. These pictures or imagoes then become the basis of how people think, feel, and behave in groups. Thus, group imagoes affect group process, individual involvement, and conflict within groups.

People develop group imagoes in four stages. During the evolution of these stages, each member strives to define their own position within the group as well as where others will be positioned. This is a normal part of the development of the group. As we have seen in the section on locatedness, positioning is influenced by many factors, with the issue of power being central, perhaps paramount. As educators and consultants, we can gain valuable information about what might be going on for the participants by becoming aware of each individual's locatedness and how it affects the positioning process.

The group imago theory of group dynamics provides educators and consultants with a way to understand some of the common and predictable interactions and processes of groups. We can use this theory as a guide to understanding some of our own experiences with groups. As an educator and consultant, when I began to understand some of the factors that lie behind the behaviours and attitudes that occur in groups, I became more comfortable with the normalcy of conflict and began to develop a new way of relating to it.

Another way of becoming more comfortable with conflict is to develop a new frame of reference from which to work. I have accomplished this task by examining both the meaning I assigned to conflict and my locatedness in relation to it. Then, in order to develop a new outlook on conflict, I explored how conflict arises in groups, identifying its source in the normal tension and anxiety experienced by people when they join a group.

When unhelpful behaviours occur as a result of conflict, an educator or consultant can explore the nature of the tension for the individual(s) in question. Further, knowledge of locatedness can sensitize educators and consultants to the kinds of issues that may cause tension for people in groups.

This has had the important outcome of showing me that I can expect conflict when I work with groups and thus I need not see it as a sign of some deficiency. Conflict, in fact, serves as a way of teaching me about the participants in a group.

Reflections For Practitioners

The theories on locatedness and basic healthiness have identified ways to better understand individuals, with a focus on learning how to create the most beneficial learning environments for participants in groups. The theory of group imagoes has demonstrated that group dynamics often follow predictable patterns, with conflict a predictable outcome in many cases. Conflict arises as a result of differences and of positioning.

Educators and consultants who want to transform learning environments will benefit from becoming clear about how power affects their practice. The concept of locatedness provides educators and consultants with a way of dissecting their own stance towards conflict, and their own relationships to power.

When educators or consultants understand the power which is inherent in their role, and have clarified their own beliefs about power, they may bring this understanding of power to the attention of participants if it is useful. An understanding of power is especially useful when it guides the use of authority in choosing the content and process for a group.

The notion of positive intention, which is based on the philosophy of basic healthiness, gives us a tool with which to identify the possible needs or wants of participants who are involved in conflict. The positive intention of a behaviour reflects the good a person was hoping to get out of a situation.

Reflecting on positive intention allows us to keep in mind every individual's basic healthiness and helps us limit our judgements of people. When addressing conflict which has stopped the growth of a group, we can introduce positive intention as a way to find non-judgemental questions for us to ask the group. This kind of questioning helps to invoke the basic healthiness of the members of the group, reinforcing the likelihood of a constructive outcome.

In addition to the theories in this thesis, I have explored several processes which have proven important to working with conflict within groups: critical reflection, learning a new language, development of skillful means, and personal reflection. The majority of the questions and issues that I wanted to address in this thesis have come up in my work as an educator and consultant. The use of examples from my own experience enabled me to reflect on specific situations which I had found difficult and to keep the theory focussed on practice. Through exploring such concepts as locatedness, basic healthiness, group imagoes, and conflict, I have found a new language with which to speak about conflict. The exploration of these concepts allowed me to engage in a discussion which asked me as well as the reader to question, analyze, and critique our thoughts, beliefs, ideas, opinions, and feelings towards some important concepts of education and consulting.

The above summarizes the different skills, tools, theories, and philosophies which are found in this thesis. They have been discussed using ideas, language, and words which have been taken from two different bodies of literature. For educators and consultants, the combination of the two orientations, critical pedagogy and psychotherapy, has expanded the repertoire of theories and philosophies from which to develop their practice. It has provided practitioners with different information and possibilities with which to view their role. When faced with conflict in a group, I now have many more choices available to guide my response.

The process of reflecting on practice as explored in this thesis, has also created more than specific theories or tools. It has resulted in a new awareness of the world. As an educator and consultant, my mind has been opened to the vastness of differences among people; to how one person's locations may affect another's; and to the fundamental similarities that exist among people.

This newly developed awareness is difficult to translate into a prescription for practice. As an educator and consultant, my old thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours were familiar to me even though I wanted to change some of them. I had become familiar, for example, with the way I reacted when participants resisted some of my ideas and activities. Even with a new awareness of issues that influence conflict and involvement in groups, I will undoubtedly experience some similar first thoughts and reactions when faced with conflict. What has changed is my intention to shift my energy from wanting to quickly minimize the effects of conflict to wanting to find ways of using conflict constructively. This shift will strengthen as I use my awareness to make new choices when faced with conflict. Redefining my relationship to conflict produces uncertainty, but the space created by this uncertainty is one that I welcome. I imagine that within this space I will discover my location has been enriched by my revised intention as an educator.

When asked exactly how I will use the information and awareness I have gained from writing this thesis, my best answer is that I will sit with it for a while. I will continue to work with groups and invite my new awareness to inform my identity and my location. The reason for letting it rest is based on the belief that my new awareness is going to shape my intuition in a way that is outside of conscious control.

My intuition led me to explore conflict the way I did in this thesis. My desire to control outcomes within a group had become uncomfortable for me and I was starting to believe that there were more effective and inclusive ways of looking at conflict. Now, I think I need to let my exploration of conflict influence my intuition. This, in turn, will allow me to use my new knowledge and awareness in creative ways within my practice.

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