In this final chapter, we take stock of the status of our knowledge theoretically, empirically, and practically on group development as it unfolds in the psychotherapy group. Woven into this analysis is an identification of the many questions that need to be addressed in future research. Finally, we integrate the information in prior chapters by illustrating how segments of two sessions can be understood more fully by applying not only a developmental perspective but also the theoretical perspectives that can be integrated with development theory, such as constructivist and intersubjective frameworks and cognitive–behavioral therapy. We show how an enriched understanding of the group’s developmental work through consideration of subject, setting, and temporal characteristics of the group may aid the therapist in planning interventions.

THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

The three realms of exploration of group development—the construction of theory, research on group development, and the extraction of the
implications of theory and research for how the therapist conducts the group—interpenetrate. Theories provide the hypotheses that empirical research seeks to assess. Emerging findings must be accounted for in developing new theories or modifying old ones. The implications for practice of both theoretical views and empirical findings must be developed. Successes and difficulties in practice provide fodder for new theoretical and empirical work. The degree of development of each of these realms, which we now consider, will thereby hinder or facilitate advancements in other realms.

Theory Development

Psychodynamic and systems perspectives have contributed richly to theoretical conceptualizations of group development. These frameworks have largely examined development from a group-as-a-whole and subgroup perspectives. The questions of how the group changes globally and how subgroups change have been well addressed in existing models. However, further theory development should be directed toward the achievement of a fuller understanding of the individual’s change process given the ways in which he or she organizes and engages with the world. The individual’s relationship to the subgroup and to the group as a whole warrants deeper understanding. The theoretical approaches presented in chapters 7 and 8 of this volume hold promise for expanding group developmental models to provide a stronger and more specific understanding of the individual in relation to these larger subsystems and systems.

The constructivist model presented in chapter 8 of this volume emphasizes the importance of recognizing the context from which understanding generated within that context emerges. The developmental approaches described in this book are rooted in a Euro-American worldview. Furthermore, certain theoretical achievements have been made in conjunction with major historical events. For example, Bion’s (1959, 1962) work on basic assumption groups occurred during World War II. Certainly Bion’s direct exposure to the horrors of war catalyzed his writings on primitive group functioning, and in fact, Bion frequently used the phenomena of war to illustrate his basic assumption groups, especially fight and flight. Yet, a full understanding of how groups evolve requires a consideration of other cultural contexts. Do group scholars from Eastern cultures perceive the conflicts and tasks of each stage in the same way? Would these scholars direct the researcher to collect the same type of data?

Another area of theoretical pursuit concerns those change models that have been proposed over the past few decades to account for the vicissitudes of complex adaptive systems over time other than the progressive stage or life cycle models. Examples of such approaches are punctuated equilibrium, complexity, and adaptive contingency models. Researchers do not yet know to what extent these approaches can be usefully combined with the progres-
sive stage or life cycle models to account more comprehensively for the changes that occur in groups. Is it the case, as Arrow, Poole, Henry, Wheelan, and Moreland (2004) suggested, for example, that with the right set of contextual conditions, a group may jump from one change pattern (e.g., progressive stages) to another (e.g., punctuated equilibrium)? That the integration of such approaches is promising has been suggested by a spate of studies in which the progressive stage model accounted for certain aspects of changes and an alternate model such as complexity theory accounted for others.

Research on Group Psychotherapy

In this section we address what general conclusions can be drawn from extant research, what major questions require further research and attention, and how such investigations should be conducted.

What Researchers Have Learned

Three broad conclusions can be drawn from existing studies. The first is that the progressive stage model accurately describes the process that unfolds in psychotherapy groups. This conclusion is rooted in findings from group climate, therapeutic factor, and leadership studies, all of which were reviewed in chapter 3 of this volume. Evidence is most substantial for an engagement stage in which members build trust and interest in one another; an authority or differentiation stage in which members deal with oppositional feelings toward one another and the therapist; and a stage in which oppositionality diminishes, attachment grows, self-disclosure increases, and members engage in a more intensive feedback process than had occurred previously.

The second conclusion is that developmental progress affects the extent to which members are able to achieve their goals in the group. This evidence was supported by findings from training groups, work groups, and psychotherapy groups. Nonetheless, research is needed to provide more robust support for the association between developmental progress and outcomes. Specific questions beg empirical consideration. Must a group get to a particular developmental stage for the group to reap the benefits of group development? MacKenzie (1997) and Wheelan (1997) averred that the group must progress to the work stage for members to benefit from the group experience. This hypothesis has credibility given that many important processes that are commonly understood as defining group psychotherapy come into play in those stages that follow Stages 1 and 2. At the same time, one may reasonably suppose that Stage 1 opportunities may be significant for members struggling with trust issues and Stage 2 opportunities may be significant for those reactive to authority issues.

The third conclusion is that groups vary in terms of how long it takes a group to complete developmental stages and whether a group progresses, regresses, or becomes fixated. As Wheelan (2005) noted, the fact that stage
development has been shown to occur does not establish that it occurs invariably in all circumstances with all populations. As chapter 9 revealed in relation to contextual variables, investigators have yet to research adequately all of the variables that may influence whether and how rapidly a group proceeds through stages.

Questions for Future Research

Past research on group development in psychotherapy groups has been directed in large part toward examining the question of whether group development occurs, especially development understood as a set of progressive stages. Investigators have considered—albeit to a lesser extent—the relationship between group work and members' success in meeting their treatment goals. Although both of these areas could benefit from further study, their pursuit should be accompanied by the investigation of other questions, the answers to which could have implications for how a group is composed and structured and how the therapist intervenes over the course of the group's life.

The developmental implications of group composition are largely unexplored. How the multiple aspects of members' identity, such as gender and ethnicity, collide or complement one another across the developmental stages has been studied in only a handful of investigations. Those studies suggest that researchers must be careful both to recognize ways in which variables that capture the identity of the person may covary and to design studies to determine which variable is responsible for mediating change. Particularly promising are personality and interpersonal variables that affect how members are likely to react to other members and behave in the group. For example, the dimensions of Affiliation and Control associated with Kiesler's (1983) circumplex model (one of a number of models associated with the interpersonal theory proposed by Leary, 1957) have been demonstrated to have a bearing on developmental processes.

Such information on personality–developmental stage connections is useful in at least two ways. First, it may affect the group psychotherapist's decision about how to constitute a group. For example, MacKenzie, Livesley, Coleman, Harper, and Park (1986) found that members of a group designed for individuals with bulimia established an instant cohesion in relation to their eating-related symptoms but avoided other, deeper types of identification. The therapist may strategically introduce different types of symptom heterogeneity (even if only to include other types of eating disorder) to enhance the members' capacity to forge the kinds of deep connections that will facilitate their movement onto later stages. Yet, in many clinical situations, the group psychotherapist has limited control over composition. A second way such information could be used is in the planning of interventions at various points in the life of the group. In the case of the group of eating-disordered individuals, the therapist may intervene to facilitate members in

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differentiating themselves from one another (e.g., "Shelita and Anastasia are both talking about anger, but Shelita’s emphasis is different in that . . ."). Ultimately, patterns of members’ characteristics and types of interventions must be linked with outcomes.

Another potentially important area of investigation is the preparation of members to participate in a developmental experience. As Wheelan (1997) noted, members’ prior exposure to developmental concepts may facilitate their participating in an exploratory group. Among the ideas that members may usefully assimilate are the notions that times in the life of the group may be fraught with pain, may contrast greatly with earlier periods, and may be experienced as confusing and chaotic (Brabender, 2000). The benefit of cultivating such ideas is that doing so inoculates the individual against the intensity of disappointment that might lead him or her to leave the group. Preparation might stimulate members’ curiosity about changes, a curiosity that will allow elements to emerge with sufficient prominence that they can exert influence on the overall group dynamic. One concern that may arise in relation to such developmental preparation is that it could deprive members of the emotional immediacy of experiencing the developmental issues from a fresh and innocent perspective. However, even if training alters a member’s perspective (after all, that is its purpose), it is unlikely to do so in a way that precludes members’ intensively experiencing the unfolding of the stages. Evidence for members’ capacity to participate in the stages even with knowledge of them appears in the set of studies that have been done on experiential groups, composed largely of group psychotherapists (e.g., MacKenzie, Dies, Coché, Rutan, & Stone, 1987). Although it is unlikely that most members go into these group experiences without any prior knowledge of group therapy, experiential or training groups yield evidence of the existence of the developmental stages.

Methodological Issues

For group developmental research to provide more comprehensive descriptions of how a psychotherapy group matures, the following methodological points must be taken into consideration in designing studies: (a) the need to comparatively assess models, (b) the conduct of multisite studies, (c) the use of common measures across studies, (d) selection of an appropriate unit of analysis, and (e) a strategic selection of a point of view.

Comparative Assessment of Models. Although research studies exist showing that developmental stage concepts have some descriptive value for the changes over time that occur in psychotherapy groups, researchers have given scant attention to whether a progressive developmental stage model provides a better description of changes than alternate models. Studies should be conducted in which investigators make alternate predictions of change patterns based on competing models. Such studies occur much more commonly with work groups in an organizational psychology context. Fortunately,
these studies can provide the group psychotherapy researcher with methodological strategies to compare competing models.

An example of such a methodology is that used by Arrow (1997), who tested the predictions of three models of group change—robust equilibrium, punctuated equilibrium (see chap. 2, this volume), and adaptive contingency—concerning the continuity of and change in structural patterns over 13 weeks. The robust equilibrium model predicts a brief period of instability followed by a steady state. The punctuated equilibrium model predicts an initial steady state that would remain until major external or internal events precipitate the emergence of a new structure. The adaptive contingency model predicts that changes will occur on the basis of external and internal contingencies.

Arrow (1997) identified structural patterns by having all members rate other members and themselves in terms of influence on decision making in the group. Unfortunately, her data did not permit a comparison of these models with the model that has been emphasized most in this text, the progressive stage model. Arrow also looked at two different formats of groups—face to face and computer mediated. She found that whereas the punctuated equilibrium model best described the face-to-face group, the robust equilibrium model accounted most precisely for changes in a computer-mediated group. She hypothesized that in the face-to-face group, members may have had a greater wealth of cues by which to develop an initial schema compared with participants in the computer-mediated group.

Arrow's (1997) methodology and findings yielded information that would enable group psychotherapists to learn whether different group formats (in her study, face-to-face vs. computer-mediated groups) launch different types of change processes. Her use of a computer-mediated format is especially noteworthy given the burgeoning literature on the delivery of group psychotherapy over the Internet (see B. J. Page, 2004; Shields, 2000). An evaluation of the descriptiveness of any proposed model of group change would also be facilitated by the conduct of research programs that are larger in scope than those from which the major empirical findings on group development have been drawn. Much of the research contributed to the literature has been scattered and has been provided by a team allied to a given theoretical approach. The importance of these research efforts should not be minimized: They have been invaluable in establishing group development as a phenomenon and in pointing to key features of group process that should be taken into account in a comprehensive study of group. A. P. Beck and colleagues’ (A. P. Beck, 1974; A. P. Beck, Dugo, Eng, Lewis, & Peters, 1983) work on emergent leadership is an example of an important research program identifying such a critical aspect of group process.

Multisite Studies. At this juncture, the field would benefit greatly from the establishment of a consortium of research settings that collaborate on the careful examination of changes in psychotherapy groups over time. This collaboration would enable a determination of whether the proposed models
for accounting for these changes have breadth of application. As Arrow et al. (2004) wrote, “For large-scale temporal studies of groups to be feasible, we need to conduct theory-driven research with multiple groups operating under different task and contextual conditions, which suggests a shift from the individual-researcher model to more multi-site, multisochlar large-scale studies” (p. 99). Such collaborations need not require the availability of multiple groups within a single setting. The use of methods such as the case-based time-series analysis with multiple observations before, during, and after treatment (Borckardt et al., 2008) will allow the individual practitioner who is running only a single group to contribute to the data pool on process–outcome relationships.

Common Measures Across Studies. As part of this collaboration, the selection of common measures for reflecting changes in groups should occur. In 1994, MacKenzie (1994a) pointed out that the field is characterized by a hodgepodge of different ways of investigating stage development with the consequence that the results of different studies cannot directly be compared with one another. Differences in findings may be due merely to differences in measures. With common measures, investigators could obtain findings that build on rather than exist in parallel to prior investigations. This building process enables cumulative knowledge rather than the fragmented and scattered set of findings currently characterizing the empirical landscape of group development research.

What measures should researchers use to capture group development? Within the group psychotherapy literature, the Group Climate Questionnaire (short version; GCQ–S) is well established and has been selected for inclusion in the Core Battery–R of the American Group Psychotherapy Association (MacKenzie & Dies, 1981). This measure asks group members to make observations about the group, not about their own position or level of satisfaction in the sessions. As Brossart, Patton, and Wood (1998) noted, “From a research perspective, having nearly every stage delineated in terms of the GCQ is a boon. It gives the researcher an advantage in interpreting results based on theory and assists with hypothesis development and testing” (p. 6). The GCQ, as Johnson et al. (2006) pointed out, has the advantage of a high level of familiarity and use among group psychotherapists—as seen in its being featured in at least 46 studies, 15 of which have linked GCQ scores to outcome. In Johnson et al.’s own study, the factor structure of the GCQ received partial support, and further research to determine the correct factor structure is needed. Work is also needed on the extension of the GCQ–S to adolescent groups (Kivlighan & Tarrant, 2001). When using the GCQ–S to determine the stages of group development, the therapist should administer it at the end of every session because a stage shift could occur within any session.

Two additional instruments, which have been cited repeatedly in this volume, have been applied primarily in the organizational psychology realm.
The Group Developmental Observation System (GDOS; Wheelan, Verdi, & McKeage, 1994), which entails the analysis of audiotapes of sessions using a group developmental system of eight categories. This system is focused on the process of members’ interaction rather than the content of verbalizations. Across a number of studies (e.g., Wheelan & McKeage, 1993; Wheelan & Verdi, 1992; Wheelan & Williams, 2003), the agreement among coders ranges from 85% to 95%. The Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ; Wheelan & Hochberger, 1996) is an instrument that taps members’ perceptions of the group and yields scores on four scales: Dependency/Inclusion, Counterdependency/Fight, Trust/Structure, and Work/Productivity. The psychometric properties of this instrument recommend its use. Test–retest and intraitem correlations for each of the scales are high, and evidence has been obtained for the GDQ’s concurrent validity with other instruments measuring similar constructs. Construct validity has been supported through a study showing that groups that meet for longer durations perceive the group to have the characteristics associated with the more mature stages of development than groups that have met for briefer durations.

The GCQ, GDOS, and GDQ all can play a useful role in future developmental research. The GDOS and GDQ are tied somewhat more closely to developmental theory than the GCQ–S and closely capture the first four developmental stages as they have been described by Bion (1961), Stock and Theilen (1958), Tuckman (1965) and others. Given that the GCQ–S reflects the building blocks of the developmental stages rather than the stages themselves, this instrument is more suitable for considering stages beyond the standard four. The GCQ–S was designed specifically with psychotherapy groups in mind, and as such, the items easily conform to members’ impressions of the group. The study of group development would be facilitated by investigations that directly compare the GCQ–S, GDOS, and GDQ to determine in which situations each is best used.

Complementing the aforementioned instruments is a tool that has great potential for expanding our awareness of developmental stages. Conversation analysis (CA; Sacks, 1992), a technique that was developed in the 1960s, has been used in a variety of social sciences, and has taken varied forms. Specifically, CA provides a way of studying the group that is distinct from either self-report or reports of group observers. Lepper and Mergenthaler (2005) demonstrated the promise of this technique by using a particular application of CA, computer-assisted text analysis, for a session of a psychodynamic psychotherapy group. Using this tool, they studied group cohesion as it was reflected in topic density (the proportion of a topic in a word group). Within the confines of a single session, they were able to demonstrate movement from question-and-answer responses that occur on a two-party basis to multi-party talk that involves greater reflection. From developmental models, predictions can be made across sessions concerning how conversation is likely to change. This method should help to determine whether groups show a
stage progression and the particular segments when the shift from stage to stage occurs.

Sequential Analysis of Verbal Interaction (Simon & Agazarian, 1967), which is described in chapter 6 of this volume, is another tool for capturing group process across the developmental stages. This instrument was used in a process comparison of cognitive–behavioral therapy (CBT) and analytical therapy across the stages of the group by Sandahl, Lindgren, and Herlitz (2000). Methodological problems precluded the use of this study to learn about developmental stages. For example, the investigators did not analyze data from the beginning and end of the 15-session groups. Nonetheless, the investigators did show that interesting differences between the two approaches can be discerned through use of Sequential Analysis of Verbal Interaction. For example, they found that in the middle of the group’s life, members of an analytic group exhibited greater empathy than CBT members whereas CBT members experienced greater competition.

Another new frontier in studying group process is the mapping of non-linear dynamic interactions using methods derived from chaos–complexity theory as seen in the research of Wheelan and Williams (2003). Also seen in their work is the use of wavelet transform images and the analysis of such features of the images as visual clarity, color, and overall tone. These methods enable the researcher to discern both what is unique about psychotherapy groups as distinct from other systems and what is unique about each group, and they will be especially useful in the pursuit of the goal identified in the “Theory Development” section of this chapter: the comparison and integration of different models of change patterns in groups.

Use of any of the aforementioned measures is preferable to another practice in the literature of basing developmental stages on the time a group has met. For example, some current investigators declare that Sessions 1 and 2 correspond to Stage 1. Throughout this text, we have discussed the fact that groups are variable in terms of the efficiency with which they proceed through a developmental stage. We have also noted that groups are capable of fixating or regressing. Hence, in the absence of any evidence that the interactional patterns, themes, or emotional reactions manifested in a session correspond to a stage, the assignment of a stage to a session is arbitrary. Given the arbitrariness of the assignment of particular stages to sessions, the continuous measurement of group processes across the life of the group is appropriate (Fuhriman & Barlow, 1994).

Attention to outcome measures is also important as investigators design studies to determine possible group development outcome links. Burlingame, Fuhriman, and Johnson (2004) saw outcome management methods as having great promise for helping researchers to determine the outcome pattern in any group. Such a method involves the creation of a database from a variety of systems, the development of norms, and the comparison of the results of any given study with those norms.
Unit of Analysis. Another methodological issue in group developmental research concerns the appropriate unit of analysis in group studies. Within the literature, arguments have been made that the fundamental unit of analysis should be the summated group reactions at any point in time on the basis of the notion that group development concerns the group as a whole. Although this point has some theoretical reasonableness, the individual’s performance is critical to looking at connections between participation in the developmental stages and outcomes. An example of such a methodology is Brossart et al.’s (1998) Tuckerized growth curve analysis, which entails a longitudinal data-sampling technique that retains information about the performance of the individual; it is an ideographic approach to the study of the group. As Burlingame et al. (2004) pointed out, the key disadvantage of this technique is the complexity of the statistical analysis.

Strategic Selection of a Point of View. Future research should be designed with a careful consideration of the range of possible perspectives that can be garnered on the development of any particular group. Whose observations concerning group development are most useful—those of trained observers, naive observers, therapists, or group members—and in what circumstances? This research is useful for two reasons. First, it provides information on what type of perspective may be most useful given the research question. Second, it enables researchers to know the generalizability of findings based on one perspective to group observations from other perspectives. A burgeoning literature base addresses this question. For example, Hurley and Brooks (1988) contrasted members’ and observers’ observations using the GCQ-S and found a substantial level of agreement. Kacen and Rozovski (1988) studied an actual treatment group, constituted of individuals recovering from myocardial infarctions. They contrasted direct observers who attended the sessions, indirect observers who viewed taped group sessions, and the observations of the group members themselves. Observations were made at three points over the life of the 10-session group. The investigators found a high level of agreement among these three perspectives. Only 1 of 12 group processes showed a difference among the three perspectives. Both direct observers and indirect observers saw growth in self-discovery over time; participants saw greater stability in their level of self-discovery. Although this study suggests that the investigator may enjoy some flexibility in which perspective to adopt, the dimensions being assessed may suggest the desirability of one perspective over another.

Practice Implications

The theoretical and empirical work that has been generated over the last 6 decades of group work has led insufficiently to developmentally based practice guidelines. The emphasis in both theory and research has been on understanding the natural unfolding of a group—a descriptive rather than
prescriptive endeavor. Psychotherapy groups are conducted to lessen mem-
bers' suffering and enhance their adaptation. However, findings of work groups,
psychotherapy groups, and training groups point to an association between
the maturity of the group and the group's capacity to meet its stated goals.
Given this association, group psychotherapists' interventions should be de-
signed, at least in part, to facilitate the group's development. Such interven-
tions require sets of knowledge and related skills. As noted in chapter 5 of
this volume, a set of core skills must be in place that the therapist will draw
on across stages. Such skills include those related to providing for members'
safety, showing members' caring, fostering attention to the cognitive and
emotional elements of members' immediate experience, and enabling the
creation and discovery of meaning from members' experiences. The ther-
apist must possess the ability to discern the stage of the group and to ascertain
when the group is transitioning from one stage to another.

Another area that developmentally informed practice guidelines might
address is composition. In the prior section on research questions, we argue
that more information is needed on how participant variables influence group
development. Such information may help the therapist intervene in a more
sensitive and effective way as the group is underway. Yet, at times, the ther-
apist may have greater latitude to direct the composition of the group. Devel-
opmental writers have outlined the interpersonal and leadership resources
needed in the group (A. P. Beck, 1981a, 1981b; Piper, McCallum, & Azim,
1992). These writers assure us that the group will cultivate the talent needed
to perform critical functions. Nonetheless, as these writers might agree, it
defies credulity to imagine that some potential members might not perform
these tasks as ably as others. When the therapist has the luxury of attending
to composition in more than a gross way, what might be the therapist's com-
position strategy?

Practice guidelines should also provide direction concerning a group's
desirable structural features. What is the optimal size, session length, and
interval before which a new member is introduced from a developmental stand-
point? What considerations should be made concerning the stages in
which new members are introduced? What developmental consequences fol-
low from having a particular leadership structure? Does it matter whether
there is solo leadership, cotherapy, or a nequipos situation (in which a senior
therapist is accompanied by a student; see Roller & Nelson, 1991)? Do the
monetary practices of the therapist affect group psychotherapy? For instance,
does the therapist's having a sliding scale versus fixed fee affect members' readiness to engage with one another (Stage 1) or acknowledge negative feelings toward one another and authority (Stage 2)?

Practice guidelines should also include information concerning the peda-
gogy of training group psychotherapists to work with developmental stages.
In chapter 1 of this volume, we assert that an advantage of attention to a
group developmental model is the assistance it provides the neophyte thera-
pist in synthesizing the diverse information from different sources on the
group's dynamics. Yet little is known about learning processes by which train-
ees can increase their ability to discern developmental cues both in the group
and in their own person, to integrate disparate pieces of information, and to
develop a formulation from which interventions may be devised.

INTEGRATING DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVES: A RETURN TO THE TRADITIONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUP

This text, through its theoretical, empirical, and practice foci, has at-
ttempted to pull together a vast and often fragmented literature on psycho-
therapy group development. The purpose of this effort is to help the group psychotherapist intervene more effectively, thereby enabling the group mem-
ers to realize more favorable outcomes from group treatment. Although the chapters have addressed varied aspects of group development, we hope that the group psychotherapist will access all of the areas addressed in formulating a conceptualization and developing an intervention strategy at any mo-
ment in the life of the group. To aid the reader in this task, we end with a vignette that integrates much of the material we have addressed in the ear-
lier chapters.

Context

A group composed of five women and three men had been meeting for 9 months on a weekly basis. The group had begun with nine members, but one man left after two sessions. The therapist was unable to explore with this member his reasons for leaving. She suspected that he left because of his extreme social anxiety, the anxiety for which he sought treatment in enter-
ing the group.

Each member is characterized in terms of his or her characteristic inter-
actional behaviors.

Bonnie is a confident White woman in her early 40s. This member often confronts others and provokes in different ways. Bonnie is frequently a focus of the group. Bonnie is a customer service representative and has been for many years.

Candy is a 20-year-old White woman who is frequently described by other members as “shooting from the hip.” She exhibits a capacity to be highly empathic with other members but also has episodes of rageful out-
bursts. She is a college student.

Clara is a reticent White woman who emigrated from Germany 3 years ago. Although her command of English is excellent, she speaks self-con-
sciously. She is a sensitive member who resonates to other members' expres-

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sions of loneliness and alienation. She is married with three children and does not work outside the home.

Paul is a middle-aged White man who was silent in the beginning of the group except to respond with apprehension over the departure of a member early in the group. Paul reliably expresses concern about the dangers of trusting others.

Rob is a White man in his 30s who has been active in identifying with other members in relation to a great range of psychological experiences. Earlier in his life, he pursued training to become a Franciscan monk. Currently, he is a high school teacher.

Vic is an Asian man who generally attempts to mediate differences between members of the group. His point of view is especially respected, and members actively call on him to intervene when a stalemate occurs.

Yvette is a distractible White woman whose wanderings are tolerated by the group in part because she conveys a sense of fragility and in part because the distractions are at times welcomed by members. Yvette is on disability for a physical ailment.

Sessions 37 and 38

In Session 37, the session before the one we focus on here, several members had spoken of their sexual lives. Only Rob's descriptions, however, were accompanied by the comment, "I have never told this to anyone except a close friend." Paul expressed distress at the end of the session over his perception that Rob's disclosures were too aggressively sought by two other group members, Candy and Bonnie. He stated that Rob was coerced into sharing what he termed "classified information." Paul believed that Rob would regret the disclosures. In response to Paul's concern, Rob expressed himself ambiguously as to whether he saw Paul's worry as having some substance. Candy and Bonnie responded to Paul's assertion with indignation and incredulity. Clara and Vic were perplexed and expressed some sympathy for both positions. The session ended on a tense note.

In the session, group members noted that Rob had not arrived at the time the session began.

Paul looked irritated and murmured, "I'm not saying anything," Bonnie anxiously pointed out to the group that Rob had been late in prior sessions and "nothing was wrong—just traffic." The therapist wondered aloud what fantasies members had about Rob's absence. As if she hadn't heard the therapist's comment, Yvette, a member who routinely diverted members from difficult issues by sharing her self-preoccupations, began to talk about an argument she had had with her boyfriend. As she was narrating that conversation, Rob walked in. The group members immediately switched attention to him. Paul asked, "How are you doing?" Rob said, "It was difficult for me to come here. I thought about not coming back,
but I also wanted to return.” Bonnie said she felt guilty; perhaps Paul was right that she asked Rob too many questions. She told Rob her intent was not to pressure him but merely to help him. She explained, “I remember from the orientation that in the group, you would share what you had not shared before and get relief. I wanted you to get relief.” Paul wondered why group members could not see that Rob broke into a sweat somewhere in the middle of the session, a manifestation that group members were being too intrusive.

Rob then said that he believed he was giving the group a misimpression. He stated that he appreciated Paul’s concern about him but he felt the caring of other group members as well. He acknowledged that he was somewhat embarrassed by what he had shared but went on to reveal that his greater sensitivity concerned his own religious doubts about his lifestyle. His description of his lifestyle reawakened these doubts. He further stated that at one time he had contemplated pursuing a religious life, and his current lifestyle was at odds with all of the values of his former self, values that were dormant but present.

Clara haltingly said that even though she was sorry that Rob was in torment over what he had shared, she was experiencing a conflict within herself as well. She said that over her time in the group, she had developed a particular fondness for Rob. At the same time, she felt herself somewhat repelled by the sexual practices he described. She perceived group members as exerting pressure on one another to say they accepted Rob’s sexual behaviors. At the same time, she did not feel that she liked or respected Rob any less. Reacting to Clara’s comments, Bonnie remonstrated with members to accept one another for who they were. Clara argued that accepting a member does not entail the obligation to accept all aspects of that person. The group members then formed coalitions according to their sympathy for Bonnie’s (“Why should I share anything if what I reveal may be rejected?”) or Clara’s (“If we have to accept everything in one another, we will be forced to be inauthentic”) positions.

Rob, who had been sitting quietly through these exchanges, noted that he detected a kind of split in himself. On the one hand, he saw himself as needing to accept that he had a longing to engage in certain behaviors and that he had engaged in those behaviors. On the other hand, he believed that he could separately accept or reject those behaviors as part of his future. Other members found the distinction intriguing. Some resonated to it immediately and others found it perplexing. Nonetheless, it seemed that Rob’s framing led the group to realize and be willing to explore further the complexity of the enterprise of accepting oneself and others.

Subsequent Sessions

In later sessions, members continued to make significant self-disclosures. However, they appeared to be given more voluntarily rather than in response to other members’ persistent questioning. Also, members evinced
greater sensitivity to the disclosing member's vulnerability and generated means to support that member (e.g., by asking whether an exploration had gone far enough for a given session).

Analysis of the Vignette

This session can be considered in terms of the stage of development in which the group is residing, the demands on the therapist at this juncture in group life, the membership and contextual variables affecting group process, and the potential contribution of theories other than those typically applied to understanding group development.

Stage Development

The reader may recognize many of the features of the end of Stage 3 of our model described in chapter 4 of this volume. The level of disclosure is high, and the types of disclosures are different from those typically made in Stage 1 in that the latter are well rehearsed. In Stage 3, members feel greater safety in making disclosures that may be associated with shame. The fact that many in the group had talked about their sexual lives and that Bonnie and Candy were so insistent on Rob's sharing is typical of the disregard for boundaries shown by a Stage 3 group.

The group's capacity to work in relative independence of the therapist is another hallmark of the group's residency in a stage subsequent to the first two stages of development. For example, Paul, in taking issue with Bonnie and Candy's level of aggression in eliciting sensitive information from Rob, is performing a safety function that early in the group would be provided primarily by the therapist. However, Paul's willingness to come up against the rest of the group is an indication that another wind is blowing in the group. His assertion of an opinion that is at odds with the expressed group sentiment ("expressed" because one does not know what views are privately held) is in itself a statement of the existence of differences, an existence that is disavowed by the group in Stage 3. Within A. P. Beck and colleagues' system (A. P. Beck, 1981a; Beck, Eng, & Brusa, 1989), Paul is a cautionary leader articulating for the group the perils of absolute intimacy. Because Paul gives voice to a worry that others have held privately, he launches the formation of a new subgroup (Agazarian, 1997), the crystallization of which moves the group into the next developmental stage.

We now turn to the analysis of the session from the enriching perspectives of the leadership, member characteristics, time frame, structure, and theoretical orientations considered in chapters 6 and 7 of this volume.

Leadership

The first demand placed on the therapist was to perform a developmental assessment of the session as was done in the preceding paragraphs.
addition to the pieces of evidence identified in those paragraphs, the therapist would access his or her own internal reactions to mine their diagnostic significance. As was noted in chapter 5 of this volume, therapists within this stage may share in the dominant affect impulse constellation of the group by wishing to eradicate the boundaries that in prior stages had been so critical to the group's ability to progress. As in chapter 6 of this volume, in which Dr. Barker allowed the group to call a hospitalized member who had broken his elbow, the therapist here must participate in the group's urge to pressure members to self-disclose beyond what may be optimal for individual members. Influenced by this element, the therapist could interfere with Paul's effort to raise an objection to the doggedness and intensity of Bonnie and Marianne's questioning of Rob. If the therapist were attentive to impatience with Paul, then this information could be used to recognize both the group's residency in Stage 3 and the presence of a force in the group moving the group forward. Rather than interfering with Paul's efforts, the therapist may support him by facilitating those who agreed with Paul's position to express that fact.

Aside from monitoring his or her feelings, the therapist at this developmental juncture must be vigilant to members' proclivity to defy the boundaries that had been established for the group in the interest of establishing greater closeness among members. Readers might imagine members considering contacting Paul. The fact that this possibility did not occur to members may have been another piece of evidence suggesting that the members were moving toward Stage 4. Had the members considered contacting Paul, the therapist's assisting members in recognizing the possible motives underlying the action (e.g., the wish to deny differences) and the consequences (paradoxically, the increase in mistrust among members) might prevent members from engaging in interactional patterns that would not only hinder the group's progress but also potentially create the conditions for a regression to an earlier stage of functioning. At the same time, the therapist must be mindful of the progress the group has made in addressing past challenges and be chary of assuming a directive stance that could undermine the group's newly won independence.

Membership and Contextual Variables

An understanding of the dynamics of the session is enriched by a consideration of who is in the group and the structured features defining the group situation.

Composition. Features that contribute to each member's identity (Hays, 2007) could influence his or her cognitions, affects, and modes of relating in the group. Moreover, the respects in which members are similar to and different from one another also have a bearing on how the member negotiates this developmental juncture. For example, how members regard the sharing of a secret, particularly concerning sexual material, may have foundation in

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their cultural contexts. For example, Paul's cultural context may be one in which the prohibition against sharing private information, especially matters of a sexual nature, is great. He would then have a low threshold for experiencing invitations to disclosure of such material as a significant boundary violation. The therapist's appreciation of the role of culture may increase his or her attunement to disparities in members' experiences to the same event, which can enable the therapist to encourage the expression of alternate and more developmentally progressive voices than those currently having sway in the group. Variables that capture interpersonal style also have significance. For example, were the therapist to know that Bonnie has an interpersonal style characterized by a high level of dominance (see chap. 8, this volume), she might anticipate that Bonnie may perceive other members as more passive and weak and in need of her direction. The possession of this information could enable the therapist to direct Bonnie's attention to data in the group at odds with this perceptual bias.

Temporal Considerations. The temporal aspects of the group are also important. The time-unlimited nature of the group may have contributed to a more luxurious unfolding of the developmental stages. In some stage models, the phenomena of Stages 3 and 4 described in chapter 3 of this volume are not depicted as occurring sequentially. Indeed, in a short-term time frame, members may take stock of progress more aggressively, leading them to "get down to business" and enjoy the playfulness of Stage 3 fleetingly. The group in the present vignette immersed itself in a full-fledged Stage 3 that created opportunities for a heightened conflict between closeness and separateness.

Size. Structurally, the group was midsized. This feature created a circumstance in which competition for air time was not excessive. However, a sufficient number of members were present for ease of formation of subgroups. Relative membership stability characterized this group, and this stability may have contributed to the steadiness of the group's progress through the developmental stages.

The Group Through the Lens of Alternate Theories

In this book, we have presented a number of theoretical and practice perspectives on group psychotherapy. Although these in large measure have developed apart from stage models of group development, they nonetheless enrich this perspective. In this section, we focus on three of these: constructivism and social constructionism, intersubjective approaches, and cognitive and behavioral therapists.

Constructivism

Constructivism or social constructionism, as was noted in chapter 8 of this volume, provides recognition of the creative aspect of the schemes that members develop for each of the developmental stages and how these schemes
play a role in modifying each member's personal narrative. Using this intellectual motif, the therapist could see Rob's act of sharing aspects of his past as a revisiting and reworking of his personal narrative, an activity for which Stage 3 provides especially rich opportunities. Paul modified his narrative in a way that allowed him to both accept himself and his past while making an independent decision about his future.

Intersubjective Approach

The intersubjective approach directs attention to the cocreated aspect of group members' experiences. Readers can see in Bonnie's statement that she understood the group to involve sharing what had not been shared with others previously as one of the workings of the group. Her encouragement of Rob was an effort to act in accordance with this notion: By helping him to open up in this obviously sensitive area, she believed that she was assisting him in realizing the purpose for his participation in the group. In a more traditional theoretical vein, Bonnie's manner of interacting with Rob can be understood in terms of her history and the construction of self and others that she developed as a consequence of this history. However, the intersubjective standpoint demands an acknowledgment that the frame the therapist created, emerging out of his or her own subjectivity, informed the struggles members experienced in their ongoing interactions. The disclosure prescription without further instruction, direction, or explanation invited the emergence of personal boundary crossings that may have been experienced by some other members as insensitive. Furthermore, the therapist's silence during the exchanges was understandably seen by Bonnie and some others as a condoning of their work with Rob. Had the therapist admitted the way in which her own subjectivity affected Bonnie, she would have cultivated Bonnie's sensitivity to seeing the effects of the expression of her own subjectivity on others.

Another aspect of the intersubjective analysis might have been the exploration of enactments. From the intersubjective perspective, enactments are inevitable, and in this group, a possible enactive sequence was Rob's unaddressed tardiness. What was contained in members' single-minded focus on his discomfort? One interpretation may be that this behavior is merely consistent with a Stage 3 repudiation of boundaries. Another interpretation is that through his lateness, Rob was at once expressing anxiety at being "fed" by the group and restoring an external empty space to match a familiar sense of emptiness inside (Bledin, 2006). A third interpretation, as Meissner (2006) noted, is that tardiness can be an expression of independence and autonomy. The group's fantasy seemed to be that through their disregard for Rob's personal boundaries, they had destroyed him as a member. Possibly the acceptance of his late arrival was an act of restitution: Members were giving back to Rob his ability to determine his own behavior in the group. Such an interpretation might be consistent with a developmental move toward
separation—a transition often precipitated by an adverse experience with efforts to achieve total closeness. From an intervention standpoint, by refraining from confronting Rob on his tardiness and allowing the group's reaction to the boundary transgression to unfold in the form of an enactment, the group's pastiche of psychological contents becomes available for exploration.

Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies

The structural perspective would have been especially useful in supporting members' transfer of insights gleaned in the group to the world outside. Cognitive and behavioral models help members acquire skills in recognizing cognitive–affective connections, be they momentary automatic thoughts and their accompanying affects or broad schema providing the substrate of thinking and the affective constellations these schema stimulate when activated. Within a cognitive–behavioral model, the therapist would sculpt a process wherein Clara could identify the automatic thoughts she had that led her to accede to the group's pressure to respond inauthentically. Such a thought may have been, "If these members don't approve of every belief I express in this group, I must be bad," a thought that she learns is associated with depressive affect. By helping her articulate this thought in a precise way and spot its presence whenever it arises in response to group events, the therapist is supporting Clara’s skill in engaging in this process in her extragroup life. Such a technique would be especially important were this group to be conducted within a short-term time frame. Additionally, the structured approaches would attune the therapist to encourage members to offer more specific feedback to one another and to recognize the achievement of microsteps toward goals.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, our survey of the status of theory, research, and practical applications has led to an integrative focus on a single session in one particular group. We have seen how analysis of the group can be enriched by a focus on stages, member characteristics, leadership, group composition and size, and time frame. We have also seen how alternate theories can enrich any therapist's understanding of group process.

Historically, the study of group development has been focused on the question of whether progressive stages exist. We believe, in light of extant research, our own clinical observations, and those of other group psychotherapists, that the statement that progressive models of group development, including our own, possess at least descriptive value and can be applied to the current practice of group psychotherapy, regardless of therapists' theoretical orientations.