CE Information for Participants

Please see front matter for Continuing Education Credit Details and Requirements.

Consciousness-Raising in a Gender Conflict Group, **by Daphna Joel, Ph.D., and Dana Yarimi, B.A.**

Estimated Time to Complete this Activity: 90 minutes

Learning Objectives:
The reader will be able to:
1. Describe the ways gender affects subjects at the social, interpersonal, and personal levels.
2. Analyze situations in groups in terms of power relations between a dominant group and subordinate groups.
3. Explain the complexity in creating a safe atmosphere in the group.

Author Disclosures:
Daphna Joel, Nothing to Disclose
Dana Yarimi, Nothing to Disclose

Consciousness-Raising in a Gender Conflict Group

DAPHNA JOEL, PH.D.
DANA YARIMI, B.A.

ABSTRACT

This article describes the main processes and themes in consciousness-raising gender conflict groups for undergraduate students who study in parallel a course on gender and psychology. The main theme of the course is that gender is a classification system that influences individuals, interactions between individuals, and social institutions. The aim of the groups is to provide students with a safe environment to discuss their thoughts and feelings following the encounter of these ideas. Group leading is based on a combination of principles derived from consciousness-raising groups from the 1970s and a model for working with groups in conflict.

This article describes a group for undergraduate students in psychology who are also enrolled in a course on gender and psychology ("Is Pink for Girls? Issues in the Psychology of Gender," given by DJ). The main theme of the gender and psychology course is that gender is a classification system that influences individuals, interactions between individuals, and social institutions (Crawford, 2006). The course describes the biological, psy-

Daphna Joel is affiliated with the School of Psychological Sciences and the Sagol School of Neuroscience at Tel-Aviv University in Tel-Aviv, Israel. Dana Yarimi is affiliated with the School of Psychological Sciences at Tel-Aviv University.

chological, and social processes that are involved in becoming males and females, men and women. It also analyzes the social construction of sexual acts and relations and of sexual orientation. The goal of the group is to provide students with a safe environment to discuss their thoughts and feelings following the encounter with these issues, and particularly the realization that gender and sexuality are social constructs that play a major role in their lives and in their self perception—notions that are typically new to them. Group leading is based on a combination of principles derived from consciousness-raising groups from the 1970s and a model for working with groups in conflict, developed originally in Neve-Shalom, Israel, for working with Jewish-Arab groups (Sonnenschein, Halabi, & Friedman, 1998). The purpose of this paper is to describe the main processes and themes in our consciousness-raising gender conflict groups as well as the principles that govern the work of the group leader. We start with a short description of consciousness-raising groups and of conflict groups. We then describe the principles that directed group leading in our groups, followed by a description of the main stages such groups undergo through the story of one group. We end by describing the main processes and themes characteristic of such groups.

CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING GROUPS

Consciousness-raising (C-R) groups emerged out of the feminist revolution of the 1960s by radical activists of the Women's Liberation Movement as a means for decreasing isolation and increasing interactions between women (Brodsky, 1973). One of the main assumptions of C-R groups is that the social environment, rather than intrapsychic dynamics, is a key factor in women's difficulties. The C-R group is therefore a mechanism by which women can share experiences and perceptions, explore gender identity issues, and reveal the unique problems of being women in a man's world (Israeli & Santor, 2000). In C-R groups, women gained strength and learned to adopt new roles and express new behaviors. This stage was often preceded by one in which women became angry with their employers, lovers, and old friends for continuing to act in chauvinistic, stereotyped patterns (Brodsky,

1973). Studies of C-R groups revealed that they had an important psychological, educational, and political impact on the participants (e.g., Brodsky, 1973; Israeli & Santor, 2000; Kravetz, 1976), including personal insights, empowerment, and support (Enns, 1993). In recent years C-R groups were also conducted for men. In these groups, men examine their gains and losses from living in a patriarchal world (Farrell, 1974).

CONFLICT GROUPS

The model for working with groups in conflict was developed in Neve-Shalom, Israel, for working with Jewish-Arab groups (Sonnenschein et al., 1998). This model was later used for working with other conflict groups, such as Blacks and Whites, Protestants and Catholics, as well as for working with men–women groups (Ayal, Friedman, Tal, & Gopher, 2006). The theoretical basis for these groups is social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which emphasizes the contribution of social identity to one's interpersonal interactions. Examining the interactions between individuals in a conflict group through the lens of an intergroup conflict unravels the dynamics of the relationships between the two social groups, a dominant majority group (e.g., Jews, Whites, men) and a subordinate minority group (e.g., Arabs, Blacks, women), in the "here and now." In order to facilitate this aim, conflict groups are typically composed of an equal number of participants from the two social groups and one group leader from each social group.

A critical difference between Arabs–Jews or Blacks–Whites conflict groups and gender conflict groups is that whereas in the former the differences in power and status between the two social groups are typically acknowledged, in gender conflict groups many participants (both men and women) often reject the idea that the relations between men and women can be understood in terms of interactions between a dominant majority group and a subordinate minority group (Ayal et al., 2006). Therefore, one of the primary tasks of such groups is to help participants see the relevance of their gender identity to their interpersonal relations, and this is achieved by focusing the group's attention on the power relations as they occur in the group.

THE CURRENT MODEL: C-R GENDER CONFLICT GROUPS

The groups meet for two academic hours once a week over an entire semester (13–14 meetings), in the same semester as the gender and psychology course. They include both men and women, but typically there are more women than men. Thus far, three such groups were facilitated by the teacher of the course (DJ), and five groups were facilitated by graduate students in clinical psychology and in gender studies who were supervised by DJ. Some of these latter groups were led by two women and some by a man and a woman. Every meeting, except for the first, starts with the group leader inviting the participants to use the group with no further instructions. In the first meeting, the group leader describes the group's aims (to enable students to discuss their thoughts and feelings following the encounter with the different issues studied in the course) and mode of work (studying the relations between men and women in the room as a means to learn about each participant's gender identity). The group leader then asks the participants to introduce themselves and describe their first gender experience. No other directions are given in the first meeting.

The main task of the group as we see it is to enable the participants to identify the patriarchal order outside the room, the patriarchal order in the group, and the patriarchal order within themselves.

The main assumptions that directed the interpretations of the group leaders were:

1. We are all products of the patriarchal society we live in, and we have therefore internalized to some extent stereotypical models of a man and a woman. These models affect our thoughts, feelings, and behavior. However, because these models often conflict with our liberal or feminist stand, it is difficult to uncover these internalized models. Only by openly confronting one's models and understanding the benefits and costs of one's behaviors can one reach greater freedom from gender stereotypes.
2. Gender identity is based on perceptions and beliefs that are mostly unconscious, but can be revealed by observing free interactions between subjects. The interpretations of the group leader focused

on the social identity of the participants, and particularly on their gender identity.
3. The group is a microcosm of society and, therefore, the power relations between men and women in society will also be expressed in the relations between participants in the group.

THE STORY OF ONE GROUP

The group described in this paper was comprised of 4 men and 11 women, all, except one, psychology undergraduates (one male participant was a graduate student). The group was facilitated by the teacher of the course (DJ), and a protocol of the meetings was written by an observer who had participated in the course and group the year before (DY). The observer sat in the same room but outside the circle of the group.

The processes and dynamics of the group were much more complex than described below, and different participants underwent these processes at different stages of the group's life.

Identifying the Patriarchal Order in Society

The main topics in the first two meetings were gender stereotypes and gender power relations in society. The first meeting dealt mainly with the ways in which participants were and still are restricted by gender (i.e., the fact that some behaviors and activities are considered appropriate to their gender and others are not—for example, "As a child I went with my mom to buy boots. I wanted blue boots, but the saleswoman said blue is for boys and I should take pink. Finally, my mom bought me green boots"; "When I was in school I envied the girls because in sports lessons they didn't have to play football"). The discussion in the second meeting focused mainly on sexual harassment in the street and in the classroom. Many women and one man shared their frustration and helplessness in the face of sexual harassment. In the two meetings, when discussing gender stereotypes, participants often made no distinction between gender differences and sex differences (e.g., complaining that only women get pregnant and give birth [sex], and that women are the ones responsible for bringing up the kids [gender]). The group leader pointed to this and ex-

plained how talking interchangeably about sex and gender serves to justify gender differences with biological factors.

Identifying the Patriarchal Order in the Group

The third meeting started with both men and women discussing women's social status, until one of the men (O) who had not participated up until that point said, "I want to say something not related, and I hope I will not get flak for doing so. I feel that the discussion is focusing on social criticism. I agree with what has been said, but I am more interested in the scientific aspects of gender. I wonder what others think and what you [the group leader] think." Several of the women in the group invited O to bring up the issues that interested him. At this point, the group leader suggested they analyze what was going on in terms of power relations—the group was dominated by women and dealt mainly with women's issues; this was not convenient to the men, and O attempted to restore male hegemony by suggesting a change of subject; the reaction of the women was to welcome his wish and offer to change the subject. This intervention opened up a heated discussion, with the men and women forming two subgroups for the first time and arguing. Several women expressed their anger with O for attempting to change the subject and for not understanding how important the issues that the group had been dealing with were to them. However, most participants did not understand how this event was related to gender—the men did not understand how O's request to change the subject could be seen as an act of gaining back power, and the women did not understand how their being nice to O could be seen as an act of submission to a member of the dominant group. (For example, a man B said, "I do not understand how the fact that he [O] wanted to talk about something academic changed the discourse to hegemonic"; a woman T said, "I am T. I'm a human being. Wanting to let him talk was not related to the fact that I'm a woman. This was how I felt, and you [the group leader] come and say that this is because I'm a woman, and women want to please"). Yet gradually, most participants started to understand that the fact that O was a man was meaningful to them and affected their reactions to his request (e.g., B said, "In the beginning I thought you [the

group leader] were wrong and that what O said was not related to his being a man. But now I start asking myself whether I agreed with him simply because we are both men"). Participants started to "put a question mark" after their assertions about themselves (e.g., T: "I still think I'm sensitive to others, but now I put a question mark regarding whether this is because I'm a woman or because I'm nice").

The third meeting was an important step in the development of the group and the beginning of the realization that gender is not just outside but also within.

Identifying the Patriarchal Order in Personal Relations Outside the Group

O was not present at the following meeting because he was at a conference, and the participants were worried about him. The discussion was very theoretical, about women's status and stereotypes, being a feminist, and so forth. It took several interventions by the group leader until participants started discussing their feelings following the encounter with O at the previous meeting. Many participants reported that in the past week they had started to see how their gender molds their interactions with family members and romantic partners. A story that generated a lot of discussion came from one of the men, I. He described a recent incident in which his girlfriend had had a flat tire and called him to rescue her, which he did, although he was very annoyed with her for letting herself be so dependent. The discussion that followed also dealt with the price one pays for acting upon the stereotypes (e.g., being "the prince on the white horse") or for refusing to act upon them (e.g., a powerful woman who is negatively viewed as forceful), as well as with the benefits of being gender-typical (e.g., it is convenient for women that men feel they have to change a flat tire for them). It seemed that participants started to understand what they can gain from the group and how identifying their gendered selves within themselves may give them more freedom. Participants also expressed their anger toward the group leader because of her intervention at the previous meeting, but they could also see that although she had an agenda, the agenda was "let's question everything."

Identifying the Patriarchal Order Within Oneself—Gender Identity: Would Men Disappear If Patriarchy Disappears? Or What Is a Man to Me?

The next three meetings (5–7) dealt mainly with these questions, posed by both men and women. Feminist theorists and psychoanalysts, following Judith Butler's theory of performativity (1990), argue that gender is not something people have but rather something people do (e.g., Bornstein, 1994; Dimen, 2003; Goldner, 2011; Layton, 1997; Stone, 2004), and that performing "a man" is performing dominance. In the context of these theories, it is easier to understand the worries of both men and women in the group regarding this question: What is it to me to be a man if I am not dominant? (as posed by men), or, What is a man to me if he is not dominant? and, Does being dominant make me a man? (as posed by women). This was not a theoretical question, because the social order in the group was different from the order outside, with the group leader being a woman and more women participants than men. Both men and women discussed their image of "The Man" and the connection they made between men and being dominant and powerful. For example, a woman participant (K) told a man participant (B), "When B speaks in favor of women, I want to protect him and tell him to be a man"; a while later she explained, "I see what B wrote [in favor of women] and I want to hug him; I admire him, and this is why I feel bad about myself that I want to tell him, 'Be a man.'" Women talked about their appreciation of the "New Man" (e.g., sensitive, kind) but the continued attraction to The Man. This made the men upset and angry, and they tried to convince the women that they were wrong. At this point, the group leader interfered and suggested that instead of being critical of each other's internalized models of gender, participants could gain more by creating a safe environment in which they could boldly face these internalizations. And, indeed, at the subsequent meeting, participants described their feeling that the group provides a safe place to explore themselves, and contrasted it with their increasing activism outside the group.

Most of the sixth meeting was devoted to whether relationships that are not based on power relations can exist. This discussion

was triggered by one of the women, A, who described her first romantic relationships that were with a very dominant and abusive woman and in which she was very submissive. In later relationships, A was always dominant, was The Man, and treated her girlfriends very badly. A said that in the past few weeks she felt very bad about herself, realizing how she gained power by humiliating women, by internalizing the stereotypical views of women as powerless and as sex objects and identifying with men. Other group members also analyzed their relationships with romantic partners in terms of power relations. One of the questions was whether power relations are related to gender and whether being homosexual allows more freedom in terms of power relations. One of the women told the group that moving from heterosexual to homosexual relations allowed her to easily move between being dominant and being submissive. This discussion led again to the question of The Man (powerful, dominant) versus the New Man (gentle, cooperative rather than dominant), and to the conflict gay men face, as stated by one of the participants (a gay man): "To be a gay man is kind of a paradox. If you are a man, you can't be gay. I see in myself internalized homophobia." This meeting ended with a realization of the tension between the wish to behave as they want to with no constrains and the wish to have people think highly of them. This was best exemplified by one of the men who was perceived as both The Man and the New Man, but trying to live up to these two labels, did not talk at all throughout the meeting.

Most of the seventh meeting was devoted to talking about the conflicts of the men in the group between being the New Man—giving up dominance—and their model of The Man. The women were very sympathetic to the men's difficulties. The group leader directed the group's attention to the observation that on the one hand the men were raising very important and relevant topics, and in a very sincere way, but on the other hand, the entire group was devoted to the men's issues, even though several women had started talking about painful dilemmas of their own in the previous meeting.

How to Exert Power

During the eighth meeting, men and women discussed their dilemma with using power. The women confronted their reluctance to take power, or use the power they have as the majority in the group, to discuss the issues that interest them. For example, a woman participant, S, said, "I think the women should answer why we relate more to the men. There is no violence in the room. It is us that give the power to the men." The men discussed their dilemma—if they participate in the group by bringing up their own concerns, they take up group resources and are again dominant. Most of the men were paralyzed by this. But O could not see that his ability to interfere with the group process both at the third meeting and at subsequent meetings may have been related to the power he had because of being a man, and that not everyone was privileged in this way. For example, at the eighth meeting, O said, "I'm angry with what has happened to me here. What do you expect me to do, sit quietly," to which several women answered, "This is often what women have to do." It seemed that O could not adjust to the change of language in the group from one of justice, to one of feelings and empathy. I, one of the other male participants, tried to explain what O was telling the group; he said, "What O is trying to say is that we didn't understand him, that he is different than what we think of him and from what he might have been in the past, and he comes with an honest request from the group to open a new page." One of the women participants, Y, then responded, "What you said, I, is very different from what O said. I didn't feel that you attacked me, but O did." I also helped the group find a solution to the problem created by the fact that the main group resource is time, and as a result if one speaks, it is on behalf of the others. I pointed to additional group resources, such as attention, acceptance, and agreement. When these resources are taken into account, participation in the group is no longer a zero sum game.

**Identifying the Patriarchal Order Within Oneself—Gender Identity:
How Women Deal with Their Internalization
of the Patriarchal Order**

The ninth and tenth meetings mainly dealt with women's dialog with their internalized models of men and women. The ninth meeting started with a story from one of the women, M, who was considered a feminist from the first meeting. She described a trip in the desert with friends (men and women) in which she was treated as The Man, which made her happy. Toward the end of the trip, she stayed behind with two other women who had difficulty walking. When it got dark, she called for a rescue force, but at the end, the three of them managed to get out on their own, and the call for rescue was canceled. M's male friends criticized her for calling for help and said it had happened because they were three females, and if a man had been with them, it would not have happened. M described her frustration that whatever she would do, at the end she would always be the female. The reactions of other women in the group helped her see that she wanted to be The Man, because she also internalized the view that it was better than being a female. For example, one woman said, "I don't understand why the ideal is to be The Man. Probably if there was a man in your group, he would have made them walk real fast, and I think you did the right thing even if it is not the male thing to do." Understanding this, M could also see how she treated the other two women as females and herself as The Man that rescued them. She realized that her solution to her internalized patriarchy was to be like a man, and that this did not really free her from gender. Following this discussion, other women spoke about their internalization of the view that men are better than women. For example, one woman said, "People tell me I am the most chauvinist feminist they have ever met," and another woman realized that although she thought of herself as a feminist, she identified with the idea that men are better, and her solution was to join men. Men joined in and talked about their notion of The Man, so the women started talking about their notion of The Woman, which was the complementary to The Man—passive, not valued, relying on a man.

It should be noted that it was very difficult for the group members to see how they oppressed themselves. At this stage of the group, the oppression outside was very clear and was seen everywhere. But it was the oppression from within that was difficult to face. Therefore, the group often turned to discussing examples of oppression outside the group and how they should be dealt with in order to avoid the more difficult issue of the oppression from within.

At the tenth meeting, following some discussion of oppression outside, the group finally turned to continuing the discussion from last week—what is it for the women to be A Woman? Most women equated womanhood with motherhood, and the discussion mainly focused on motherhood. It seemed that to avoid facing the hegemonic view that women are less valued than men, the group chose to talk about an aspect of womanhood that has more power—motherhood. Through this discussion and the question of whether or not to have children, it became clear that participants were still in a dialog with gender norms and stereotypes. They might have been for them or against them, but they were not free of them. For example, some women said they wanted to have kids because this is what women want, and some said they did not want to have kids exactly because this is what women are expected to want, but none was really free to choose whether or not she wanted to have kids.

Identifying the Patriarchal Order Within Oneself—Sexuality

The eleventh meeting started with a discussion of the price one pays for gaining these insights and trying to act on them outside the group, and worries about how they would keep the process alive within themselves once the group was over. But then one of the women who had not been very active in the group said, "I was hoping to gain more knowledge about sexuality and sexual orientation, but maybe it is too much to expect that this course can help me feel more relaxed about my body and my sexuality." This opened up a discussion on female sexuality, which started off with discussing men's sexuality and what it does to women. This was interpreted by the group leader as an attempt to escape a bold discussion of women's sexuality by instead discussing how

society/men/others interfere with it. The group leader insisted that although what the women were describing was true, talking about men's sexuality—what men want—was helping the women avoid a discussion of their own sexuality—what they want. In the discussion that followed, the main theme was: Where did "horny-ness" go? The women described how much they had wanted sex when they were teenagers and how this passion was later lost. They expressed their sadness at this loss, which was not, however, related to their ability to enjoy sex.

The twelfth meeting mainly dealt with the participants' reactions to and thoughts following the lesson on pornography and a television program on pornography they had watched. The main themes were surprise at the degree to which they internalized the view that penetration is sex, that sex is about having an orgasm, that sex is equated with power relations, and the influence pornography had on their views of sexuality. The men were particularly disturbed and sad following this discovery. For example, one man, I, said that while having sex with his girlfriend he noticed feeling like a character in a porno film. The women also talked about how the previous meeting had influenced them. Most had gone home to talk with their romantic partners, but one had bought a book about female masturbation and reported that reading it had made a great change in her sexuality, both alone and with her partner. This brought up again the difference between staying in the passive position (e.g., talking with the boyfriend and letting him solve the problem) and taking responsibility (for one's sexuality).

Concluding Meeting

The thirteenth meeting was the last. The group leader invited the participants to summarize the process they had undergone throughout the group. Participants talked about the intimacy and confidence they had in the group, their feeling that they had created a special language and that in the group they could be understood, whereas outside the group they had a hard time explaining themselves. They were worried that without the group they would lose the freedom they felt they had gained. They decided to continue meeting on their own (and indeed they con-

tinued for several months, and they still keep in touch through a group they opened on Facebook).

DISCUSSION

As described above, the main process participants undergo throughout the life of the group is identifying the patriarchal order in society, in the group, and within themselves. Participants start this process from different vantage points, depending mainly on their gender and on their previous exposure to gender and feminist studies. As a result, the exact order of events in each group varies, depending on the composition of the group. Below we describe the three components of this process and give examples of some variations in the way this unfolds.

The Main Processes and Themes

1a. Identifying the Patriarchal Order in Society. Participants vary in the extent to which they are aware of the power relations between men and women in their society, from denial of the existence of patriarchal order in society to a clear understanding of its existence. The realization that the patriarchal order exists in one's society is very unpleasant for most participants, and typical reactions include denial of its existence, attempts to justify the patriarchal order by biological and essentialist explanations, and reassurance that patriarchy is not to be found in the group itself (similar reactions have been reported in gender conflict groups; Ayal et al., 2006). For participants who are already familiar with this issue, the group serves as a type of support group, allowing discussions of encounters with male hegemony in the outside world, such as sexual harassment, inequality of household chores, and so forth. For the less aware individuals, the group offers an opportunity to discover what it is like to be a woman in a man's world. Typical reactions of women at this stage are relief following the discovery that they are not alone in their feelings and experiences, and despair following the growing realization that patriarchy is much more prevalent than they had previously thought (these reactions are very similar to those previously described in C-R groups; Brodsky, 1973). Men are often surprised

by the discovery of patriarchy and often feel that they are being blamed for this reality.

Although the identification of patriarchal order in society is a critical stage in the development of the group, at later stages discussions of patriarchy outside the group may serve to avoid the more difficult task of facing patriarchy within the group and within oneself.

Depending on the composition of the group, each group's starting point may be anywhere between a women-dominated C-R–like group, which openly discusses the patriarchal order in society, and a men-dominated group, which either denies the existence of patriarchal order or justifies it by biological facts. In the latter case, the denial of patriarchal order is paralleled by enactment of this order in the group itself, in terms of unequal division of resources (time) in the group as well as silencing of other voices, typically of women that are more aware of gender issues (this dynamic is very similar to that described in conflict groups; Ayal et al., 2006; Sonnenschein et al., 1998). In such groups, the group leader, by pointing out the male dominance, helps the group realize the existence of patriarchal order within the group, enabling other voices to be heard and leading to a discussion of patriarchal order in society.

1b. Identifying the Patriarchal Order in the Group. Regardless of the point from which the group started and the level of awareness of gender power relations, at some point these relations will be evident in the room. The form, though, may vary considerably. In some groups, the conversation may be dominated by men. In others, it may be dominated by women, but at some point the men will attempt to regain power by changing the subject of the conversation or by giving advice to the women. On all these occasions, it is important to pay attention to the responses of the women. In the first type of groups, most women are passive, letting the men dominate the conversation, or they actively deny the existence of patriarchy and its effects on them. In the second type of groups, some women will be very accommodating to the men, warmly welcoming their attempts to change the subject or their efforts to help, whereas others may express anger at the men's attempt to control the group.

When gender power relations are enacted in the group, it is critical that both men and women see beyond the actual content of the discussion—for example, that the men will be able to relate to their feelings when in a group dominated by women; that the women will be able to relate to their feelings when discovering that some men are not happy with the situation; and that both men and women will check which part of their actual reactions was related to their gender (e.g., that being a man allows him to voice his discomfort in the group; and that being a woman means needing to be nice and making sure everyone feels comfortable, especially the men).

Men start to realize that belonging to the hegemonic group affects their behavior and the way others respond to them. This is typically a painful realization. Men then struggle to find a way to express themselves without taking over the group or being patronizing toward the women. Some men, not knowing how to participate in the group without dominating it, refrain from talking. It is important to help them see their conflict and find a way to participate in the group. Women are also in a bind. They have difficulty exerting power and taking up group time. The women need to confront their reluctance to use the power they have, especially as they are in the majority in the room, to discuss the issues that interest them.

It is important to note that the enactment of gender power relations in the group is not a one-time occasion. For example, in groups that start as dominated by men, the realization of the patriarchal order in the group typically leads to a women-dominated discussion of the patriarchal order in society, which then leads to an attempt by the men to regain power. Gender power relations may also be evident at a later stage, when hypothetically the group has already successfully passed the "identifying the patriarchal order in the group" stage. For example, the discussion in the group may focus on issues related to men (e.g., losses to men because of the current patriarchal order). Although such discussions are clearly very important and serve the primary task of the group, it is also important to view them through the lens of gender power relations and to show the group how again men are in the center and women agree to give up discussing their own issues with gender to allow the men to discuss theirs.

Identifying the patriarchal order in the group is critical for the development of the group for two reasons. One, it is the first encounter of the participants with their internalized model of men and women and the ways these models affect their behavior. The second is that as long as the power relations in the group are implicit and denied, the group cannot progress to intimate relations between participants, and to relations between participants that are not dominated by their gender.

1c. Identifying the Patriarchal Order Within Oneself. One of the major tasks of the group is allowing the participants to openly face their internalized models of men and women, including the parts they are not proud of and which contradict their self-perception as liberal and feminist. It is very unpleasant to realize that gender and the constraints it exerts on the individual are imposed not just from the outside but also from the inside. In other words, everyone has an internalized model of a man and a woman, and these internalized models govern and constrain one's feelings, thoughts, and actions. Therefore, a warm and accepting atmosphere is required in which participants are not being criticized following disclosure and can openly discuss their gains and losses from their perceptions and behaviors.

Several additional changes in the group dynamics occur in parallel and in relation to this major change in the group's discourse, from identifying the patriarchal order outside the group to identifying the patriarchal order within themselves:

2. Moving From Patriarchal Order to No Order. Criticism of the current state of gender relations in the world typically leads to an urge to replace it with a "new order," that is, to find the "correct" and "right" way to think, feel, and behave. The group may be occupied with questions regarding the right behavior and the right language in the group, and the right way to behave outside the group. It is typically assumed that the correct way is the feminist way, and participants may discuss "the right way to be a feminist." Participants who do not feel "feminist enough" may be afraid to bring their experiences and feelings to the group. Participants may also ask the group leader for directions regarding the "right order."

It is the task of the group leader to (1) expose the wish for a new order that will replace the old order and to resist the group's

pressure to describe the desired "new order"; to show the group that replacing one order with another order, even if more liberal and less oppressive, is still oppressive to the individual, because the choices of "right" and "wrong" are exerted from outside (e.g., many feminist women refrain from feminine characteristics—in terms of actions, clothes, etc.—because they believe feminists should not show such characteristics); (2) reiterate that there is no one "solution" to the problems gender presents us with, and that each participant should find her/his own solutions—that is, what s/he wants to preserve from her/his conceptions of gender and what s/he wants to change or resist; and (3) help the participants realize the gains and losses from having an order, and how difficult it is to have no externally imposed order, but rather to create one by oneself.

3. Moving From a Cognitive-Academic Type of Conversation to an Emotional-Personal Type of Conversation. The initial stages of the group are typically dominated by a more academic, logical, and cognitive discourse which is often theoretical and focuses on the "then and there." Gradually, the conversation changes so that it is more personal and emotional and relates more to the "here and now." For some participants, mostly women, the more emotional type of conversation is convenient and familiar, whereas for others, mostly men, it is difficult and less familiar. Guidance from other participants and from the group leader helps them learn the emotional and personal language (e.g., instead of giving advice, revealing how a story made them feel).

The Role of the Group Leader

In the original women's C-R groups there was no member-leader distinction and responsibility was shared equally between all group members. Men's C-R groups typically had a leader because it was believed that a leader is needed to help men overcome their stereotypic tendencies in relating to others. The group leader was expected to withdraw from leadership once the members increased their awareness (Moreland, 1976). In academically sponsored C-R groups, described by Moreland (1976), that are characterized by participants with low levels of gender awareness, the leader helps participants gain awareness of gender issues and

helps the group develop norms that foster sharing, acceptance, and concern. In such groups, the leader is more active than in traditional C-R groups and uses well-described techniques, including a refocusing from the individual to the group and from the "there and then" to the "here and now," as well as group-oriented meaning attribution, to facilitate the group processes.

The model of group leading in our groups was very similar to that described by Moreland (1976) for academically sponsored C-R groups, the main difference being our treatment of the groups as conflict groups. That is, the group leader treats the gender identity of participants as an important factor for understanding the dynamics in the group, and shares this point of view with the participants.

We would like to emphasize two points regarding the interventions of the group leader. The first is that the leader has to balance between creating a safe atmosphere in which participants can discover and reveal their gendered selves, on the one hand, and helping participants confront the power relations within the group, on the other hand. The latter is often achieved by pointing out gender-related conflicts or power relations within the group that participants typically prefer to deny. As a result, in the initial stages of the group, the leader is often perceived as someone who causes conflicts in the group rather than someone who facilitates a safe environment. However, in the later stages, when participants are already aware of power gender relations, the leader facilitates the creation of a noncritical atmosphere by explicitly suggesting that participants adopt a noncritical position, by offering alternative modes of participation (e.g., sharing feelings instead of giving advice), by exposing attempts to set up a "new order" in the group, and other dynamics which may interfere with the ability of participants to openly share their thoughts and feelings.

The second point is that for most participants the discovery of the impact of gender on society, interactions, and themselves is very unpleasant, and participants as well as the group as a whole use different strategies to avoid these issues. It is the role of the group leader to point out these avoidance attempts and to help the participants overcome their reluctance to face these issues.

SUMMARY

The consciousness-raising gender conflict group combines the principles and methods of C-R and conflict groups to accompany and help participants in their struggle to uncover what gender is for them. Participants in our groups went through stages similar to those described in C-R groups, namely, gender stereotyping (accepting the prevalent notions of masculinity and femininity), ambivalence (questioning these notions and becoming aware of their restrictive nature concomitant with anxiety about the alternatives), anger (toward the prevailing gender norms), activism (implementing changes in one's life and taking political action), and celebration (Moreland, 1976). Similar stages are described in Brodsky (1973). Yet, using the theoretical framework and the methods of conflict groups, our groups had greater emphasis on unraveling gender power relations in the group and participants' internalized models of gender. The change of emphasis in our groups from the outside world to the group and the individual may be linked to the change in women's rights in the past 40 years. To date, the oppression of women in the Western world is much more implicit and is achieved more by interpersonal interactions and internalization of gender stereotypes than by law. Clearly, not all participants in our groups reached the final stage of celebration, but those who did reported an increase in personal freedom that was typically combined with activism.

REFERENCES

Ayal, S., Friedman, A., Tal, L., & Gopher, U. (2006). Encounter between social identities: The case of women and men. *Mikbatz: Israeli Journal of Group Facilitation, 11*(2), 13–30. In Hebrew.

Bornstein, K. (1994). *Gender outlaw: On men, women and the rest of us.* New York: Routledge.

Brodsky, A. M. (1973). The consciousness-raising group as a model for therapy with women. *Psychotherapy, 10*(1), 24-29. doi:10.1037/h0087537

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity.* New York: Routledge.

Crawford, M. E. (2006). *Transformations: Women, gender, and psychology.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Dimen, M. (2003). *Sexuality, intimacy, power.* New York: Analytic Press/ Taylor & Francis.

Enns, C. Z. (1993). Twenty years of feminist counseling and therapy. *Counseling Psychologist, 21*(1), 3-87. doi:10.1177/0011000093211001

Farrell, W. (1974). *The liberated man: Beyond masculinity: Freeing men and their relationships with women.* New York: Random House.

Goldner, V. (2011). Trans: Gender in free fall. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues, 21*(2), 159-171.

Israeli, A. L., & Santor, D. A. (2000). Reviewing effective components of feminist therapy. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 13*(3), 233-247.

Kravetz, D. F. (1976). Consciousness-raising groups and group psychotherapy: Alternative mental health resources for women. *Psychotherapy, 13*(1), 66-71. doi:10.1037/h0086489

Layton, L. (1997). The doer behind the deed: Tensions and intersections between Butler's vision of performativity and relational psychoanalysis. *Gender and Psychoanalysis, 2*(2), 131-155.

Moreland, J. R. (1976). Facilitator training for consciousness raising groups in an academic setting. *Counseling Psychologist, 6*(3), 66-68. doi:10.1177/001100007600600313

Sonnenschein, N., Halabi, R., & Friedman, A. (1998). Israeli-Palestinian workshops: Legitimation of national identity and change in power relationships. In E. Weiner (Ed.), *The handbook of interethnic coexistence* (pp. 600-614). New York: Continuum.

Stone, A. (2004). Essentialism and anti-essentialism in feminist philosophy. *Journal of Moral Philosophy, 1*(2), 135-153.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel, *Social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Daphna Joel
School of Psychological Sciences
Tel-Aviv University
Tel-Aviv 69978
Israel
E-mail: djoel@post.tau.ac.il