

The courage to stay in the moment

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ABSTRACT In 1934, James Strachey wrote that the active ingredient of psychoanalysis was the mutative interpretation. Even at this early date, Strachey observed that a relatively small proportion of the analytic literature was concerned with the mechanisms for change implicit in the analytic model.

In this paper, the author proposes two modifications of Strachey's ideas. One is that it is a moment, an event, and not an interpretation as such that creates change. The author terms this the 'mutative moment'. The other modification is the proposal of an unconscious internal group matrix as an image of the structure of self. This is a self that is at one and the same time, internal and external, individual and social.

Building upon Freud, the object relations theorists, Kohut and the work of group analysts, the author pinpoints where and how change occurs in both individuals and in groups. The active ingredient of change is the focus on the here-and-now, a perspective common to both therapists and counsellors. As an understanding of the meaning of this focus develops, it becomes apparent that it takes courage to stay in the moment.

KEYWORDS Interpretation, think group, courage, pre-conscious, time, here-and-now

INTRODUCTION

In her therapy group, Carol surprised herself by bursting into tears every time someone was absent or when loss or abandonment was mentioned. At first, she felt ashamed and apologized to the group for her vulnerability. Her marriage had ended eight years before. She thought that she had 'dealt with it'. She might have to leave the group if the tears did not stop.

Tears were important to Carol. She explained that she had not been allowed to cry as a child. Now, she had mixed feelings about crying. She needed to cry in order to feel accepted by the group. But she feared a group who would reject her tears, like her family. The group conductor helped Carol to see that she was crying in the group from fear of losing the empathy of the group and of the conductor.

After some months in the group, Carol spoke in more detail about her broken marriage. Carol told the group that her ex-husband was a wonderful man. She thought this, even though he had left her with a small child and was with another woman just two months after they had split up. She felt that she needed to preserve his image for the sake of her son.

The group responded to Carol's story with mixed feelings. Some of the men thought that Neil, Carol's ex-husband, had broken up the marriage for selfish reasons. They thought that Carol was taking the blame to protect her son. They empathized with Carol, but they identified with Carol's son. They wanted to know the truth. They did not want her sacrifice.

As she interacted with the group, Carol began to see how she had idealized Neil. She loved the man she first knew. But this man had never really existed. She had rejected the man as he was now. She had, in fact, told him to leave. In subsequent sessions, Carol stopped crying. She thanked the group. She had not realized that she was preserving the image of the man she wanted and not the image of the man she had. She started to think that she might find a new relationship.

Carol changed in a clear and dramatic way. Some people in groups move more slowly, in smaller steps. As a group analyst, I know that the group is a powerful instrument of change. The group offers a different space from individual counselling or therapy. For some people, it is a better space.

It is less understood, however, why a group promotes change so dramatically. Group analysts have a technique that becomes ever more powerful as it becomes more refined. Carol had 'waited' eight

years before being able to begin a process of change. But what happened in Carol's group to enable her to make such a drastic and deep change? What are the elements of the nature of the group and of the group process that made this response possible? What does the group conductor, together with the group members, witness happening in a group?

This paper aims to elucidate the process of change that occurs in both group and individual therapeutic environments. In elucidating this process of change, I will clarify differences, as well as similarities, between group and individual counselling and therapy. In looking at these differences and similarities, I aim to encourage people who work primarily with individuals to see the group as more than an alternative form of therapy or a possibly more cost-effective way of providing therapeutic help to people. That is, I propose that an understanding of the group and its processes is an important aspect of thinking about what happens in therapy in general and in any one therapy in particular. Further, both group conductors and members witness social as well as individual processes in the group consulting room. I propose, therefore, that 'thinking group' is an important activity for all counsellors, therapists and social theorists.

Theoretically, I begin with the elements of Freud's theory of the mind. Building on Freud, on the object relations theorists (Klein, Bion, Fairbairn and Winnicott) and on Kohut, my hope is that the ideas presented here will contribute to more modern theories of self, largely developed from a group analytic perspective. These are ideas of self that include inside and outside, as well as the individual and the social (see Nitsun 1996; Dalal 1998).

THE MUTATIVE MOMENT

Carol experienced a 'mutative moment' in her group. There are various ideas in theory about what elements make up the power for change in therapy. James Strachey (1969{1934}) tried to answer this question about what happens in the moment that something mutative takes place. He termed what he considered to be the active factor in change as the 'mutative interpretation'. Murray Cox and Alice Theilgaard (1987) wrote about the 'mutative metaphor' in psychotherapy. Bion termed the real emotional changes found in therapy groups as 'learning from experience' (Bion 1962).

Strachey was himself surprised at how little analysts have 'been concerned with the mechanisms by which the effects (of analysis)

are achieved' (Strachey 1969{1934}: 275). A great proportion of the counselling, therapeutic and analytic literature is concerned with showing that these therapeutic effects do happen. Another large proportion focuses on the techniques of effecting change in therapy and counselling.

A focus on the change that occurs in the mutative moment as the active ingredient of internal change, alternatively, can enrich what psychotherapists have to offer, both as therapists and as social theorists. That is, organizations, institutions and friendship groups may also be capable of a focus on the moment. This understanding becomes more important as the family disintegrates. The quality of the social moment can be improved. After all, the group and the organization are the human intermediaries between the individual self and the social.

STAYING IN THE MOMENT

One of the characteristics of the mutative moment is that it occurs in the here-and-now of the present. This is its main characteristic – and its most difficult. Strachey expressed this emphasis on the here-and-now in the individual analytic situation in two ways. First, he said that the interpretation, in order to be mutative, must be aimed at the 'point of urgency', which is always in the here-and-now of the therapy session. Strachey's second, and related, point is that the mutative interpretation will always be a transference interpretation. This means that it will, at one and the same time, invoke the past and show that the present is different (Strachey 1969{1934}: 289).

Strachey goes on to say, however, that to make an interpretation is 'a crucial act for the analyst as well as the patient' (1969{1934}: 291). Staying in the here-and-now with each other, in fact, is extraordinarily difficult for human beings.

Elsewhere I have written about how the film *Groundhog Day* dramatically illustrates the feeling of being caught in time, unable to break out of a repeating present into a future that can be different from the past. I give an example of how this happened in a couple, Anne and Jonathan. Anne and Jonathan could come together in a new and different way, once unconscious changes occurred (Bacha 1998).

It is this moment of breaking with the past that I term the 'mutative moment'. Carol had a mutative moment in her group when she realized that she could cry and still be accepted in the group. This

was unlike her experience in her family. In this moment, she found herself able to do something different than she had done in the past. This is what enabled her to do the rest of the work. What happened in these moments to make things different for Anne, Jonathan and Carol?

CONCEPTUALIZING THE INTERNAL WORLD

In order to start to think about what happens in the mutative moment, I need some sense of how the mind is structured. When Freud postulated his three layers of the mind (conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious), he was thinking of processes internal to the individual. However, these three layers of the mind can also be seen as corresponding to different relationships between the internal and the external worlds. Thus, the three levels of the mind can be re-defined as three layers of different systems which progress from inside to outside in the human emotions. These layers are:

- 1 the internal group matrix of early relationships or what the individual makes of them (the early family, the unconscious part of the mind);
- 2 the projection of these relationships into the here-and-now of present reality and relationships (the couple and the group, the meeting place of the different levels, the pre-conscious part of the mind); and
- 3 social life including relationships with friends and with society and culture in general (the conscious part of the mind).

I propose that, under certain conditions, the middle layer of the mind is the location of the mutative moment. When the conditions are met, the mutative moment happens:

- When the past experiences and relationships are evoked by the present here-and-now; and
- When the present here-and-now disconfirms the past and makes now different from then.

As this suggests, the conditions are as important as the process. I tend to think of the conditions that all therapists work hard to create as a 'better than usual' social space. By this, I mean an environment that does not reject, act out or ignore projective identifications. Such a space enables the client or group member to allow the evocation of the past to occur (the repetition) and also allows him or her to

remain in the here-and-now long enough to register the consequences. When the conditions are good enough, the past is disconfirmed by the present. When this happens, changes occur in the internal template.

One corollary of this formulation is that the unconscious does not need to become conscious for change to occur. This is because change occurs in the unconscious process of projection from the unconscious into a here-and-now environment that is good enough. Thus, Carol's mutative moment came when she changed her internal structures to allow a space where she could cry and not be frightened of rejection. But her conscious changes came after this. Carol's conscious change was when she realized that she had idealized Neil into the man that she wanted, as opposed to seeing him as the man that he was. The more conscious, logical, aspects of the change could not have occurred without the deeper and more emotional (psychological) changes that had come before.

THE INTERNAL GROUP MATRIX

If the changes of the mutative moment occur in the pre-conscious, it is the unconscious that carries the past into the present. I have called the unconscious level 'the internal group matrix of early relationships' (see the three levels above). By this, I mean, quite literally, the matrix of inner objects and their relationships as structured by early infant and childhood experiences. This constitutes an internal group. (For similar ideas, see Pines 1996.)

In the *Groundhog Day* article, I formulated the internal group matrix as a two-element structure that evolves to a three-element structure in infancy and in early childhood (Bacha 1998). It is the relationships in this structure that form a template for all future relationships. These future relationships are, at one and the same time, internal and external, with individuals and with groups, and with the environment as a whole. Like the internal self described by Kohut, this internal group matrix is bi-polar. This means that the self lives in the tensions created by two different carer roles, e.g. mother and father. The internal group template (images and relationships) thus structures relationships from moment to moment, in a sort of time-less here-and-now.

For example, Brian's mother was depressed when he was born and thereafter at various times in his life. Brian's internal group template, in this case, includes his depressed mother, his absent father, his

experiences of being the child of each of these two parents and his experiences of their relationship with each other. In this example, Brian may project his depressed mother onto his present relationship with his wife, he may identify with his mother and become depressed himself and/or his world or environment might receive his depressed projections. In the face of his depressed wife or of the world that cannot do without him, he becomes the carer who can never do enough, the child of the depressed mother.

This unconscious, and, I propose, human, emotional process is not a problem as long as these relationships can be maintained.

Let us suppose that Brian becomes an adult who cares for the depressed mother in his internal matrix through his environment. In other words, Brian feels that he is responsible for the well-being of his surroundings and of the people in them. In this case, at some point in his life, Brian may no longer be able to meet the demands at work and at home and may become depressed himself. His friends and family, the people he cares for and who are dependent on him, are shocked, disappointed and perhaps angry that he is now the needy one instead of the carer. They tell him to pull himself together.

At this point, Brian's internal group matrix is in danger of breakdown. But it does not necessarily change at this point. In fact, it is a characteristic of this matrix that it cannot easily be changed. It can only be confirmed or disconfirmed. And, the disconfirmation of the internal matrix is only accomplished with great difficulty, as in the mutative moment.

Brian's GP may respond to Brian's depression by prescribing anti-depressants, which lift his mood. He can now get back into his caring mode, confirming his role as carer for depression, not as depressed himself. People do not like it when he is depressed, he has discovered. He will hide it better next time, maybe even from himself. These decisions may make it difficult for him to grieve and to change. Brian splits off and scapegoats his internal depressed mother, isolating (repressing) his depression inside.

Medication, then, can only confirm the internal template and, therefore, cannot lead to internal change. Only other human beings, in or out of therapy, can do this. The mutative moment is when the internal group matrix changes. Repetition compulsion, then, becomes the hope that things can be different. The mutative moment occurs when the difference between the present and the past can be absorbed by the internal matrix in such a way as to change the internal relationships. It is only then that the internal group matrix

changes. Clients will often say that they do not understand what has happened; but something has changed.

In the example, as well as giving him anti-depressants, Brian's GP sends him to a group-analytic therapy group. In his group, Brian learns that the group can appreciate him, but that the group can also function without his care. When Brian internalizes this changed relationship, he begins to have a different viewpoint on his relationship with his depressed mother inside. Brian is still the son of a depressed mother. But he is more aware of this and how it might affect him. This means that Brian can now allow himself to change and to grieve without feeling that he will turn into his mother. He more easily asks for care for himself. In his book, *The Fragile Self* (1993), Phil Mollon suggests that changes such as this one are due to the introduction of a stronger figure in the functional role of the father. Thus, I propose that the group, as well as the individual therapist or counsellor, might also play such a role.

THE ROLES OF THE GROUP AND OF THE CONDUCTOR

When the mutative moment becomes a group moment, however, rather than an individual analyst's interpretation, the roles of group and of conductor in the change can be further elucidated. The group offers a particularly good space for the internal group template to be reflected and disconfirmed. In counselling and therapy, the creation of the conditions for the mutative moment is linked to the special nature of the therapist. The therapist is defined as someone who strives not to bring his or her own defences into the room with the client. This special role enables the therapist to create a social space that is better than usual. The better than usual social space is where the client can evoke the past and disconfirm it. This is why the therapist's own therapy is so important. The therapist must be able to stay thinking in the moment of the here-and-now of the client. In order to do this, the therapist must know about his or her self, including about his or her defences. In making things different for the client in the here-and-now, the therapist facilitates the communication between the elements of the client's internal group matrix. This is the important change in the mutative moment.

In so far as the therapist can remain undefended with the client, the client can also become less defended in relation to the elements in his or her internal group matrix. This increases the client's internal

strength and knowledge of self. Clients often report that they feel stronger inside.

When there is a therapy group involved, this process is even clearer than it is in individual therapy, which involves a couple in an environment. The group and its members reflect, and become reflected in, the structure of the internal group matrix of each group member. This becomes clearer in the group because each member sees that the others experience the same environment in different ways.

In fact, it might be said that the individual therapist must play the role of the group as well as that of the counsellor. In Strachey's article, for example, the analyst is both the 'object of the id-impulse' and the 'auxiliary super-ego' as well as the interpreter (Strachey 1969{1934}: 290). In a group these roles are unpacked and shared out between group members, group conductor and the group as a whole. The group therapist is freed up to concentrate on his or her job of ensuring that the group maintains a better than usual social space. The group therapist's main responsibility, then, is to create a group that is able to think about the psychology of its members, thus creating group members who are capable of thinking about themselves. This enables the internal relationships to become available and to change.

As part of this process, the group therapist also develops strategies to bring the group members into the here-and-now of the group. The work of the therapist in Carol's group was to ensure that the group was a place where she could cry and a place where the other group members could tolerate and relate to this. When this happened, Carol's internal dialogues were able to appear in the group between the group members.

Staying in the here-and-now is vital for change. However, these mutative moments are rare events and must be nurtured and cherished. Strachey proposes that analysts resist making mutative interpretations because, in doing so, the analyst is exposing himself to a great danger, 'deliberately evoking a quantity of the patient's id-energy while it is alive and actual and unambiguous and aimed directly at himself' (Strachey 1969{1934}: 291).

There are other reasons why it takes courage to face the here-and-now and risk the changes that might follow:

- 1 It is difficult and painful to see what the template is. It may also be shameful and wounding.
- 2 Implicit in change is the need to mourn the losses of the past, as well as regrets that mark the loss of possibilities.

- 3 The inner template is familiar. Change implies having to deal with unknowns, both inside and outside. It takes courage to face a potentially dangerous unknown.

The group offers a space for this to occur and also company in the process.

THE GROUP

I offer this digest of one group session in order to show how these processes work moment-to-moment in the group. As in any group session, there are many currents available to the group members and to the group conductor at any one time. I shall concentrate on the oscillations between present and past and inside and outside in this group.

In this session, the group members pull each other into the present and then take flight from it. The group conductor and the group members struggle to stay focused on the here-and-now of the group. Group members have various strategies to lead away from direct communication of feelings, such as scapegoating one member with the more difficult feelings in the group. As this strategy gains some power in the group, the scapegoated member must find the strength in herself to stand up to this process. This enables her, I propose, to make an internal change. This internal change is possible, in other words, because of the struggle in the group, both inside each person and between people, to stay with the here-and-now.

All five members, Jason, Maria, Joseph, Ray and Lydia are present. Lydia arrives a couple of minutes late, as usual.

Ray is asked how his problems at work are going. He is in a sticky situation at work. Ironically, though, as the situation has worsened, he has begun to feel better in terms of a lessening of his chronic anxiety and mood swings. He has received a 'stay of execution', as he puts it, and he is going on holiday with his family for the next two weeks. He will thus miss the group sessions.

Maria says to Ray that she is glad that his work problems are giving him a rest because she now feels that she can 'play hard' with him. She has a bone to pick. She must pick it now because he will be away and she no longer wants to keep the secret.

The secret is that Ray approached her some weeks ago to meet for coffee, just the two of them, outside the group. Maria declined his invitation, because she knew that part of their contract with the

group was not to meet outside the group. But she has kept the secret until now. She is frightened of Ray's anger. She also feels disloyal to Ray for bringing this into the group. It is difficult for her to say 'no' to him because he might be angry with her.

Maria is an intelligent woman with a high-powered job. But, in this contribution, she reveals an undefended and soft aspect of herself, a victim. She feels inside that she has to say 'yes' and to be sexual with Ray. She is frightened of him. It has taken courage for her to be in the moment with Ray and with the rest of the group. Will this risky moment confirm or disconfirm her hidden feelings of hopelessness and helplessness that she brings from an abusive mother and an absent father?

Maria's revelation puts the rest of the group into anxious confusion. Ray feels both attacked and guilty. He says to Maria, to me and to the group that he is innocent. He did not mean anything by it. He thought that they had things in common. Who would it hurt if they just met outside?

Lydia initially picks up the panic. What are the rules? Are they fair and just and rational ones? Do they have to follow my rules, or can they have rules of their own? After all, why shouldn't they meet outside, if they like each other?

Lydia seems to be caught up in Ray's panic for a moment. Then she pulls herself out of it and into her own moment. Lydia continues more thoughtfully, saying that it has been difficult to bring things to the group lately. There are so many men. (Joseph is a new male group member.) She then says that she feels angry with me (not Ray) because I obviously had not told him the group rules about abstaining from meeting outside the group.

I am tempted to become defensive at this point. I certainly did tell Ray the rules about meeting outside. My second thought is that I might try and work with their anger with me. But I suspect that such an approach would be too oblique for them at this point. Both Ray and Lydia are making a clear appeal to me as the rule-maker of the group. I feel that the group is both putting the authority to say 'no' into me and also expressing their anger with this. I feel that they need me to say something that will enable them to be together in the room and in the present.

In the panic, it is difficult for me to keep thinking. It feels chaotic. However, I know that if I can remain calm, and keep the various currents together, the group members can each use the moment. They can tell me, and each other, about their anger and their hurt.

I put this sense of needing to keep the different currents together into words. I say that the group guidelines are clear. It is important for their therapy that they all have access to the relationships between them. I go on to say that perhaps I then become the one who says 'no' in the group. Maybe this is the way that they are experiencing me, and the group, at the moment. I know that it is difficult to talk in a group about intimate, particularly sexual things. So, I think that it is important not to make it wrong.

In making this comment, I hope that I am enabling them to stay in the room with each other and with their feelings. I offer myself as both boundary-maker and giver of permission, a mixture of mother and father. I do not feel this as a mutative interpretation, though. I see it as more of a comment designed to hold the group together and in the present, so that they may do the mutative work with each other.

The comment works. The panic subsides somewhat. But the possibility of this moment is also fraught with fear. Ray explodes into talking very fast and anxiously. He very quickly apologizes to Maria. He has not wanted to do her any harm. And then on to me, pulling me into him, for protection, it feels, by saying how wonderful he thinks that I am and how much he likes the group and how he was grateful and touched by me when I said in a previous group that I would find a way for him to stay in the group, whatever happened to his business.

This felt warm and genuine and intense, but also desperate. The intensity is broken, however, by Lydia, who says that she has forgotten to tell the group that she is away next week.

It is as if she can no longer stand the anxiety and intensity. She feels that she can deal with it only by interrupting. I feel that she does this on behalf of the others, as well as on her own behalf. I start to think about whether there is jealousy in the group.

This is confirmed when the other group members also turn away from the emotional intensity and attempt to deal with Lydia's disconnection. Jason says that he feels that Lydia needs to come into the group more. He feels that she is keeping secrets from them. This seems to be a projection of his own disconnected feelings. He goes on to say that he knows that secrets are destructive. There were secrets in his family and this has affected his whole life. Jason is angry about the secrets. But the anger goes to Lydia instead of to Ray. (This displacement becomes clear in what follows: it was Jason's mother who kept secrets from him.)

Ray is suddenly calm and interested in someone else. What were the secrets in Jason's family? Ray is now out of the line of fire. He can connect. He has found a point of contact in the group that can help him. Jason goes on to talk about how his mother had been abused by her father. She was also abusive to him. She never talked about her own abuse and he only came to know as an adult, from another family member. This is a moment of calm in the session. Jason often flies from the present into the past. He has supplied his own defence for the others.

As Jason talks, I think that perhaps a similar generational dynamic applies to Ray. Although he idealizes his parents, his mother was overly anxious for his safety while devaluing his father as someone who never took enough risks to make the family secure. I think of Ray as someone whose father never managed to interrupt his mother's suffocating double messages. It feels that Ray has welcomed Jason's intervention as, maybe, an explanation of his mysterious mood swings, anxieties and bad thoughts. This is a good example of the way a group can be used to produce a new viewpoint in the self.

In this calmer moment, Maria is able to say to Ray that the guilt is not all his. She has been tempted and now that she has spoken in the group, she has to give up the fantasy of their affair outside the group, which has been exciting and comforting. Maria is solidly in the moment at this point. She is thinking calmly and clearly and holding it all together. She is no longer frightened. She has also here made something different for herself internally. She has stopped an abuse.

While Lydia holds the disconnected feelings for the others, they can go on and work together effectively. Lydia, however, does not accept the 'disconnected' role. She says that she has interrupted because she feels jealous. Why should Maria have all the men when Lydia does not have any? This feels very connected. Lydia throws off her disconnection and re-enters the emotional arena of the group. But this is also dangerous. Now there is not only anger in the group; there is also jealousy.

Ray then turns to her and says that he does not want to be funny, but he thinks that she needs a good man. I guess that this is Ray's way of reflecting back to Lydia what she is saying in a way which leaves her feeling his vulnerabilities as well as her own. This is the last straw for Lydia. She bursts into tears.

Pain and anger are thus projected into Lydia at the end of the session. But Lydia is learning how to handle projections such as

these. Through her tears, Lydia says that she is feeling that there is something wrong with her. These are her fears about herself when she comes close to insight. But, then she dries her eyes and goes on to be more assertive and spirited when she says that, anyway, she also has a secret. They do not know that she is not always good because she has not mentioned in the group that she has a date with someone during the week.

THE GROUP MOMENT

Sitting with a group like this feels chaotic. Essentially, when the here-and-now came into the room with Maria's confrontation of Ray, the heightened anxiety caused an explosion of feelings, defences and moments of closeness. This is quite different from group sessions where the members work calmly and peacefully together.

Part of the difficulty in sorting out the chaos of a group such as this is that all the dynamics, so carefully dissected in the theoretical section of this paper, are in the room at once. Competition, anger and jealousy are there as well as closeness and caring. In the mutative moment, the defences are down and the boundaries are open. Projection and projective identification are rife, and this causes confusion. Sometimes the conductor has only his or her countertransference as a guide.

When a group process becomes confusing, a group analytic conductor thinks about his or her countertransference and also about what each group member is saying on behalf of the group as a whole. These elements of technique enable the conductor to maintain a sense of the unity of the group, a sense of the group matrix.

As a group, I thought that they were saying several things to me. One was how difficult it was to be together in the room and how many feelings exploded all at once. The fantasies of being close and merged, of not having boundaries, were clear. But, in bringing a group secret into the room, Maria was also expressing a group desire to be more separate. The wish to merge in a group without boundaries conflicted with the desire for clear and safe boundaries. The sub-groups also reflected this conflict. These were the over-involved, dependent or merged, sub-group of Maria and Ray, contrasted with the less involved flight sub-group of Jason and Lydia.

In my countertransference, I felt a great pulling apart. It felt difficult to manage to keep and to secure the boundaries of the group without banning the sexual feelings and thoughts. I understood this

as reflecting the dilemma or the split in the group. In my comment on the group process, I reflected an attempt to manage to 'live in the tensions of the poles' of this conflict. This is a concept following Kohut who sees the bi-polar self as always negotiating the tensions between its mirroring and idealizing poles (see Kohut 1979). There was also anger with me for saying no, for making and enforcing the boundaries and for interrupting the merger. In the moments of resolution of the panic, I suspect that each group member felt these conflicting feelings, together in the group.

Inside this group conflict, what each person brought to the group was something old and specific to them in the hope that something new and common with the others would happen. The hope is that this new happening will enable them to get out of the ruts and repetitiveness of the past and into a present that is different. In a nutshell, the hope is that what feels to be mad, like Lydia's feeling of something wrong with her which sets her apart from the others, will become something special which brings her together with others, and allows difference.

In subsequent group sessions, Lydia stops being late and brings more of her own material. Jason also, in subsequent groups, finds the courage to tell Ray about how he feels about his lack of respect for boundaries. Interestingly, Ray finds this anger containing and becomes less anxious in the group. It is almost as if Ray was looking for an anger that could chastise him but not destroy him. Maria has started to function with more certainty in her life.

Lydia had become the scapegoat in this session of the group. She was the target and receptor of the disconnected and vulnerable feelings stirred up in each of the group members by the tentative and momentary connections in the group. Had Lydia accepted this role, she would have become the quiet and accepting victim of the group, reflecting the quiet and accepting victim parts of each of the other members. Internally, in each, this part is also the powerless and vulnerable secret self, like the mother's secret abused past in Jason's family history.

Lydia did not accept this role when she told the group that she was not all good. When she did this, she stood up to that projection and refused to be the victim. I suspect that they all felt that hope at the end of the session, implicit in Lydia's attempt at having a new relationship.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have started to investigate the power of psychotherapy in groups by focusing on the mutative moment, the moment of change. It is the power of this moment that defines the power of groups as instruments of change. I propose that this understanding is important to individual as well as to group counsellors and therapists.

An understanding of the mutative moment implies a focus on the way group members come close to each other in the here-and-now of the present, and then flee to more defensive and withdrawn positions. From these withdrawn positions, members come close again.

In order to start to understand this process of approximation and flight, I have introduced two concepts: the mutative moment and the internal group matrix. I propose that the experience of witnessing group processes adds a level of understanding as to how unconscious, pre-conscious and conscious processes involve an interaction between internal and external worlds. In the unconscious part of the internal world, time has stopped until something powerful can set it going again. It becomes evident in groups that this involves a process of disconfirmation of internal relational links from the past. Thus, the theory of the mind becomes a theory of the whole human being. By this, I mean mind, body and social relationships. The whole human being, then, includes inside and outside, individual and social.

A focus on the mutative moment enables the group conductor (and the group members) to witness the moments of change. This is what enriches what psychotherapists have to offer both as therapists and as social theorists.

As therapists, the focus on the mutative moment is another way of saying that it is the relationships in the therapy room and the acceptance and understanding of these that create change in the therapy. But, it adds something to this in that the therapist must find ways of bringing the client or group member into the here-and-now of the therapy. This means finding ways of making it all right and ways of holding on to these moments when they occur. In a group, this implies the active intervention of the group conductor. This was true in both the examples of Carol's therapy group and in the extended group vignette.

Psychotherapists are especially privileged to be with people in their moments of extreme vulnerability, openness and honesty. Psychotherapists are privy to the inner workings of the individual and also of society. It is difficult, but not impossible, to find ways of communicating this knowledge to the outside world. It takes courage.

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