

**PROFESSIONAL SKILLS  
FOR COUNSELLORS**

# *Group Counselling*



**Keith Tudor**

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# *Group Counselling*

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# *Group Counselling*

Keith Tudor



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No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

John Donne (1624) *Devotions, XVII*

No individual is self-sufficient; the individual can exist only in an environmental field. The individual is inevitably, at every moment, a part of some field. His behavior is a function of the total field, which includes both him and his environment.

Fritz Perls (1973) *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy*

I am because we are

African proverb

In memory of  
Margaret Proctor, FBPsS  
Principal Educational Psychologist, ILEA  
generous Godmother and enlightening witness  
(1914-1997)



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# *Introduction*

- Group - An assemblage of objects standing near together, and forming a collective unity; a knot (of people), a cluster (of things) . . . a confused aggregation . . .
- A number of persons or things in a certain relation, or having a certain degree of similarity.

(*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*,  
3rd edn, 1973, p. 896)

- A social aggregation that has an external boundary and at least one internal boundary.

(Berne, 1963, p. 319)

Human beings are social animals. This is the sense of Aristotle's dictum that 'man is a political animal'. We live in a social world and live, love and work in social groupings. We are born into and raised in a family group (however we define 'family'); as children we often play in groups; we are educated in groups; we may dance and sing in groups; we work in groups - I spend the majority of my working life working in and with groups; we socialise mostly in groups; using computers we even network with others in groups; many people die surrounded by a group of family and friends. Despite this, Western psychology in its development and application to the field of counselling over the past hundred years has focused its attention predominantly on understanding the individual, individuality, *self*-actualisation, autonomy, the concept of the *self*, and the importance of *self*-development. More recently - in the past fifteen to twenty years - criticisms have been made of such an emphasis on the individual (e.g. Hillman and Ventura, 1992), self-actualisation (e.g. Rigney, 1981; Lukas, 1989), autonomy (e.g. Whitney, 1982; LeVine, 1990), self-development and individual *self*-concept - Nobles (1973), for instance, theorises that there is a 'we' self-concept, an awareness

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of an historical and cultural reference group. Donne's famous reflection on the human condition represents a view that we are inextricably linked each with each other. The social nature of the human condition and experience is as relevant a subject of enquiry as the individual psyche and, arguably, more so. This leads to a greater appreciation of the structure, dynamics, influence and value of both accidental groups (such as family) as well as intentional groups (such as counselling groups).

Since the first therapeutic groups were established in the late 1920s a wealth of experience has been garnered and libraries of papers and books have been written about the phenomena of 'the group'. The current list on group psychotherapy from the specialist bookshop Karnac Books comprises well over 100 titles and there are at least twelve journals on groups in the English language alone. This literature includes a number of books which serve as introductions to groups, the theory of groups and groupwork practice as well as those on 'how to create and run a group'. Yalom's *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (first published in 1970 and now in its fourth edition) (Yalom, 1995), is still the most comprehensive text available on group therapy. From a North American perspective, Shaffer and Galinsky (1974) give an overview of the major group approaches across psychiatry, social work and education which includes a useful section on the role of the leader within each model of group reviewed. More recently, Corey (1995), in his *Theory and Practice of Group Counseling* (also in its fourth edition), introduces basic elements of group process and, similarly, a number of theoretical approaches, although his basic elements appear separate from their theoretical foundations. Issues about pre-group information, confidentiality, psychological risks, ethics, use of techniques etc. all have a basis in (different) theoretical traditions: they are not atheoretical or neutral. Here in Britain, both Whitaker's (1985) guide to the principles of groupwork and Hinshelwood's (1987) introduction to groups are written from a psychodynamic perspective. Attention to the dynamics of groups is a feature of both analytic and humanistic counselling and does not feature so much in groups informed by cognitive-behavioural or rational emotive behaviour therapy. This present book aims to fill a gap in the literature in that it is written from within the humanistic/existential tradition of psychology, psychotherapy and counselling. Within this tradition, I have inevitably been influenced by my

own experience, study and training: first in gestalt therapy, then transactional analysis (TA) and the person-centred approach (PCA). TA and the PCA represent both similar and significantly different perspectives on human nature, personality, diagnosis/assessment, change, interventions and on working with individuals and in groups (elaborated in Chapter 1). This book reflects a study of groups and group phenomena, influenced by humanistic/existential and cultural psychology (see Shweder, 1990), which views culture and social issues as central to our knowledge and understanding of humans and our social psyches (see Singh and Tudor, 1997). Indeed, the experience and study of groups both reflects culture and represents the individual in the context of culture, community and society. In this sense, group counselling is - and must be - culturally located and culturally intentional.

This book is one of a series titled 'Professional Skills for Counsellors'. Skills, however, cannot - or should not - be divorced from theory and thus this book does draw on, refer to, summarise and introduce theories and concepts about groups. Significantly, the several dictionary definitions of skill (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1973) identify reason, cause, knowledge and understanding as the (back)ground of practice. Furthermore, an undue emphasis on skills at the expense of the development of the counsellor's philosophy of practice and their therapeutic attitudes - of genuineness, respect and understanding - is positively dangerous as it perpetuates the myth that technique and interventions are 'tricks of the trade' which may be bought, sold and passed on, divorced from their roots in personal philosophy and a way of being. Theory is indeed the best practice. The ability to articulate a conceptual framework to guide group practice is considered good practise, as outlined by the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) division of the American Counselling Association (ASGW, 1998) (see Appendix 1). In being both practical and theoretical (and full of attitude!) this book reflects a position of praxis. It is thus less of an instructive 'How to . . .' book than one which encourages the practitioner in how to be and how to think about 'How to . . .'. None the less, readers from a variety of professional backgrounds (counselling, social work, medical and complementary health care, community work, organisation and industry) who are involved with or interested in setting up and facilitating groups will find help with the mechanics as well as the dynamics of groupwork. This is also a

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resource book. Whilst written from a broadly humanistic/existential perspective, I acknowledge and draw on other traditions, especially the analytic, and references provide the reader with both source material and further reading on a wide range of relevant and related subjects.

Following a brief history of different approaches to groups and an introduction to group development (Chapter 1), the structure of the book in the next four chapters reflects a developmental approach to groups which is descriptive rather than prescriptive and which follows the concerns and considerations of the practitioner, by introducing and reflecting on concepts and theory that support practice. Thus, Chapter 2 discusses the concept of the group and stages of group development and considerations in setting up a group; Chapter 3 focuses on establishing the group and the first meeting of the group and reflects on issues of leadership and of contracting; Chapter 4 considers the developing group and ways of recording what happens in groups; and Chapter 5 presents issues in ending groups. Chapter 6, written by a colleague, Jenny Robinson, who is Project Manager of a therapeutic community, discusses issues raised by facilitating groups in residential settings. Chapter 7 explores the social (plural and collective) nature of the human condition and reflects on issues of the large group, inter-group relations, organisation and community. The implications of ethical issues raised in and by working with groups are considered throughout, whilst specific implications for education/training, personal development and supervision of the group counsellor are considered in Chapter 8.

### **A note on language**

This book is one of a series on counselling and in this context I refer to group counselling and to group counsellors. Nevertheless, much of the content of the book draws on and is equally applicable to the theory and practice of group psychotherapy including the psychodynamic and group-analytic approaches. Much of the debate about the differences, particularly between counselling and psychotherapy, centres on superficial distinctions such as the notion that counselling is short-term, focusing on present problems, whilst psychotherapy is long-term, focusing on the influence of the past. In theory, practice and organisation and as regards the education and training of counsellors and psycho-

therapists, there are many overlapping areas between the two. The differences which exist and which are perceived are based on differences defined by different theoretical orientations. Thus, for example, the person-centred approach does not distinguish between counselling and psychotherapy, transactional analysis does (but not coherently in my view (see Tudor, 1997c), much of the psychoanalytic literature does, and so on. Difference is also promoted by the organisational context by which training institutes may or may not distinguish between the two in terms of entry requirements; or by the legislative context whereby some practitioners are registered as counsellors or psychotherapists and some titles, such as 'psychoanalyst' and 'child psychotherapist', are protected. In the context of the theory and practice of group counselling/psychotherapy, there is another term – *sociotherapy* – which generally describes the exploration of *interpersonal*, as distinct from *intrapersonal* activity (this is further discussed in Chapters 1 and 7).

Although I generally use the term 'counselling' in this book, I use the terms 'counselling' and 'psychotherapy' interchangeably and the generic 'therapy' to stand for both. When I use one or the other specifically I am reflecting their use either by the authors cited or in the context of the particular discussion and thus, for consistency, certain passages or sections refer to counsellor or to therapist. I generally use 'counsellor', 'group counsellor' or 'facilitator' to refer to the person facilitating or leading the group, except in Chapter 3 in which 'leader' is used in the context of a discussion of group leadership. Perceived differences between different terms such as groupwork, group counselling, group psychotherapy and group analysis are discussed in Chapter 1. I use the plural pronoun 'they' to refer to the singular she or he, and 'you' to refer to you the reader. Although a number of authors quoted are men of their time who, at least in their writing, did not account for women, I maintain the integrity and accuracy of quotations and leave you the reader to insert '[sic]' after 'he' and 'his' or to make your own translation. Excerpts from and references to clients' counselling work have been effectively disguised.

# *Groups: History and Development*

In this chapter I offer a brief history of groups, and distinguish between counselling groups across the three traditions or 'forces' of psychology - the psychodynamic, the behavioural and the humanistic/existential. I introduce the conceptual distinctions between working *in*, *through* and *of* the group and the implications of such distinctions for practice. Finally, I discuss concepts of group development and illustrate their usefulness to the counsellor working in, through and with groups.

## **A brief history of groups**

Although histories vary, it seems that Worcester, an associate of the psychologist James, and Pratt, an internist, were the first practitioners of group therapy. From 1905, they organised consumptive patients at the Massachusetts General Hospital Outpatient Clinic, Boston into groups or classes. In establishing a preventive programme of 'home sanatorium treatment', Pratt was initially concerned to monitor patients' progress and to educate them about their diet and environment. Later, he came to realise the importance of the mutual support created by patients having 'a common bond in a common disease' (Spotnitz, 1961, p. 29). He then became more interested in the psychological aspects of the groups and the interactions between group members. At around the same time as Worcester and Pratt were developing their outpatient groups, in 1909 Moreno was working with school children in Vienna, getting them to act out little plays, initially written for them, about various problems and issues of behaviour.

Soon the children were presenting their own plays and Moreno was applying this impromptu role playing - *psychodrama* - to working with adults. In 1922 Moreno established the Theatre of Spontaneity in Vienna. This therapeutic method had - and has - three aspects: *psychodrama*, the acting out of roles; *sociometry*, the method of investigation about attitudes and relationships; and *group psychotherapy*, a term first coined by Moreno in 1932, which describes the philosophy of treatment (see Moreno, 1946/1964, 1958). Later, during the Second World War, Moreno and his colleagues, now in the United States, developed *sociodrama*, in which the audience became the community, acting out and dealing with issues, for instance, of racial conflict.

Also in Vienna at this time, Freud was establishing a Psychological Society study group, comprising amongst others Adler, Ferenczi and Rank, which met weekly on Wednesday evenings and which may be regarded as the first training group, if not group training.

From these different beginnings, historically the next major development was that the group began to be viewed from within the conceptual framework of psychoanalysis. In 1921 Freud published a short book on *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (Freud, 1921/1985a) in which he drew heavily on the work of the French psychologist Le Bon (1896/1920). Freud's views on group psychology (summarised in the next section) led to a number of distinct traditions of group therapy within psychoanalysis.

Three figures were influential in the early application of psychoanalytic concepts to groups: Burrow (1927), who referred to his procedures as *group analysis*, that is, analysis *in* groups; Schilder (1936, 1939), who applied the technique of free association by encouraging his group patients to discuss whatever came into their minds; and Wender (1936), who observed that transference phenomena developed in groups as much as in individual analysis. In 1938, Wolf, an American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who had read the works of Burrow, Schilder and Wender, established his first psychotherapy group. Over the next ten years he developed his practice and by 1947 began to hold seminars in psychoanalytic group therapy at the New York Medical College. A year later, Wolf began a training workshop at the Postgraduate Center for Psychotherapy in New York and by 1954 the Center introduced a certification programme in group therapy. Wolf and his



colleagues applied psychoanalytic concepts – resistance, transference, interpretation etc. – to the patients in the group, with very little modification of them, other than developing the notion of *multiple transference* which acknowledges that the patient's transference manifests itself in and onto the multiple relationships in the group and not just with/onto the therapist. The advantage of such group therapy is that the patient shows more evidence of their neurosis and pathology and thus there is more data available to be analysed and interpreted.

Also in the 1940s, Lewin (1952) was developing field theory, whereby psychological relationships were viewed in terms of their surrounding field – in this case the group, which was understood as an entity in itself. Lewin established the training group (T-group), comprising volunteers (not clients) in order to study the qualities of the group – what he referred to as 'group dynamics'. Following Lewin's death in 1947, some of his associates founded the National Training Laboratory (NTL) in Bethel, Maine, in which the T-group formed the basic education instrument (see Gottschalk, 1966).

Around the same time as Wolf was establishing his first psychotherapy groups in New York, in Britain Bion (who did not publish his work until 1961) and Foulkes (1948/1983, 1964) (who was also heavily influenced by Lewin) were developing a group dynamics approach to group psychotherapy which emphasised the importance of viewing the group itself as a coherent entity. This took place at a military rehabilitation hospital in Northfield in what became referred to as the Northfield experiments, and at the Tavistock Clinic in London. This focus on the dynamics of the group also led Bion, Foulkes and others to develop theoretical concepts relevant to the *group-as-a-whole* as distinct from applying concepts to the group borrowed from individual psychoanalysis. In 1952 Foulkes and other colleagues formed the Group Analytic Society; formal training developed with the founding in 1971 of the Institute of Group Analysis. This tradition has influenced the theory of systems (systems theory) in many groups such as families and organisations.

In the 1950s and 1960s, various psychologists and therapists, working within what has come to be known as the 'third force' of humanistic/existential psychology and psychotherapy (see pp. 14–20), began experimenting with and promoting more experiential approaches to psychotherapy, including working with

groups in which the members' – and therapists' – experiencing of themselves and of each other became the focus of the group and interpersonal process and often dynamic encounter (see, for example, Whitaker and Malone, 1953; Gendlin and Beebe, 1968; Rogers, 1970/1973). Around the same time, gestalt therapists, influenced by Lewin's field theory, were recognising the importance of both field and ground: 'only the interplay of organism and environment...constitutes the psychological situation, not the organism and environment taken separately' (Perls et al., 1951/1973, p. 19). Also, Berne, the founder of transactional analysis (TA), was developing his ideas on the principles, structure and dynamics of groups and of organisations (Berne, 1963, 1966). In 1970 Yalom first published his seminal work on *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, based on his research into the curative or therapeutic factors of groups (Yalom, 1970) (see Chapter 2). Although Yalom is an existential psychotherapist, his research and influence spreads across all schools of psychology.

Over the past thirty years, group analysis, group psychotherapy and group counselling have developed, been applied to more and a greater variety of settings, and have become more integrated into professional practice, with many individual counsellors/psychotherapists and other professionals such as social and health care workers, psychologists, management and organisational consultants leading or facilitating groups. Groupwork theory, in turn, has been influenced by other fields such as social work (which generally uses the term 'groupwork') (see Douglas, 1979, 1993; Glassman and Kates, 1990; Brown, 1992), family therapy (e.g. Satir, 1982) and by recent developments in social theory such as cybernetics and postmodernism (see Becvar et al., 1997). During the past twenty years, exponential development in electronic technology in the field of human communication has also had a significant impact on counselling – through the increasing provision and use of telephone counselling and communication through electronic e-mail and the world wide web of the internet. Whilst there appear obvious disadvantages about counselling via such media, the advantages of greater mutuality, that is relationships often with a team or group equalised through language (plain text) and the timing of the communication (stimulus and response, sending and receiving), and of relationships less mediated by social conventions and therefore perhaps more honest, should not be underestimated. In taking up the challenges of

'computer therapeutics', Lago (1996) argues for a theory of e-mail counselling and, from a person-centred perspective, considers its application to the early, pre-therapy phase of contact with the client. Rosenfield and Smillie (1998) discuss group counselling by telephone.

### **The three traditions**

Broadly, there are three different traditions or 'forces' within psychotherapy: the psychoanalytic or psychodynamic, the behavioural and the humanistic (also referred to as the humanistic/existential). Theoreticians and practitioners within these different forces have different ideas about human nature, personality development, pathology or maladjustment, even differences between the terms used to describe the same phenomena, society, the process of change, groups, group dynamics and the role of the analyst/conductor/psychotherapist/counsellor. These are briefly reviewed as regards their contribution to our understanding of group counselling.

#### *The psychoanalytic tradition*

Psychoanalysis is, strictly, an individual therapy. The rules of treatment, requiring as near total privacy and confidentiality, and the format it takes, requiring regular attendance of anything from three to six times a week, make it almost exclusively an individual form of treatment. It is thus more accurate to discuss group therapy within this tradition as *informed by* psychoanalysis. None the less, Freud (1921/1985a) did write about group psychology and this informs psychoanalytic approaches to groups. His views of group psychology can be summarised thus:

- The individual in a group is less repressed and therefore displays 'the manifestations of this unconscious [his instinctual impulses], in which all that is evil in the human mind is contained as a predisposition' (p. 101).
- The individual 'readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest' (p. 101).
- The condition of the individual in a group is one of being hypnotic.
- By virtue of being in a group, the individual becomes a barbarian, a creature acting by instinct, with a lowered intellectual ability, an ass.

- 'A group is impulsive, changeable and irritable . . . led almost exclusively by the unconscious . . . incapable of perseverance . . . it has a sense of omnipotence . . . is extraordinarily credulous and open to influence, it has no critical faculty . . . the feelings of a group are always very simple and very exaggerated' (pp. 104-5).
- A group requires excessive stimulus to produce an effect on it; it is nevertheless open to the influence of suggestion or suggestibility.

That Freud's statements about group psychology appear somewhat undeveloped, is due to the fact that, for a number of reasons, he did not further elaborate his theory and analysis of groups. Other psychoanalytic influences also inform group theory and practice: from Adler, the value of social equality; from Jungian analytic psychology, the collective unconscious (see Boyd, 1991); whilst Kleinian theory influenced Bion (1961). Convergences between Jung and Foulkes are described in a special issue of *Group Analysis* (Fiumara, 1989). From these different historical influences, as well as developments in social and political theory, four distinct traditions may be discerned within psychoanalytic approaches to groups.

In one strand of psychoanalytic thinking, Freud's approach to group psychology, together with psychoanalytic principles, are applied to individuals *in* the group and, to a limited extent, to the group itself. A Freudian psychoanalysis of the processes in the group between the group members relies on:

1. A theory of the unconscious.
2. An analysis of defence mechanisms of individual members - Freud (1921/1985a) describes identification as the principal neurotic defence operating between members of a group - and of any resistance to interpretation.
3. An analysis of transference and counter-transference phenomena.
4. Interpretation of group processes.

This is represented by the 'Tavistock model' of group analysis in which themes develop from free-flowing discussion (the group equivalent of free association) and all material is understood in terms of the transference with the group therapist. In response, the therapist makes a specific tripartite interpretation: firstly, of

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the group; secondly, of individual members, relating the group interpretation to how the individuals in the group are behaving; and, thirdly, viewing the group as analagous to and evocative of a family, pointing out how this (current) behaviour is a repetition of responses from early life experiences. In his chapter on the psychoanalytic approach to groups, Corey (1995) reflects this classical approach to group psychotherapy.

It was the work of Bion (1961) and Foulkes (1948/1983, 1964) which moved the focus from (individual) psychoanalysis to group analysis, that is, analysis *of* the group itself. Bion developed the interpretation *of* the *group-as-a-whole*. Based on the notion that any group has 'work' to do and that this provokes anxieties, especially in relation to the group leader, Bion identified three 'basic assumptions' of groups:

- Dependency - when the group looks to the leader to lead and to do the work for them.
- Fight/flight - when the group resists any attempt on the part of the leader or group members to structure the group by rebelling against them (fight) or ignoring them (flight).
- Pairing - when members pair off psychologically, hoping that the pairs will provide the structure they need to do the work and produce a solution to the work task.

For Bion all interpretations were group interpretations made towards the goal of helping group members to function effectively in work groups and helping groups-as-wholes to function effectively as work groups.

Foulkes, who was influenced not only by Lewin's field theory but also by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School of philosophy and social theory, generally referred to his work through the group as group-analytic psychotherapy, and had a different focus to that of Bion. Foulkes' philosophy, principles and practice may be summarised thus:

- The primary focus of treatment is on 'the individual as a whole in a total situation' (Foulkes, 1948/1983, p. 1).
- The group situation is the best forum in which to study both the group and the individual.
- Neurotic symptoms disguise what is not expressed within relationships.

- Communication in groups takes place on four levels, in terms of: current relationships, individual transference relationships, shared and projected feelings and fantasies, and archetypal images.
- The focus of group-analytic psychotherapy is on the group matrix, 'the hypothetical web of communication and relationship in a given group . . . the common shared ground' (Foulkes, 1964, p. 292).
- The aims of group-analytic psychotherapy are: activation (active participation, communication and self-observation), adjustment or adaptation, and insight (Foulkes, 1948/1983).

For an introduction to Foulkes' work and developments based on it see Pines (1983).

A fourth tradition within analytic group psychotherapy is represented by the 'group focal conflict model' (Whitman and Stock, 1958), which conceptualises group dynamics in terms of nuclear conflict, utilising concepts of 'disturbing motive', 'reactive motive' and 'solution' (see Whitaker, 1985). Hyde (1988) sees this model as having a number of similarities to the Tavistock model and as compatible with group analysis.

### *The behavioural tradition*

This tradition has its roots in the work of the Russian physiologist Pavlov, his discovery of the conditioned response and reflex in animals and his application of classical conditioning and the conditioned stimulus and response to the neurotic behaviour of humans (see Pavlov, 1941 [a posthumous publication]). In America, the work of the behaviourist and experimental psychologist Watson on maladaptive behaviour (Watson and Rayner, 1920) and Skinner (1938) on operant or instrumental learning, was influential on the development of behaviour modification. In Britain, two approaches have developed: one behavioural and the other cognitive-behavioural, which focuses in therapy on cognitions first and then on behaviour (O'Sullivan, 1996). Behaviour therapy (a term coined by Skinner in the early 1950s) is predominantly an individual therapy and does not have a specific approach to or model of groups. Apart from the economic advantage of working in groups by providing services to more people, there is a therapeutic gain of conducting behaviour therapy in groups in dealing with certain social behaviours such as assertiveness, anger

and shyness. Shaffer and Galinsky (1974) identify and describe three distinct categories of group approaches within the framework of behaviour therapy: systematic desensitisation groups, which use various techniques and steps to control forms of anxiety (see Wolpe and Lazarus, 1966); behavioural practice or behaviour rehearsal groups, for example, in assertiveness (see Lazarus, 1968); and specific behaviour control therapies over, for example, smoking (see Marrone et al., 1970). Although cognitive-behavioural group therapy is, strictly speaking, not itself a group therapy (see Alladin, 1988), the behavioural tradition has influenced practitioners across the other two traditions and the use of its techniques (for example, coaching, confrontation of behaviour, beliefs, constructs and thinking; feedback; goal-setting; homework; modelling, paradox; rehearsal; and suggestion) is equally widespread in both individual and group counselling/psychotherapy and other approaches to working with groups.

### *The humanistic/existential tradition*

This tradition represents a broad church of psychological, psychotherapeutic and counselling theory and practice. Maslow (1962) first identified this as the 'third force' in psychology, defining it as a developing science (some would say an art) concerned less with pathology and disturbance (psychoanalysis) and that which is simply explained in terms of mechanistic theory (behaviourism), and more with human motivation, self-development and aesthetics. Humanistic psychology, as Maslow describes it, is 'epi-Freudian' and 'epi-behavioural' ('epi' = building upon) and thus includes previous traditions. In any case, it includes, amongst others, psychodrama, neo-Reichian therapies, gestalt therapy, personal construct psychology, transactional analysis, the person-centred approach, psychosynthesis etc. Whilst each school or approach has its own contribution to group counselling, one form of group which draws on many models and which, in representing the accumulated thinking and practice of a variety of people, reflects this 'epi' tradition is encounter.

*Encounter* Encounter literally describes a 'meeting', sometimes defined as 'face to face' or 'in conflict', is a form of group and is - or was - for some even a social movement. Encounter is essentially holistic, based as it is on a belief in the unity of mind, body and spirit. A central concept is that of *identity*, which has an inner

aspect including the rules we have which govern us as well as an outer expression of this – which we express in groups. Although the first mention of encounter goes back to a series of poetic writings published by Moreno in 1914, the two major influences on encounter were Schutz (1973), who came from a psychoanalytic tradition, and, from within the humanistic tradition, Rogers (1970/1973). Schutz, who joined the staff of the Esalen Institute in California in 1967, developed what became referred to as an ‘open encounter model’ of group. Drawing on the work of Reich and neo-Reichians, Schutz prioritised the somatic in his analysis that body tensions are and represent blocks against feelings. In open encounter the group leader brings the client’s awareness to bear on their body and encourages them to express their feelings in the form of some physical activity such as pushing against or falling back on others. Although Rogers was running groups training counsellors as early as 1946, and included a chapter on groups (Hobbs, 1951) in *Client-Centered Therapy* (Rogers, 1951), it was not until the 1960s that Rogers himself became more involved in groups. Applying his research and ideas about the facilitative conditions for change, and favouring a more participative approach on the part of the facilitator, Rogers (1970/1973) describes the following patterns in the process of encounter groups, ‘roughly in sequential order’ (p. 22):

1. Milling around
2. Resistance to personal expression or exploration
3. Description of past feelings
4. Expression of negative feelings
5. Expression and exploration of personally meaningful material
6. The expression of immediate interpersonal feelings in the group
7. The development of a healing capacity in the group
8. Self-acceptance and the beginning of change
9. The cracking of facades
10. The individual receives feedback
11. Confrontation
12. The helping relationship outside the group sessions
13. The basic encounter
14. The expression of positive feelings and closeness
15. Behaviour changes in the group.



Barrett-Lennard (1979) suggests that this formulation may be summarised in three phases:

- Engagement
- Trust and process development
- Encounter and change.

At around the same time as Schutz and Rogers were running or facilitating encounter groups, Bach (1966) and Stoller (1972) were extending the format of conventional group therapy in terms of its time frame to the point of running groups of 24 to 48 hours' duration, referring to these as marathons and later as marathon group encounter.

Wibberley (1988) traces four influences on encounter: one from the 1940s from Lewin and the NTL training groups which, over time, became more concerned with personal growth than organisational development; a second from the more aggressive confrontational style of groups run originally in a residential therapeutic community for drug addicts called Synanon, founded in 1958 (Yablonsky, 1965); the third from Schutz; and the fourth from Rogers. The influence of these roots is seen in encounter and, more commonly, groups influenced by encounter today.

1 Encounter groups are generally directed towards and comprise 'healthy' people rather than existing counselling and/or disturbed clients. Whilst often therapeutic, with their focus on the here-and-now, they are not generally regarded as therapy. Rogers and Sanford (1980) view the purpose of encounter as the enrichment and enhancement of personal development and distinct from group therapy in its response to serious problems - although they state that the process is much the same. They are - or were - part of the self-development and growth movement, especially from the late 1960s to mid 1970s. Wood (1995b) reflects:

with less stable communities and the decline of organized religion, the small group also could offer a congenial communal setting for the creation of a stabilizing mythology and inspirational ritual. Perhaps the encounter group served as a microcosm of American idealism where the defeat of loneliness, finding a sense of meaning, anti-intellectualism, and religiosity were all possible (p. 5).

2 One strand and influence in encounter is the intensive, confrontational approach which, in its extreme form at Synanon, involved 'attack' therapy whereby a person is cross-examined about their behaviour or attitudes, criticised and even ridiculed.

This found a cultural resonance at the time amongst people who supported the Chinese cultural revolution, which employed similar tactics, especially against intellectuals and those perceived to be intellectual. The Erhard Seminar Training ('est') marathon groups developed some similar techniques in their promotion of personal growth and transformation in a short period of time - for a review of Erhard's subsequent and more recent initiative, The Landmark Forum, see Wruck and Eastley (1997).

3 The open encounter of Schutz was highly structured with movement, group exercises and suggestions and directions from the leader. Experimentation was encouraged - the nude marathon was one example (Bindrim, 1968) - and in many ways reflected the times.

4 The fourth branch of encounter, which developed from Rogers, is less structured, with more emphasis on communication between members of the group and on congruence or genuineness. In the later years of his life Rogers became more involved in the resolution of conflict, intercultural tension and in peace initiatives through facilitating groups in several of the world's 'hot spots'. This reflects the strong counter-cultural influence of encounter which led it at the time to be an influential social experience - Rogers (1970/1973) even claimed that the encounter group was one of the most successful modern inventions:

those who may have thought of the encounter group as a fad or phenomenon affecting only a few people temporarily would do well to reconsider. In the troubled future that lies ahead of us, the trend towards the intensive group experience is related to deep and significant issues having to do with change . . . in persons, in institutions, in our urban and cultural alienation, in racial tensions, in our international frictions, in our philosophies, our values, our image of man himself. It is a profoundly significant movement. (Rogers, 1970/1973, p. 169)

In present times, the legacy of encounter finds expression in social applications such as consciousness-raising groups, and, more recently, in community-building initiatives (see Chapter 7).

For further reading on encounter see Merry (1995) and Yalom (1995).

*Transactional analysis and the person-centred approach* As far as approaches to groups and to working with groups are concerned, each school within the humanistic/existential tradition