

Group Dynamics: C7P7A7 – A More Descriptive Version

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This is an updated version that I have used for my webinars and workshops.

Hay (1993, 2004, 2009, 2012) developed an idea about analysing group dynamics that had been presented by Landy Gobes at a TA conference. Following input from Hay and others, Gobes (1993) extended it to C4P4: Contact, Contract, Context, Content, Process, Parallel process, Professional level of development, and Plan for the future. Subsequently, Hay had converted it into C5P5A5 and more recently (Hay, 2018) into C7P7A7:

- **C7:** Context, Contact, Contract, Content, Creativity, Commitment, Contrasts;
- **P7:** Personal, Professional, Psychological, Power, Paradigms, Parallel, Performing;
- **A7:** Attachment, Autonomy, Authenticity, Alternatives, Actions, Accountability, Aims

We cannot keep all of these in mind at once so they can be considered roughly chronologically. C7 relates to what is happening as the group starts up. P7 applies once the group has moved into doing its work. A7 is relevant as the group is reaching the end of a task or a meeting.

Context – what is the context within which the group is functioning and how might the environment be influencing the group dynamics; what stakeholders outside the group might be influencing the group; does the group provide good structure, strokes and stimulation; are the group boundaries clear, with adequate provisions for people to join and leave?

Contact – how well is initial contact being made between the group members; are there overt signs of rapport being established, what body language can be observed; are rituals leading into pastimes and then onto working and playing together; does it seem as if people are taking time to create relationships and lay the foundations for moving into attachment?

Contract – what is the contract, or agreed remit, of the group; are group members clear about this; do people have clear contracts or agreements with each other; do the contracts include procedural, professional and psychological level; do they address the results intended, the allocation of responsibilities, and the relationships that will apply; are the psychological distances between the parties balanced, without unhealthy alliances or alienation?

Content – is the content of the discussion related to the contract; are group members focusing on appropriate content; how clearly is the objective of the group communicated in shared; are people focused on the real work of the group; what topics are coming up for discussion; is there a real commitment to problem solving and innovation?

Creativity – is there evidence of creativity; are new ideas welcomed; are people asking questions and making sure they have understood suggestions being made by others; are people building on new ideas; is there a focus on finding ways around any difficulties with new ideas?

Commitment – do all group members seem equally committed to the work of the group; are they all contributing; is the group moving on through rituals and pastimes into working on the purpose of the group?

Contrasts – how are group members using any differences between them (e.g. cultures, styles, etc) rather than these leading to unhelpful conflict; are contrasts being valued at the macro level (e.g. race) as well as at the micro level (e.g. attire) as well as anywhere in between; what happens when there is a clash of styles; of opinion; of experiences?

Personal – is the group process respectful; are they listening to each other and communicating effectively; are they exhibiting skills of listening, questioning, cooperating; how is information being shared and used; are group members talking to each other and to the group as a whole rather than setting up side conversations?

Professional – how professionally competent are people;; are they working on the issues in line with their professional roles; are they capable of undertaking any necessary activities; is there an appropriate level of professional expertise, knowledge, experience; do group members respect the professionalism of those with different backgrounds; what professional ethics apply?

Psychological – how ‘straight’ our interactions within the group; is the process clean, with a lack of hidden messages; are the group avoiding game playing; what recognition/stroking patterns are operating within the group; how does the group avoid recognising and reinforcing poor performance?

Power – is there an absence of power plays; are more senior group members encouraging others to play a full part; is power being shared and on what basis (e.g. experience, professional specialisation); is there any sense of hierarchy within the group, perhaps due to roles that people have outside the group?

Paradigms – whose maps of the world are being operated within; are group members being open-minded enough about the perspectives of others; are there organisational or family paradigms, such as “this is how we do things here”; are societal norms needing to be challenged?

Parallel – is the group functioning in the here-and-now and avoiding any sense of parallel process (Searles, 1955) dynamics outside the group (such as replaying conflicts between their managers); are problems within the group mirrored outside the group, such as between groups, or in individual relationships that group members have outside the group?

Performing – has the group reached the performing stage; are they focusing on the purpose of the group rather than spending time on the group process; are they at the stage of working, playing or closeness rather than playing psychological games?

Attachment – have the group reached the stage where they are close and open with each other; are they relating well to each other rather than forming subgroups or cliques; are they maintaining an appropriate level of closeness in terms of the purpose of the group; are any group members appearing to want a higher level of attachment than others are willing to provide?

Autonomy – are group members managing to be autonomous and offer their own views rather than engaging in groupthink; are people aware and in the here-and-now; are they developing and growing through their contact with the group and each other; what life positions or windows on the world are in evidence?

Authenticity – are group members being genuine about their opinions; are they sharing rather than saying what they think they should; are they willing to challenge each other; are they sharing feelings so that these can be taken into account?

Alternatives – is the group generating alternatives; are a range of options being considered before decisions are made; is there any discounting – of the situation, its significance, possible solutions, skills available, strategies for implementation, or ultimate success factors?

Actions – are practical actions being generated or identified; are the actions appropriate in terms of the aims of the group; are clear action plans being set, with measurable, manageable and motivational objectives; is the sequence one of decision, direction, destination?

Accountability – are the group members allocating/accepting responsibilities to specific group members for ensuring actions are implemented; are individuals indicating unreservedly that they there accept responsibilities; are plans being made to follow up on actions allocated; are individuals clear about why their allocated tasks are important to the group?

Aims – do the outcomes relate back to the original aims of the group; are is it clear that what is being achieved fits the contracting conducted previously; is the group working to aims arrived at through consensus rather than being restricted to aims that our personal priorities for some individuals?

References

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