

Men's Groups

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INTRODUCTION

Groups of men have existed throughout history. Men have congregated in all male groups in every society to accomplish a wide variety of political, social, religious, economic, recreational, and personal tasks. Most of these groups, whether large in size, such as an all-male army or religious order, or small, such as a meeting of the male tribal leaders in a primitive society or a gathering of a totally male corporate board of directors in an industrial society, have both reflected and served to maintain cultural definitions of masculine and feminine gender roles. Quite simply, men have met in all-male groups to perform certain functions which have most often been separated from the functions women perform. The purpose of this chapter is to describe a type of men's group which differs from these other exclusively male groups. The specific functions of this type of men's group are to encourage examination of how the masculine gender role is experienced by individual men and to explore new ways of enacting this role.

Two major categories of such men's groups, consciousness-raising groups and psychotherapy groups, are described in this chapter. While the purposes and characteristics of these two categories of men's groups are not always clearly differentiated, either theoretically or in practice, they can be viewed as distinct entities and will be described as such. Throughout the chapter the use of the term "men's group" will refer, unless otherwise specified, to small groups of men who meet on a regular basis and who have identified one of their purposes for meeting to be the examination of the masculine gender role. The manner in which they accomplish this purpose will be shown to vary widely from group to group. All of them, however, have developed as a result of two historical factors: first, the entire biologic and cultural history of differences between men's and women's gender roles, a history which significantly shapes the characteristics of

the very men's groups which have been established to alter definitions of the masculine gender role; and second, the contemporary movement to describe and alter traditional definitions of gender roles. This movement was labeled in America in the 1950s and the 1960s as the Women's Movement and is now described by some as part of a larger human potential movement. These two factors—the historical differences between masculine and feminine gender roles and the contemporary movement to alter the definitions of these roles—underlie the development of men's groups in America today and provide a basis for understanding many of the characteristics of men's groups as they presently exist.

Throughout this chapter, the author will present his own experiences with men's groups in order to illustrate certain characteristics and applications of these groups. His experiences have included participation as a member in a year-long leaderless men's consciousness-raising group, as a psychotherapist in four men's psychotherapy groups, and as a leader of numerous men's discussion groups and workshops on men's issues. Each of these experiences has provided him with a rich opportunity for personal and professional growth.

He will also present in this chapter a brief historical background of men's groups in America, develop a rationale for these groups, describe some of the characteristics of men's groups, and discuss possible applications of such groups in the mental health field. Each of these topics will be discussed within the context of the larger topic of this book, the changing male role in American society.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MEN'S GROUPS

The history of men's groups is short and poorly documented. Nevertheless, understanding this history can help us to identify some of the characteristics of men's groups and to appreciate better many of the issues which can arise in such groups. An early account of a group of men meeting together to examine the experience of being men was written in 1971 and is entitled *Unbecoming Men*.¹ This book is a collection of brief essays written by the members of a men's consciousness-raising group. The title chosen for the book suggests an essential dilemma faced by the participants of any men's group. Men, who by definition reflect at least in part the masculine gender role, come together in these groups to learn how to "unbecome" men. Many of the characteristics attributed to the masculine gender role in American society, such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and independence, may be contradictory to the stated goals of men's groups, which include introspection, self-disclosure, sharing of affective experiences, and diminishing competition and the use of power in oppressive ways. Thus men, who represent masculinity, seek in men's groups to become, according to social definitions, unmasculine. This inherent contradiction in the very concept of men's groups—the contradiction of men seeking to "unbecome" men—provides a significant theme throughout the brief history of men's groups.

The essays in *Unbecoming Men* suggest another important theme which

persists today in most men's groups: many of the men in this group describe an awareness that they want to change as men as a result of interactions with women who were a part of the Women's Movement. The relationship between women changing their concept of feminine identity and men changing their concept of masculine identity is complex. The contemporary Women's Movement began in America in the 1950s and by 1971, when a small number of men's groups were beginning to form, women had already articulated many aspects of the roles they wanted as women in society, had offered serious criticism of men's roles, and had begun to meet in a variety of types of women's groups. Thus, women had very clearly been the first to question traditional notions of gender roles, and men were the followers. The reasons for this phenomenon have been examined extensively and usually include issues related to the maintenance by men of power over women. Farrell² has suggested that the development of separate Women's and Men's Movements is a distinctly American process and that other countries, such as the Scandinavian ones, have instead developed a Human Liberation Movement. The relevance of this separate history of the Men's and Women's Movements in America is that men frequently enter men's groups with a sense of isolation from the struggles of women, with feelings of self-criticism as men which are in part a response to the real critique of men and the male role presented by feminists and other women, and with an awareness of following women in changing. These themes have become important determinants of the characteristics of some men's groups.

The author's experiences with men's groups also began in the early 1970s, when he was asked to participate as a leader and as a resource person for women's groups in order to assist these groups in examining their reactions to the presence of a man following being together as a group of women. He began to develop an interest in feminist writing at the same time. Many of his female friends and patients were also describing to him the distress they saw in their male partners and friends in reaction to changes which they were undergoing as women. Gradually men began to report directly their concerns in relation to the women they knew who were changing their views of themselves as women. These concerns were presented by a wide range of types of men including some who came to him because of psychiatric disturbances.

Based upon these experiences, he decided to start a men's psychotherapy group which could address both the emotional distress of his male patients and the social issues regarding male-male and male-female interactions. He also realized that being in a men's group himself would be of benefit in understanding better his own experience of being a man. He began to read the few books and articles about men available at that time. He realized that his interest in being in a men's group was not a solitary one when two friends shared with him their similar interest. They each invited other men to participate in such a group. Eventually eight men came together to discuss how they wanted to conduct their group. The experiences in this group will be presented in later sections of this chapter.

Like the group of men in *Unbecoming Men*, most of the other men's groups which have been written about in the professional literature^{2,3} can be described

as consciousness-raising groups. They tend to be leaderless, exist in nonprofessional settings, and focus on altering the social expectations placed on men. The fact that men in such groups tend to challenge existing social expectations for men has led to an apparent reluctance to form or at least to report about such groups within settings which represent and reflect more traditional social values, such as hospitals or community mental health centers. Those few men's groups which have met within an institutional setting^{4,5} have been formed in universities. This may simply reflect the fact that the university is the setting where many professional publications originate. These groups are more structured in format, following either an educational or psychotherapy format, and may utilize examination of issues of masculinity as only one of several approaches to change.

Newspaper and other public media accounts⁶ provide the only other descriptions of men's groups. The groups described in these accounts are formed in churches, in men's centers, or outside of any organized setting by groups of men who work together or have some other common interest. The largest number of such groups are probably formed in large urban communities or in university settings. Almost all of these groups seem to follow a consciousness-raising format, although many of them exist primarily as support or discussion groups without an explicit goal of change for the participants or for society. Because of the paucity of reports about men's groups, it is impossible to determine exactly how many men participate in such groups, what the outcomes for the members are, and for what reasons the groups were originally formed. Recently national organizations such as Free Men have been formed with the specific purposes of encouraging communication about gender roles through conferences and of promoting the formation of men's groups. The formation of men's groups does not seem to be a widespread social phenomenon, however. A much larger number of women's groups have been reported about in the professional and popular literature.

Part of the reason that so few men's groups have been described in the literature may also be viewed as a direct result of the very purpose and structures of these groups. The purpose of these groups is to change the way males are required to perform as men in our society. To exist within traditional and male-oriented settings could be counterproductive to the stated goals of such groups of men. To report in a systematic fashion in the professional literature on men's groups also could be viewed as a derivative of the same ways men have always been required to be: systematic observers who often maintain power through a scientific, logical approach to their experiences. Many of the men who enter men's groups are trying hard to alter these expectations for themselves, and to do so many require being outside the mainstream of professional and other social organizations.

This brief history of men's groups in America demonstrates several important issues relevant to these groups. First, while there are several published references to men's groups, actual studies are practically nonexistent. Second, the phenomenon of men's groups came after the start of the Women's Movement and the formation of a large number of women's groups. Third, the history

of men's groups reflects some of the problems inherent in all male groups within which such groups have to struggle. These problems include the difficulty for a group of men who themselves represent masculinity to accomplish the task of "unbecoming" men and the related difficulty of developing strategies for groups which are not stereotypically masculine but which will at the same time allow honest expression of the masculinity of the group members. Fourth, men's groups have developed along two lines, those formed outside of professional settings, such as consciousness-raising, political action, and support groups, and a small number formed in traditional professional settings, primarily universities, and which may utilize a combination of consciousness-raising, educational, and psychotherapy approaches.

In subsequent sections of this chapter, the author will demonstrate how these historical issues relevant to men's groups are useful in formulating a rationale for men's groups and for understanding both the problems which arise in such groups and the possible applications of these groups in the mental health field.

RATIONALE

The rationale for men's groups is in the most general sense a belief in the need for men as a group to change their behaviors, belief systems, and affective experiences. A number of authors have discussed the problems for men in these areas.⁷⁻¹⁰ In a separate paper¹¹ the author presented six areas of concern related to gender-role issues which have been identified by men: a generalized difficulty and anxiety in relating to the changing role of women in society, changes in the fathering role, examination of the male role in work and recreation, a wish by men to change affective style, alterations in the nature of adult relationships, and changing patterns of sexual functioning. Small groups of men meeting together to share concerns and to change in these areas may be particularly helpful for some men.

Experiences in the men's consciousness-raising group in which the author participated illustrate how one group of men interacted about their concerns in these areas. The topics discussed in this group included relationships with male and female partners, relationships with parents, the experience of being fathers, feelings about each other, sexuality, careers, and many other aspects of the men's lives. Together they lived through many important life events, including marriage, separation and divorce, graduation from college, the birth of a child, questions of homosexual identity, sickness of parents and other relatives, and stress in personal relationships. They also began to share meaningful events among themselves. Late in the life of the group they took a weekend retreat in a setting on a lake. This and many other shared activities served to expand their conceptions of how they could be together as men.

The nature of the sharing and the content of the discussions in this group were undoubtedly determined to a large extent by certain common characteristics. All of the men were between the ages of 20 and 40, most were students or members of the faculty of a large university, several had careers in psychology or

psychiatry, and all shared an interest in the examination of their experiences as men. For the author, this men's group was a valuable resource for support, for learning about himself as a male, for helping to focus his professional interest in the particular concerns of men in contemporary America, and for developing new ways of relating to other men and to women. Today, four years after the ending of this group, several of the men in this group remain among his closest friends. All of the men had an important impact on his life.

His gratitude and respect for the men in this men's consciousness-raising group has continued to this day. In this group the author learned how to care about men as an adult; he learned also how to fight with men in totally new ways; he began, as a result of experiences in the group, to explore more deeply the relationships with his son, his father, his brother, and other important males in his life; and finally, as a result of learning more about himself as a man, he reevaluated his relationships with women and began to establish patterns of intimacy with women which did not involve traditional expressions of sexuality or power. While no political activities were directly undertaken by the group, several of the group members have become involved in other men's activities following being in this group. All of them were deeply affected by the experiences of sharing with each other the personal parts of their lives, parts which most of them had previously tended to share primarily only with women, and of allowing other men to become important to them as close friends.

Being in a men's consciousness-raising group was invaluable in preparing the author to work with men's psychotherapy groups as well. The men's psychotherapy groups with which he subsequently worked have consisted of from six to eight members and have all been conducted on an outpatient basis. The men who composed these groups have ranged in age from 18 to 60, and they have presented with a wide range of psychiatric problems. Some of the men were experiencing only mild symptoms of depression and disturbance in interpersonal relationships when they entered the groups. Others presented with symptoms of severe depression, borderline personality disorder, or character disorder. Several of the men had had extensive previous psychotherapy, had been hospitalized, or had received psychotropic medication. These groups all met weekly and were relatively short-term (six to eight months) with closed membership. Three of the groups were conducted in conjunction with women's groups led by Teresa Bernardez, M.D. The coleaders have reported on several aspects of these groups in a separate publication.⁵

Consistent themes have emerged in each of these groups. Many of these themes are described elsewhere in this chapter. But certain themes may be of particular interest in helping to elucidate further a rationale for men's psychotherapy groups. First, the men in all of these groups have expressed a concern with whether or not they can fully relate to each other in the absence of women. This concern appears different from the common experience of psychotherapy groups which are struggling to define their pattern of interaction as a group and to achieve a degree of cohesiveness. It seems rather to reflect a feeling of lack of interpersonal competence on the part of men.

A second and related concern expressed by all of these men's groups in-

volves the nature of affective or feeling expression within the group. Expression of certain types of feelings directly within the group, especially those feelings perceived to be associated with vulnerability, such as sadness, affection, sexual attraction between men in the group, and feelings of intense anger, is initially inhibited within these groups. Again, this lack of affective expression appears different from experiences of groups in general. While members in any group may require a certain amount of time together before they can begin to express their feelings directly, the members of a men's group seem particularly reluctant to display their feelings. The eventual release of this affective inhibition in these groups tends to disconfirm the idea that men are unable to express feelings directly. It does appear to support the idea that men can learn to express feelings more openly if given the opportunity. The capacity to share feeling experiences varied considerably, of course, among the men in these groups and was to a large extent independent of the factor of gender. The occurrence of an initial affective deadness within these groups, however, seems specifically related to the fact that they were all male in composition.

These examples of one men's consciousness-raising group and four men's psychotherapy groups are presented in order to highlight certain themes and types of interactions which can occur in such groups. From these examples and the descriptions of other men's groups available in the literature, several specific purposes and functions of men's groups can be presented which together form a rationale for such groups. This rationale serves to differentiate men's groups from other types of groups and to describe the unique contributions of men's groups to society in general and to the field of psychotherapy in particular. The specific purposes and functions of men's groups which are not currently accomplished in any other type of group will now be presented.

Membership in a men's group represents in itself a statement of nontraditional masculine values. Men who wish to change themselves as men often begin this process by affiliating with a group of men who have similar values and interests. Since men's groups are a new social development and have arisen in large part as a result of the Women's Movement, a willingness to enter a men's group is an important statement by an individual man that he wants to change. For many men, this may represent the first step in a whole series of life changes related to his experience of being a man.

Men's groups provide an opportunity for men to relate to other men in an interpersonal setting without women. Many men in our society rely on women to perform a wide variety of interpersonal functions, such as caretaking, nurturing, and expressing certain types of feelings more associated with the feminine role.¹² In an all-male group, men are left to accomplish these functions on their own without the support of women. In such a setting, men may learn to perform many of the functions which they previously felt could only be done by women.

Men's groups serve as a means for demonstrating to men how they behave when they are with other men. Competition, striving for success, a wish to dominate, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and intellectualization are characteristics associated with the masculine role.¹³ These characteristics can be expected to appear in groups of men meeting together, and in time men in men's groups may learn to

express them in new ways. Struggles to win or to dominate other men, when they arise, can be experienced, examined, and altered in men's groups. The manner in which a particular men's group examines and helps to alter stereotyped masculine behaviors will to a large extent determine the success of the group in helping its members to change.

A men's group represents a nontraditional male activity for its members. When men come together in groups they generally do so for a specific purpose or to accomplish a task, both in work and nonwork areas. Although men's groups do have a personal, political, or psychotherapeutic purpose for the members, they will generally not have the same product-oriented or competitive goals as other groups of men. The task of sharing personal feelings, thoughts, and hopes with other men provides an opportunity to behave in nonstereotypically masculine ways, an opportunity which may not be available to many men in any other area of their lives.

The relationships in men's groups can serve to highlight the ways in which members have related to other significant men in their lives. Men's groups, especially those having a heterogeneous composition with respect to age and other characteristics of the members, may provide an opportunity for members to see important aspects of relationships to fathers, male children, authority figures, or male peers. The men may initially interact with other group members in ways which are similar to interactions with significant males in their lives outside of the group. If the group facilitates the experiencing and sharing of these "here and now" relationships, its members may acquire a greater understanding of the ways in which individual men and men as a group are encouraged to interact with other men according to stereotyped masculine patterns. This understanding can lead to important changes in relationships with men outside of the group through the formation of new relationships which are not based on patterns of authority, competition, or other traditional factors in male-male relationships.

A men's group can provide a setting in which to explore special topics which are frequently difficult for men to talk about, such as dependency and homosexuality. Adherence to the masculine gender role prescribes for men a masculine identity which emphasizes independence, lack of noncompetitive physical contact between men, and exclusion of sexual feelings between men. In challenging the traditional masculine role, a men's group can encourage the expression of feelings of dependency, passivity, weakness, and sexual feelings for other men. The open acknowledgment of such feelings within a group of men can serve to diminish the men's concerns about these areas and to reinforce a greater openness in sharing a wider range of other feelings as well.

Men's groups may lead to the greater understanding of special problems for men, such as male diseases, an excessive need to achieve, reactions to divorce, and difficulties in parenting. Certain topics are of interest to men either because they are exclusively male problems, such as men's illnesses, or because they generally involve a particularly masculine experience in American society, such as the frequent separation of men from their children following divorce. The opportunity to hear about other men's experiences in these areas may be especially helpful to men in two ways. First, some stress for individual men in these areas

may be alleviated merely by learning that other men experience similar concerns. Second, some men's groups may attempt to alter the male experience in these areas either by supporting individual men in challenging social norms, as when a man is encouraged to obtain custody or joint custody of his children, or by focusing the entire group's activity in a particular area of concern to men. An example of this type of group is one that is specifically organized to alter existing divorce or child custody laws.

Men's groups can serve to alter the nature of adult male-male relationships by promoting caring and friendship between men. Many men primarily relate to other adults in structured settings which preclude the sharing of feelings, concerns, fears, hopes and expectations, and empathy. If such interpersonal sharing takes place at all, it occurs within the family setting, and for many men it fails to occur at home as well. Men's groups can be a mechanism for learning how to develop adult male friendships, either through the establishment of relationships with other men in the group or by applying the learning experience in the group to relating in new ways to men outside of the group.

Men may learn new patterns of relating to women in men's groups. Men who participate in a men's group often have an awareness of changes in the role of women in society and are attempting to change the gender-role expectations and norms for men as well. The relatedness between changes in men and women is a recurrent theme for most men's groups, and relationships with women may be the central focus of some men's groups. Regardless of the extent to which the group explicitly discusses relationships with women, however, these relationships can be expected to be affected because the men are changing their ideas about themselves as men. The nature of specific effects will vary considerably, of course, depending on such factors as the degree of political consciousness of the men in the group regarding gender-role issues, the quality of existing relationships with the women to whom the group members relate, and the motivation of members to experiment with nontraditional patterns in male-female relationships. These patterns can include establishing nonsexual friendships with women and assuring equal power in relationships with women.

Men's groups can serve to increase the social and political awareness of men as a basis for eliminating individual and institutional sexism. Some men's groups are organized for the specific purpose of promoting radical change in existing gender arrangements. All men's groups, by encouraging awareness of gender-role characteristics for both men and women, can help to increase the sensitivity of men to prejudices and injustices in society related to sexism. With such a heightened sensitivity, individual men can become more aware of their own beliefs and behaviors which previously may have served both consciously and unconsciously to oppress women as a group and to restrict their own experiences of becoming more fully human.

Each men's group will vary considerably in the extent to which it addresses these issues. Similarly the outcomes of such groups for individual members will vary depending on many factors, including the stated purpose and interests of a given group, the type of men who compose it, the format of the group, the setting in which it occurs, the presence or absence of a group leader or therapist,

and the length of time the group meets. Nevertheless, a group of men which comes together in order to examine concerns about gender-role characteristics can provide an opportunity which is not presently available in any other type of group. Some of the variable factors which determine the specific characteristics of a particular men's group are discussed in the next section.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN'S GROUPS

Small groups of men have been shown to have characteristics which are different from the characteristics of women's groups and mixed groups. Aries¹⁴ demonstrated differences in these three types of groups which she believes reflect the sex-role demands of conventional society. She showed that

... men had more personal orientation in a mixed setting; addressed individuals more often, spoke more about themselves and their feelings, while in an all-male setting they were more concerned with the expression of competition and status.

She also demonstrated that over time in a small discussion group men tend to benefit more from a mixed setting and women tend to feel less restricted and benefit more from an all-female setting.

Several other authors have also reported on specific problems in men's groups. Farrell² extensively examines some major barriers to successful interaction in men's consciousness-raising groups which derive from the very conception of the masculine role in American society. One such barrier is the tendency of men to intellectualize. Through this process, men may become psychologically insightful or politically aware at an intellectual level without really changing underlying attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Another barrier to which Farrell refers is an inability of men to overcome their attachment to a hierarchy of values which places males' values over females' values in a social interaction. A technique which he identifies as reinforcing the male hierarchy of values is "self-listening," which refers to a process of listening to another person only for the purpose of sharing one's own experiences and reactions and not for purposes of genuinely appreciating the speaker's experiences. Farrell believes that men employ this technique of exchange both with other men and with women. He further believes that utilization of this technique and the maintenance of attachment to males' values in group interactions leads to the development of such interactive traits as dominating, interrupting, condescending, showing disrespect, and aggression, traits which can interfere with showing empathy and warmth in interacting with others. Farrell's analysis of male interaction in consciousness-raising groups is consistent with Aries' findings about all-male discussion groups. He believes that these patterns are demonstrated by men in mixed groups with women as well.

Washington¹⁵ identifies several additional problems for men in consciousness-raising groups. He describes the initial decision to participate in such a group and a sustained willingness to continue to attend as the two major problems for such groups. Other problems he identifies for men's groups include anxiety about homosexuality within the group and a tendency for the men to use intellectualization.

Efforts to overcome some of the problems which men may have when interacting in groups have led to several suggestions for how to structure men's groups. Wong⁴ outlines a series of activities and possible discussion topics for male self-help groups. Moreland¹⁶ describes a course of seminars for increasing college students' awareness about sex roles. Farrell² believes that men's groups need a facilitator initially in order to overcome males' inhibitions to group interaction, but that the facilitator should play a diminishing role over time in the groups.

The factors identified by Aries, Farrell, and others which interfere with communication between men meeting in small groups may significantly determine the characteristics of men's groups. The author's experience shows that for most men's groups these factors, when they are examined and when they are successfully managed within the group, may also provide a stimulus for further personal growth for the individual men in the group. Breaking through barriers to communication which present themselves as masculine patterns of relating to other persons appears to be the most satisfying experience reported by the men who have participated in men's groups. Certain specific features of men's groups, including the nature of the contract, the process, the pattern of leadership, the dynamics, and the presence of conflicts about changes will significantly influence the degree to which a particular men's group will successfully overcome the problems men have in interacting in small groups.

CONTRACT. Any group must have a task and a set of assumptions, guidelines, and rules which will presumably lead to the accomplishment of this task. The task and rules of operation determine the contract for the group. The task of most men's groups is generally stated as a personal one for the members, to increase awareness about men's issues and about alternatives to social prescriptions for male behaviors. Some men's groups also attempt to undertake broader political or social activities related to these issues, but even these groups may still emphasize the individual member's responsibility for gaining awareness and changing.

The rules of operation of men's groups are much more variable. Some groups function according to clearly specified guidelines which establish requirements for attendance, what may be discussed, how long the group will meet, and other rules which determine the structure of the group. Other groups may be loosely organized, meet sporadically, and not decide in advance what will occur during meetings. The degree of organization and adherence to rules may significantly influence what can be accomplished in a given men's group. Style and degree of organization is of particular importance in men's groups because the male role in society tends to emphasize hierarchy and organization. The wish by some men's groups to operate without established rules may promote overcoming traditional male patterns of interaction, but it may also encourage disorganization within the group, leading to nonattendance or lack of shared purpose among the members.

The specific contract for a men's group will vary considerably, of course, depending on whether it is a psychotherapy, a consciousness-raising, or some other type of group. Men in a psychotherapy group may be expected in general to be experiencing a greater degree of emotional distress than men in other types

of groups. As a result of their distress they have "contracted" with a therapist in the hope of obtaining relief. Consequently, the factors of identified emotional distress and of working with a therapist will determine certain characteristics of men's psychotherapy groups, such as degree of structure and setting. The contract of a consciousness-raising group may, in contrast, involve only an agreement among the members to increase personal awareness about the experience of being a man. Because of the relationship between the contract of a group and how the group is structured, the nature of the contract can be seen to be an important determinant of how a particular men's group will overcome the barriers to communication among its members.

PROCESS. Most men's groups will at some point directly address issues of communication between members, or in other words, attend to the process by which the group functions as a group. The manner in which a group addresses its process will vary considerably depending on other characteristics of the group. The characteristic of men's groups which seems to be most consistently helpful to the members is simply the opportunity to interact with other males about issues related to being men. Thus, a helpful process in men's groups is one that facilitates interpersonal communication among its members. In the initial phase of the group, some specific structure for demonstrating existing modes of interaction and for eliciting the concerns of the members may be desirable for most groups. By discussing selected topics, reading certain books about men, allocating time for each member to talk about his concerns, designating a group leader or facilitator, or combining these approaches, the group may encourage the development of a sense of cohesiveness and sharing among the members. Later in the group's life, these initial arrangements may yield to a more loosely organized process in which members spontaneously interact regarding certain shared problems or individual concerns. Because of the varied composition, settings, and contracts of men's groups, the process which any given group follows will vary considerably.

An awareness of which areas may be particularly problematic for men in groups and an attention to ways in which the process the group follows can be helpful in addressing these areas will be crucial in determining the success of the group. For example, a group of men who have decided to participate in a consciousness-raising group and who share a concern about expressing feelings with other men may want to avoid a group process which focuses on intellectual topics or reading books. A process which focuses on here and now sharing of feelings between the members or which encourages the revealing of emotionally important concerns may be more relevant for this type of group. In contrast a group of students who want to learn about gender-role issues during a set period of time may benefit more from topic discussions. A flexible combination of various group processes which highlights the concerns men have allows the men to interact about these concerns, facilitates a greater level of awareness, and provides an opportunity to behave in new ways is the ideal process for most men's groups.

PATTERNS OF LEADERSHIP. Leadership is an extremely important variable in men's groups. Participants and observers in these groups agree that competition

for dominance is an almost universal phenomenon in groups of men. The dilemma for most men's groups, if they recognize this struggle for dominance, is to establish a balance between leadership, which can provide some consistent direction and facilitation for group exchange, and nonadherence to traditional patterns of leadership, which are often directive, prescriptive, or authoritarian.

The original purpose of the group will influence the pattern of leadership. If the group is formed for purposes of psychotherapy or education, then a therapist or instructor will usually serve as a leader. If the group is constituted specifically for consciousness-raising or political action purposes, then leadership patterns will vary considerably. Some groups may rotate leadership, others may agree that there is no established leader, and yet other groups may utilize a set structure, such as a topic-discussion format, which addresses leadership by selecting a discussion leader. The setting in which the group occurs may also significantly influence the leadership patterns. For example, a group which meets to learn about sex-role issues in a college classroom may benefit from the structure and direction provided by the instructor. A group whose purpose is to significantly alter the life styles of its members may require experimentation with a variety of patterns of leadership.

Style of leadership is also an important issue for a men's group, regardless of how the leadership function is structured in the group. Moreland¹⁶ has emphasized the need for group facilitators in college classes about sex-role issues to be aware themselves about sex-role constructions and to model nontraditional patterns of behavior. It is difficult to imagine the members of a men's group achieving a higher level of awareness about sex-role issues and changing themselves if they were to be led by a person demonstrating only traditional sex-role attitudes or behaviors. Female leaders have apparently not been extensively utilized in men's groups, but this approach may provide an alternative for some men's groups which could both demonstrate that women can be in helpful positions of leadership in relation to men and at the same time provide for men a realistic representation of feminine qualities within an otherwise all-male group. Other groups may benefit from periodic consultations by outside leaders who are requested to assist the group in overcoming specific problems or to offer expertise in an area of particular interest to the group at a given time.

If a group decides to establish itself without a designated leader or facilitator, it may encounter problems which can result in dissolution of the group, stagnation within the group, or, if successfully handled, an enhanced sense of accomplishment by the group. If the group does continue to function, the risks of conducting a men's group without a designated pattern of leadership are that the group members may persist in openly competing for leadership through the life of the group, thereby reinforcing traditional patterns of male-male interaction, or that the members may deny that competition exists at all. The latter outcome may serve to encourage even more unconscious mechanisms for achieving dominance through the use of intellectualization or reaction formation. Groups which can successfully overcome these problems without adhering to traditional forms of leadership may serve as the best laboratories for expanding male consciousness. Leaderless men's groups which cannot overcome these

problems can benefit from utilizing alternative strategies for leadership, such as requesting help from outside consultants or temporarily designating a leader from within the group.

DYNAMICS. The dynamics of a group refers to the themes, conflicts, and style which are characteristic of a particular group. Men's groups reflect the dynamics of small groups in general as well as certain dynamics which can be viewed as unique to groups of men. It is these unique dynamics of men in groups which will be discussed in this section.

Many of the dynamics of men in groups reflect the nature of the masculine gender role. Some of the attributes which are associated with the masculine role in American society are assertiveness, aggression, independence, rationality, competitiveness, seeking of power, an action orientation, a tendency not to be introspective, little expression of certain emotions (such as sadness, vulnerability, helplessness, and caring), and being less nurturing than women in relationships. While an individual man may possess these attributes to a greater or lesser extent, groups of men can be expected in general to exhibit these traits more than either groups of women or groups of both men and women together. Thus the dynamics of groups of men highlight many of the same themes, conflicts, and styles which are a product of the masculine gender role itself.

Most men's groups will struggle at some point with how to obtain the proper balance between allowing those masculine traits which help to organize and coalesce the group and discouraging expression of those traits which may tend to dissolve the group and threaten its continued survival. (And often a single trait may be helpful to the group at one point in its existence and may be a hindrance at another point.) This struggle is not an easy one and is reported as occurring in varying ways in virtually every men's group which has been described thus far in the literature. The struggle can be illustrated by examining how a single masculine-linked characteristic, such as competitiveness, may manifest itself in a group. Competitiveness can be an extremely valuable characteristic which may serve to motivate an individual or a group to achieve certain goals; but it may also be experienced as a burden to an individual man and oppressive to others if the competitiveness becomes a requirement in all interactions. Many men experience both these positive and negative aspects of competitiveness and may even enter a men's group with an awareness of their mixed feelings about competitiveness. Within the group itself, however, especially in a group which encourages fairly open-ended interactions, the men may become so competitive, either because of a wish to compete or of a fear of not competing that the group may not be able to establish a climate for helpful communication. The struggle for most groups is neither to curtail completely the expression of this competitiveness, which may be a shared concern of many men in the group, nor to encourage its display to such a degree that the group cannot function. Some groups may structure their meetings so rigidly with agendas or rules that it appears as though competition does not exist among the members, and other groups may spend so much of their time arguing, disagreeing, or debating that they never alter their expression of competitiveness.

The dynamics of men's groups can be viewed in the most general sense as a

struggle to achieve the expression of the entire spectrum of human attributes within an all-male setting. This struggle will continue in men's groups until a greater flexibility in the masculine gender role is achieved in American society. Most men who enter men's groups will seek to balance their learned tendencies to be competitive, aggressive, powerful, in control, and rational with newly discovered capacities to be nurturing, supportive, and expressive of feelings. The greatest barrier to achieving this balance appears to be an excessive display of the so-called masculine attributes. In contrast, the most helpful factor in attaining this balance seems to be the motivation on the part of the men who enter men's groups to gain access to the so-called feminine attributes. The helpful integration of these characteristics can be the major accomplishment for a men's group.

CONFLICTS ABOUT CHANGE. Three specific conflicts regarding change often present themselves in men's groups and are a reflection of certain themes with which men in general are concerned today. These conflicts involve struggling with ambivalence about change, establishing a positive image as a man which incorporates both masculine and feminine traits, and resolving guilt associated with being a man. The members of a men's group must arrive at a motivation to change which is stronger than the motivation to maintain the *status quo* of gender-role arrangements. The evidence that men suffer as men in our society is overwhelming. Goldberg¹⁷ has documented many of the negative aspects of being a man in America today, including a shorter life span than women, a higher crime rate, greater victimization as a result of crimes, and a higher incidence of many chronic diseases. But because men in fact continue to be in positions of dominance, continue to possess economic, educational, and political power, and continue to exercise prerogatives not available to women, giving up an association with the traditional masculine gender role is unacceptable to many men. Even if men, as individuals, derive little actual gain from the masculine role, they still have an association with power simply by being men. Women have the clear objective in their struggle to change to obtain certain social rights, privileges, and power which have been denied them. Men, in contrast, will have to yield some of their privileges and power if they are to change. Many men refuse to examine their role as men or, even if they begin such an examination by participating in a men's group, will present an ambivalent motivation to alter their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors as men. This reluctance to risk a loss of some of the benefits of being a man in our society prevents some men's groups from promoting true change in their members.

A second conflict with which men's groups must struggle in order to allow change is to establish a more integrated sense of masculinity which does not deny traditionally "feminine" traits. Chodorow¹⁸ has stated that the masculine identity is to a large extent the result of a process which encourages boys not to be like their mothers. Many men, as a result, fear becoming like women if they acknowledge certain characteristics, such as the wish to be nurturing, passive, and dependent or the desire to possess other attributes traditionally associated with women. But to learn new ways of being men may be impossible for some men until they have first acknowledged their fears of being like women. The fear

may be expressed in groups as anxiety about homosexuality or concern about being a "sissy," but it derives from an underlying devaluation of certain feminine-identified qualities. Miller¹⁹ has described some of the social consequences of this devaluation. As a result of the conflict between the recognition by some men that they no longer want to be like men are supposed to be and the coexisting fear of being like a woman if they do not behave like men, some men's groups may have difficulty in fostering new positive images for their members. The recognition of this conflict and the gradual opportunity to experiment with new attitudes and behaviors may free the men to achieve a more flexible sense of identity as a man, an identity which can incorporate both masculine and feminine attributes.

A third conflict in some men's groups involves the personal guilt which men may tend to assume as a result of criticism of the masculine role. Criticism of the masculine role by some feminists and dissatisfactions with men expressed by individual women can lead to a personal sense of guilt on the part of some men simply because they are men. This guilt, if excessive, may prevent a group of men from freely examining what actual responsibility they have in their lives for oppressing women and ultimately from arriving at new definitions of masculinity which are associated neither with guilt nor with oppression. Resolution of this conflict requires careful exploration (within a nonjudgmental setting) of both the positive and negative aspects of being male. Either self-denigration or excessive criticism by others can inhibit such exploration and interfere with arriving at a new positive image of oneself as a man.

TYPES OF MEN'S GROUPS

Several types of men's groups can be described, based upon the stated purposes and the format of the group. These include support, political action, consciousness-raising, discussion, educational, and psychotherapy groups. All of these types of groups share two characteristics: (1) at some point in their life they are all male in composition and (2) during the course of the group an opportunity is provided to discuss or to take action regarding concerns related to the masculine gender role. Most of the general characteristics of men's groups presented in the preceding section can also be demonstrated to be descriptive of the several types of men's groups. However, the form of expression of these characteristics in a particular men's group will depend to a large extent on how the members define their group. For example, some ambivalence regarding changing the masculine role can be expected in most men's groups. This ambivalence may be explicitly acknowledged in a men's discussion group. In contrast, a political action men's group may never talk about ambivalence regarding change, but may instead express this ambivalence through focusing their activities on greater rights for men and ignoring equal rights for women.

The different types of men's groups may address similar areas of concern even while talking about different content areas and behaving in very different ways. The political action men's group may talk about and try to change social and legal structures which define patterns of interaction between men and wom-

en (such as marriage and divorce laws) or between men and their children (such as child custody laws or child support arrangements). The consciousness-raising group, which may be more focused on awareness within the group, could simply talk about the individuals' experiences regarding these concerns. And a men's support group may focus on participating together in certain activities which in our society usually take place between men and women, such as going on outings with children or providing emotional support to one another. This latter group, by focusing on personal activities, may want to restrict the opportunities for intellectualizing or for behaving in traditionally masculine ways as, for example, by becoming involved in politics. The content of these three groups' discussions and their behaviors will be very different, yet each of them is addressing an underlying concern with the nature of male-female and male-male relationships and is attempting to alter the existing patterns of such relationships.

Two types of men's groups, the consciousness-raising group and the psychotherapy group, are particularly relevant to the mental health field because of their potential applications in psychotherapy and because of the different assumptions regarding change underlying these two types of groups. Both men's consciousness-raising and men's psychotherapy groups have a stated goal of change for the members with respect to their beliefs, feelings, and behaviors regarding gender roles. Both types of groups may also utilize a variety of means, including support among members, education, discussion, experimentation with new behaviors and therapeutic interaction, to accomplish change. But the underlying assumptions regarding how change is best accomplished are very different for these two types of groups.

The literature on women's groups provides some clarification of the differentiation between consciousness-raising and psychotherapy groups. Kirsh²⁰ has outlined two basic theoretical elements of difference between them: (1) the degree of reliance on an hierarchical and unequal patient-therapist relationship in contrast to peer equality, and (2) the amount of emphasis on intrapsychic and individual in contrast to social change. Consciousness-raising groups tend to emphasize peer equality and goals of social change; psychotherapy groups rely more on an unequal patient-therapist relationship and stress individual change. Because psychotherapy is often seen as a conveyor of existing social values, some feminist writers²¹ have argued that traditional psychotherapy is not the appropriate mechanism by which women can alter their concepts of themselves as women. To a large extent the factors of hierarchical relationship between patient and therapist and of focus on individual change are contradictory with the goals of change articulated by some women. Thus, Kirsh's differentiation between consciousness-raising groups and psychotherapy groups serves to point out possible problems inherent in changing patterns of social role expectations for women through traditional forms of psychotherapy.

Certain differences between masculine and feminine identities and between the masculine and feminine gender roles suggest additional issues which must be considered in evaluating for men the effectiveness of consciousness-raising or psychotherapy groups. First, the critique of the traditional client-therapist rela-

tionship in psychotherapy by feminist writers is based to a large extent on how the greater assumption of power by the therapist generally reinforces the social experience of men in power over women since a larger number of men have been therapists and a larger number of women have been clients. For men, who have not been in the client position as frequently as women, the acceptance of lesser power and the accompanying position of dependency on the therapist (who may be either female or male) may represent a helpful change in their usual social role.

A second difference between men and women relates to the greater focus on introspection and on issues of inner identity in women and the greater focus on activity and outer identity in men. Erikson²² identified the developmental basis for these differences. Writers such as Hopkins²³ have recently demonstrated changes in the relative importance of issues of inner and outer identity for women. Similar studies of men have not been undertaken. But generally men as a group could still be expected to represent less capacity for introspection than women and greater emphasis on concerns about outer or social identity. This essential difference may suggest that men who wish to alter their expression of the masculine gender role may benefit more than women from participating in more traditional forms of psychotherapy which emphasize introspection and individual change rather than social change. The relevance of these differences between men and women to change in same-sex groups must be tested in further research in this area.

Regardless of these theoretical issues regarding the different types of men's groups, the largest number of men's groups described in the literature follow a consciousness-raising format. These groups have formed over the past decade in America with the primary purpose of bringing men together to discuss experiences with traditional expectations associated with the masculine gender role and to explore alternative ways of being men. While the actual number of men who have participated in such groups cannot be determined, it is clear that they have arisen throughout the country, that men's consciousness-raising groups appear to serve a need for a certain segment of the male population, and that they have been formed primarily outside of psychiatric and other mental health settings. As long as this need continues to exist, men's consciousness-raising groups can be predicted to continue to exist as well. The extent of increase or decrease in the number of men's consciousness-raising-groups will depend on at least three factors: the future course of the human potential movement in general in the United States, the evolution of the movement to examine and alter gender-role definitions for men and women, and the effectiveness of men's consciousness-raising groups in providing a forum for accomplishing member's goals.

At the present time there is no evidence to suggest how extensively psychotherapists utilize either men's or women's consciousness-raising groups as a viable alternative resource for their patients. Since men's consciousness-raising groups are usually leaderless and considered nontraditional, this type of men's group will probably continue to exist outside of settings where an organized practice of psychotherapy takes place. Arguments can be raised that to attempt

to alter this situation would be beneficial neither to the men who participate in these groups nor to the practitioners of psychotherapy. For the members, any attempt to impose an institutionalized structure on men's consciousness-raising groups would undermine many of the goals and characteristics of the groups as they presently exist. And for many psychotherapists, working within a consciousness-raising format in a men's group would be inconsistent with their current conceptualizations of psychotherapy.

In contrast to the brief history of men's consciousness-raising groups, groups of men have met together in professional settings for psychotherapy and educational purposes since at least the turn of the century. The early history of group psychotherapy²⁴ consists to a large extent of groups of men who were brought together in wartime and in certain all-male or primarily male settings, such as prisons, military hospitals, and drug treatment centers. But only recently have men's psychotherapy groups which have the stated goal of examining issues of masculinity been formed in professional settings. No precise delineation of how this goal is accomplished or of the extent to which a particular psychotherapy group emphasizes this goal will be attempted. However, all of the men's psychotherapy groups which are referred to in this chapter do share three characteristics: (1) The group has the structure of a psychotherapy group, including at least a designated leader or leaders (psychotherapist), a contract to engage in a psychotherapeutic process, and a regular meeting place and time. (2) There is an explicit acknowledgment by both leader and group members that gender-role concerns are appropriate matters for discussion. (3) The opportunity is provided for concerns related to gender roles to be expressed during the course of the group, either through a direct focus on such material or through examination of these concerns as they relate to other material presented in the group. These three characteristics serve to differentiate men's psychotherapy groups both from other types of men's groups, such as consciousness-raising, political action, or educational groups, and from other all-male psychotherapy groups which do not explicitly examine gender-role issues.

The differentiation between men's psychotherapy groups and psychotherapy groups which are simply all male is an important one which involves assumptions regarding the interplay between specific psychosocial factors such as gender roles and emotional disturbance. While a psychotherapist who believes in the importance of the relationship between social forces and individual emotional distress and specifically between gender-role expectations and emotional disturbance may not apply this belief in the practice of psychotherapy, a person who does not believe in this relationship or who actively opposes it could not be expected to examine it effectively within the context of his or her practice of psychotherapy. Therefore, the requirements that a men's psychotherapy group must by definition explicitly acknowledge the importance of gender-role concerns and must in some manner address these concerns serve to confirm that the psychotherapist at least will bring a particular belief system to the group. He or she may more or less actively attempt to encourage group members to share these beliefs, but this is not a universal or even necessarily a desirable undertaking.

In summary, a necessary condition for a men's psychotherapy group of the type being discussed in this chapter is that at least during part of its life it will be all male. But the quality of being all male is not a sufficient condition for defining this type of men's psychotherapy group. In addition, the all-male psychotherapy group must incorporate a belief system regarding the relationship between gender-role expectations and emotional disturbance and provide an opportunity for expression of conflicts in this area in order to be labeled a men's psychotherapy group.

OUTCOMES

No systematic research has been undertaken to determine the outcomes of the several types of men's groups. Yet those men's groups which have been described are subjectively reported to be positive experiences by the men who have participated in them. Although the characteristics of women's groups and men's groups have been shown to be different in many respects, it may be helpful to examine some of the research about the outcomes of women's groups in order to arrive at a better understanding of outcomes for men's groups.

Most authors who have reported on the outcomes for women's groups have described positive changes for women who have been members of either a women's consciousness-raising or a women's psychotherapy group.²⁵⁻²⁷ There is a great variation in the manner of reporting outcomes, but the positive changes for women in women's groups can be grouped into four general areas: (1) women's groups provide an opportunity for increased affiliation with other women and for recognition of women as a distinct social group with specific characteristics; (2) women's groups lead to the acquisition of a more positive internalized sense of identity as a woman; (3) women's groups lead to more egalitarian relationships with men; and (4) women's groups lead to a greater awareness of sexism, promote the expression of anger against sexism, and increase women's determination to change rigid gender-role definitions for themselves and within society in general. These outcomes suggest that women's groups provide a means both for increasing a woman's personal sense of positive identity as a woman and at the same time for promoting change in the social requirements and restrictions regarding how a woman is supposed to behave.

To the extent that men's groups attempt to accomplish outcomes comparable to women's groups, similar positive outcomes could be described as enhancing an individual male's image of himself as a man and promoting for men in general a greater flexibility in their expression of the masculine gender role. The extent to which a particular men's group accomplishes these outcomes will depend on the purposes and characteristics of the group. For example, different specific outcomes can clearly be expected following participation in a men's consciousness-raising group and in a men's psychotherapy group. A group of men meeting together for purposes of personal awareness will share different goals than a group of male psychiatric patients who come together because of emotional distress. Some more specific positive outcomes can be postulated for men's groups in general, however. The effectiveness of a given group in achiev-

ing these outcomes can only be determined through the systematic study of actual groups over time. These predicted outcomes for men's groups derive from the rationale presented in a previous section of this chapter and from reports by individual men who have participated in such groups.

First, an increased awareness about the masculine role and about an individual man's experience of being male in American society can be expected. Every type of men's group should at least provide an opportunity for acquiring this awareness even if the members vary in the extent to which they actually do so. For some groups, particularly educational groups, this outcome may be the primary goal of the group. Other types of groups, such as men's consciousness-raising groups, will generally view this as either an early or partial goal during the group's life. A men's psychotherapy group may emphasize this goal to a greater or lesser extent depending on the severity of emotional disturbance and the relevance of this issue to the problems of the individual men in the group.

A second outcome can be a greater sense of personal freedom as a man. This outcome would result from acquiring a greater flexibility in expressing feelings and from engaging in activities which are generally considered unmasculine, such as rearing children and entering traditionally female professions. With the support of other men in a group, men can be freed to experiment with more options in their lives and to make choices based to a greater extent on personal interests and talents and less on social stereotypes for masculine behavior. While this outcome may be an ideal result of any personal growth experience, it has particular relevance with respect to the dimension of masculinity presented in men's groups. A greater sense of personal freedom in other areas of one's life as well can result from the experience of being in a men's group for many men.

A third positive outcome is greater satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. Men, through understanding themselves better as men, may also acquire a greater understanding of women. A recognition of real differences and real similarities between men and women can replace stereotyped impressions of how men and women are or should be. The experience of encountering other men within a men's group can also lead to greater empathy with men in general. Some men's groups may meet periodically during their existence with women's groups to explore new ways of interacting with women. Other men may enter a group of both men and women following participation in a men's group.

A fourth and final outcome for men's groups is a change in relationship to social institutions. Recognition of individual and social sexism directed against both men and women and exploration of nonsexist approaches can encourage personal and political confrontation of discrimination based on gender. For some men this confrontation may take the form of direct political action to change laws and regulations which promote such discrimination. Other men, who do not choose to become politically involved, may still acquire a greater understanding of how they relate to the authority of social institutions and as a result alter their personal patterns of interactions with these institutions. For example, a man who is about to become a father may, following participation in a men's group, challenge established regulations where he works which discriminate against men with respect to paternity leave.

The discussion of the characteristics of men's groups, the different types of men's groups, and some general outcomes of men's groups provides a background for looking at the specific application of men's groups in the field of mental health. In the following section the author will examine the clinical application of men's groups in the practice of psychotherapy.

Men's groups have not been extensively utilized either as an approach to psychotherapy or as a method of educating mental health professionals. Several reasons other than the fact that men's groups are not a widespread phenomenon in American society in general can be suggested for the paucity of experience with men's groups within the mental health field. First, as described in a preceding section, these groups can be difficult to work with because of the problems men present in communicating when in small groups. Some psychotherapists may not work with men's groups as a result of their awareness of these problems and because of a lack of experience in successfully resolving such problems within an all-male setting.

A second reason for the small number of men's groups in the mental health field may derive from the fact that working with such groups can confront the male psychotherapist with the same conflicts with which the men in the group must struggle. These conflicts include ambivalence about changing gender-role arrangements, difficulty in arriving at new expressions of masculinity, and guilt about being a man. In addition, the lack of responsiveness of men in general to issues raised by the Women's Movement can also occur among male psychotherapists and may lead to reluctance or even to inability to examine concerns about gender roles presented by male and female patients. This reluctance may be expressed in a theoretical argument that the proper scope of psychotherapy does not include social issues, or it may be expressed even more directly in the form of actual disapproval of changes in gender-role expressions in patients. Recent efforts to educate men who are hostile or apathetic to changes in women²⁸ may also be helpful for some of those male psychotherapists who are unwilling to examine their own experiences of being male and of relating to women. Such efforts could promote in these therapists an increased awareness, a greater sensitivity, and an enhanced skill in addressing concerns regarding gender-role experiences which are presented by both male and female patients.

Other reasons for the small number of men's groups in the mental health field include a general unfamiliarity with and lack of information about this approach to working with patients, the smaller number of men as compared with women who enter psychotherapy and who are therefore available for participating in men's groups, and the absence of evidence regarding the effectiveness of men's groups in helping men who are in emotional distress. Utilizing men's groups on a wider basis and in a variety of settings, reporting in the professional literature on such clinical experiences with men's groups, and systematically studying the outcomes of these groups for men who participate in them will provide a basis for determining the actual usefulness of men's groups as an approach to psychotherapy.

The clinical discussion of men's groups presented in this section is based largely on the author's experience as an educator and a psychiatrist who has worked with such groups. Recently he has found among mental health professionals an increasing interest in and enthusiasm about the use of men's groups. He believes that this growing responsiveness to the idea of men's groups is in large part a result of the effectiveness of women's groups in addressing problems with gender-role expectations among women. The extent of further application of two types of men's groups, consciousness-raising and psychotherapy groups, may determine the ability of mental health professionals to work with parallel concerns among men.

THE APPLICATIONS OF MEN'S CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING GROUPS. Men's consciousness-raising groups can serve to increase the awareness of men about problems arising as a result of enacting rigid, stereotyped gender-role expectations, to offer support for men who are sharing similar concerns in these areas, and to promote change among these men. These groups can be a valuable community resource to which men who present to psychotherapists or other mental health workers with such concerns can be referred in the same manner in which patients are referred to other community "self-help" groups.

Increasingly, no single approach is offered for the treatment and care of patients who present with mental health problems; rather attempts are made to provide medical care, psychological and behavioral treatment, attention to the social support system of the patient and, if necessary, legal intervention. The validity of using men's consciousness-raising groups as part of such a comprehensive treatment program for some men cannot be stated at this time. However, increased belief^{29,30} in the need for broad-reaching behavioral and social interventions in the practice of psychotherapy and of medicine in general suggests that social support systems which are perceived to be helpful—as men's consciousness-raising groups are by the men who participate in them—should be made more available to patients. While the actual relationship between beliefs and behaviors associated with the masculine role and the development of disease may never be precisely determined, efforts by men to achieve attitudes and behaviors which appear to be associated with a greater degree of health can nevertheless be supported. The mental health field can contribute to this holistic movement through its practitioners' being informed about the existence of men's consciousness-raising groups and then recommending participation in such groups for those men who might benefit from them. It can also contribute to this movement to promote mental health in men by further studying the relationship between specific diseases and the psychological and social expression of the masculine gender role.

Three examples where a recommendation to participate in men's consciousness-raising group could be viewed as part of a comprehensive treatment and care program for men can be presented. These examples are the substance abuse patient, the cardiac patient, and the patient diagnosed as having one of the broad categories of disturbance classified as reactive or adjustment disorder and associated with depressive symptoms. Patients with each of these categories of disease include large numbers of men, and factors described as being associated

with the disease also represent characteristics which are related to the definition of the masculine gender role. Specifically, each of these disorders involves, in addition to many identified and hypothesized biologic factors, particular patterns of reacting to and coping with stress in the environment. The male alcoholic patient who reacts to anxiety by drinking, the compulsive, driven man who develops hypertension or has a heart attack, and the man who reacts to divorce with symptoms of severe depression can all be viewed as men who are in part enacting aspects of the stereotypic masculine role in American society. Through hiding feelings, through behaving in an excessively competitive and aggressive manner, or through viewing the loss of a relationship with a woman as a cause for lowering of self-esteem and helplessness, these men may be enacting pathological extremes of the masculine role.

Selecting men who could be referred to men's consciousness-raising groups will depend on two factors: first, the careful evaluation of the appropriateness of such a group for an individual man and second, the availability of such groups within a particular community. Within the midwestern community in which the author practices, several such groups currently exist. One men's group has met for over five years in a local church. Several of the members of this group have entered psychotherapy following participation in the group, and other men have joined this group as a result of being in psychotherapy. Separate groups have been formed on the initiative of other men who have either been patients or colleagues of the author. These groups have served for some men as a valuable adjunct to psychotherapy for purposes of consciousness raising and support; for others they have provided a setting in which emotional problems which could better be resolved within a more traditional and structured psychotherapy relationship are first recognized.

A second application of men's consciousness-raising groups within the mental health field is their direct use in the training of mental health professionals. Participation in a men's consciousness-raising group could accomplish this goal of increasing the individual male mental health practitioner's self-awareness regarding gender-role issues. The results of a systematic encouragement of men's consciousness-raising groups for these men cannot be predicted at this time. However, it is clear that professional mental health training and continuing education programs have failed to pay attention to gender-related issues and sexism among men. Arguments regarding the proper scope of psychiatry and other mental health disciplines or the relative biological or psychosocial emphasis of a particular training program may be used against the idea of a direct application of men's consciousness-raising groups in mental health education. However, the increasing number of reports of women's groups for female residents and psychiatrists^{31,32} suggests that there can be advantages for similar groups of men as well. Within the field of psychiatry, Robertello³³ is one psychotherapist who has written about his experiences in a men's consciousness-raising group, and participation in such groups by male psychiatrists has now been reported about by a small number of male psychiatrists at recent annual meetings of the American Psychiatric Association.

Opinions about the advantages and value of men's consciousness-raising

groups for mental health practitioners will probably continue to vary considerably depending both on perceptions regarding the role of psychiatry and the other mental health professions in general and on the interests and skills of individual professionals. But for some of these men, and potentially a large number, the experience of participating in a men's consciousness-raising group may be an important opportunity to increase self-awareness and to understand better the particular concerns of male and female patients regarding gender-role issues. This opportunity has not yet been realized by mental health professionals on a large scale.

THE APPLICATIONS OF MEN'S PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS. EVALUATION, SELECTION, AND USES OF MEN'S PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS. The clinical applications for men's psychotherapy groups discussed in this section remain, at this point, suggestions for use, since there exists little evidence that such groups have actually been utilized within the mental health field. Two principles must be considered if these applications are to become viable therapeutic alternatives. First, the same requirements which exist for evaluating the appropriateness of an individual patient for any psychotherapy group must also be applied in selecting men for participation in a men's psychotherapy group. Consideration is given to the setting and purpose of the group, the degree to which an individual man could benefit from participating in group psychotherapy, and the composition of a particular group. Both the general principles regarding selection of patients for small groups and the specific criteria of the individual practitioner in selecting patients for groups will apply to men's psychotherapy groups as well. A second principle which must be applied is that men's psychotherapy groups must be studied as they are tried so that greater precision can be arrived at in predicting their usefulness for individual men.

Men's psychotherapy groups may be the desired treatment of choice for three types of men who are evaluated to be otherwise appropriate for group psychotherapy. These three types of patients are those with significant disturbance in interpersonal relationships, those with concerns about gender identity, and those men with specific concerns related to gender-role performance. These categories of patients may present with a wide variety of specific diagnoses and individual concerns, but each may benefit from participation in a men's psychotherapy group. Depending on the degree and nature of individual disturbance, a men's psychotherapy group may be the single approach to care or may be used in conjunction with other approaches, such as the use of medication or in combination with individual, marital, or family therapy.

No consistent criteria for selecting those men who could benefit most from men's psychotherapy groups can be presented. The psychotherapist must first be willing to consider this treatment approach for his or her patients and then must attempt to understand how a particular man's concerns could best be worked with within the setting of a men's group. A helpful approach to selecting men for a men's psychotherapy group will involve assessment of the same areas which are evaluated in all patients combined with a particular emphasis on deciding how an all-male setting might be appropriate for an individual patient. For example, in obtaining a developmental history, specific developmental lags

which are identified, such as failure to develop a relationship with father or failure to establish meaningful same-sex friendships during latency, may be reflected in current problems in interpersonal relationships. The opportunity to work with these problems within the environment of a men's psychotherapy group may be helpful for some men. Experimentation with a variety of types of groups will help to determine the usefulness of men's psychotherapy groups for different types of patients. For example, a married couples' group may benefit from having separate all-male and all-female sessions during the course of the group. And men who have experienced similar life situations, such as divorce or job difficulties, may find a men's psychotherapy group particularly useful.

Men with a variety of physical diseases may also find a men's psychotherapy group helpful because this type of group would provide an opportunity to discuss those aspects of the disease which are associated with being a male in American society. The masculine gender role could be especially relevant in considering two aspects of physical disease, the hypothesized relationship between the etiology of a variety of diseases, such as hypertension and heart disease, and patterns of coping with stress, and the impact of physical incapacitation on the ability of men to function as males are expected to perform in our society. An excessive requirement for men to achieve and compete may contribute to the development of physical disease in some men. The real or perceived loss of this ability to achieve and compete associated with illness for other men may lead to distress in the area of masculine identity. Thus, both the causes and the effects of physical illness may for some men be related to their experience of the masculine gender role.

The types of groups which would be appropriate for such men would depend on the degree of associated psychopathology. Many men's groups which might be formed in general medical settings would probably not be designed as psychotherapy groups, but rather would be discussion groups which focus on reactions to loss, such as the loss of sexual functioning and of ability to work which result from some illnesses. The important difference between these groups and groups of men which already exist in medical settings would be the focus on issues of gender-role expression and the relevance of these issues to the illness. For example, groups of male cardiac patients who presently meet for purposes of regular exercise and education could also be structured to encourage discussion of losses associated with being men. Men's psychotherapy groups constituted of men with physical illnesses could be appropriate for those patients with serious psychopathology which develops in relation to their physical illnesses.

Men's psychotherapy groups may also be useful within those institutions, such as military hospitals and prisons, which are almost exclusively all male. Identified psychiatric populations within these institutions who are also evaluated to be appropriate for group psychotherapy could benefit from participation in a men's psychotherapy groups. The rationale for such groups derives from a belief in the interplay between the particular psychiatric disorder of an individual and his environment. In some all-male institutional settings, such as prisons, there is an increased likelihood that the environment may reinforce the

development of particularly destructive expressions of the masculine gender role, including violence and excessive regimentation. Psychiatric patients within these settings may be especially vulnerable and could benefit from examination of their experience of being men within these settings. All male institutions or other settings, such as male wards in mental hospitals, may also foster the development of particular concerns related to the experience of being a man, such as fears of homosexuality, anxiety concerning athletic performance, or performance in other traditionally masculine areas. Men's psychotherapy groups or men's discussion groups may be helpful for men with these concerns as well.

THE THERAPIST IN A MEN'S PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUP. The author's experiences in working with men's psychotherapy groups will serve to illustrate some of the problems the male psychotherapist may encounter in such groups. Generally he conducts psychotherapy groups with a combination of the group-as-a-whole approach described by Bion³⁴ and approaches utilizing individual interpretation and interpersonal interactions. In working with men's groups, he has sometimes experienced requirements which seem contradictory with his role as leader in these groups. The beliefs he holds as a group psychotherapist and the manner in which he applies these beliefs may tend to reinforce the notion that he, as a male leader, represents aspects of an aloof, nonfeeling, and authoritarian masculine role. His parallel belief in the necessity for the therapist in a men's psychotherapy group to model nontraditional behaviors and attitudes has at times led to a conflict for him in his perception of his role as a psychotherapist. The gradual resolution of this conflict through the integration of these seemingly discrepant views into a single belief system has resulted in a more consistent pattern of leadership, a pattern which provides for a greater flexibility in his role as a therapist not only in men's groups but in all of the groups within which he works.

The pattern of leadership which the author now attempts to follow incorporates some of the same masculine-identified and feminine-identified characteristics which the men in the groups are seeking to integrate as well. One example of his changing belief system has been to view his interpretations, which still derive from an awareness of unconscious and dynamic processes in groups and individuals, as *alternative* insights. Thus, he attempts to listen to his patients without utilizing what Farrell³⁵ labels as the masculine technique of self-listening. Many psychotherapists may believe that their interpretation of a patient's experience is the only correct interpretation and therefore listen to patients only in order to state their own insights and values about these experiences. While a therapist of any theoretical orientation may arrive at similar conclusions about what is effective in working with patients, the particular belief which the author holds, in part as a result of working with groups of men, is that the process identified as self-listening is a derivative of the masculine gender role. As such, the therapist in a men's psychotherapy group may choose to demonstrate actively that he can simply listen to a patient or that he can admit the inappropriateness of an interpretation following discussion with the patient. Through such choices the male psychotherapist can demonstrate directly that

men can be more passive in interactions and can admit errors even while being in positions of perceived authority.

Another example of the author's behavior which has altered because of his changing belief system has been the degree to which he presents intellectual in contrast to affective interventions in men's psychotherapy groups. Because many men have difficulty expressing feelings directly, encouragement of the greater expression of feelings may over time be more helpful to these men even at those times when an intellectual insight appears to be more appropriate or obviously relevant. The author also utilizes self-disclosure regarding his immediate feelings when appropriate in order to model the expression of feelings for men. Through a greater emphasis on showing feelings and a decreased use of intellectualized interpretations, he has attempted to integrate his beliefs about the need for changes in men with his beliefs about the role of the psychotherapist. Unlike other therapists who may demonstrate similar behavior, he has undertaken these changes because of his particular understanding of gender-role characteristics and of the need to provide greater flexibility for both men and women in the expression of these characteristics.

While each male psychotherapist working with a men's group will determine the nature of his role as a function of his belief system, his personality characteristics and the needs of a particular group, all male therapists who work with such groups will be confronted with particular issues which may challenge their conception of their roles as men and as psychotherapists. For the author, issues concerning authority, male silence, expression of feelings, and sexuality recurrently arose during his work as a therapist in men's psychotherapy groups. An important task for each therapist will be to distinguish between those aspects of his individual concerns which arise in reaction to intrapsychic transference and countertransference material and those which arise as a result of interpersonal and social challenges to stereotyped attributes associated with the masculine role. Such challenges will occur for the therapist as well as for the patients in men's psychotherapy groups.

MEN'S PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUPS IN PRACTICE. A clinical example of one men's group with which the author has worked will serve to highlight certain of the characteristics of men's psychotherapy groups, some of the problems in working with these groups, and possible outcomes for the members of men's groups. This group consisted of six men who were highly homogeneous with respect to age and to educational and socioeconomic levels. All of the men were between 20 and 35 years old, had some college or graduate school education, and were either currently employed or in school. Three of the men were married and three were single. This group first met for several sessions in a mixed group with an equal number of women, subsequently met for twelve weekly sessions as a men's group and then returned to the mixed group setting. Teresa Bernardez, M.D. and the author were coleaders for the mixed group.

Videotaped segments of the initial session of this men's group have been shown for purposes of training to several audiences of mental health professionals. This session has consistently stimulated similar observations and reactions in these audiences. The men in the group discuss a wide range of topics of

concern to them with particular emphasis on problems of relating both to other men and to women. The pattern and content of the discussion demonstrate a general lack of straightforward affective expression by the men, a high level of intellectualization, a frequent reference to women and to the qualities women possess which seem unavailable to the men, and a virtual absence of direct interaction between the men. The content of the verbalizations does not always seem to flow in a clear manner from speaker to speaker, largely because the men rarely speak directly to each other. In spite of these qualities, the group generally evokes a strong reaction in the audiences who observe it in response to the intensity of the wishes conveyed by the men to be different and the degree of isolation they describe in their interpersonal relations. These factors are directly described by this group of men as a derivative of pressures they feel to behave in stereotypically masculine ways, including denying expression of their feelings, requiring the presence of women for conveying feelings related to intimacy and caring for others, and following certain rules of interaction with other men which emphasize athletic and other forms of competition. Other groups of men with whom the author has worked have described similar experiences but have not always linked these experiences as directly to their perceptions of characteristics associated with the masculine gender role.

One direct exchange does occur in this session between two men and illustrates the fear some men have of being like women if they change their ways of behaving as men. Prior to this exchange, several of the men talked about their dissatisfaction with the feeling that they had to compete with other men or to act in certain ways, such as hiding their feelings when they were upset and showing an interest in athletics, in order to be accepted as men. One man then talks about his wish to be different in how he shows his feelings than most men seem to be. Another man responds to this expressed wish by saying, "That's what I don't like about you sometimes. You seem to want to be like a woman." This derogation of characteristics which appear unmasculine and are identified with women (You will "be like a woman" if you show your feelings differently than other men) seemed to be shared by all of the members of this group. Even the man who had expressed his wish to change how he showed his feelings agreed with the second man's disapproval of his appearing to want to be like a woman. At the time of this exchange, the specific qualities associated with a feminine expression of feelings had not even been identified, and the men seemed to be reacting to a generalized fear simply of being unmasculine or of becoming effeminate. Subsequent development of this theme revealed an underlying fear of loss of potency and effectiveness which is associated with losing a sense of masculine identity. This internal masculine identity may be perceived to be particularly fragile when it is viewed as largely equivalent to characteristics attributed to expression of the masculine gender role.

The pattern of discussion in this group, the nature of the concerns expressed by the men, and their initial attempts to resolve these problems can be viewed within the context of a large number of theoretical frameworks. A group psychotherapist emphasizing the interpersonal dynamics of the members might understand this group session as a demonstration of immature and unsuccessful

patterns of relating and seek to encourage different patterns of relating among the men. Such a view would attend to both the process and the content displayed by these men. Another therapist, having a more analytical and intrapsychic orientation, might approach this group with an understanding based upon the distorted or unsuccessfully resolved conflicts regarding dependency and identity conveyed by the men in the group. Both of these views would be accurate and could serve as a basis for helping the men to change, but neither alone incorporates an appreciation of the extent to which social pressures require men to behave in certain masculine-identified ways and prohibit men from demonstrating other feminine-identified traits.

It is this additional level of understanding, one which recognizes the importance of characteristics associated with gender roles in determining thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, that is essential in working with a men's psychotherapy group. As a result of the author's belief in the importance of gender roles in understanding what happened to the group, his interventions during the first session were few in number and were intended primarily to clarify comments by the members and to focus their discussion more on the here and now of the group and between the members. Such interventions would serve both to model for the men a less active and controlling male presence and to encourage a more immediate interpersonal exchange between the men. One of these interventions described the intellectual quality of the discussion about men in society and linked this quality to possible fears about what would happen in the immediate setting of this all male group. The initial reaction to this intervention was denial of fear in the group. One man stated that he felt more comfortable in an all-male setting, and another man stated that he perceived this group as a controlled "laboratory," which would not evoke such fears. After the initial denial of this fear, however, and following the author's listening to their disagreement, one man proceeded to talk about his fears of homosexuality. Soon after this comment, the exchange between the two men regarding men becoming like women occurred. Both of these comments served to move the men to a more direct expression of feelings and to a more immediate interaction with each other.

The eventual outcomes for the members of this short-term men's psychotherapy group were both positive and negative. Several of the men reported a sense of dramatic improvement in their understanding of themselves as men and in their behaviors in interactions with men and women outside of the group. One married couple were in the mixed group together, and participated separately in the two same-sex groups. Their marital relationship, which had been highly stressful for both partners prior to the group, changed significantly following being in the group. Both the man and the women were able to accept the wife's striving for greater independence through returning to school and beginning her own career. The husband, during the course of the group, learned about his reactions to his wife's changes, expressed his own difficulties in accepting his altered role as husband and father, and explored new ways of establishing his independence as a man.

In contrast, another man dropped out of the group following the return to a mixed group setting after the twelve sessions as a men's group. The conscious

focus of his dissatisfaction was intense anger at the author. He reported that in contrast to the female therapist the author appeared "unavailable" to him. In addition to presenting his own dynamic and conflictual issues, this man also seemed to represent the views of several other men in the group who had not had well-established relationships with their fathers and who had difficulty establishing adult relationships with male authority figures. The lack of significant relationships with males for individual men may be recapitulated in a men's group through extreme difficulty in establishing meaningful relationships within the group or through the presence of persistent anxiety and ambivalence as aspects of male-male relationships are explored.

This particular men's psychotherapy group may have been especially problematic for this man for two reasons. First, the group was so short in duration that there was not sufficient time for him to work through conflictual material. Second, the experimental structure of this group, which alternated between a mixed and a same-sex composition, may have worked against the resolution of or actually reinforced this man's problems. He had been raised almost exclusively by women, and like several other men in the group, he attributed many expressive and relational capacities almost solely to women. When the men's group met after first meeting together with women, he reported a loss of a sense of being able to relate as openly. And the eventual return to the mixed setting seemed to precipitate his decision to leave the group. This return of women to the group may have represented to him a reminder of feminine attributes which now seemed even more unavailable to him and which he believed to be similarly absent in me. Thus, while several factors worked against the direct resolution of this man's conflicts within this group, a major factor seemed to be the variable structure and composition of the group. His situation suggests the importance of understanding the personality structure and dynamics of each man before recommending psychotherapy in a men's group.

This group was atypical in comparison with the other men's psychotherapy groups with which the author has worked in two respects: first, none of the men in this group demonstrated signs of severe emotional distress and second, the group was the shortest-term men's group the author has conducted. But the eventual outcomes, given the nature of the members' concerns and the length of time the group lasted, were comparable for this and the other groups. Five of the six men reported satisfaction with their experiences in the group and demonstrated significant improvement in their presenting problems, which included moderate depression, anxiety in interpersonal relationships, and significant disturbance in marital relationships. In addition to the positive changes described in these areas, the five men all reported an enhanced self-esteem with respect to their expression of the masculine gender role. While similar changes might be accomplished in other types of groups, the specific focus on feelings, thoughts, and behaviors associated with the masculine gender role seemed to promote a more rapid and significant positive change in interpersonal relationships as well as in the other areas of concern to the members.

These changes were demonstrated within the group itself as well as in descriptions of experiences outside of the group. The fears of becoming like

women initially expressed by the men were further clarified in later sessions of the group and served to highlight the irrational and stereotyped nature of responses to expressions and behaviors associated with the masculine and feminine gender roles. None of the men in fact simply lost masculine-associated attributes or acquired feminine-associated attributes. Instead, all of them experimented with demonstrating a greater range of characteristics in their internal representations of themselves as men, in their interactions with other men, and in their relationships with women. This simple acquisition of flexibility in the expression of gender-associated characteristics was the single most positive outcome for most of the men and resulted in a greater ability of the men to express feelings of vulnerability, caring, and dependency and a diminished need to compete, to dominate, and to appear aggressive in relations to others.

All of the men's psychotherapy groups with which the author has worked have led to many valuable outcomes for the men in them. The resolution of the problems with which the men initially presented has appeared to take place as readily as in other types of group settings. And the men in these groups have in addition been able to explore concerns related to the masculine gender role which are problematic for many men today. All of the groups which have met periodically with women's groups as well have reported satisfaction with these experiences and have viewed the opportunity to meet in both same-sex and mixed-sex settings as beneficial to them. In his future work with such groups, the author intends to refine further both the technical aspects of working with men's groups and the description of specific indications and outcomes for these groups.

CONCLUSION

Men's groups have been explored in this chapter as a social phenomenon, as an approach to psychotherapy, and as a part of the author's personal and professional experiences. Their relevance for individual men will depend on many factors including interest, motivation, and capacity to function within a small group setting. Each of these factors must be considered by the clinician in evaluating individuals for participation in men's groups. The greater utilization of men's groups within the field of psychotherapy can provide many men with the opportunity for an enhanced appreciation of themselves as men and for greater satisfaction in their relationships with other men and with women. The wider application of men's groups in the training of male mental health professionals can also lead to an increased awareness about gender-role concerns on the part of psychotherapists. For some men, traditional masculine activities such as athletic events and club or lodge meetings have been supplemented or even replaced by participation in men's consciousness-raising, support, or psychotherapy groups. The purposes of this chapter are both to inform the mental health professional about this occurrence as it relates to a growing number of men's lives and to encourage an increased interest in the direct application of men's groups in psychotherapy. The future of men's groups as an approach to psychotherapy will depend on the careful examination of the benefits such groups provide to the men who participate in them.

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