

**A Phenomenological study of the Experience of Koreans’
Leading Counseling Groups**

Yoonmi Kim

Mark A. Hector

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Hawaii International Conference on Education

January 7 - 10, 2003

Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

ABSTRACT

A qualitative method was used to understand the experience of Korean individuals who have led counseling groups. In phenomenological interviews, seventeen participants described their experiences of leading counseling groups. These interviews were transcribed and then analyzed by a group of researchers to identify common themes within and across transcripts. The experience of leading counseling groups is grounded in the concept of Becoming. Four themes emerged from the interview transcripts. The first theme is Leader's Becoming, which depicts leader's becoming and changes in his/her role, emotions, personal changes, counselor orientation, and leader's qualities. The second theme is Members' Becoming, which depicts members' roles, changes in themselves, and members' emotions related to counseling groups. The third theme is Group Dynamics which illustrates group power and group cohesion. The fourth theme is Our (Korean) Culture, which depicts Korean values, behavioral tendencies, and differences between Koreans and Westerners.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature Review

2. METHOD

Participants

Informed Consent

Existential-Phenomenology

Phenomenological Interview

3. RESULTS

Thematic Structure

Ground: Becoming

Theme 1: Lader's Becoming

Theme 2: Members' Becoming

Theme 3: Group Dynamics

Theme 4: Our (Korean) Culture

Other themes

Summary of Bracketing Interview

4. DISCUSSION

REFERENCE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of Koreans who have led counseling groups. A phenomenological research method has been used.

Participants in this study were Korean individuals who had experiences of leading counseling groups. Staff at Kyungpook National University Counseling Center and Tae-Jun Youth Counseling Center in Tae-Jin helped to identify participants for the study. Participants were selected and contacted by the primary investigator.

Once a participant had given her or his consent to be part of the study, qualitative research methods were employed beginning with the interviews. The length of the interviews ranged from 30-minutes to 60-minutes. During the interviews participants described their experiences of leading counseling groups. The interviews were carried out in the Korean language and they were audio-taped. Korean transcriptions were made from the audio-tapes and translated into English by the primary investigator. All identifying information was removed during the transcription process to ensure confidentiality. All the transcripts were presented to a phenomenological research group at the University of Tennessee. The transcripts were read aloud and then phenomenological research group members identified themes which

described the experiences of the participants. A hermeneutic analysis was carried out by the primary investigator. In a hermeneutic analysis all of the transcript is considered and then specific parts of the transcript are considered. The hermeneutic circle consists of an analysis that goes from the whole, to part, to whole and to part. Going from whole to part is repeated until meaning emerges. Common themes were sought throughout all of the transcripts and results were presented to the research group for discussion and more thematizing.

Literature Review

Group counseling has been hailed as an effective method of achieving client change. It draws on the human need for persons to be closely related to others, provides a chance of personal exploration and feedback, invites participants to test reality, and offers them support to transfer personal insight and change in their everyday lives (Hansen, Warner, & Smith, 1980). Corey and Corey (1997) suggested the goals of group counseling are to help people develop more positive attitudes and better interpersonal skills. These goals are achieved by employing group process as a way of facilitating behavior change, and helping members transfer newly gained skills and learned behaviors into daily life.

There have been many studies focusing on group counseling. Therapeutic factors in group psychotherapy have been extensively researched. Initially, 12 curative factors were identified by Yalom (1975) based on intensive clinical experience and research efforts. He later reduced them to 11 (Yalom, 1995) and argued that this core of factors represents the major mechanisms that lead to change in the individual in any effective group process. The 12 factors included altruism, universality, group cohesiveness, catharsis, interpersonal learning, development of socializing techniques, guidance, imitative behavior, family reenactment, self-understanding, installation of hope, and existential factors (Yalom, 1975). The most important factors for outpatients were group cohesiveness, catharsis, and interpersonal learning. For the inpatients, instillation of hope, universality, and existential factors appear to be most valued (Fuhrihan et al., 1999). Perrone and Sedlacek (2000) compared homogeneous and heterogeneous groups to examine group cohesiveness and client satisfaction for clients. In their study, group cohesiveness was positively related to client satisfaction, and participants in homogeneous groups reported a higher level of group cohesiveness than participants in heterogeneous counseling groups. Also, homogeneous group members reported higher satisfaction than heterogeneous counseling group members.

According to Corey and Corey (1997), the leader as a person is one of the most

significant variables influencing the group's success or failure. They discuss 15 personal characteristics of effective group leaders: courage, willingness to model, presence, goodwill and caring, belief in group process, openness, becoming aware of your own culture, nondefensiveness in coping with attacks, personal power, stamina, willingness to seek new experiences, self-awareness, sense of humor, inventiveness, personal dedication and commitment. Also, Corey and Corey (1997) list the skills of the group counselor as a professional: active listening, reflecting, clarifying, summarizing, facilitating, empathizing, interpreting, questioning, linking, confronting, supporting, blocking, diagnosing, modeling, suggesting, initiating, evaluating, terminating.

Group counseling has been widely applied in many diverse settings. Kim and Omizo (1998) assessed the impact of culturally consonant group counseling on the self-esteem and internal locus of control orientation among Native American adolescents. Gore-Felton and Spiegel (1999) reviewed the literature on group effectiveness and described the components of an empirically validated group treatment for breast cancer patients and discussed the implications for group leaders. Dobson and Dobson (1991) designed for adults who are experiencing role changes with their aging parents by taking care of their parents. Zimpfer (1992) surveyed the literature on groups for persons in correctional institutions. MacDevitt and Sanislow III (1987) assessed

curative factors among therapy groups of offenders experiencing differentially restrictive incarceration.

Group treatment has been used for diverse problems such as alcohol and drug addition, anger control, shyness, spouse-abuse, child sexual abuse, weight control. According to Page and Berkow (1998), group work is an effective treatment for addictive behaviors, and it can be used to enhance the spiritual development that AA approaches acknowledge as being basic to the change process. McWhirter and Liebman (1988) described a group approach to anger control using cognitive restructuring and structured experiential activities for Vietnam veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder. Martin and Thomas (2000) proposed a model psychoeducation group for shy college students. They described the considerations for planning, organizing, and conducting counseling groups for shy college students. Schwartz and Waldo (1999) studied therapeutic factors in spouse-abuse group treatment. This study examined 38 men's experiences of therapeutic factors in educational groups for batterers. Shaffer, Brown, and McWhirter (1998) presented a four-phase group plan to help survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Harvey and Powers (1998) provided a description of a 12-week psychoeducational group combining education, nutritional counseling, and moderate exercise for coping with being overweight.

Counseling groups have been studied and widely applied in many diverse settings and problem areas. In most studies on group counseling the researchers used quantitative research methods, such as surveys and questionnaires, to measure the effects of counseling group. In the present study, a phenomenological investigation is conducted to illuminate the experiences of Koreans' who have led counseling groups.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were 17 Koreans who had led counseling groups. Thirteen were females and four were males. They were counselors, counselor trainees, and there was one professor. Participants were selected and contacted by the interviewer with the cooperation of Kyungpook National University Counseling Center in Taegu, Korea and Tae-Jun Youth Counseling Center in Tae-Jun, Korea. In the initial contact, the purpose of the study was explained, and an informed consent form was discussed. Most of the interviews were held in counseling rooms of the two counseling centers. Two interviews were held at quiet and private places by the request of interviewees. No payment or other tangible incentives were offered to the participants.

Informed Consent

Prior to the interview, the participants were asked to read and sign an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A). The form was signed and any questions were answered regarding the study. The participants were informed of their right to discontinue the interview at any time without penalty. They were informed that their

identities would be concealed throughout all aspects of the study.

Existential-Phenomenology

The purpose of existential-phenomenological research is to investigate the experience of the participants' being-in-the-world (Giorgi, 1985). The emphasis is on understanding the participants' experience of being in real life situations.

Existential-phenomenological research focuses on the description of participants' experience rather than participants' behaviors. The words participants used in describing their experiences are the data of the study. Transcripts of interviews are read, and using a hermeneutic analysis, themes begin to emerge when the transcripts are read and reread. When no new themes emerge, the analysis is completed (Polkinghorne, 1989). Before the interviews were conducted, the primary investigator participated in a bracketing interview. The goal of the bracketing interview is to control the primary investigator's pre-existing ideas and biases regarding the research topic (Valle, and Halling, 1989).

Phenomenological Interviews

The primary investigator held most of the interviews in quiet rooms of the

counseling center at Kyungpook National University and Dae-Jun Youth Counseling Center. Two interviews were held in quiet private places by the request of interviewees. The interviews were unstructured and questions were asked in an open-ended fashion so as to encourage elaboration of the experience of leading counseling groups. The interviews began with a request of the following nature, "Please tell me about your experience of leading counseling groups." Other questions were asked for clarification of thoughts and feelings related to their experience.

The interviews were carried out in Korean language and they were audio-taped. Following the interview, the primary investigator transcribed the audio tapes. The Korean transcriptions were then translated into English by the primary investigator. During the transcription process all identifying information was omitted.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Seventeen participants were interviewed by the primary investigator. Each interview was audio-taped. Eleven interviews were done with the cooperation of the Kyungpook National University counseling center in Taegu, Korea and six interviews were done with the cooperation of the Taejun Youth Counseling Center in Taejun. Four male counselors and 13 female counselors participated in this interview. Ten out of Seventeen counselors led groups more than five years. Since all of interviews were done in Korea, Korean transcripts were made first and then translated into English by the primary investigator. Instructors at the University of Tennessee Writing Center reviewed translated transcripts to correct grammar errors. After ten translated transcripts were analyzed, the primary investigator stopped translation of Korean transcripts since no more new themes emerged from the analysis.

Thematic Structure

The thematic structure includes a ground theme and four figure themes. The experience of leading counseling groups is grounded in the concept of Becoming. Participants describe their experience of leading counseling groups as the process of

changes and becoming. From this ground, four themes emerged as figural: Leader's Becoming, Members' Becoming, Group Dynamics, and Our (Korean) Culture (See the Figure 1). All of the participants describe their own changes and becoming and group members' changes and becoming through counseling groups. The group dynamics is described in all transcripts. Thirteen participants discuss our Korean culture related to counseling groups (See the Table 1).

Figure 1

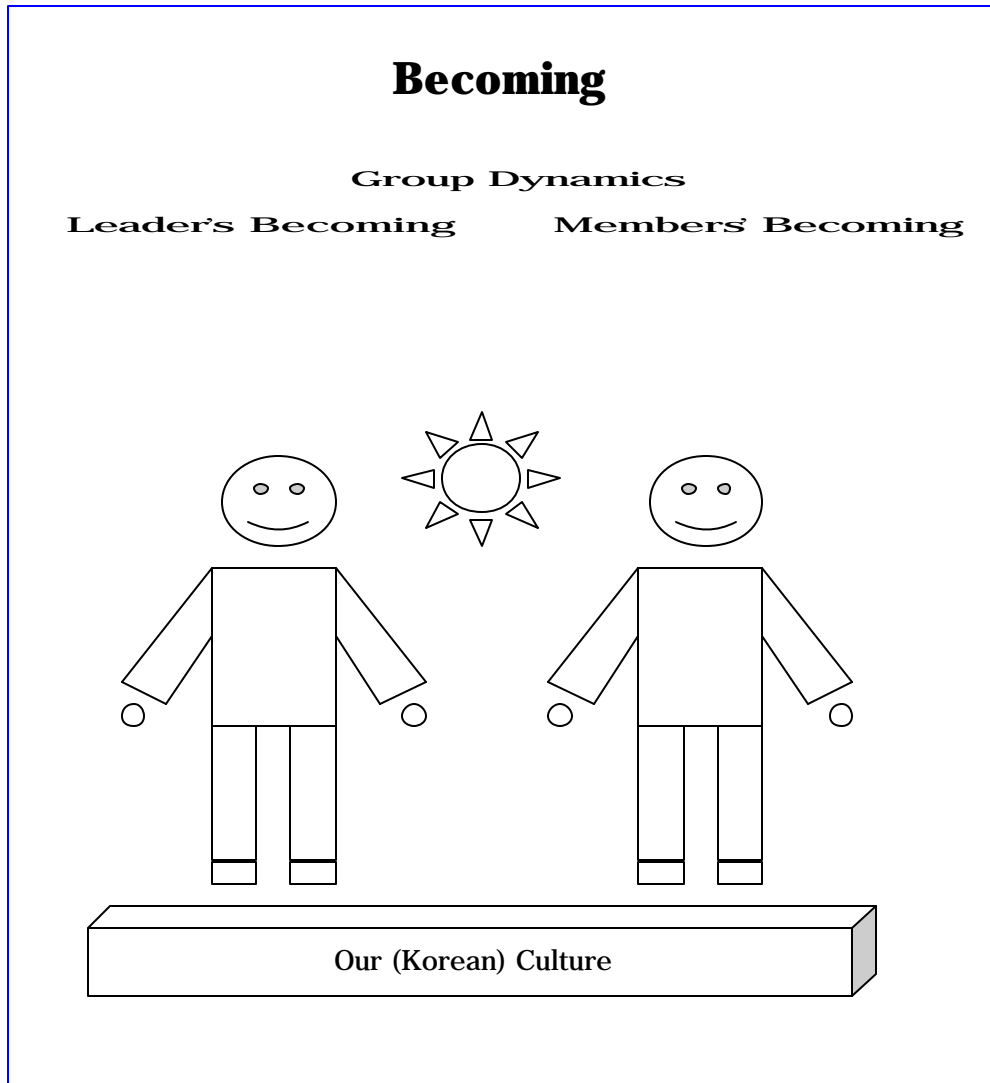


Figure 1 : Thematic structure of the experience of Koreans'

leading counseling groups

Table 1

Experience of Koreans' Leading counseling groups

Themes Transcript #	Leader's becoming	Members' becoming	Group dynamics	Our(Korean) culture
Pilot	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Transcript 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yss
Transcript 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript 6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript 7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Transcript 9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transcript 10	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Ground: Becoming

Participants describe their experience of leading counseling groups as the process of becoming for leaders themselves and for group members. They describe that they become more insightful about themselves and others and gained more personal growth through process of counseling groups. They describe their changes in accepting

others thoughts and feelings, and the relationship between themselves and group members as helping relationship of changes and becoming.

I was glad and satisfied that we were doing things together and so I began to enjoy counseling groups more. I found myself being changed with group members...I used to be objective to group members and I was a helper in the counseling groups. Now my relationship with group members is giving and receiving helps in both ways and we are becoming together. We are the beings of becoming.

A participant describes her changes and becoming as a group leader.

I became more flexible and more accepting instead of being self-complacent and too straight...My style has changed, so people who have experienced groups with me in the past say that I have changed a lot ...They say that I become very comfortable and flexible and patient to group members...I believe that I am going in the right direction and people are changed by themselves when they open and accept. We can't change ourselves all at once. We are in the process of becoming apprehended.

Another participant said that she became more accepting about herself instead of trying to change aspects of herself.

I came to know it was a dangerous idea that I tried to change all of myself. I became more accepting by thinking "I know that I am okay. I will be better if I change this part of me a little bit more." Those knowing process made me to become more accepting.

The participant describes changes of her feelings after her repeated counseling groups.

I felt easier and more comfortable. When I experienced and practiced more. It's a psychological comfort. When I first led groups I was nervous about things being different from what I intended to be and worried about forgetting things that I planned to do.

This participant uses the word "becoming" to herself and to groups. She indicates groups work better when she becomes comfortable, confident, and understand herself better.

The more I come to feel, the more groups become. As much as I become, groups become. Instead of changing a group member, I myself should be become first. Once I become comfortable and understand myself more, I see groups become better. They come to have more cohesion, and group process gets better... When I feel comfortable and confident in me and understand myself, groups become better. As much as I understand myself, I can sense other people. 'This person's emotion is that.' Then I can see and read group dynamics better. Therefore I think very frequently that as much as I become, groups become. I feel in that way. So I think I need to have more chance to see myself not just by leading groups but by participating more groups.

Four themes emerged from the interview transcripts: Leader's Becoming, which depicts leader's becoming and changes in his/her role, emotions, personal changes, counselor orientation, and leader's qualities; Members' Becoming, which depicts members' roles, changes in themselves, and members' emotions related to counseling groups; Group Dynamics which illustrates group power and group cohesion; Our (Korean) Culture, which depicts Korean values, behavioral tendencies, and differences between Koreans and Westerners.

Theme 1 : Leader's Becoming

Participants describe their roles as group leaders and also their role changes in the process of leading groups. Also they describe their emotions in the comparison of past and present. They also talk about their personal changes through their group experiences. Most participants talk about their orientations in counseling groups and talk about leaders' qualities and importance of continuous training and group experiences to become a better leader. Three sub-themes emerge within the theme of leader's becoming: leader's roles, changes in me, emotions, counseling orientation, and leader's qualities.

Leader's Roles

Interviewees describe their perception of leader's roles such as what they need to do and how they should be as a group leader.

When you participate in a group as a member, you don't need to worry about how the group goes, but once you get the leader's role, you have to think what the members would think, how to lead the group, how to help the members, etc.

I think group leaders should improve themselves and examine themselves when they lead a group and work with group members in each session. Leaders need time to review group activities after each session. Leaders need to do a lot of group practice and study to improve themselves. Without those efforts, group leaders cannot renew the group atmosphere and cannot project a

dynamic image. Also, they have to improve their knowledge of groups and study and re-examine themselves continuously. Therefore, leaders should keep examining and reflecting on their thoughts.

One of the interviewees described her role change as a group leader through her experiences of leading groups and also she described leader's roles in different phases of group process.

However, I think that it's the leaders' role to see group dynamics and change them naturally. It's also the leaders' role to accept dynamics which are made by group members. The leaders' role is important since it's also the leaders' role to accept dynamics as made by group members. At the beginning, I thought that the leaders' role is pulling groups. In the middle of my experiences, I had a kind of model and I focused on sharing experiences as a person who had prior experiences. Now I focus on following where group goes and make an effort to play invisible roles such as helping group cohesion, and openness, and trust. When I play those roles, group members feel safer in groups. I think those leaders' invisible roles are necessary as a kind of big frame for groups. I also think leaders' roles are different in the process of group counseling such as initial and middle and final stage. In the initial stage, leaders' roles are absolute in forming acceptable and positive group atmosphere for group cohesion by giving feedback and making comments. In the middle stage, leaders should not hurry or be anxious when confrontation and diverse group dynamics occur and should support and keep behind the group. In the final stage, leaders help wrapping up groups smoothly. Therefore, group leaders' roles become different at different stages of the group.

Changes in me

Participants describe their personal changes which include gaining and learning about themselves and others through the experience of the leading counseling groups

It was a very good time, since people could examine themselves. It was very helpful because others told me about their opinions of me that I never thought about...Also in the interpersonal relationship, if I have a bad relationship with somebody, it is a better for me to adjust myself to others rather than to expect others to adjust themselves to me to improve the relationship. Also it is important to listen to others with interest. People want me to listen to them. I learned that by listening to others I can accept them, and then they listen to me and accept me.

It is nice to be a leader since I can learn how to see others exactly as they are from what I have learned from others to see myself as I am. Those are very good aspects of group counseling. I am so pleased I can help people gain some power from groups and I am so happy that I can be warm sunshine for them continuously.

I learn a great deal as I lead a group. I learn from the members and I find new things whenever I lead a group. Whenever I meet a new group, they are different.

This participant says she found some changes in herself, but she found that it's difficult to accept others as who they are.

It was helpful for me to work with others and it made me change a little, but I found that the kinds of people taking part in the group influenced me differently. From my formal group experience, it was impressive to see that people were accepted as what they were. I thought that I, myself, as a co-leader, should accept others as what they are but I found it was difficult. I also found it was not easy for the group members to create a trustful atmosphere in the group, because they were students attending the same university and they might meet each other by chance after the group finished.

Emotions

Participants describe diverse emotions they have related to leading counseling groups. They described their feelings when they interact with group members.

Even if I meet the same group, each time the dynamics of the group and the feelings are different; therefore, I am always excited and experience a flutter of heart with certain expectations and the positive emotions rise up my mind

In some groups I was absorbed into the group mood and led them with a lot of fun, but there were some groups I felt very pressured and uncomfortable and overwhelmed.

It is rather difficult to lead groups when there is a group member who expects a leader to solve or provide him/her something, especially at the beginning of groups. Then I feel more pressured that I should give them something they expect. Some groups are easier to lead than some other groups. When some groups don't work well, then I feel guilty.

Counseling Orientation

Participants describe their counseling theoretical orientations and their preferred counseling techniques.

I prefer Rogerian type of counseling and I believe people can function for themselves. Therefore, I try to find others' good points and support them and, I help and encourage them. I don't think it's much helpful for a person to being analyzed or interpreted by others.

I believe the behavioral skills should be taught. Behavioral approaches appear to be paralleled with our culture.

They came to know that their present interpersonal problems resulted from their childhood relationships... My group style is psychodynamic. So it didn't match with my style since it was a completely structured self-growth group.

Leader's Qualities

Participants describe a group leader's qualities and emphasize that they need to make endless efforts to improve their qualities as a group leader.

Group leaders need to develop their techniques based on a certain theory. If a group leader is close-minded and leads the heterogeneous group in an inflexible fashion, we all get hurt...the counselor should find techniques suit himself and try to make them and develop them.

Leaders need to have the ability to see how those behaviors or emotions occur. Those abilities can be gained through individual counseling or intense study of psychology...I think group leaders' qualifications are the most important. When group leaders are professionally well qualified, members will have right group experience. Therefore, counselors need to be well trained and qualified.

I need more professional qualifications of counselors. Since I am still in the process of learning counseling, I need to get more professional qualities by leading and participating more groups and which are led by great group leaders, and also by feeling, "It was good when I led in this way, and it wasn't good when I led in that way," and by obtaining more learning from books.

Theme 2 : Members' Becoming

Interviewees described their perception of members' personal changes and the characteristics of group members' roles. Also, participants described how group members feel about counseling groups. Participants emphasize group members' roles

such as active and voluntary participation in group activities and group attendance. Also, they emphasized the importance of members keeping confidentiality as an important group members' role. Three sub-themes emerged from the second themes: members' role, changes in them, and emotions.

Members' Roles

Participants indicated that group members' roles are very important for members themselves to gain more benefits from counseling groups. Group members' attitudes such as active and voluntary participation in groups and regular attendance are emphasized.

Also it will be great if group members join the group voluntarily. I learned the reason why group counseling can be successful when the members join the group voluntarily. If they do not, it is difficult to make all of them actively participate in the group work. There are big differences in the result of group counseling depending on whether the members are genuinely interested in or not. People who are interested in group counseling want to know more and ask more questions during group work than those who aren't. People who are not interested in the group only wish the group to finish quickly.

I also thought group members' full attendance is very important in group management. Some group members were very passive, so they didn't actively participate. They just did what the leader asked them to do but did not cooperate eagerly. They made leading the group difficult.

The participants described that it is very important for members to keep

confidentiality about what they hear from groups.

Group counseling could be successful if the group dynamic and mood is really good and all of the members feel, 'We are one. We never tell others stories outside of the group.'

During group counseling, group members are not supposed to talk about what others said when they are outside of groups.

They showed some efforts, but there were no serious problems. They had some problems, but it was difficult for them to expose themselves since they were classmates. What they said in group could be told by other members outside of group. Of course, at the beginning we made contract, but it was difficult for them to talk about their real problems.

But some people concern about the confidentiality. This is small town. It's small world. If they were born here and grew up here, they are afraid of what other would think about them. They have some difficulties in disclosing themselves for that reason. They are afraid of gossip. I think the character of this town would also, contributes.

Changes in Group Members

Participants described group members' personal changes and gains through the process of groups.

I felt that people know they have problems but they don't want to face them and want to avoid and deny them. However, they have to face their problems in groups and receive feedback and reflection from others and they have to accept those. Also they feel others' care and affection through groups and they gain power and hope. "I can overcome. I can do it."

I found that they came to have insights which help them to know themselves better...They came to have more insights and express their feelings

well and understand themselves better. All members became aware that every problem in the present has some reasons behind it... There was some current of feelings and feedback. Through that process they became to know and understand themselves better.

Emotions

Participants described group members' emotions through counseling groups.

Some group members get hurt because of leaders' inappropriate treatment or because of the lack of trust.

If the leader fails to treat the members appropriately, they get hurt. This is the negative experience the members may get from the group counseling. There are good points in the group, but if the members are forced too much, then they get hurt.

Some people get hurt so easily. They get hurt as their weak points they want to hide are being mentioned. Some of them stop coming back to the group after they had those kinds of inner pain. It does not frequently occur, though, I have not seen many cases like that. If there were many cases like that, I think, I would not want to keep the job. I follow up the cases which that is needed. I phone them or meet them and say, "I worried about you because this or that." Most of these people do not trust others since they don't trust themselves. As I explain them what my intention at that time was and my affection behind it, they usually accept it

At the beginning, group members feel uncomfortable, curious, anxious and wondering, "What kind of person is he?" But as a group gradually precedes and as it passes the initial stage of presentation, the stage of conflict so on, as you know, after the conflict stage, something begins to happen. During this period, the members are wondering, "Why am I here? Why should I do this? And then, when group ends, many of them begin to miss the groups. I get a nice feeling as they ask questions about what they have doubted and as I see the process of changes.

Theme 3 : Group dynamics

Participants described group dynamics which have a lot meaning in it and some call it as group power. The word of group cohesion also used by some other participants. They indicate group dynamics as a very important factor that leads to successful counseling groups since personal changes of group members occur based on group dynamics.

Since group members were college students and met once a week, they were often absent, and then group dynamics wasn't connected. At the beginning of groups, until three or four sessions group dynamics isn't smoothly connected since group members meet once a week about two hours.

The expression is similar to the book saying, "Group Dynamics." Without clearly defined intention, the group seems to have certain power that makes people change. You feel something when the group's attention is focused on you. That kind of phenomenon seems to exist. Although it is difficult to specifically indicate, one can see himself through the other members' eyes or behaviors of the group.

Also they feel others' care and affection through that they get some power and hope "I can overcome, I can do it" When I see those, I feel that I have a good job and I am proud of myself.

Participants indicated group cohesion help members to build trust in each other and to support each other. Also strong group cohesion is formed and group members love their group. They have basic trust that whatever they say or do in the group can be

understood. Therefore, that counseling group is very active.

Group members accept each others and support them by saying such as “How difficult time you had!” Those group process gives people the effects of healing by being listened and supported only. It was wonderful to find that what I had done to them were only listening, empathizing and clarifying their problems but it had such healing effect.

I think that will be desirable because it is better that groups are led by group members than by leaders since then group members feel more belongings to the group. In that way, they have better group cohesion and it causes more strong motivation of participating groups and feels stronger responsibilities for groups.

Some participants indicated that formation of subgroups causes negative group atmosphere and make them to have difficulties to lead groups.

Sometimes group members know each other well from the beginning and sometimes group members do not know each other. It is difficult when there are two or three people know each other, and they ruin the group atmosphere.

Also one of difficulties is the group in which subgroups are formed. I had an adult group in which there were 3 or 4 teachers who graduated from the same university. These teachers formed a subgroup and dominated the group. The other members of the group began to feel that they were left over and, because of the power of the subgroup, the leader was unable to control the group properly.

When group members form some subgroups, it's difficult. Some group members who attend the same church or work together come to the group; then it's very difficult to lead groups since they already know each other. They become very exclusive to others and lead the group mood in the wrong direction. I know I have to intervene but it's not so easy. Therefore, I feel uncomfortable and afraid about subgroups.

Theme 4 : Our(Korean) Culture

Since interviewees are Koreans who have led counseling groups, they are aware of the characteristics of Korean culture, and also aware of the differences between American culture and Korean culture. In Korean culture they are aware of differences of subcultures such as gender, age, and province.

Some participants describe their culture and their behavioral tendencies. They indicate that some of counseling methods originated from western country are not appropriate to apply for their culture.

Actually, our culture emphasizes congruence and to keep personal emotions in ourselves. We are discouraged from expressing our emotion. For example, husbands are not to show their affection to their wives, especially in front of their parents. When these socially expected behavioral patterns are somewhat broken by the influence of what they have learned from the group sessions that created an atmosphere for the members to be free to show their emotions, negative or positive, they might be seen as immature by others. What I mean is the counseling methods directly imported from Western culture may be not appropriate for us.

I don't think the assertiveness training is not perfectly fit into us since it came from the foreign country. "Rational" word itself doesn't fit into us. For young people who learned westernized studies, it might be familiar but for over middle-aged people it is not suitable since they have never lived rationally or never experienced the word "rational". For them, to behave rationally could be seen as rational. It may be seen as aggressive. Therefore, we need to make assertiveness training to be Koreanized.

In communication, we Koreans have a tendency to explain something too much which is not directly relevant to the main topic, such as our surroundings. Although they are reminded to face the facts and feedback is given, it is not easy to put them back on the right track. Considering this situation, other techniques may be adopted to prevent that aspect.

The participant indicates Korean cultural aspects as hiding own personal problems and tendency of bandaging wound when someone cries out.

We don't want to get a negative evaluation. Let's say, I have conflicts with my father. People don't want to talk or show their problems, but on the other side these people have warm hearts to comfort others. Therefore, they comfort others not to cry if somebody is crying. These cultural aspects get into the group. If somebody cries others try to stop him with sympathy, not empathy, and they may even complain about the others who let the person cry. I will say this is a Korean mood. We like to protect others who have fear. This is not negative feeling. This is a sense of community, but we are losing this. This sense of community is changing and individualism takes its place.

Participants describe our culture as men-dominating society and still men have more power in our society and home.

Our culture itself is very men- dominating. I can see many women have difficulties from our irrational men-dominating culture and in which women behave like adult-child. They are physically adult but their mentality is still in the state of childhood, the child inside of them crying.

Our culture is not like that culture. Especially, men in our country try to pass over their family issues or close relations with family. However, I feel sorry since they try to avoid their basic and important relationships.

Another participant describes differences in groups according to members' age

There are different characters according to age level. As you lead groups for several years, you will see how people feel and behave, because there are different developmental assignments according to age levels.

Another participant describes the differences in group members according to different provinces of Korea.

Also Choong-Chung province culture is known to be calm, quiet and private while Kyung Sang province is known to be active, affectionate and hospitable. They are different according to where they come from. If you go to Seoul, people there are very rational and they are very private. Jul-La province is community-centered, and they show a tendency to reject other communities. Each province has a different character. Here, Dae-Jun people are slow and gentle and affectionate, but the community is enclosed against outsiders. People from Kyung-Sang province do not inhibit what they say, but Dae-Jun people do not talk in such a way.

Other Themes

There are some other theme emerged found from the transcripts which are not general themes. Some Participants describe types of groups they have led, and also mention group sizes and gender make-up. Participants indicate that they have difficulties leading groups when they have too many members in their groups. Three participants talked about the improvement of counseling groups environment. Some participants emphasized the importance of orientation of the counseling groups and

group members' screening. One of participants emphasized a leader's well-suited outfit. Three participants described difficulties of leading counseling groups because of the dual relationships with group members. There are some participants who mentioned matching issues: matching between counseling group and group members. One participant says, "For some people, the group experience can badly influence them since their personality doesn't match with the nature of counseling group."

Summary of Bracketing Interview

A bracketing interview was conducted in which the primary researcher described her experience of leading counseling groups. The bracketing interview was done to identify any presuppositions of the primary investigator. From the bracketing interview the themes were emerged from the ground of becoming. The primary investigator describes her learning and changes through leading groups. Also she describes the difficulties of leading groups such as members' subgroup formation, and passive participation in group activities. She mentions group dynamics and sense of belonging as an important factor of successful counseling groups. The primary investigator described group leader' roles and members' roles and group dynamics.

In summary, participants' experiences leading counseling groups are described

as the process of becoming for themselves and for group members. In the process of becoming, a group leader's and members' roles are emphasized and personal changes of a leader and members and their emotions through group process are described. Also, group dynamics are described as an important factor for successful counseling groups. Participants are aware their culture and behavior patterns coming from their own culture.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Four themes emerged from the participants' descriptions of the experience of leading counseling groups in Korea. They are Leader's Becoming, Members' Becoming, Group Dynamics, and Our (Korean) Culture. These four themes comprised the overall experience of leading counseling groups, and they emerged against the ground of Becoming. Through the process of counseling groups both a leader and group members become more insightful about themselves and furthermore they gain more understanding of themselves and others better. They become more open to others on the basis of group dynamics. However, in Korean culture during the group process, it's not easy for group members to be open to others.

Berg, Landreth, and Fall (1998) indicate that through the process of the group counseling the group members find the meaning of giving and receiving emotional support and understanding in a different and more positive way. Perception of self is then redefined in a context similar to that which initially resulted in the distortion. Participants in this study described that group members become mirrors for each others in the supportive and accepted group atmosphere. Members' reflect others' thoughts and feelings by sharing their own feelings and thoughts or giving feedback. In the group

process they see and understand themselves through the others' mirror. Participants describe the word "mirror" as the meaning of reflection on feelings and thoughts. Group members help each other to understand themselves and others better by reflecting their own thoughts and feelings. Then they become more accepting and open.

The themes of Leader's Becoming, Members' Becoming, Group Dynamics, and Our (Korean) Culture can be understood in terms of the existential triad modes of being in the world. Three ways of being in the world are *eigenwelt*, the world in the relationship to oneself, *mitwelt*, the world of being with other people, and *unwelt*, the biological and environment (May, 1983). The ground theme which is becoming seems to be the combination of three modes of being in the world. Being in the relationship to oneself and with others involve with a group leader' own becoming and members' becoming. A leader's and members' becoming, which means getting to know more about self and others and becoming more accepting and open, occurs in the context of the group dynamics. Korean culture and social context is related to the idea of *mitwelt*.

According to Anderson (1984) the "I-We-It" triangle represents the important elements of all interaction, such as in group process. The "I" indicates the individuals and it is the unique experience of each member at any one point in time related to needs, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. The "We" reflects the group. It is the interrelationship

within the group at any one point of time and the awareness of members that they are a unique group with its own different patterns of relationships and concerns. The “It” refers to the individual’s and common goals, or the theme, for which the group meets. The “I” in this study seems to related to the leader’s own experiences of leading groups, and “We” seems to related to leader and members relationships. One of participants describes a group leader and members are becoming together. “It” is the individual or common goals for both leaders and group members in the counseling groups. These three points of the triangle are connected and closely related with each other.

The goal of the present study is to provide an understanding of Korean’s experience of leading counseling groups by means of unstructured interviews. Interviews were carried out in Korean language, the primary researcher translated Korean transcriptions into English transcripts. In the process of translation, some of the nuances of Korean may have been lost.

According to participants who discussed about difficulties in applying counseling theories and techniques, they discuss that there are some problems to apply counseling theories and techniques to Koreans without appropriate adaptation. Most of counseling theories and techniques are from western country and they are developed based on Western culture and religion and social context. Some of participants indicate

the differences of Koreans and Westerners to explain why they need find Korean counseling theories and techniques. It is very important to develop Korean styles of counseling theories and techniques, which will serve Korean clients with appropriate treatment on the base of Korean social context, values, religion and culture.

Reference

- Anderson, J. (1984). *Counseling through Group Process*. NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- Berg, R. C., Landreth, G. L., & Fall, K. A. (1998). *Group counseling : Concepts and procedures*. PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Corey, M. S., & Corey, G. (1997). *Groups: Process and Practice* (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Dobson, J. E., & Dobson, R. L. (1991). Changing Roles: An aging parents support group. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 16, 178-184.
- Fuhriman, A., Burlingame, G.M., Seaman, S.W., & Barlaw, S.H. (1999). Validating a behavioral measure of catharsis, cohesion, and insight in group therapy. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Society for Psychotherapy Research, Braga, Portugal.
- Giorgi, A. (Ed). (1985). *Introduction to phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University.
- Gore-Felton, C., & Spiegel, D. (1999). Enhancing women's lives: The role of support groups among breast cancer patients. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 24, 274-287.
- Hansen, J. C., Warner, R. W., & Smith, E. J. (1980). *Group counseling: Theory and process* (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Harvey, K. H., & Powers, P. S. (1998). The "free to be me" psychoeducational group: A conceptual model for coping with being overweight. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 23, 312-325.

- Kim, B. S., & Omizo, M. M. (1998). The effects of culturally consonant group counseling on the self-esteem and internal locus of control orientation among Native American adolescents. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 23, 145-163.
- MacDevitt, J. W. & Sanislow III, C. (1987). Curative factors in offenders' groups. *Small Group Behavior*, 18, 72-81.
- Martin, V. & Thomas, M. C. (2000). A model psychoeducation group for shy college students. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 25, 79-88.
- May, R. (1983). *The discovery of being*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- McWhirter, J. J. & Liebman, P. C. (1988). A description of anger control therapy groups to help Vietnam Veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 13, 9-16.
- Page, R. C., & Berkow, D. N. (1998). Group work as facilitation of spiritual development for drug and alcohol abusers. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 23, 285-297.
- Perrone, K. M., & Sedlacek, W. E. (2000). A comparison of group cohesiveness and client satisfaction in homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 25, 243-251.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). *Phenomenological research methods*. In R. S. Valle, & S. Halling (Eds.) *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology*, pp. 41-60. New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Schwartz, J. P., & Waldo, M. (1999). Therapeutic factors in spouse-abuse group treatment. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 24, 197-207.

- Shaffer, J., Brown, L. L., & McWhirter, J. (1998). Survivors of child sexual abuse and dissociative coping: Relearning in a group context. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 23, 74-94.
- Valle, R. S. & Halling, S. (Eds.). (1989). *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Yalom, D. I. (1975). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (2nd ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Yalom, D. I. (1985). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (3rd ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Yalom, D. I. (1995). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (4th ed.). New York: Basic Books.
- Zimpfer, D. G. (1992). Group work with adult offenders: An Overview. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 17, 54-61.