

Postmodern Openings

ISSN: 2068 – 0236 (print), ISSN: 2069 – 9387 (electronic)

Coverd in: Index Copernicus, Ideas. RePeC, EconPapers, Socionet,
Ulrich Pro Quest, Cabel, SSRN, Appreciative Inquiry Commons,
Journalseek, Scipio

EBSCO

Appreciative Socialization Group. A Model of Personal Development

Simona PONEA, Antonio SANDU

Postmodern Openings, 2010, Year 1, Vol 4, December, pp: 75-87

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://postmodernopenings.com>

Published by:

Lumen Publishing House

On behalf of:

Lumen Research Center in Social and Humanistic Sciences

Appreciative Socialization Group. A Model of Personal Development

Simona PONEA¹
Ph.D. Antonio SANDU²

Abstract

In this article we want to present a new form of group, which we consider as being important for the process of personal development. Groups are a form of gathering more people united by a common purpose. We believe that through their group, members can develop new skills and also can obtain the change in the direction they want. Socialization is the process that we “share” along with others, by communicating and also by having close views towards different things in life. Appreciative socialization involves placing emphasis on those elements that have value to us, which are positive. We consider appreciative group socialization as a model of good practice that aims the development among group members and increases empowerment process.

Keywords:

appreciative socialization group, socialization, group practice, appreciative inquiry, Coffee morning.

¹ Simona PONEA – Researcher Assistant, Lumen Research Center in Humanistic Sciences, Iași, Email address: simonaponea@yahoo.com, Phone number: 0040 742 80 42 86

² Ph.D: Antonio SANDU – Lecture Ph.D. at Faculty of Law, „Mihail Kogălniceanu” University, Iași Chairman / Researcher III Lumen Research Center in Humanistic Sciences, Iași, Email address: antonio1907@yahoo.com, Phone number: 0040 740 15 14 55

1. Introduction

Specialty literature has variously defined the concept of "group". According to the Dictionary of sociology (2003:265) the social group gathers "several individuals, defined by formal and informal criteria that share a sense of unity and are bound together by relatively strong interaction models". Pragmatically speaking, the group is that entity which we live in. Family is a group, as children we play in a group, at school we learn in a group, further we work and evolve within a group. Global society is a whole subject to the rules, ideas, actions, needs, prejudices. there by society is a group.

The main concepts combined in this work are "group", "process of socialization" and "appreciative methods". For a better understanding of the mixing between the three concepts / phrases we considered necessary to define each of them. Appreciative socialization group is a new model that comes with new "rules" and "borrowed" rules, specific to the above mentioned concepts.

Gabriela Irimescu (2009) defines group as "an alliance among individuals who need each other, more or less, alliance done in order to solve common problems" (cf. Shulman, 1994). The group is that entity in which we all live, is a unique model for growth and development. We can belong to a random group or we can satisfy our needs within it, solve a problem or just to be 'in it'.

According to researcher Anthony Giddens (2001) socialization is "the process by which a person becomes self-conscious, intelligent, integrated in the type of culture that he/ she was born in [...] socialization links different generations between."

The concept of **appreciative inquiry** was launched in 1987 through the work of David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivatsa, *Appreciative inquiry in organizational life*, who defined appreciative inquiry as "seeking what is best in people, organizations, and around the world. Appreciative inquiry involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a system, when it is most alive, most effective and most constructively in economic, environmental or human. "(Cooperrider, 1987)

Gervase Bush (cf. Cojocaru, D., Sandu, 2009) one of appreciative inquiry theorists, considers it as a theory of organization and method of social change, one of the most significant innovations in action research.

2. Group Development in Social Work Practice

Creating groups has the expanded role to cure "emotional illness". American specialty literature (Corey, M. Corey, 1977:15) defines the group as a microcosm of society, that can provide a "sample" of reality, drawn from the experiences of participants in various activities taking place in the same

framework. This "proof of reality" shows how we interact among ourselves, how we receive feedback, how we evolve, how we face problems and overcome them.

Denizia Gal (2007) speaks about the existence of several types of groups used in social work:

- recreational groups
- educational and skills training groups
- decision and problem- solving groups
- self-helping groups
- socialization groups
- therapeutic groups
- "meeting" groups

Researcher Linda Farris Kurtz (1997:24-29) says about social groups that have great merit to facilitate the transformation process of the individual, to generate individual "growth / development" (empowerment), leading to a better intrinsic understanding, to identify new perspectives on an issue (reframing) and not least to develop a new style of living. Each of them may not be possible without the individual's own desire for change. The process of change must be desired and supported by various resources, by themselves, by will, but also by others.

Objectives of a group are achieved through proposed actions that have the purpose of social change of reality. Researchers Gerald Corey and Marianne Schneider Corey (1977) mention a series of objectives of social groups:

- to become more open and honest with others
- to learn to trust themselves and others
- to learn to become free and overcome terms such as: it is mandatory, you must
- to fully develop and accept themselves and learn to not expect perfection from their person and from others
- to recognize and accept the "conflicts" with others
- to listen and understand those around
- to be heard and understood by those around you
- to able to tolerate ambiguity
- to learn to choose between alternatives because nothing is certain in life
- to identify solutions to solve problems
- to behave with others with respect, appreciation, honesty

Postmodern Openings

Advantages and disadvantages (adaptation after Corey, M. Corey, 1977:8-10)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Exploration of feelings, emotions	Increasing of group reliance
Exploration of the type of interaction with others	Increasing vulnerability of the individual in front of other group members
Giving and receiving support from other participants in the group	Total opening in front of people you do not know very well
Development of new behaviour	Privacy violation
Facilitation of the change process	Transmission of negative experiences and enhance their status
Recreation methods	Changing her/ his own rules in life with others that do not fit the person
Receiving feedback from experts and „group fellows“	Facilitation in prejudices creation
Personal and social development	Granting total trust
Acquiring new abilities and competencies	Inadequate management of group meetings
Acquiring experience	Considering that through a group participation we find the solution for any problem
Overcoming difficult moments	The use of the group as a sensitivity method for the others
The ability to transform one problem in an opportunity	
Increased self-confidence and confidence in others	
Development of self- potential	
Methods of overcoming problems that may occur in the family, couple, reference group	

Researcher Linda Farris Kurtz (1997) proposes a number of essential elements that must be taken into account when we want to form any type of group:

- the size of the group
- the type of the group
- the type of the institution/ organization
- the characteristics of the participants (age, sex, type of needs, preferences, social class, etc.)
- the type of “setting” of the group
- how to organize a group (rigid/ authoritative, democratic, collaborative etc.)
- degree of involvement of participants
- Formation criteria and the rules of the group
- The location of the meetings
- The duration and frequency of the meetings
- Group communication
- Cohesion of the group
- The methods of overcoming dysfunctional situations
- The objectives of the group
- The purpose of the group

„Coffee Morning” – Appreciative Socialization Group

The appreciative socialization group has its origins in three different groups officially recognized in the specialty literature in social domain: the support group, T group and group meeting. We aim to offer a brief definition of appreciative socialization group precursors and further to define the new type of group specific to social domain.

The support group is represented by "a group of people that can be led by a therapist, providing mutual emotional support, information and advice on issues of common characteristics or experiences (Houghton, 2001: Dictionary). The support group is also seen as "a group of people with common concerns, experiences and offering emotional and moral support to another member" (Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary).

T-group concept appeared in 1947 through the National Institute of Further Training in Bethel ME. Here was initiated the development and use of T groups (Training Lab), involving "the use of here and now experiences in group, feedback among participants and theory on human behavior to explore group process and build confidence in themselves and in others. The aim is to give people options for their behavior in groups. T-group was a successful innovation in the social domain, which provided the basis for what is currently used as team building. "(Gallagher: 2001, orgdct.com)

Group meeting (encoutering) is a "sensitivity group where component members strive to obtain emotional support [...] with emphasis on interpersonal expression of feelings within the group (Dorland's Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers). In Mosby Medical dictionary we find the following definition of group meeting: "a small group of people who meet certain conditions to help increase self-awareness, promotion and personal growth, and improve interpersonal communication (Mosby's Medical Dictionary: 2009).

Appreciative socialization group is a type of group that involves combining key elements of the support group methods, T group and group meetings, seeking social integration of people and self development through framework stability, which is a favorable way of expressing lived experiences, establishing of new relationships in society, achieving social integration, identification of common issues with other group members, improving self-appreciation, self-esteem and equality between individuals of society.

One of the basic models specific to appreciative methods is 4 D model promoted by David Cooperrider in 2001. In this study the 4 D model was used to construct an appreciative approach to facilitate the individual through in creating a new identity. In particular we used the "success stories" technique to facilitate self development of social group members participating in the appreciative socialization group - BACH model, for social inclusion.

Socialization group occurs in social work practice within America. The identified model involves combining support group model with the T group model. It is important to mention that the model proposed in this paper is considering a mix between the three models explained above, plus the specific characteristics of appreciative inquiry.

The appreciative socialization group - BACH model, starting from the appreciative inquiry methods, brings a new perspective on the model described above by introducing the concept of partnership in "self-development" of the team organizing the group and the group intervention clients. The appreciative socialization group looks uniform in its composition having both members of the beneficiary community and the implementation team of the group; all relationships are equal and equally considered as group members.

Methodological design for the appreciative support group - BACH model. Application Protocol

The activity „Coffee Morning” take place in the Support and Counseling Office for Disabled Persons/ Biroului de Asistență și Consiliere pentru persoane cu Handicap (BACH), within the Diecezan Caritas Centre (Ponea, 2009). The purpose of the office is to help improve living conditions and opportunities for therapeutic treatment of persons with disabilities through rehabilitation and development of the individual and family capacity to overcome difficult situations by themselves. The central mission is to help the disabled person to integrate socially and professionally (Ponea, Sandu, 2010).

BACH promotes a complex of measures and actions to meet social, individual, family or group needs, of persons with disabilities, to prevent and overcome difficult situations, vulnerability and self-reliance for the preservation and protection of the individual, to prevent marginalization and social exclusion, to promote social inclusion and to improve quality of life.

The activity „Coffee Morning” was promoted based on the same purpose as that of the office, trying to combine the activities specific to integration with those of support, of increasing self-esteem, self-development in the disabled person. Thus, the appreciative socialization group - BACH model, applied through the activity „Coffee Morning” implies:

- Social Integration of persons with disabilities
- Making friends within the group
- Increasing self-esteem of participants
- Spending free time in a pleasant way
- Participation to recreational and educational activities
- Establishing a partnership between experts, volunteers and beneficiaries
- Developing self-autonomy of participants

The idea of „Coffee Morning” activity started from the proposal of forming a partnership between professionals, volunteers and beneficiaries (Ponea, 2010a), after the model formulated on education by Federico Verona Madrid (2008). Adapted to this model, we believe that between specialists, volunteers and beneficiaries there can "conclude" an agreement on cooperation, helping to triple development. Each of the participants learns from new experiences, regardless of the knowledge that each individual member has (Ponea, 2010c).

As educational partnership (Madrid, cf. Sandu, 2009:132) refers to various benefits for both sides, the "social" partnership implies gain for its members. Thus it emphasis on the experience of the one called "beneficiary",

especially on positive elements, successful/ winning strategies that he/ she has, contributing to the development of this partnership.

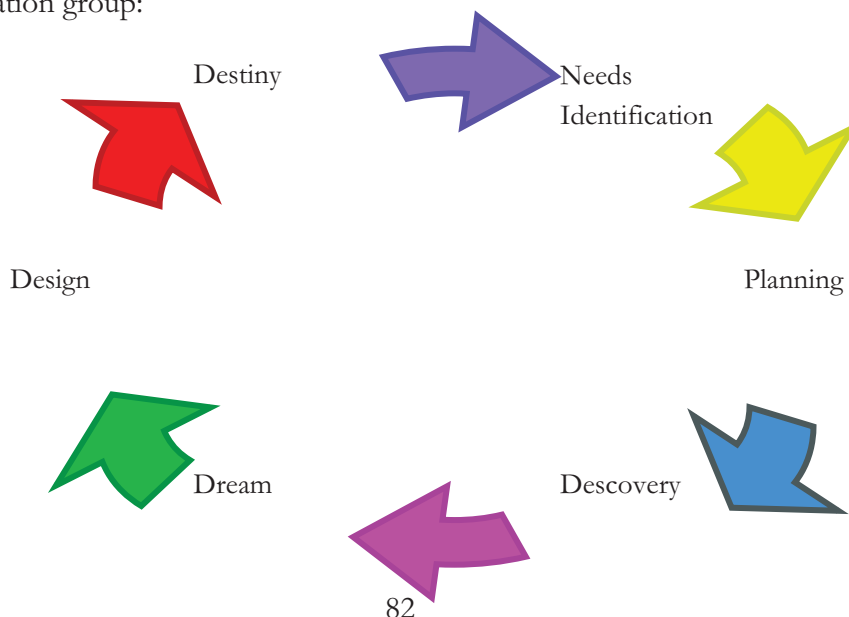
The appreciative socialization group's purpose is to "force" the client to transition from the victim (self-vulnerability) to winner. "Vulnerability is a state of potentiality, the present non-manifestation of factors that may lead in future to marginalization, disadvantage or other related phenomena, a mental map of inadequate interpretations in reality or potential of person." (Cojocaru, 2005: 30). Most times people affected by some disability go through various negative processes, such as marginalization, exclusion or discrimination, but the following processes: self-vulnerability, self-marginalization and self-discrimination are just as sharp.

Thereby we are witnessing a double-negative process that "claims" to exclude persons with disabilities. By applying the appreciative socialization group – BACH model only the individual is able to overcome both external negative processes, but more so to move beyond self-exclusion experienced by himself.

The participating member of this group is the one who "takes the power" (by the process of empowerment) and that integrates with his/her own forces, through their success stories, the objectives which they propose to themselves, but especially by the positive results obtain by them. In this way their objectives are becoming higher and more desirable (Ponea, 2010b).

The appreciative socialization group – BACH model followed the steps of 4D model promoted in the specialty literature specific to appreciative methods, to which two crucial stages were added in the application of the activity „Coffee Morning”.

Next we want to detail the precursors steps occurred in the appreciative socialization group:



Step 1: Identifying the needs

This stage took place over a long period because the idea of the „Coffee Morning” activity came after many hours of voluntary at the Support and Counseling Office for Disabled Persons/ Biroului de Asistență și Consiliere pentru persoane cu Handicap Iasi, together with specialists and other volunteers. I mention that the office enjoys the presence of many active volunteers, both disabled persons and students.

The methods to identify the target group's needs are:

- Structured Interview
- Conversation
- Brainstorming
- Questionnaire
- Participatory observation

Documentation sources:

- Reports
- Files of the persons with disabilities
- Statistics
- Experts in the domain
- Disability persons
- Volunteers of the office

Teachers: Social Work Specialization

The sources mentioned above represent the combination between human resources with library resources to obtain the best results. The organization group wanted to ensure that all necessary data is available to identify fair and realistic the needs of the target group.

Step2: Planning and Organization

The stage of planning and organizing of the activity „Coffee Morning” was done in about a month. An important role at this stage was the analysis of data obtained in the previous stage. Deployment details were designed according to the identified needs. Some of these were:

- Social Integration
- Increase self-esteem
- Widening group of friends
- Spending spare time in an educational way

- Develop recreational and educational activities
- Active involvement in other activities conducted within the Support and Counseling Office for Disabled Persons/ Biroului de Asistență și Consiliere pentru persoane cu Handicap

Also at this stage there have been proposed long-term goals and objectives of the activity.

Step 3: Discovery

The step Discovery is the stage of identifying the positive stories and spread them in the organization (the group). The starting point of investigation is the selection of affirmative / positive themes; assuming that the organization (group) evolves in the direction it is studying, choosing the research topics is significant and strategic; themes are established in affirmative terms and must be linked on the area where the organization wants to grow and therefore where they can be amplified. (Cojocaru, 2006: 52). In the first meeting of the "Coffee morning" activity we took into consideration the following:

- Re-identifying the needs of the participating members and re-checking the analysis carried out in first step
- Establishing the common purpose
- Establishing common goals
- Identifying "success stories" of members participating in the activity
- Establishing partnerships between professionals, volunteers and people with disabilities

The latter mentioned aspect, the partnership, places the participating member - person with a disability - on equal level with the organizers / experts. In this way he has control, he decides which direction activities will go further, to what extent will be influenced, what and how he will achieve through activities, personal goals and objectives, but also the common objectives set in the group.

Step 4: Dream

The Dream step is the stage where people describe their wishes and dreams about work, their motivations, their work and organization relationships (Cojocaru, 2005: 52). This stage takes place in a group meeting during which the data and stories collected during the first stage is shared with others. Van der Haar emphasizes the importance of alternative thinking to overcome the limits "out of box" by creating appreciative visions of the future based on history of this organization and on present (Haar, 2002, Sandu, 2009:71) Van der Haar subliniază importanța gândirii alternative a depășirii limitelor "ieșire din cutie"

prin crearea unor viziuni apreciative asupra viitorului pe baza istoricului organizației și a prezentului (Haar, 2002, Sandu, 2009:71)

Group members describe their desires and dreams related to personal goals of their future in terms of social integration. Each of them "tells" their "success story", but also how to evolve towards a new target.

Step 5: Design

Design step uses data collected from the first two steps: once the system has a coherent picture of what would become, it needs a new social architecture. [..] It is a process of reinvention of the organization" (Cojocaru, 2005: 53).

As main activities for this stage are:

- The design of objectives and purpose of each member.
- Each of the participants exposes his/ her point of view.
- Reinventing "reality"

Step 6: Destiny

"Destiny step is the phase of implementing the support, maintainance, adjustment and development plans of what was projected. This later stage is also called Delivery. Is a phase of network and facilitated structure creation of links designed to develop co-creator potential" (Carter 2007:57).

This is the stage where all previously pre-defined actions are applied. During this step, it starts the shaping of new success stories, the precursor to the next appreciative process.

4D model (including the extended form proposed in this paper) gives everyone the opportunity to apply a continuous cycle of appreciation, the assertion of positivity. Each goal reached is a new story of success, afterwards other standards to achieve, other goals and other purposes are formed. Each success story is another step climbed to a level (in this case) of social integration, "total" and "permanent".

Conclusions

The activity "Coffee morning" - appreciative socialization group was implemented in the Bureau of Assistance and Advice for People with Disabilities, from Caritas Centre, Iasi, Romania. The proposed model was implemented on a group composed from beneficiaries of the service - people with locomotor disabilities - and also volunteers and staff of the service. The group has as its main objectives the growth of the social network and of participants, promoting partnership and equality, raising self-esteem, active involvement in their development, and also generating a series of action of "active integration".

References:

- Marshall, G. (editor) (2003) *Dicționar de Sociologie, Oxford*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, București
- Carter, B. (2007) One Expertise Among Many Working Appreciatively To Make Miracles Instead Of Finding Problems, in *Journal Of Research In Nursing*, Sage Publication London
- Cojocaru, St.. (2005) *Metode apreciative in asistenta sociala. Anchetă, supervizarea și managementul de caz*, Editura Polirom, Iași
- Corey, G., Corey, M. (1977) *Groups. Process and Practice*, Brooks, Cole Publishing Company, Monterey, California, SUA
- Cooperider, D., Whitney, D. (2005) *A Positive Revolution in Change*, Berrette Koehler Publishers, Inc, SUA
- (2007) *Dorland's Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers*, Saunders, Editura Elsevier
- Gal, D., (2007) *Metode de grup în asistență socială*, Suport de curs, Facultatea de Sociologie și Asistență Socială, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj Napoca
- Irimescu, G. (2009) *Grupul în practica asistenței sociale*, suport de curs pentru disciplina Grupul în practica asistenței sociale, master „Supervizare și planificare socială” An 1, Semestru 2, facultatea de Filosofie, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza” Iași
- Kurtz Farris, L. (1997) *Self – Help and Support Groups. A handbook for Practioners*, Sage Publications Ltd, SUA
- (2009) *Mosby's Medical Dictionary*, Ediția a 8-a, Elsevier.
- Gallagher, R. (2001) T-gropus, http://www.orgdct.com/more_on_t-groups.htm
- Madrid, F., V. (2008) La intervencion apreciativa: una nueva manera de descubrir, crear, compartir, e implementar conocimiento para el cambio en instituciones gubernamentales o privadas, in *Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala*, Nr. 20, Editura Lumen, Iasi.
- Ponea, S (2009) *O lume diferita, o lume la fel. Integrarea sociala a persoanelor cu dizabilitati locomotorii*, Editura Lumen, Iasi.
- Ponea, S. (2010a) Integrarea socială a persoanelor cu dizabilități din perspectiva metodelor apreciative. Grupul de socializare apreciativă - Modelul BACH (Social integration of people with disabilities from the perspective of appreciative methods. Appreciative socialization Group - BACH Model) (Romanian Version), in Antonio Sandu (coord) (2010) *Seminarii Apreciative/ Appreciative Seminars (Romanian Version)*, Editura Lumen, Iasi.
- Ponea, S. (2010b) The Implementation of Appreciative Management in the Recruiting Process and the Integration of the New Employees, in *Postmodern Openings*, No. 3 / September, Editura Lumen, Iasi.

- Ponea, S. (2010c) Appreciative Management – A Management based on Excellence (Managementul Apreciativ – Un management de excelență) (Romanian Version), in *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensională*, Vol. 3 / April, Editura Lumen, Iasi.
- Ponea, S., Sandu, A (2010) Appreciative Socialization Group. A Collaborative Creativity Model, in Volume edited with the occasion of the Conference of Inventions, “**The XIV-th International Conference of Inventics**” organized by the National Institute of Science Inventions in partnership with the Technical University “Gh Asachi” Iasi and Human Academy Committee for Inventions, international participation from France, Belgium, Austria, Moldavia, Croatia, Serbia, Poland, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Russia, Ukraina, in *Inventica 2010 The XIV-th International Conference of Inventics*, (9-11 June, 2010), Performantica Publishing House, Iasi.
- Sandu, A. (2009) *Tehnici afirmative-apreciative în dezvoltarea organizațională. O sociopedagogie a succesului*, Editura Lumen, Iași
- Schifirneț, C. (2002) *Sociologie*, Editura Comunicare.ro, București
- (2006). *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company
- www.orgdct.com