Table 2. Distribution of Substantive Issues

Topic	No. of Articles
Personal Aspects of Male Role (competition, emotional tightness)	23
Socialization	17
Family/Intimate Lifestyles	16
Men's Liberation	13
Work	12
Heterosexual Sexuality	11
Homosexuality/Homophobia	9
Minority Men	6
Violence	6
Patriarchy	4
Male/Male Friendships	3
Mid-Life Decline	2
Personal Relationships With Women	2

REVIEW ESSAY

Grounded-Encounter Therapy: A Sociodiagnostic

and Sociotherapeutic Approach

L. Alex Swan

Texas Southern University

Grounded-Encounter Therapy (GET) is a sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic approach for clinicians applying sociological knowledge to problems that are lodged in a social context. It is a process of Encounter, interpretation, and situation/context analysis which allows for the discovery of essential facts and explanations that are Grounded in the social context of the clients. GET further provides a framework for the development of approaches for situational change and client growth.

GET is a dynamic approach that provides a creative interplay between research, theory, education, and practice that produces knowledge and Grounded explanations for the purpose of application by the sociotherapist, and/or the clients to problems that are social in nature. Encounter establishes the methodological basis of the approach, and Grounding establishes the theoretical and application or intervention basis.

GET improves clients understanding of their problems, and allows for development of a plan of action for enhancement and change of client perceptions, and increased personal control of situations and relationships. GET also assists individuals by establishing a process for examining, determining and

interpreting their behavior and situation to enhance their ability to make appropriate decisions and take progressive action to minimize future problems.

The sociotherapist must have the ability to engage the clients in encounter, interpretation and situation/context analysis to produce essential data that reveal presenting and real problems. Getting the clients involved and maintaining the process is a most significant and challenging task.

Changes in views and perceptions occur during the sociodiagnostic process through the Encounter. Change in behavior and in the situation of the clients occurs during the sociotherapeutic process with the implementation of strategies for change that emerge during the encounter, interpretation and situation/context analysis, or during the sociodiagnostic process.

Introduction

There are only a few sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic techniques and approaches available to Clinical Sociologists and Sociotherapists for the discovery and application of sociological knowledge. In The Practice of Clinical Sociology and Sociotherapy (1984), an extensive discussion is provided of Grounded-Encounter Therapy (GET). This sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic approach is developed for clinicians functioning both at the micro and macro levels. However, GET is especially developed for Clinical and Counseling Sociologists, Social and Clinical Criminologists and Sociotherapists who apply sociological and criminological knowledge, understanding and methods to problems lodged in a social context.

The social context is all of the human systems that are related to the presenting and real problems, plus the nature and character of the particular social milieu that is dominating the interpersonal and interactional patterns of their relationships. The milieu of the social context is the particular setting that has been created by the coming together of human systems and the

experiences or ways in which the human systems have tried to fit their actions and lives together. The human systems are the individuals who make up the social setting or situation and create the system's milieu. Together they make up or constitute the social context which must be understood through social diagnosis if therapy is to be effective.

What is Grounded-Encounter Therapy (GET)?

A brief discussion of GET will be followed by a presentation of its process and theoretical orientation, its basic characteristics, and the basis for change and goals of GET.

GET is a dynamic approach that provides a creative interplay between research, theory, education and practice. The sociotherapist brings to the process insights, understandings, and knowledge about group life, human social behavior, and a variety of techniques and strategies for grounding the content of the social context discovered through encounter with the clients or human systems, through interpretation and situation analysis (see the section Key Concepts for an explanation of grounding). The clients are equally involved in this process with their presentation of essential facts, interpretations and meanings.

GET is an approach that is based upon the findings of the empirical process of social diagnosis. Grounding the social diagnosis is the way of collecting relevant data to arrive at explanations suited to the social context, its human systems and its particular milieu. As the clients and the sociotherapist encounter the social situation and each other, the problems emerge along with the explanations and possible directions for resolution.

GET is a technique and process that focuses primarily on the social situation of the clients out of which the problems and difficulties are generated, and the interpretations and meanings of the individuals implicated therein. It grounds the therapy in social diagnosis and explanations of the social situation through encounter between and among the individuals, and between the individuals and the social milieu of the human systems. A process and content is established in collecting the essential facts about the social situation

and the problems involved. The course of action to take, relative to the social situation and difficulties, also emerges in the process.

Any technique or approach that engages the persons involved in social interaction for discovery and understanding of essential facts concerning the presenting and real problems, the social settings/context and strategies for change is a sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic technique or approach. GET is such an approach.

The Process and Orientation of Grounding and Encounter

Grounding, as a scientific and practical process, requires: (1) confronting the social context of the clients, designating the social situation and the milieu of the context, encountering the clients with the situation, with each other and with the sociotherapist; (2) interpreting and analyzing the situation, verifying the apparent and real problems and difficulties; and (3) connecting the emerging explanations and meanings with the situation of the clients, and devising strategies for therapy. This is the process for grounding the theory and the therapy.

After deciding to see clients, the sociotherapist should talk with each individual separately before starting the collective session. Participants should be told how the sessions will be conducted and how they are to be involved. After the approach is explained, they should be invited to provide feedback. If they are comfortable with the approach, the sociotherapist should start and maintain the encounter process. Encounter is a technique using social interaction to engage the parties in a process of discovery about the social context out of which problems emerge. As used in GET, the term "encounter" reflects more of its Spanish origin which means the meeting or finding of two people rather than the abrasive or conflictual connotation of its English usage.

Often the encounter process is a learning experience for clients who attempt to become involved in discovery of themselves, others and their social situation. In many cases they experience a degree of impatience with the process, and the sociotherapist may be tempted to

hurry them through not allowing them to make the discoveries.

If through the process of encounter, interpretation and situation or context analysis the presenting and real problems are not identified by the clients or human systems, the sociodiagnostic process has not been effective. In an effective sociodiagnostic process, the human systems become aware of the presenting and real problems as they emerge. The sociotherapist does not have to identify or point them out except to confirm what has emerged and in some cases where clients are reluctant to do so, or where they need to be encouraged to confirm what is discovered. It is only when this process is adequately executed, that the sociotherapist has engaged the clients in the sociotherapeutic process. It is not scientific or practical to make application of sociological knowledge to problems that are not clearly identified and have not emerged in the process of encounter, interpretation and context analysis.

During the process of encounter where clients interact on a face-to-face basis, they speak directly to each other. The sociotherapist starts the process and intervenes when there is a point to emphasize, when the process breaks down for a moment, when something emerges that seems important and collective agreement is sought, and at various points in the process to allow for interpretation, analysis and the assigning of meanings. The intervention takes the form of questions to either or all clients and comments for response by the individuals involved.

Clients often report what problems and difficulties they think they are experiencing. In many cases, they are partly correct. However, in GET, the sociotherapist seeks to locate the social situation of the clients which is the context of the problems and difficulties they are experiencing. The task of the sociotherapist is to engage the clients in both the discovery of the nature of the apparent and real problems, and to help bring about approaches for resolution. The ability to engage clients in this process is crucial to the success experienced. This approach is sociodiagnostic because it engages the persons involved in social interaction for discovery and understanding of the essential facts concerning the social setting/context, and the apparent and real problems

therein. It is sociotherapeutic in that strategies for change in views and in the situation of the clients results.

GET recognizes that every problem has its own context, which is regarded as the primary context for social diagnosis and treatment. There are also secondary contexts which are important in the sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic processes. Care must be exercised in keeping the problem in its own context and managing its multiple realities. To assist in this process, questions must be raised by the sociotherapist in relation to the alarm resulting from the problem, the indication and designation made about the problem, and the concern expressed about what is considered the problem. Questions raised should include: In what way is it (what is indicated or designated) a problem? How does it manifest itself as a problem now? Who are the actors in the situation out of which the problem emerged? What is being done that attempts change but does not achieve change? These questions, and others, can provide the basic data to facilitate the sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic processes.

Resistance by clients is usually a way of managing until joint-action is established. When the clients are invited to provide an understanding of their problem and situation through definition and interpretation, they develop a sense of involvement in the process of discovery. What to do will emerge from the discovery which involves everyone implicated in the social context of the problem. To the degree that clients see and sense themselves as part of the process of discovery and change, they will either assist or resist the process.

Social diagnosis is the process of discovery. Through this process the sociotherapist and the clients discover the essential facts and the reported difficulties and problems will emerge along with others. The total picture must come forth through encounter, interpretation and context analysis. This posture is based upon the usable knowledge for social problem solving that results from both traditional professional social inquiry and common sense, or ordinary knowledge. The explanations of the problems must come from the data discovered during the social diagnostic process. The explanations will suggest or indicate strategies for

change and resolution. Therapy, therefore, is based on the explanations (theories) which are grounded in the data produced through social diagnosis.

The sociotherapist must have the ability to engage the parties in encounter, interpretation and context analysis that produce data which reveal presenting and real problems. Getting the parties intimately involved in this process is a most significant and challenging task, and the sociotherapist must be careful in starting and maintaining the process. Once all parties are involved, there is little need to point out or identify the problems and difficulties. If the process is well established, the clients are able to identify and see the problems as they emerge. Tasks in GET allow the sociotherapist to see where and why there are blockages, and they provide for the shift of responsibility for change, growth and progress from the sociotherapist to the client.

There are various blocks to the determination and resolution of human social-behavioral problems. However, most problems within the human systems and the milieu of the social context of the human systems are available to our understanding and knowledge if we devote enough attention to study, research and experimentation with the social reality of the context of the clients. In GET, this task is accomplished through social diagnosis which is the process of knowing and understanding. Therapy is the process furthering and applying the knowledge and understanding achieved through the process of social diagnosis. In this sense, the two processes are interrelated and interdependent. A sense of self, others, and the situation is crucial to the sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic processes of GET.

Solutions to persisting problems are rarely presented directly in GET. They are discovered by the clients as they encounter and answer questions put to them by each other and the sociotherapist. In the process, all parties are forced to think about themselves, others, and their social situation in ways they might not have considered before. By answering questions (actual and hypothetical) about themselves, others and the social situation, the clients unwittingly begin to see things in new ways. Otherwise, clients tend to become rigid and resistant when designations and prescriptions are imposed on them.

Social scientist and clinicians have tended to overestimate the importance of scientific knowledge almost to the exclusion and/or underestimation of ordinary knowledge which has its origin in common sense, casual empiricism, systematic analysis, thoughtful reflection, and creative observation. Because of this, there are serious gaps between social science theory, research, and social realities. GET seeks to narrow the gaps between theoretical analysis and its practical application for the purpose of effective social problem solving.

All knowledge that is to be applied in clinical settings must be obtained through the combination of scientific methods and common sense ways of knowing. In other words, common sense, or "ordinary knowledge" and "scientific knowledge" must be combined to be applied in clinical matters of a social nature. This is the reason that in the social diagnosis of GET the interpretations, meanings and perceptions of those implicated in the social situation out of which the problems emerged are taken into account. Therapy must be grounded in the reality of the social context of the clients, and discovered by the sociotherapist and clients through the scientific process of social diagnosis, facilitated by the techniques of encounter, interpretation, and context analysis. Everyone and everything implicated in the social situation must be taken into account as understandings, explanations, and strategies for change are discovered. This is the essence of GET. Knowing the social context of the individuals, marriage, family, group, organization, industry, community, and society, allows for the emergence of the problems, explanations, and strategies for therapy. This is the essence of the grounding process. This knowing is facilitated by the process of encounter. No problem can be properly understood and treated until its context is discovered and understood. In other words, the context of the problem must be determined and understood before the real problems can be understood and treated. The information collected through the encounter process should answer all questions related to the presenting and real problems of the clients. The context creates its own reality and does not permit any problem to be legitimately raised other than those that it can answer. All other questions are contextually irrelevant.

Goals and Basis for Change in GET

The real goal of GET is to try to get the clients to develop grounded knowledge of their problems, and actually be responsible for making changes. Clients must be patient enough to go through six to ten sessions for the process to work effectively. However, at the very outset most clients want to see and experience progress.

GET is a sociolgocially (theoretically and methodologically) consistent way to diagnose and treat various problems grounded in a social context. Clients should meet with the sociotherapist four times per month and perform assigned tasks outside of meetings. The assumption is that clients are stuck and need the assistance of the sociotherapist to get unstuck. The encounter allows clients to gather, organize and analyze information, and develop the skills basic to formal decision making. It also allows them the opportunity to develop the ability to work together throughout the demanding and often frustrating process of trying to find ways to get unstuck in their interactions, relationships, perceptions, and social situation.

Change in views and perceptions occur during the sociodiagnostic process through the encounter with the clients, the sociotherapist, and the social situation. Change in behavior and in the situation of the clients occurs during the sociotherapeutic process with the implementation of the strategies for change that emerge during the encounter and situation analysis, or during the sociodiagnostic process. Basic to all changes (individual and situational) is the exercise of the client's choice. Choice is a decision or selection of action for which one should accept responsibility. However, a choice is not made in isolation. A choice is made within the context of a set of values, norms, experiences, circumstances, conclusions and dispositions the individual has acquired and assumed. Even though the individual has to be responsible for the choice made, in order to help the individual, one has to determine the nature of the choice and the setting and conditions within which the choice is made and grounded.

Human beings are not determined by their past. We are more than Pavlovian dogs who have been conditioned to respond or behave to particular stimuli in a particular

manner. Further, we are not simply products of our environments and conditioning. The past does not determine what we are, rather, the future holds the clues to who we are and what we are in the present. Where we are, and where we are going is the most important dimension of the human self and personality. We are heavily dependent upon what we choose to become. Instead of being confused, distraught, and emotionally unbalanced, many persons demonstrate dynamic personalities and wholeness of selves. When humans make decisions to commit themselves to becoming a new person, they move toward fulfilling lives.

Human beings have the ability to choose, to make decisions that have the potential to transform their situation and themselves. Through their decisions they are empowered to become whole persons. The past may influence who we are, but it does not determine who we are. It is true that the past influences the options from which we can choose our destiny, and our background and personal history limit what we become. However, no matter what our backgrounds happen to be, we have options. There are always alternatives from which we can choose. Ultimately, we are deciding beings with the freedom to will our futures.

Human beings are able to develop a construction of reality by giving meanings to people and things. When individuals assign a meaning to something and act in accordance with that meaning, they are likely to behave in predictable ways. We interact with others on the basis of the meaning we attach to them. Individuals usually treat the meanings they give to people and things as objective facts. This process is referred to as reification (for example, our country is the best in the world, or work is honorable). We attribute a meaning to something and act in accordance with the meaning and treat it as if it actually were the fact. Social meanings are not objective facts. An understanding of how individuals learn meanings and how they shape behavior can facilitate change in meanings, redefinition of situations, and can assist sociotherapists in helping clients act in ways that are liberating (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Blumer, 1969).

The sociotherapist helps clients to understand themselves and their situations, and to see their options clearly. S/he also helps them become aware of their capability for making the decisions that will transform their despair into hope, sadness into joy, and confusion into peace.

Basic Characteristic of GET

Implicit in this presentation are the basic characteristics of GET. This approach has what all effective sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic techniques must have: a basic theoretical perspective; a basic philosophy; key concepts; goals and objectives; specific techniques; applicability; and an established relationship between clients and sociotherapist.

Theoretical Perspective and Basic Philosophy

Human group life consists of people interacting with one another. Because they live within a group, people must necessarily fit their actions to the actions of others. It is the very nature of group life that the members are embedded in a social situation (context) created by the actions of others. Meanings are socially created and individuals respond or react to situations in individual ways based upon their own interpretations of reality.

The basic philosophy of GET is that real change in behavior and the situation is a result of voluntary action. The assumption in this sociotherapeutic posture is that the individuals or clients are entangled in a situation or behavior that is undesirable, not well understood, and/or undetermined. Once determined and understood, ways to change the behavior and/or situation (context) will be sought and change made either voluntarily (individually) and/or with assistance (collectively). Social diagnosis and therapy are grounded in the discovery, designation, and interpretations of the social context of the clients.

What the individual and/or situation was is in the present. Nothing is meaningful, well understood, or changed without a context. Each problem has its own context in time and space. The context in the past is not the context of the problem in the present. The focus is on methodological principles for discovering essential

facts about the content of the present presenting and real problems. The information and explanations that emerge through encounter for grounding the facts discovered results in effective sociotherapeutic actions.

Goals of GET

The goals of GET are to assist clients in gaining a grounded understanding of the problems and deciding on a plan of action for growth, enrichment, and change of their situation and relationship. A specific goal is to assist individuals in development by establishing a process for examining, determining and interpreting their behavior and situation that would enhance their ability to make appropriate decisions and take progressive actions.

The Sociotherapeutic Relationship

The context of the setting is the basis for fully understanding the problems and difficulties faced by individuals in group life. Therapy and/or treatment, therefore, must be grounded in the reality of the social context of the clients, and discovered by the sociotherapist and the clients through the scientific process of social diagnosis as facilitated by the techniques of encounter and interpretation. The clients and the therapist encounter the social situation and each other, and the problems emerge along with explanations and solutions. Consequently, the perceptions and interpretations of everyone and of everything that are implicated in the reality of the context are taken into account as explanations are sought and action devised. The sociotherapist functions as a facilitator, for implementing contractual agreements and behavioral procedures. When the contracts are completed and the behavioral procedures implemented, therapy is terminated. When an understanding is achieved and explanations are discovered about a problem and/or a situation, social diagnosis ends.

Therapeutic Technique

A wide range of techniques are designed to help the therapist and clients determine, discover and plan. Social diagnosis is essential in assessing the nature, context and character of the problem or difficulty. Clients and the therapist participate equally and actively in the social diagnosis and interpretations as data emerge through confrontation, encounter, dialogue with polarities, role playing, or role taking. Other techniques include sociodrama, simulation, context/situation analysis and the use of sociograms.

Application and Contribution

GET, as a sociodiagnostic and sociotherapeutic approach, has wide applicability. It can apply to individuals, groups, institutions, organizations, and various situations and interpersonal relationships. This approach provides for the encounter of theory and empirical research for the purpose of sociotherapeutic application. The process allows for the discovery of relevant and useful theory and for the grounding of theory and therapy in social research, or for generating the theory and the kind of therapy from the data collected in the scientific process of the social diagnosis.

Conclusion

In GET, explanations of the presenting and real problems are derived from what is discovered through encounter, situation analysis and interpretation of the human systems and the particular milieu of the social context. The sociotherapist and the clients encounter this context to make discovery. The change is to be made by the human systems and in the milieu are based upon the explanations or the conclusions drawn from what is discovered. Grounding the theory (explanations) and therapy (treatment) takes place when this methodological approach is employed.

Once the presenting and real problems are discovered, interpretations and explanations are exchanged and synthesis of perspectives is attempted. A

setting of objectives for efforts to change and a sociotherapeutic contract or agreement is negotiated. Engineering these efforts and handling resistance sometimes requires making modifications in treatment, switching of assignments, or changing the tasks. Changes are monitored and impact is assessed before transfer of control and responsibility is made. Follow-up and termination end the social intervention. The task of the sociotherapist is to always engage the clients in both the discovery of the presenting and real problems and in their solutions or approaches for resolution.

There are seven (7) basic characteristics of GET, and there are seven (7) steps in the process of grounding. These steps are presented in the following diagram, and step seven is understood here to be completion and perfection.

Key Concepts

Clinical Sociology is sociological intervention; the application of a sociological perspective to the discovery, analysis, and design of intervention for change at any level of social organization.

Sociotherapy is treatment through and understanding applications of sociological knowledge and techniques to problems lodged primarily in social context (the human systems and their particular milieu). The application of sociological principles to the treatment of socio-behavioral problems.

Sociotherapist is one who seeks to understand and treat problems grounded primarily in social context by applying sociological knowledge and techniques.

Grounding is a scientific process of social diagnosis for collecting data, establishing explanations (theory), and determining treatment.

Encounter is a technique that engages the parties in a process of discovery and revelation through social interaction about the social context (the human systems and the particular milieu) out of which problems emerge. As used in GET, Encounter reflects more of its Spanish origin which means the meeting or finding of two people rather than the abrasive connotation of its English usage.

Social Diagnosis is the process of collecting essential facts (discovery) for understanding and knowing.

THE PROCESS OF GROUNDING

Confronting the Social
Context (the human
systems and the Social
Milieu).

Designating the Social
Situation and the
Milieu of the Context.

2.

1.

Encountering the Clients
with each other
with Sociotherapist
with situation.

3.

7.

Devising strategies,
mechanisms and plans
for therapy and change.

4.

6.

Interpreting and
analyzing the situation in
relation to the emerging
information (data).

Connecting the emerging
explanations and
meanings with the
situation of the clients.

5.

Verifying and explaining
the apparent and real
problems and difficulties.

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