

HOW SOCIAL GROUP WORKER HELP CHANGE UNACCEPTABLE VALUES

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ABSTRACT

Whether or not we wish it or are aware of its implications, unacceptable values are deviant behaviours and these activities affect the social attitudes of people ways which are vital both to themselves and to society. This paper is an attempt to point out a few of the ways in which social group workers may contribute to social change in essential and significant respects of unacceptable behaviours. The paper is descriptive and uses secondary data and information from sociological construction of realities, thus, theory and practice will depend upon whether we, as group-workers, adopt educational objectives which recognize meeting social needs as well as individual growth and institutional advancement. For the fulfilling of such objectives the group-worker will require not only a set of techniques-valuable as these are not only a skill in program making or in organization, but, the courage to turn his philosophy into action. Only so can a group worker engage with client to change behavioural defects, what is perhaps more important, an adequate citizen of a new age.

Keywords: Norms, Social Values, Deviance, Group work, Sanctions.

INTRODUCTION

Social group workers enable various types of groups to function in such a way that both group interaction and programme activities contribute to the growth of the individual, and the achievement of the desirable social goal. All types of social workers; caseworkers, group workers and community workers, have been making the world better for over 100 years. Since the middle age of the industrial revolution, social workers have become a vital part of society, helping people overcome some of life's most difficult challenges. Iwarimie-Jaja (2011) defines Social work as the process of helping individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities who suffer from an anomaly or social problem resulting from unmet need. From the above definition unacceptable values entails unmet needs and (or) social problems facing the society which the social worker will have to professional give out helps. The objectives of the group worker include provision for personal growth according to individual capacity and need; the adjustment of the individual to other persons, to groups and to society, the motivation of the individual toward the improvement of society and; the recognition by the

individual of his own rights, abilities and differences of others (Douglas, 1976). Through his participation the group worker aims to effect the group process so that decisions come about as a result of knowledge and a sharing and integration of ideas, experiences and knowledge, rather than as a result of domination horn within or without the group. Social Work Intervention with Individuals and Groups through experience he/she aims to produce those relationships with other groups and the wider community which contributes to responsible citizenship, mutual understanding between cultural, religious, economic or special groupings in the community, and a participation in the constant improvement of our society towards democratic goals. According to The American Association of Group Workers (1949), the guiding purpose behind such leadership rests upon the common assumptions of a democratic society; namely, the opportunity for each individual to fulfil his capacities in freedom, to respect and appreciate others and to assume his social responsibility in maintaining and constantly improving our democratic societies. Underlying the practice of group work is the knowledge of individual and group behaviour and of social conditions and community relations which is based on the modern social sciences.

On the basis of this knowledge the group worker contributes to the group with which he works with a skill in leadership which enables the members to use their capacities to the full and to create socially constructive group activities. He is aware of both programme activities and of the interplay of personalities, within the group and between the group and its surrounding community. According to the interests and needs of each, he assists them to get from the group experience, the satisfaction provided by the programme activities, the enjoyment and personal growth available through the social relations, and the opportunity to participate as a responsible citizen. The group worker makes conscious use of his relations to the group, his knowledge of programme as a tool and his understanding of the individual and of the group process and recognizes his responsibility both to individuals and groups with whom he works and the larger social values he represents (Treeker, 1995).

SOCIAL WORK WITH GROUPS VALUE

Social group work is a method of social work that helps persons to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experiences and to cope more effectively with their personal, group or community problems (Murphy, 1959). Thus, it values are the primary modality of social work in bringing about positive change, it is defined as an educational process emphasizing the development and social adjustment of an individual through voluntary association and use of this association as a means of furthering socially desirable end. It is a psycho social process which is concerned in developing leadership and cooperation with building on the interests of the group for a social purpose. Social group work is a method through which individuals in groups in social agency setting are helped by a worker who guides their interaction through group activities so that they may relate to others and experience growth opportunities in accordance with their needs and capacities to the individual, group and community development. It aims at the development of persons through the interplay of personalities in group situation and at the creation of such group situation as provide for integrated, cooperative group action for common ends. It is also a process and a method through which group life is affected by w⁷orker who consciously directs the interacting process tow⁷ards

the accomplishment of goals which are conceived in a democratic frame of reference. Its distinct characteristics lies in the fact that group work is used with group experience as a means of individual growth and development, and that the group w⁷orker is concerned in developing social responsibility⁷ and active citizenship for the improvement of democratic society. Group work is a way to serving individual within and through small face to face group in order to bring about the desired change among the client participants.

WHAT DO SOCIAL WORKERS DO?

Social workers focus on helping individuals overcome difficult situations in their lives. The vast majority of those in social work practice work with individuals or small, family groups, helping people learn how to move past problems, both by strengthening themselves and by taking advantage of social services provided through government entities and non-profits. In many ways, social workers are part counsellor and part aid facilitator. Many social workers are also advocates, pushing governments to change harmful laws, supporting government assistance programs, and starting new non-profits and/or non-profit initiatives aimed at helping people through difficult times.

Group social work careers include the medical social worker, clinical social worker, school social worker, family social worker, military⁷ social worker, and government services social worker. However, those broad categories of social work encompass a wide variety of unacceptable values related to areas of practice. Social work practice can focus on:

1. Rural Social Work
2. Mental Health Therapy
3. Adoption and Foster Care
4. Child Welfare Services
5. Family Preservation Services
6. Homeless Family Assistance
7. Eating Disorders
8. Addiction Prevention/Treatment
9. Hospital Social Work
10. Crisis Intervention
11. School Violence
12. Hospice and Palliative Care
13. Depression
14. Institutional Care
15. Chronic Pain

16. Outpatient Treatment
17. Development Disabilities
18. International Social Work
19. Community Mental Health
20. Employee Assistance
21. Private Practice
22. Veterans Services
23. Child Abuse and Neglect
24. Domestic Violence
25. Political Development
26. Parent Education
27. Family Planning
28. HIV/AIDS
29. School Alternative Programs
30. Difficulties in School
31. Gerontology Services
32. Community-Based Services
33. In-Home Services
34. Criminal justice
35. Senile Dementia and Alzheimer's
36. Public Welfare
37. Military Social Welfare services
38. Employment Services
39. Advocacy, Consulting, and Planning
40. Housing Assistance

Ways in Which Social Group Workers Can Change our Unacceptable Values in Society⁷

1. **Civil Rights:** Social workers were on the forefront of the 1960s civil rights movement and have played active roles in securing rights for all people, regardless of race, gender, faith, or sexual orientation. Social workers understand that discrimination can dramatically impact a person or a family's ability to thrive and that ending discrimination is an important step in ensuring all people have access to needed services and opportunities (Grace, 2013).
2. **Workers' Rights:** Social workers see first-hand the way employment—or the lack thereof—can create debilitating stress and other problems in people's lives. To help mitigate the worst of these problems, social workers have been key players in reforming labour laws and implementing programs designed to help people overcome losing a job. Some of the programs social workers

have helped establish include unemployment insurance, disability pay, worker's compensation, and Social Security.

3. **Mental Illness:** Suffering from a mental illness used to land many people in asylums, where they rarely received humane treatment. Social workers have worked to change not only how we treat the mentally ill but how we perceive mental illness, fighting for the reform of our mental healthcare system and fighting for a larger de-stigmatization of mental illness. The efforts of social workers have made mental health services far more humane and have ensured those services are focused on helping the mentally ill live productive lives.
4. **Poverty:** while the world may never fully end poverty, social workers have been a driving force behind the development of programs designed to limit poverty's most destructive effects. Social workers were instrumental in the development and implementation of programs in the New Deal and Great Society, including the introduction of Medicaid and Medicare, which expand access to healthcare and help ensure the costs of health treatments don't derail a person's ability to thrive.
5. **Child Abuse and Neglect:** social workers play a vital role in every state's child protective services system. Because of this, they are on the forefront of addressing issues of child abuse and neglect and have played an important role in the development and implementation of laws and procedures designed to protect children.
6. **Substance Abuse:** Before social workers can help people overcome issues such as family conflict, crime, and educational failure, they often have to help people overcome addictions to drugs and alcohol. As such, social workers have been and continue to be strong advocates for treatment programs and public health initiatives aimed at helping people overcome addiction.
7. Fighting for social justice through policy advocacy: policy advocacy is slightly different. It involves working for social

justice via policy change on behalf of vulnerable populations. a social worker may join a coalition or work with community members, or she might be more of an individual activist. All social workers are expected to work toward achieving greater social justice as policy advocates no matter what setting or capacity they work in. social workers may go about their advocacy work by lobbying elected officials, working within their own agencies to make change, or by building coalitions around particular issues in the community. Social workers empower communities to advocate for change and they also do some of the work themselves. Social workers learn how to become policy advocates as students. They learn that they can get involved in a wide variety of advocacy activities including *organizing* meetings, educating the public, writing letters to the editor, creating petitions, or engaging key stakeholders.

8. **Recognizing Social Injustice:** Social workers should fight for greater social justice in several key areas. They should recognize when certain communities are being marginalized or disenfranchised and fight for greater power and influence for these communities. They should always combat racism and oppression, gender inequality, and discrimination wherever they see it. These are vital issues of social justice. Fighting for social justice also involves advocating for a more just economy. Economic injustice may come in the form of low wages, job discrimination, a lack of job training opportunities, or high unemployment in certain communities. Social workers can fight for greater economic social justice by advocating for policies that reduce poverty or increase employment and training opportunities in communities.

MEANING OF SOCIAL VALUES:

In sociology our concern is with social values. Social values are cultural standards that indicate the general good deemed desirable for organised social life. These are assumptions to what is right and important for

society. They provide the ultimate meaning and legitimacy for social arrangements and social behaviour. They are the abstract sentiments or ideals. An example of an important social value is, “equality of opportunity”. The importance of such a value in social life can hardly be exaggerated.

A social value differs from individual value. An individual value is enjoyed or sought by the individual which a man seeks for himself. Even though these values are commonly shared, they do not become social values. As distinct from individual values, a social value contains a concern for others’ welfare. Social values are organised within the personality of the individuals. They regulate his thinking and behaving. The process of socialization aims to include these values in his personality, the ethos or fundamental characteristics of any culture are a reflection of its basic values. Thus if the American culture is dominated by a belief in material progress, the African culture is marked by spiritualism, the forgetting of self, abandonment of personal desire and elimination of the ambition. The “African way” is different from the “American way”.

FACTORS THAT DETERMINE SOCIAL VALUES

The differences in social values result in divergent social structures and patterns of expected behaviour. Thus the following factors should be examined:

NORMS:

Norms are standards of group behaviour. An essential characteristic of group life is that it is possessed of a set of values which regulate the behaviour of individual members. When a number of individuals interact, a set of standards develop that regulate their relationships and modes of behaviour. These standards of group behaviour are called social norms. That brothers and sisters should not have sexual relations; a child should defer to his parents and an uncle should not joke with his nephews and nieces are the illustrations of norms which govern relationships among kinsmen. Norms incorporate

value judgements: Secord and Buckman (2015) say “A norm is a standard of behavioural expectation shared by group members against which the validity of perceptions is judged and the appropriateness of

feeling and behaviour is evaluated. "Members of a group exhibit certain regularities in their behaviour. This behaviour is considered desirable by the group. Such regularities in behaviour have been explained in terms of social norms. Norm, in popular usage, means a standard. In sociology our concern is with social norms, that is, norms accepted in a group. They represent "standardized generalizations" concerning expected modes of behaviour.

Conflict in Norms:

Conformity to norms depends largely upon agreement as to what the norm demands. Without this agreement there would be a wide range of behaviour. As already seen norms are agreed upon standards of behaviour. Without such agreement, norms have a weaker force. Further we have seen that norms differ from society to society and from group to group in the same society. It is obvious that norms do not apply equally to all members of all societies or to all members of a society. They are adjusted to the needs of a society and to the positions people hold in particular social orders or to the occupations they practise, etc. Since there are different norms for different groups, a conflict among them is inevitable.

There are reasons why norms are not followed without deviation:

- i. Some norms are perceived less important than others and so the less important ones are violated when one has to make a choice between two norms. In this case it may be said that strictly speaking there is conflict because the relative importance of the norms is clear.
- ii. Norms may so conflict with each other that an individual must disobey one if he is to conform to the other. A student who sees a friend cheating in an examination must choose between conflicting norms. One norm instructs him to be loyal to his friend while another instructs him to see that honesty is upheld.
- iii. An individual may deviate from a norm because he knows it is weakly enforced. Using college stationery for personal use, letter writing is rarely punished.
- iv. Some norms are not teamed by all persons even in the same society. For example,

there are wide differences in life styles, food habits and etiquette. ,,

DEVIANCE: THE UNACCEPTABLE VALUES

An essential feature of social life is that it is possessed of a set of norms which regulate the behaviour of individual members. All societies provide for certain standards of human behaviour. These standards of behaviour, as we have seen earlier, are called norms. But no society completely succeeds in getting all its members to behave in accordance with the social norms. Some Of them fail to conform to these norms. Failure to conform to the customary norms of society is deviant behaviour or deviance. Thus deviant behaviour is any behaviour that fails to conform to some specified standard. Parsons defines deviance in two ways. Firstly, he defines it as "a motivated tendency for an actor to behave in contravention of one or more institutionalized normative patterns." Secondly, he defines it as the tendency on the part of one or more of the component actors to behave in such a way as to disturb the equilibrium of interactive process." Deviant behaviour disturbs the social equilibrium.

It is contravention of the social norms. It is a departure from the usual modes of behaviour. It consists of disapproved activities. Cheating, unfairness, malingering, delinquency, immorality, dishonesty, betrayal, corruption, wickedness and sin are examples of deviant behaviour. The delinquent, the saint, the ascetic, the hippie, the leader, the miser all have deviated from conventional social norms. Deviation is relative, not absolute. Deviation is relative to the prescriptions and anticipations that govern particular patterns of behaviour at specified times and places. Societies are undergoing continual change. Along with social change the social norms also change. What is considered as intolerable at one time, becomes a norm at another time.

Two strategies have been developed to decide who is deviant. According to the first strategy developed by Robert K. Merton and Taicott Parsons, deviant behaviour is conduct that objectively appears to violate a norm. According to the second strategy developed by Edwin M. Lemert and Howard S. Becker, deviant behaviour is conduct that is perceived by others as contrary to the norms. In the later

conception, less attention is paid to abstract standards, and more attention is paid to the actual social definitions of conduct by members of social groups. A conduct is regarded as deviant because it is harmful and dysfunctional.

The geniuses of all ages have suffered from the hostile attitude of the members of their communities. Socrates, Christ and Galileo suffered, who are now recognized as outstanding intellectuals of their time. It has been said that people are not completely deviant. Thus, the social work profession is to help individuals conform to social norms

Deviant Sub-cultures:

When an individual deviate from the norms of his sub-culture he is an individual deviant. But in a complex society there may be a number of deviant sub-cultures. By deviant sub-culture we mean the norms of deviant persons. It “refers “to a set of shared understandings, values and ways of doing things that are at odds with conventional society, and yet, are accentuated in common by members of a particular community.”

Causes of Deviant Behaviour:

Deviant behaviour may be caused due to inability or failure to conform. The inability to conform may be the result of mental or physical defect. On account of mental defect, the individual has limited capacity to learn. On account of mental illness, a person is unable to perceive and respond to realities in an orderly and rational manner. Hence he becomes a social deviant. The causes of mental illness may be both physical and social. The stresses and strains of modern social life produce mental illness. Culture introduction to sociology conflicts also are responsible for mental illness. But some people fail to conform even though they are physically and mentally capable of learning conventional behaviour.

To explain such cases of deviation some theories have been put forward. These are

1. **Psychoanalytic Theories:** These theories attribute deviant behaviour to the conflicts in human personality. Freud was a leading psychoanalyst. He gave the concepts of id, ego and super ego. Deviant behaviour is the result of conflicts between the id, and the ego, or between the id and the super ego. The psychoanalytic theory is still unproved by empirical research. Sometimes, culture

frustrates biological drives and impulses leading thereby to deviant behaviour. Thus our culture makes no approved provision for the satisfaction of sexual drives of the unmarried, widowed or separated. If one gratifies such impulses in contravention of social taboo, he is engaging in deviant behaviour.

2. **Failures in socialization:** both the above types of theories fail to explain deviant behaviour adequately. Everyone affected with physical or mental illness does not become a deviant. Likewise, every member of a society is frustrated by the clash of his biological drives with the taboos of, his culture, but not everyone becomes a deviant. The social scientists are of the opinion that some persons are deviant because the socialization process has failed in some way to integrate the cultural norms into the individual’s personality. Where the socialization process is successful, the individual internalizes the social norms and he behaves in the expected manner. His lapses are rare. Family, as we have studied earlier, is the most important agent of socialization. Behaviour norms are mainly learnt in the family. Although it is difficult to prove direct relationship between deviant behaviour and family atmosphere, yet a variety of behaviour difficulties have been traced to some disturbance in the parent child relationship.

3. **Cultural Conflicts:** The society is an extremely heterogeneous society. There are many sets of norms and values which compete with one another. The family norms may come into conflict with the norms of trade union. One religion teaches one thing, another teaches a different thing. The school teaches respect and obedience, the party teaches resistance and revolt. The family teaches God- worship; the state teaches secularism. The religious system teaches that one should be generous and self- sacrificing, but our economic system rewards those who are ruthless and selfish. Our formal mores demand chastity until marriage, but our films present too much sex. The young people are exposed to obscene literature. Thus culture conflicts are a unique feature of the modern complex and changing society. They are found virtually in all societies.

And wherever they exist, culture conflicts encourage deviant behaviour. It may be said that a high rate of deviation is the price we pay for a complex, rapidly changing society.

4. **Anomie:** anomie is a condition of normlessness. By normlessness we do not mean that modern societies have no norms; instead it means that they have many sets of norms with none of them clearly binding upon everybody. As we have seen, in the modern society with its elaborate division of labour and complex institutional patterns, the difficulty of coordinating all the parts and of socializing all the humans to mesh their behaviours smoothly is formidable. In the words of Merton, Anomie may be conceived as breakdown in the cultural structure occurring particularly when there is an acute distinction between cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them." According to him, there is in our social structure "a strain towards anomie." The degree of anomie may range from slight contradiction and confusion to serious deterioration and disintegration.

SANCTIONS:

Society, as we have seen earlier, is a harmonious organisation of human relationships. Unless the people live up to the expected norms of behaviour, the social organisation may not be effectively maintained. But people often do not live up to the expected behavioural norms and often violate them. They may take the form of both rewards and punishments. Generally speaking, sanctions are understood to mean punishments or deprivations, but rightly understood sanctions refer to both rewards, gratifications and punishments or deprivations. They are used to persuade or force an individual or group to conform to social expectations.

TYPES OF SANCTIONS SOCIAL WORKERS MAY EMPLOY

Sanctions can be positive or negative. Positive sanctions are essentially pleasant or rewarding such as praise, flattery, promotions, honours, medals etc. Negative sanctions are essentially unpleasant. They inflict pain or threaten to do so. Such sanctions may vary from a mild expression of disapproval to fines and imprisonments or death.

Sanctions can be formal and informal. The informal sanctions are illustrated by customs, the mores and public opinion. The formal sanctions are worked out by a legally constituted authority. Sanctions can be symbolic or take the form of overt force. Symbolic sanctions are praise and flattery, promises, persuasion, propaganda, rewards, satire, commands, censure and threats. The form of overt force includes fines, punishment, imprisonment, torture and death. A brief description of sanctions used by social workers include

(i) Conscience:

Conscience is self-imposed sanction. It is the inner acceptance of certain moral norms as right and necessary, with the feeling of guilt if one violates them or is even tempted to do so. Conscience is an automatic warning signal that is tripped off when one wanders from one's right path. Conscience checks the self from doing things that might bring ridicule or punishment. Though all the moral norms are never internalized as conscience, yet it is sufficient if the majority show respect for such social ideals which are necessary for the preservation of order.

(ii) Symbolic Sanctions:

Symbolic sanctions are in the form of words and gestures. Praise is a reward in words, especially from higher to lower strata. Flattery is undue, exaggerated and somewhat false praise. It appeals directly to the ego. Indoctrination advertising and propaganda condition persons to act along lines which they like or imagine they like. Persuasion is a form of suggestion. Slogans help define situation and direct behaviour along desired lines. Gossip is largely critical in tone. Satire employs wit and scorn as in direct criticism of actions felt to be socially harmful. It exposes by ridicule the danger of behaviour. Laughing at others is one of the oldest sanctions. It isolates its object from his fellows. Name—calling is an old device of control.

(iii) Overt Force:

When the above sanctions fail, the final sanction of force is resorted to. It signifies that if the individual does not do as he is told, pain, suffering and even death may be inflicted on him. This sanction includes fines, imprisonment, whipping, mutilation, torture, banishment and death. It must be borne in mind that overt force is applied by

legitimate, vested authority in the name of a group or the total society⁷.

CONCLUSION

Social work with groups represents a broad domain of direct social work practice (Garvin, Gutierrez & Galinsky, 2004), thus, Social workers work with a variety of groups in all settings in which social work is practiced. Unacceptable values between clients and the social worker must include sanctions to make possible the prediction of behaviour. It need not be emphasized that to ensure an established and peaceful order people should know what to expect from others and what others will do. Through regulation of behaviour it can be anticipated what an individual will do or what his punishment will be if he fails to act. Sanctions also make possible continuity. They form a part of the culture which is passed on from generation to generation. Thus each generation gets a pattern of control which keeps the social order running smoothly. Group work is a form of voluntary association of members benefiting from cooperative learning, that enhances the total output of the activity than when done individually. It aims to cater for individual differences, develop skills (e.g. communication skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking skills), generic knowledge and socially acceptable attitudes or to generate conforming standards of behaviour and judgement. Social workers are expected to be able to identify many different types of unaccepted values. Social workers should have the tools they need to understand power dynamics, which stakeholders need to be engaged, and how to advocate for policies or programs that can reduce social deviance and injustices. Advocating for change should be central to the work of all social workers across settings, including in counselling agencies and offices, schools of social work, human service agencies, public schools, and community organizations and non-profit.

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