THE UNBearable EMBEDDEDNESS OF BEING: SELF PSYCHOLOGY, INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND LARGE GROUP EXPERIENCES

Rosemary A. Segalla

Studying the large group from a self psychological perspective is a new area of exploration. The purpose of this work is to consider an expansion of the selfobject concept to include experiences in group. The groupobject is conceived as a function which addresses the inherent group needs of the individual. Just as the selfobject serves to fill in missing aspects of the self, the groupobject fills in missing aspects of the group self. The development of this concept emerged from an ongoing large group experience. It has its roots in the idea that effective group treatment can result from the recognition and support of groupobject as well as selfobject needs.

KEY WORDS: groups; large groups; self psychology; intersubjectivity; groupobject.

INTRODUCTION

The National Group Psychotherapy Institute, created by the faculty of the group training program of the Washington School of Psychiatry, was designed as a two-year program to teach members about various models of group therapy. The two-year program's primary feature was eight three to four day conferences conducted from a variety of theoretical perspectives such as systems, self psychological, Sullivanian, existential, and object relational. In addition to didactic, demonstration and small group experiences, each weekend included three to four large group events. For each


National Group Psychotherapy Institute, Washington School of Psychiatry, Washington, DC.

Correspondence should be directed to Rosemary A. Segalla, Ph.D., 4501 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 109, Washington, DC 20030.
of these weekend conferences, the membership remains essentially the same with the addition of ten to twelve new members on any one weekend.

The large group was composed of fifty-five to sixty-five people with five consultants and one observer for each group experience. Chairs for the group were arranged to spiral out from a center point, creating a single coiled row in which the five conductors were dispersed. In keeping with the group analytic approach (Foulkes, 1975) the group was run with a minimum of structure and leader instruction. This large group format is similar to the training groups, or "experience centered group" (Foulkes, 1975), so successfully employed by the Tavistock Clinic, the configuration of which provided the faculty and membership a unique opportunity to witness the evolution of a large group culture. Observation of this group's developmental and dynamic processes over the last two years, as a consultant, has provided the stimulus to identify theoretical constructs with explanatory validity. I will briefly describe the evolution of this large group experience in order to provide a context for the constructs this paper outlines.

In the first conference (June, 1994), the group embodied the descriptions we so often read about large groups (Agazarian, 1993) it was terrifying and chaotic for members and conductors. Between painful, heavy silences, individual members made seemingly desperate attempts to start the group, give it direction, find its intended meaning or purpose. The group's boundaries were questioned and a number of members demanded explanations and instructions from the conductors. There seemed to be little to draw the membership together until, in the last session of the large group, one member encouraged by another shared his reasons for resisting engagement in the group experience. His story of pain and trauma electrified the membership and created a moment of powerful cohesion in the group as the members united around his trauma with empathy and sympathy. Their recognition of the inevitability of pain and trauma appeared to create a bond, and the large group experience ended with a sense of the possibility of cohesion and connection among the members.

In each succeeding conference the large group fluctuations gradually moved toward bringing the membership closer together. The level of self disclosure deepened as each succeeding conference and the honest, direct and defenseless manner in which feelings, fears, wishes and desires were expressed was so touching it would move the various members of the five-person team to tears. The conductors were often awed struck at the level of emotional and cognitive work being done in this group of sixty or more people.

How do we explain this process? How can such a large group develop this powerful sense of cohesion and safety? For the last twelve years I have endeavored to apply a Kohutian perspective (Segalla, 1985) to the development and dynamics of small therapeutic groups. I have attempted to supplement and enhance these groups through the application of an inter-subjective perspective (Segalla, 1995). More recently, I have observed the development of this large training group from these two perspectives. Self psychology and intersubjectivity seem to offer some explanations for the powerful cognitive and affective experiences observed in groups in general. These theoretical constructs provide a foundation essential for conceptualizing the complex balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group. This paper represents an effort to 'sketch out' the preliminary results of this study and provides direction for enhancing our understanding of large group experience.

SELF PSYCHOLOGY AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Kohut's 1978 paper, "Creativeness, charisma, group psychology," (Kohut, 1978) addressed his ideas about group. He suggested that, just as there is the self of the individual, there is a group self. He stated that it was essential to study all aspects of group, from its formation through its "oscillations" between group fragmentation and group reintegration. Kohut was concerned about the power of the group self and the potential diminishment of individuality. He therefore encouraged its study, while also warning that the task is made especially difficult for the leader/participant who must avoid succumbing to the group's regressive pull while concurrently remaining empathically connected enough to allow vicarious introspection. He spoke of the need for courage in studying the group self by referencing Freud's courage in his self-analysis, saying, "Could it be that the analogous step in group psychology, the decisive advance toward a valid depth psychological understanding of the experiences and actions of the group, will be the result of a similarly courageous self-scrutiny of the psychoanalytic community by itself?" (Kohut, 1978, p. 838). His concern about the psychoanalytic community as a large group suggests an acute awareness of the potential destructiveness of the large group. Having had to flee Vienna in 1939, he personally experienced this destructive power. This may have been reinforced when his theoretical advances met with criticism and dismissal among many within the psychoanalytic community. His awareness of the negative potential of the large group is mirrored in the comments of large group writers such as Agazarian and Carter (1993), Pines (1994), Turquet (1975) who reference terror, aggression, projective identification, chaos and trauma as some of the affective experiences they have had in the large group. Despite the potentially negative effects, those who conduct large group can also attest to its enormous healing power. Although the
psychoanalytic writing in this area has contributed much toward our understanding, there is a need to explore further what happens during the development of a large group. Self psychology, particularly in selfobject theory, and the theoretical advances of intersubjectivity seem to provide some useful new avenues for understanding the dynamics of large groups.

**SELF PSYCHOLOGY**

What can self psychology and intersubjectivity theory bring to this dialogue? Each perspective offers something useful for understanding powerful large group experiences and the potential healing which can occur as a result of large group experiences. Selfobject theory is the cornerstone of self psychology and one of Kohut's most inspired clinical contributions to psychoanalysis. It is also a critical aspect of Stolorow, et al.'s intersubjectivity theory. This paper represents an effort to utilize selfobject theory as a foundation for exploring large group phenomena. For those readers who may not be familiar with theories associated with self psychology and intersubjectivity, the basic tenets will be outlined prior to moving on to their application to the large group.

As its title implies, Kohut's theory revolves around the "self." He describes the self as a supraordinate configuration that is the "... independent center of initiative and perception, integrated with our most central ambitions and ideals and with our experience that our body and mind form a unit in space and a continuum in time" (Kohut, 1977, p. 177). In the simplest terms it is the degree of cohesiveness (solidity, integrity) of an individual's self which determines psychological health. Unlike other theorists (Freud, Mahler, etc.), Kohut's theory does not equate independence with psychological health. He believes that even the healthiest individual requires "a milieu of empathically responding selfobjects in order to function effectively" (Chessick, 1993). Kohut conceptualizes selfobjects as a class of psychological functions pertaining to the maintenance, restoration, and transformation of self-experience (Stolorow, Brandchaft & Atwood, 1987). Unlike objects, who are autonomous (with their own center of initiative) and who can be valued for who they are, selfobjects are experienced subjectively and are valued for the internal functions and emotional stability they provide. Although one individual can supply both object and selfobject needs, the selfobject is not experienced as a separate object, but as an extension or function of the self. Understanding Kohut's ideas on selfobject needs is central to understanding the selfobject concept.

Having first identified mirroring and idealizing as selfobject needs, Kohut later added twinship/alter ego needs as well. The mirroring need can be briefly defined as the child's (or adult's) need to have accomplishments and "greatness" reflected back as a "gleam in mother's eye:" the idealizing need can be described as the need to experience the selfobject as both powerful and calm so that in times of stress the child can merge with the selfobject to soothe the upset or overstimulation; and finally, the twinship or alter ego need is intended to describe the individual's need to share "alike-ness" with other human beings and in doing so, feel connected to the human community. As was predicted by Kohut (1984), other selfobject functions continue to be defined. Wolf (1988) added an adversarial need, Stolorow and Atwood (1992) added a self-delineating selfobject function and Lichtenberg (1992) added vitalizing selfobject experiences defined by his five motivational systems. Our success in having selfobject needs met is a sign of healthy functioning. In fact, a measure of therapeutic success includes the capacity for mature selfobject experiences.

Kohut found that the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship was enhanced when the therapist, through empathic engagement, helped to create an environment in which selfobject needs, previously unmet, were activated within the relationship with the therapist. Because of previous experiences of feeling unsuccessful when these basic functions were not filled by a caretaker, the patient was often reluctant to engage with the therapist, fearing that she would again be painfully disappointed in her efforts to have selfobject needs met. The reactivation of the selfobject within the transference relationship is the basis on which healthy growth can be resumed. Kohut saw optimal frustration as a necessary component of this process. That is, the therapist's failure to fill one of these selfobject needs (an empathic rupture) can create an opportunity for resolution of the problem, by an understanding-explaining sequence. The capacity of the therapeutic pair to work through the empathic failures constitutes a significant part of the therapy work leading to healing of the self deficit. This emphasis on the necessity of empathic failures and their healing has been replaced for many by the concept of optimal responsiveness (Bacal, 1985). He states that it is the therapist's capacity to engage optimally with the patient which encourages resumption of the growth process.

**INTERSUBJECTIVITY**

Like all important theories, Kohut's work has inspired both criticism and adulation. Since his work was first published innumerable writers and theorists have refined and extended his efforts. Although a review of this literature is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, the writings of Robert
Stolorow and his colleagues deserve special mention. While these individuals made a great number of important contributions, central to their work was the concept of intersubjectivity. This approach to psychoanalytic thinking focuses on the “interplay between the differently organized subjective worlds of the observer and the observed” (Stolorow, Brandchaft & Atwood, 1987). Key to this concept is the premise that the observational stance is always within, rather than outside, the intersubjective field (Stolorow et al., 1987). Application of this perspective enhances the clinician’s ability to accurately utilize vicarious introspection, and in so doing, improves the clinician’s ability to respond empathically to the patient, a central component of the curative process in both theories.

While the work of Stolorow et al, for the most part, shares Kohut’s selfobject theory, their efforts to move toward experience-near explanations has resulted in a number of significant differences. For instance, self psychology and intersubjectivity theory differ regarding the nature of the primary motivating force. Kohut’s theory is based on the premise that the individual is motivated to grow. Stolorow et al., on the other hand, view the self as motivated to organize affective experiences (Trop, 1994). They object to Kohut’s distinction between object and selfobject as a reification that only serves to confuse the function (mirroring, idealization, etc.) with the actual person (i.e., the object). They believe this can be avoided if the term selfobject is used strictly to refer to “a class of psychological functions pertaining to the maintenance, restoration, and transformation of self-experience ... a dimension of experiencing an object” (Stolorow et al., 1987 p. 16). Stolorow et al., place selfobject functions at one pole of a bipolar conception of transference. At the other pole are “the patient’s expectations and fears of a transference repetition of the original experiences of selfobject failure” (Stolorow et al., p. 102). They use this end of the bipolar model of transference to explain the conflict and resistance inherent in the selfobject transference. However, the theoretical positions of both Kohut and Stolorow, et al., are organized around the significance of the need for selfobjects. Implicit in the notion of selfobject needs and functions is the concept of intersubjectivity. That is, we always operate in an intersubjective context in which mutual responsiveness and regulation (Beebe and Lachmann, 1988) determine the course of any encounter.

SELF PSYCHOLOGY AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY AS APPLIED TO GROUP

While both self-psychology and intersubjectivity have provided significant insight into understanding and treating individuals these theories can also provide assistance in conceptualizing the development and dynamics of groups. Kohut (1984), Stolorow et al. (1993), Mitchell (1991), Ogden (1993), and Hoffman (1992) state that we do not exist as isolated individuals, but always in dynamic interaction with another from the moment of birth. Although dyadic engagement is our earliest and most continuous mode of engagement, we also quickly move beyond a dyad to increasingly larger and more complex systems. Thus, a primary task of the individual is learning how to function within these larger, more complex hierarchical systems. The increasing complexity suggests that in learning to function in these large group contexts, we must move beyond individual selfobject experiences and expectations, and learn how to function effectively in various groups. In attempting to shift our focus from the individual to the group we are left with a number of thought provoking questions. These include: what happens to individual selfobject needs when the individual becomes a member of a group, especially a large group; if a group consists of individuals, each with their own selfobject needs, how does a group achieve its “groupness” and finally, if individuals give up, at least to a limited degree, the primacy of their selfobject needs in order to join a large group, what role does the group play in maintaining, and regulating the self cohesiveness of these individuals in light of this surrender?

One can assume that these and similar questions were behind Kohut’s somewhat tentative introduction of the term group self. Unfortunately, he never returned to the subject to fully explicate his thinking on groups and the group self. If, however, his thinking about the individual self is extended to the group self, one can suggest the possibility that the group organism operates in the same way the individual organism operates. Therefore, if the group has a self, the group can also be said to possess a set of functions designed to maintain the integrity and cohesiveness of the group self, and a set of functions which provide the group with initiative and goal direction. Along the lines of Stolorow et al, these functions might also serve to organize affective experiences. In other words, just as there are specific needs inherent at the individual level, I believe that the group organism, composed of individual members, has inherent needs that originate at an individual level but are only manifested within the context of a functioning group. To summarize, in order to maintain the organization and operation of the group, the group organism must, like the individual self, possess a set of functions, or groupobject needs, which, operating on both an individual and group level, serve the needs of the group and ultimately the needs of individual members of that group.
THE GROUP SELF ON THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

For any individual to give up the primacy of selfobject needs in order to join a group, he or she must possess groupobject needs powerful enough to motivate this somewhat dangerous surrender. These groupobject needs appear to be an extension of selfobject needs. Primary in a group context is the need to belong to, or merge with, something larger and more powerful than the self. This assumption is based on the simple hypothesis that human beings, in ways similar to other species, retain an organismic, survival based, tendency, or proclivity, to group. This associational-affiliative need, similar to Kohut's selfobject need for idealizing (that is, seeking to merge with a powerful object), carries obvious benefits. As a member of a group, an individual's chances for survival are significantly improved. The individual gains strength by temporarily surrendering the primacy of selfobject needs and allowing a merger with the group. Only through this surrender can the individual effectively participate in the group's enormous power.

Despite the possible benefits in merging with a group, the need to associate/affiliate with a group cannot be satisfied without some capacity to experience the self as equal to the requirements of membership. Similar to Kohut's "twinship" need, to survive the trauma of joining a group individuals must rely on an internalized sense of their own capacity to be an able and integral part of the group organism. In other words, the individual must be able to favorably compare themselves to other group members. This individual groupobject need for membership, can be understood as playing a critical role in mitigating the very real fear that failure to contribute ably to the functioning of the group will result in either being extruded from the group, or—an even more terrifying possibility—becoming the focus of the group's aggressive capacity. On an individual level, optimal group experiences contribute to the fulfillment of groupobject needs for association/affiliation and membership, which in turn support the development of a cohesive and vital group self. Just as these selfobject needs arise in an intersubjective context of two people, groupobject needs arise within a group context composed of several to several hundred people.

The development of the group self begins with early experiences within the context of the individual's primary group, usually their family. These groupobject experiences continue throughout life and include school, religious, cultural, political and ethnic groups. Groupobject failures, especially traumatic failures, in ways similar to selfobject failures, affect the integrity or cohesiveness of the group self. And, just as positive, non-traumatizing, selfobject experiences can serve to fill in missing aspects of the self, positive groupobject experiences can serve to fill in missing aspects of the group self. Also, just as they have met with varying degrees of success in getting selfobject needs met, individuals experience varying degrees of success in addressing groupobject needs.

THE GROUP SELF ON THE GROUP LEVEL

At the level of the group, groupobject needs operate on an intrasubjective level among members within the group. On this level the cohesiveness of the group self is directly related to the degree to which the members perceive the group to be a cohesive and functioning unit. Groupobject needs on the group level consist of the need for solidification and the need for potency. The need for solidification refers to the need for experiences in which the group operates as a whole, cohesive, bonded and unbreakable unit. Groupobject failures in this sector result in real or perceived fragmentation of the group. Developmentally, a group's movement from a collection of individuals to a fully formed cohesive unit depends on a process of successive "clumpings." This clumping process starts on a dyadic level, advances through a period in which the members form and identify with subgroups, and finally, given optimal groupobject experiences, leads to the shared experience of solidification, identification with the large, cohesive, group organism. This clumping process provides the individual group members a stepped process to gradually loosen individual boundaries and temporarily set aside selfobject needs. As a subgroup experience occurs, this loss of the self is gradually replaced by the new functioning group self. The great advantage inherent in this subgroup clumping process is that in the event the larger group structure collapses—the individual remains protected by a succession of subgroup layers.

However, once the assembly is operating on the large group level, it becomes apparent that dyadic or small group experiences which had served anchoring functions for the individual in the early stages of the large group experience, cannot be sustained. This may be reflected by a sense of disorganization or in psychotic-like experiences which can cause a defensive withdrawal or a projective process. Turquet (1975) points out that since we are no longer face-to-face in a large group, we cannot read the other. An example of this can be found in the infant research work of Beebe and Lachmann (1994), who studied the importance of the gaze in infants and the disorganization of the mother-infant dyad when the gaze is averted. In the large group, one cannot easily gaze into the eyes of another. This loss of the intersubjective context activates the fear of the loss of self, signaling a potential loss of cohesion. This is a transitional large group moment in which an individual member, or subgroup, may withdraw or begin to enter
the group differently. It is a crucial point in which there is a loosening of internal barriers and an activation of group object needs. When these unconsciously held group object needs are activated, they lead to new large group behavior. Thus, we may see members begin to speak of their affective or intellectual experiences within the large group, expressing a range of reactions which suggest that they have become engaged in the large group process and have unconsciously reactivated hope in having group object needs met. Obviously, the larger the group the more difficulty it will face in making the developmental transition from subgroup to whole group unity.

The group object need for potency refers to the group's craving for circumstances which allow the group to experience itself as uniquely special and robust. The group can experience this powerfulness both intrasubjectively in the eyes of the individual members and group leaders, and intersubjectively from individuals or groups external to itself. An example, from the fourth meeting of the National Group Training Conference, of our large group working to provide for the group object need for potency is seen in a statement made by a member of the training group who stated "I would never have believed that I could speak at this level in such a large group." This statement was then affirmed by a succession of group members who attested to the "power" of this "exceptional" group.

**BARRIERS TO GROUPOBJECT DEVELOPMENT**

Barriers to group object development fall into three broad categories: selfobject deficit barriers, trauma based conflictual barriers, and transitional barriers.

Individuals with significant selfobject deficits, most prominently seen in the narcissistic self disorders, will naturally have a great deal of difficulty managing the anxiety inherent in a development process dependent on the suspension of individual selfobject needs. Out of fear and anxiety, there can be an effort to continue to function as an individual filling individual selfobject needs. As a group begins to become cohesive, the individual longing for selfobject experiences will be activated. At one level, efforts to fulfill selfobject needs may proceed without significant detriment to group development. Thus, one could experience mirroring when another member states something which reflects their own thoughts or feelings at that moment. Or they may find the leader's comments and interpretations soothing or useful, and so have an idealizing selfobject need met. Another's affective response may kindle twinship experiences; someone's angry reaction may kindle another's adversarial need; or someone's insistence on re-

remaining outside the group may be similar to one's own self-delineating selfobject needs. It is, however, difficult to remain at this intersubjective level of selfobject need since there is an absence of the dyadic or inter-subjective context in the large group. When faced with the prospect of surrendering selfobject needs, these individuals will either defensively withdraw, trying to remain in a singleton position (Turquet, 1975), or actively work to sabotage the group's effort to move forward developmentally. If efforts of the latter type are not interrupted, by either the group or the group leaders, these individuals may succeed in setting off a cascade of anxiety among the group members, related to fears of impending group object failure. If powerful enough, this anxiety will stimulate a return to the relative safety of the dyadic or subgroup level. This cascade, and the resultant regression, will likely start with those individuals most vulnerable to fears of retraumatization, the second category of barriers to group object development.

Just as patients defensively avoid engaging with their therapists because they fear that they will yet again be unable to get selfobject needs met, engagement in the group is defensively avoided for fear of again being unable to get group object needs met. Understood at this level, individual resistance to immersion in the group can be reinterpreted as reluctance to reexperience the pain and confusion associated with previous group object failures. Reactivation of trauma can be particularly powerful at the small or family group level, setting the stage for resistance to immersion in large group experiences. Throughout our lives we have had repeated experiences of emotional injury which operate to maintain our resistance to groups. Trauma is a significant consideration in both individual and group treatment (Stolorow and Atwood, 1992) and the role it plays in the development of the large group cannot be underestimated.

The third category of barriers includes those events, conditions or non-conditions, which prevent the group from making the developmental leap from subgroups to the large group. Even without the kind of threats to group object development described above, a large assembly of subgroups cannot hope to achieve large group cohesiveness without the structural and dynamic conditions normally provided by group consultants. The assembly must rely on the consultants to structure the group (time, place, format) and contain the group through its often tumultuous, sometimes terrifying, transition from subgroup operations to operation as a large group. Dynamically, the group consultants, especially in the early phases of the group, act as the observing parents and stimulate participants' efforts to "perform" as "good" group members, or just as likely, to act out, in ways designed to gain the attention and approval (or disapproval) of consultants. Methodologically, the group consultants achieve these goals in ways similar to the individual therapist. By empathically immersing themselves in the
group's subjective experience, the group consultants help the group understand what it is experiencing by reflecting back to the group. Only with this empathic understanding can the group hope to find ways to manage the anxieties inherent in this difficult process. If, however, the consultants overlook this role, or fail to empathically understand the group's experiences, the group will face significant difficulty in negotiating the transition from subgroup to large group cohesiveness. The group consultant's pivotal role in groupobject development warrants closer examination.

THE GROUP CONSULTANT AND THE LARGE GROUP

When we consider the consultant in the large group we must ask, what role does the consultant play in groupobject development? Is the consultant, like the therapist, included in the group to intersubjectively provide for groupobject needs or are these needs, as alluded to earlier, addressed intrasubjectively within the group? I would submit that the consultant's role changes according to the groups developmental needs. Initially, in the earlier forming stages of the large group, the consultant will operate very much in the group's foreground, structuring the group, setting boundaries, and most importantly, helping the group understand its own subjective experience. By empathic immersion in the large group experience the group consultants are able to provide interpretations which are close enough to members' internal experiences to allow them to remain engaged at the large group level. At this stage the consultant operates intersubjectively as a groupobject for the group organism. As the group progresses, the group leaders must allow for the group's development by receding into the background and providing the group enough room to operate intrasubjectively to fulfill its own groupobject needs. The group provides an intense experience for the leader(s) in that, while attempting to maintain their individual cognitive and emotional capacities in order to study the large group, they are also, at every moment, a part of the large group experience, shaping their interpretations from within that context. Stolorow and Atwood (1992), referencing the novelist Kundera (The Unbearable Lightness of Being, 1984), speak of "the unbearable embeddedness of being" and the inevitability of intersubjectivity. As Kohut (1976) pointed out, empathic immersion carries with it the risk of being snared by the group's regression and losing the very perspective needed to understand the group. This highlights the task for group therapists in their study of the group and group behavior. Their task, from their own unbearably embedded position, is to study and understand group behavior. This becomes increasingly difficult as they move from the more familiar therapy group to larger groups. That is, the same fear of a loss of cohesion occurs for the large group therapist or consultant as occurs for the membership. Therefore, the study of the large group must also emphasize the impact on the leader and how that impact is reflected in the development of the membership.

SUMMARY

The two-year training provided by the National Group Training Institute of the Washington School of Psychiatry has provided a unique opportunity for the study of the evolution of a large group. It also allowed this author to speculate on the possible contributions that self psychology and recent advances in its theory make to the study of the large group. This experience led me to formulate the idea of groupobject needs which exist side by side with selfobject needs. The presence of groupobject needs allows us to move beyond our individual subjectivity and intersubjectivity and immerse ourselves in the multiple subjectivities presented to us in all aspects of our existence, from the family through the larger cultural institutions present in society.

Within both self psychology and intersubjectivity theory, there is a recognition that empathic reactions by the therapist to the patient's trauma foster healing. Bacal (1985), moving beyond Kohut's optimal frustration to optimal responsiveness, stated that it was the optimally responsive therapist who fostered healing. Stolorow, et al. (1992), state that it is the affect attunement within the intersubjective context which is curative, and trauma can be reactivated in therapy when this attunement is not present. Just as this occurs at the level of the individual, it can occur at the group level and even at the large group level.

A developmental process unique to each individual is activated upon entry into group. This process is the activation of the wish to resume growth at the level of the group self. This process emerges slowly into the consciousness of the group, and varies from person to person based on their own history of group-experiences in various settings in the culture. It occurs as a foreground or background experience, depending on the nature of the group. These groupobject needs can be viewed as supports for the many tasks of society which require that the group needs be in the foreground and the individual needs in the background.

In self psychological and intersubjective terms, the membership of our training group had overcome their individual traumatic fears so that they were able to move beyond attending to individual selfobject needs in order to allow groupobject needs to emerge, or, as Stolorow might suggest, the conflictual aspects of the self were in abeyance, in the background suffi-
ciently so that the members were able to join something larger than the individual self. The members were able to set aside individual selfobject yearnings sufficiently so that the self could “de-organize” and allow groupobject needs to emerge.

The more we can learn about what allows us to function successfully beyond ourselves, the greater the chances are that society can begin to find ways to successfully heal itself.

REFERENCES


Self Psychology, Intersubjectivity and the Large Group


