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Chapter 4 | Types and Models of Group Work Practice

Because of the overlapping purposes and elements in various group types, it is neither possible nor desirable to make a list of group work models that are presented as totally different from each other. For example, educational groups can provide support, and support groups have therapeutic effects (Garland, 1986). Wasserman and Danforth (1988), note that "A helping process that is not conceptualized as therapeutic may be just as therapeutic, if not more so, than one that is. This may be the case of support group vis-a-vis the therapy group (p. 66). According to Toseland and Rivas (2001), "therapy groups help members change their behavior, cope with or ameliorate their personal problems, or rehabilitate themselves after physical, psychological, or social trauma" (p. 26). Although these authors go on to point to the remedial and rehabilitative focus of therapy groups, each of the purposes they describe could be attributed to educational and support groups as well.

Given their overlapping elements, it is helpful to conceptualize groups as if they were viewed under a floodlight rather than a spotlight. A spotlight lights up an area with a clearly delineated boundary. There is nothing to see or consider in the surrounding darkness. A floodlight provides a major focus, but allows one to see it within the framework of the dimmer peripheral area. Students often err by mentally spotlighting a group type and losing sight of related though not central factors to be considered. They may also err in the other direction and lose sight of the major purpose. The resulting practice may be either too rigid or lacking in focus.

Following are four hypothetical situations presented by hypothetical students that represent the kinds of group situations actual students present to classroom and field instructors, and which contain

elements of common dilemmas. An understanding of the range of group types and models and the similarities and differences among them would help actual students answer their own questions. The first situation is presented by a student we'll call Jeannie, who explains:

I run a support group for elderly widows who have lost an adult child. At the last meeting, one of the women suggested that the group celebrate birthdays with cake and coffee. The members seem to like the idea, but I feel uncomfortable. They can go to the community center for their social lives. I'm supposed to be helping them grieve their losses, not joining them in birthday parties. What is the best way to explain this to them?

Tom presents the following problem:

I'm placed in a junior high school and run a parenting skills group for parents of acting-out teen-teenagers. My co-leader and I don't think the parents are really motivated to learn new ways to handle their children. They come regularly, but never read the articles we give them. They seem to want to spend their time together trading family war stories. How can we keep them focused on the material we need to cover? The articles could really help them.

Francine talks about working with a holiday party planning committee of an association for diabetics. The committee members are themselves diabetic, and Francine says:

They have begun to use committee meetings to discuss the stresses and anxieties of their disease. It's so good to see them use each other in this way that I hate to interrupt them even though they almost don't get to plan for the party, and we are behind schedule. I'm not sure what I should do.

Jim tells his frustrating story:

The doctors in the hospital where I am placed have asked the social workers to help get the hypertension patients to take their medications in spite of their unpleasant side effects. My field instructor has assigned me to organize a support group in order for the patients to encourage each other to take better care of themselves. I just can't seem to get the group started. I've posted notices all over the hospital, sent letters to the prospective members and asked doctors and nurses to urge their patients to attend. Still, not one person showed up for the first meeting last Wednesday evening. These patients haven't asked to meet around their disease, but that's what I'm expected to get them to do. I don't know what to do next.

Each of these students is describing a dilemma in a different kind of social work group, each with its own purpose, and recognizes that their interventions must relate to the type of group their members have agreed or will agree to form. All groups should operate within a working agreement that sets the stage for member expectations and worker interventions.

Jeannie needs to recognize the celebration of birthdays as a constructive step towards healing the wounds of loss. Tom needs to listen to what the parents are saying to each other and to find the seeds of a curriculum that has more meaning to them than the articles he wishes they would read. Francine is in danger of overlooking the group's major purpose and needs to help the members work on their agreed upon task, planning the holiday party. She could offer the committee members a different group opportunity for mutual support around their illness. Jim needs to know that there are other group work options for the work he wishes to do besides trying to get members to attend a group meeting at a time he has chosen, to address a topic he believes is in their best interests to discuss.

Defining Group Types

When classroom teachers ask students to describe the kinds of groups they have been assigned in the field, their responses will usually reflect a wide range of ways to categorize groups. They might mention a support group for single mothers, a mandatory group for drunk drivers, a single session group for newly diagnosed cancer patients, or an after-school activity group for eight-year-olds. As in the examples given, group types can be described according to many different dimensions. These include group purpose (support), how the group was formed (mandatory), group structure (single session), or group content (activities). These dimensions overlap with each other, so that groups with the same purpose can differ in many ways. They may be long- or short-term, and have open-ended or closed membership. They may rely primarily on dialogue or include activities as a medium for expression, communication, and personal development.

In spite of all these possible variations, certain defining characteristics must be present in order for work with groups to be considered social work with groups. One of these is the worker's focus on helping members to meet each other's "human needs through democratic group processes" (Falk, 1995, p. 69). Social work with groups also requires the development of a common goal and purpose that integrates the personal goals of each member and the professional goals of the worker (Pappell & Rothman, 1980). The group worker is not the group

leader, but instead seeks to promote members' autonomy and independence through support of positive indigenous leadership as it emerges through group development processes. These principles stem from the historical roots of this social work method that developed from a democratic movement. They must be present in all of the group types and formats discussed in this chapter, whether they are described by purpose, formation process, structure, or content.

Groups Defined by Purpose

Group work theorists categorize group purposes in many different ways. For example, Toseland and Rivas (1998) define groups as being either for treatment or task purposes. They consider treatment as the broad category in which all other personal growth groups fall. In contrast, this book considers personal growth, rather than treatment as an overarching category, largely because of its health and strengths perspective. Such an approach reflects the heritage of social group work, and its contribution to the social work profession.

Though students must be helped to understand the differences between groups that are designed for personal growth and those designed for task achievement, they must also recognize that to some extent, this is a false dichotomy. Growth groups may include tasks, and successful task achievement certainly promotes individual growth and development. Pappell and Rothman (1962), in their discussion of the social goals model (i.e., groups organized for affecting social change) refer to the underlying assumption that there is a unity between social action and individual psychological health. They point to the therapeutic and growth promoting implications of social participation. Nevertheless, as students consider the direction of their interventions, it remains helpful to distinguish between groups designed primarily for personal growth and those designed to complete a task.

Personal growth groups vary in their degree of emphasis on education, support, therapy/treatment and socialization. Task groups include agency or community committees, boards of directors, staff meetings, and other work groups.

Educational Groups

The purpose of social work educational groups is to help members gain new knowledge that will influence their psychosocial functioning. These groups are characterized as having a specific focus and addressing specific content areas, like Tom's group on parenting skills. They are generally time-limited, informative, and structured to facili-

tate the learning of new information, behaviors, and relationship skills (Kuechler, 1997). Other examples include groups on caretaking, learning to cope with and manage an illness, or overcoming an addiction.

There are important differences between an educational group that is part of social group work and other kinds of educational groups. The latter may focus primarily on providing new knowledge to members, while social work educational groups also attend to the psychosocial factors that influence how that information will be received, internalized, and put to use. Social work educational groups are called for when the nature of the new information brings questions, anxieties, and concerns that need to be addressed for the new knowledge to be useful and valuable. These groups require workers with both teaching and social group work skills. The student must help participants move beyond their roles as learners into the roles of group members engaged in mutual aid. Educational groups become social work groups "when the aim of...[the] activity is to assist clients to teach each other (Falk, 1995, p. 69).

Students may feel comforted and supported by going into a group with a prepared structure or curriculum, like Tom and his co-leader. However, they must be encouraged not to become so committed to *covering* material, that they overlook the importance of *uncovering* material. For example, a father in this group may quickly learn that the experts do not believe in corporal punishment as a response to an acting-out child. The student, however, must then recognize that although this father may readily give sincere verbal agreement to this notion, it will probably be difficult for him to implement the new approach when he is flooded with angry emotions evoked by his child's provocative behavior. A worker in Tom's situation must help the parents to deal with the challenges and potential conflicts the new information or new perspectives produce, and help them feel safe enough within the group to express feelings that they are not supposed to have. Tom's acceptance of these in a nonjudgmental manner can help the parents face and hopefully modify their feelings and inclinations towards less effective parental responses.

Any form of structure a student brings into the group must have a liberating rather than constricting effect on group processes. Structure can liberate by providing a focus, direction, and channel for the group's energy. However, in instances such as the one Tom and his co-leader faced, students must be prepared to let go of their curriculum structure as they receive direct or indirect cues about what the group members consider their most immediate concerns to be. Any form of social work must start where the client is, even if that place is not where the curriculum assumes they must be.

Support Groups

The purpose of support groups is to help members relieve stress and develop constructive behaviors to deal with difficult situations. They are not designed to cure mental illness or bring about overall personality change. Support groups are composed of people who share a similar set of challenging circumstances and who could help each other through an exchange of their experiences, ideas, and feelings (Wasserman & Danforth, 1988). Such circumstances could include dealing with loss, as was the issue in Jeannie's group, living with a chronic illness as in Jim's proposed group, or membership in a population suffering from discrimination because of ethnicity, race, physical disability, or sexual orientation. Members of support groups who demonstrate personality or emotional problems that severely limit the helpfulness of the support may need to be referred to a different kind of group.

On a cognitive-affective continuum, support groups are closer to the affective realm than educational groups. However, there is great overlap in these groups (Garland, 1986), and they are not distinctly different than each other. The best educational groups help members support each other as they learn. The best support groups will usually provide some information about the problem that members share and for which they seek to develop coping behaviors.

Socialization Groups

The purpose of socialization groups is to help members develop attitudes and behaviors that will help them contribute to and receive satisfaction from participation in daily community life. Such groups could be composed of children or youths being helped to develop age appropriate social competencies such as dealing with complex emotions, managing interpersonal conflict, and learning to share, create, and make decisions with others. The student who described her assignment as an after-school activity group may have been describing a group for these purposes.

Socialization groups can be helpful for any population that would benefit from a new view of their social selves. This includes isolated mothers who need to develop the necessary skills to become part of a supportive social network (Wayne, 1979), or elderly people who may be in need of resocialization into the changing social and family roles that come in later years (Hartford & Lawton, 1997).

Socialization groups usually seek to create group situations that mirror daily life events. Ordinary life experiences include recreational and work-oriented activities (see section on activity groups) and informal discussion of members' recent and past experiences, interests,

pleasures, and problems. It is this broad purpose and use of content, as well as general informality that distinguishes this type of group from those that are focused on helping members improve a specific area of functioning. Its usual lack of a presenting problem further distinguishes this type of group work from most work with individuals.

Opportunities for socialization are omnipresent with natural groups in their daily living environment, whether in a residential or community setting. When possible, it may be more effective for the student to find rather than form such groups (see section on natural groups).

Therapy Groups

The purpose of a therapy group is to bring about personal changes in the behavior, cognition or affect of its members. Barker (1987) defines therapy as "a systematic process and activity designed to remedy, cure, or abate some disease, disability, or problem" (p. 164). Therapy groups focus on the personal problems of group members, as compared to support groups that focus on helping them to cope with the difficult circumstances they share. Despite the focus on individual personal problems, students must help members identify the connecting threads that create opportunities for members to be helpful to each other in some way.

There are as many types of therapy groups as there are theories of therapeutic approaches. As with one-to-one work, each of these theories has implications for the structure and focus of therapeutic interventions.

Task-oriented Groups

Task-oriented groups are those designed for the achievement of a goal outside of the group that affects a broader constituency than the group members themselves. Its "overriding purpose is to accomplish a goal that is neither intrinsically nor immediately linked to the needs of the members of the group" (Toseland & Rivas, 2001, p. 15). In task groups, assessments of individuals and group processes are made in relation to achievement of the group's task. Any resulting personal growth of members is viewed as a by-product of the group's major purpose.

Francine's holiday party planning committee was established as a task-oriented group. Hopefully, the working agreement articulated her responsibility to help the members plan a successful party. When they drifted into using the committee as a support group for personal issues, it would be Francine's job to help them remain focused on their task. It would not have been in their or anyone's interest to produce a poorly planned holiday party. Francine could create support group opportunities for the committee members at another point. They could

agree to remain after committee meetings to resume their more personal discussions, or come together as a support group after the party had occurred.

Task-oriented groups frequently follow formalized rules for discussion and decision making. Members are chosen for their potential contribution as individuals or representatives to the task at hand. A student may assume a direct leadership role in such a group, or may serve as a staff person and consultant to a group chaired by a layperson. In these instances, the student can provide direct feedback to the group from his/her assigned role, or can confer with the chair outside of meetings, to help him/her keep the group directed towards its agreed upon purpose. In either case, it is the student as social group worker who brings knowledge and skill about group work practice to the group experience.

Although task-group membership does not entail sharing personal and intimate material, the socio-emotive factors of personal and interpersonal feelings amongst members still affect group processes. Whether for political, personal, or other reasons, subgroups and alliances develop, and these may have either a positive or negative effect on successful completion of the task.

The most common error students make in their work with task groups is to overlook these socio-emotive factors, and to proceed as if all that occurred in the group were based on objective thought, without the influence of personal feelings. Professional social workers sometimes overlook the fact that the same skilled professionalism required for work with personal growth groups is necessary for task groups as well. Ephross and Vassil (1988) assert that "a steadily increasing concern with gaining skills in group methods in treatment. . . has not been accompanied by corresponding attention to working groups" (p. 7). It is the ability to assess the group dynamics and to intervene purposefully, informed by knowledge of group work practice, and directed by the values of the profession that separates the social group worker from the lay chairperson, and which makes task groups a model of social group work practice.

Groups Defined by the Formation Process

All groups can be categorized as either natural or formed. Natural groups are those in which people come together either because of geographic proximity, shared interests or goals, shared circumstances, or family ties. Most students, however, are assigned to work with groups that are formed by professionals for a particular purpose. Formed groups may be composed of voluntary or mandated members.

Natural Groups

Natural groups refer to those that form without professional intervention. They exist in residential as well as community settings and are there to be found rather than formed by the professionals who wish to work with them (Frey, 1966). Natural groups offer special opportunities for social work practice. The level of communication and accessibility to feelings that workers try to foster in formed groups often occur spontaneously amongst people who have come together naturally, and who have been together for a period of time. Ironically, in both residential and community settings, it is often paraprofessional direct practice workers rather than professional social workers who have opportunities to intervene in such circumstances.

Work with natural groups is as challenging as with formed groups. The student should not assume that the existing relationships amongst group members are conflict-free or necessarily built on trust and affection. There are times when the student as the new member of the group may have to help members unlearn their less effective ways of relating and communicating with each other.

There are many opportunities for students in different settings to reach out to naturally grouped target populations. These include common living areas where people in residential settings spend their unstructured time, community center drop-in lounges, and high school cafeterias. In the community, natural groups can be found in playgrounds, on neighborhood street corners, shopping malls, and fast-food restaurants. Adolescents, who may be difficult to engage within an agency setting, may respond positively to the social work student who reaches out to them in such places (Bass, 1995).

Students may feel awkward reaching out to natural groups as the new and usually uninvited members. They must be as honest and clear about their purpose and function as they would be in a more traditional, formed group. This may be more difficult to do away from the security of an office and a presenting problem focus. This is not social work practice as usual, and requires a different perspective of professional self than in the more traditional therapeutic hour. Chapter 7 elaborates on how to help students develop skills for engaging groups in natural, unstructured situations.

Social group work has its roots in working with natural groups, and the profession's movement away from prevention and education has resulted in doing so less frequently than before. Students should be helped to recognize when this approach may be the most effective.

Formed Groups

Students will be assigned either to work with groups that have already been formed by another professional, or like Jim be asked to form a group themselves. Though students may sometimes not recognize it as such, forming a group is as much a part of group work practice as is the work done at any meeting. While chapter 7 will elaborate on group formation skills, this section will describe the characteristics of formed groups.

Formed groups may be composed of members who are there by choice or because they must attend in order to avoid some negative consequence. The negative consequence could be an angry spouse, a legal consequence, or some other consequence. Whether composed of voluntary, semivoluntary, or mandated members, all formed groups share certain commonalities.

Members of formed groups must be helped to understand why they have been asked to come together and what they stand to gain from the experience. They need to know what will be expected of them, and what it is that they can expect from the worker and from each other. They must be helped to define their common purpose, and to identify their personal goals within the framework of that broader purpose. The student must explain his/her function in helping them to achieve the goals they have established. The understanding and acceptance of a shared purpose serves as the foundation for each person's progression from a solitary individual to a member of a group that will function as a mutual aid social system.

Drawing again on Jim's unsuccessful attempts to organize a hypertension support group through traditional approaches, let's assume he would then be advised by the department's group work consultant to reconceptualize his notion of formed groups and to integrate aspects of the approach to natural groups. On the day the clinic saw hypertension patients, Jim would enter the waiting room, set down the refreshments he had brought, and introduce himself as a social work intern. He would tell the patients that he knew how stressful waiting to see the doctor could be, and joke that the wait itself could raise a person's blood pressure. A worker in this situation would express hope that he could assist them in helping each other deal with the long wait, the feelings it was likely to evoke, and other issues related to their hypertension. Such an approach would help the patients—strangers to each other—draw themselves into discussion with him about their feelings in the waiting room, their medical protocols, and the related issues that Jim had hoped they would discuss as a group. In an actual waiting room group described by a student in class,

the patients became so invested in the group experience that instead of leaving the hospital after seeing the doctor, they rejoined the other members for the remainder of the meeting.

By broadening his concept of how groups could be brought together, Jim could create structures through which people in shared, stressful circumstances could help each other.

Voluntary Membership. All of the groups discussed so far in this chapter have been composed of people who chose to be group members. They may have been recruited from direct contact, through referrals from their colleagues, or from public notices about the group being formed.

Even voluntary group members can be expected to have some ambivalence and feelings of caution (Garland, Jones, & Kolodny, 1976). This is especially true for the semi-volunteer who is there because of some external pressure. The person who is there at the insistence of a spouse is one such example. Even the most self-motivated members benefit from professional skills aimed at helping them become invested in the group experience. Each of the formed groups described in this chapter was helped to reach the point where work with natural groups may begin. It is natural for friends to celebrate milestones such as birthdays with each other, as in Jeannie's support group. It represents progress when acquaintances want to know more about each other's lives, as in Tom's parenting group. It is a sign of connection when members turn to each other for support around their vulnerabilities, as in Francine's planning group, and ultimately in Jim's group. The members entered the group with the hope and expectation that they could benefit from the experience. They remained in the group because their expectations were being met.

Mandatory Membership. Mandatory groups are those that members must attend in order to avoid a most undesirable alternative, usually a legal consequence. This could be a prison sentence for a drunk driving offense, or the removal of a child from the home because of parental abuse or neglect. It is common for students to feel awkward and intrusive when faced with such a seemingly resistant and frequently hostile membership. The student should remember and should point out to the members that at some level they have chosen to attend, and in all likelihood, would like to acquire behaviors that would remove the threat of the negative consequences they joined the group to avoid.

Students can help members engage in the group process by encouraging discussion of their feelings about being forced to attend and their feelings about not needing the group. The very reasons for their resistance may lead to the core of their problem. It can prove most helpful to work with the resistance, rather than fighting or ig-

noring it (Shulman, 1999). Students should point out that the reluctant members still have the choice of how they will spend the time within group meetings. Trimble (1994) tells his mandated male batterers that though they would rather not be in the group, once there, "no one can reach into your mind and heart and order a change. That's where you have complete control" (p. 262). Mandated members can recognize this as empowerment, and the potential power struggles between members and worker can be eased.

Groups Defined by Structure

Groups may often be defined by some aspect of the way they are structured. This section will discuss three commonly used structural descriptions of group types. These are closed groups, open-ended groups, and single session groups.

Closed Groups

Closed groups are those in which most members begin and end at the same time. Some groups have natural, predetermined time boundaries. Francine's holiday party planning committee could disband or change its purpose after the party occurred. Groups in school settings usually terminate at the conclusion of the school year. In other circumstances, groups may be scheduled for a certain number of sessions in the belief that goals can reasonably be met in that time.

An understanding of group development theory is critical for assessment and subsequent intervention in closed groups. A student must appreciate that the same piece of behavior exhibited by a member at the first meeting may have a different meaning at the seventh meeting, and may call for a different intervention. Knowledge of group development can also help a student depersonalize and even appreciate the normally difficult phases in the life of a group. For example, a comparison of developmental theories (Toseland & Rivas, 2001) reveals the widespread observation that relatively early in the life of the group, members will compete for status and influence, and will engage in some degree of testing behavior towards each other and towards the worker. If students know this, they will welcome this phenomenon as a sign of the group's progress rather than believe this represents the loss of their ability to control the group.

Tom's group may well have been in a testing stage. He was beginning to feel some frustration and irritation because the parents were not reading the assigned articles, and were not addressing the curriculum he had developed. On one level, these parents were following their own agenda of interest in each other, finding their places within

the group's social structure and locating where they were most comfortable with the group's range of behavioral norms. On another level, the members may have been testing Tom's ability to let them control their own group. If Tom were to insist that the members stick to the agenda he had developed, he might fail the test, and eventually lose members. He would not be the first professional in these circumstances to conclude that the members were indeed unmotivated and hard to reach, rather than recognizing that he was the one who found it hard to listen. An understanding of group development could foster a more successful outcome.

The cohesion that is fostered by the membership stability of closed groups also creates an environment in which taboo subjects can be explored in greater depth than in groups with changing membership. The student needs to build on the trust and acceptance that can develop within a stable group to create a culture of open expression and mutual support. Closed groups are more likely to reach this point than those that have to deal with the disruption of members entering and leaving from meeting to meeting.

Open-ended Groups

These are groups that may meet indefinitely, but with a changing membership. People enter and leave throughout the life of the group. The hypertension waiting room group was open-ended. Membership changed as new patients began to use the clinic and other patients were seen with decreasing frequency.

The benefits of open-ended groups include the often welcome stimulation that comes from the entry of new members. Reviewing the group's purpose for the new members helps the others to maintain a focus on the reason they are together. Continuing members can serve as culture bearers and guide new individuals into membership more quickly than it took the original individuals to become a group.

As recognized earlier, the disadvantages of this kind of group include greater difficulty in helping members develop trust and intimacy with each other, and the loss of continuity of the issues being discussed. In open-ended groups, the group development momentum referred to in the discussion of closed groups may be present (Schopler & Galinsky, 1984), but may be less powerful.

Agencies may sometimes establish open-ended groups more because of financial reasons than for benefits to members. The availability of an ongoing group to which clients can be quickly referred is an advantage for an agency dependent on funds from a managed care arrangement. In addition, the possibility of a short-term membership

group experience may be the only option for people whose insurance coverage is only for a few sessions. Unfortunately, this may cause some members to terminate before they have reached the goals they had set for themselves.

Single-session Groups

Single-session groups are those that meet once for a specific, well-defined purpose. They are being increasingly used, especially in medical settings where people with a shared medical crisis can "air complaints, express fears, share information and get support" (Ebenstein, 1999, p. 49). However, single-session groups can be helpful in many situations; for instance, Gladstone and Reynolds (1997) describe their use to deal with stress reduction in the workplace.

This kind of group can be intense and meaningful in itself, and also can provide valuable recruitment opportunities for longer-term groups. If the members find the single meeting helpful, they may be motivated to enter into a continuing group experience. The student could even engage members in planning for such a group. Jim could have experimented with a single session hypertension information group as a way to find members for the group he was trying to organize.

Groups Defined by Content

Many group workers have been asked if their groups were "activity," or "discussion," or even "activity," or "therapy." Both of these are false dichotomies, since activity groups are not silent, and dialogue is not the only path to therapy. This section will examine major aspects of groups described as either discussion groups or activity groups.

Discussion Groups

Social work education includes content on communication in general, and the interview process in particular. The special dimension of communication in groups, however, is the need to focus on helping the members to communicate with each other. It is common for members to begin their group experience by addressing their remarks to the worker, and the student must learn to redirect the communication flow. Group work is not casework with many people at the same time, and it is the mutual aid that results from members interacting with each other that makes that difference. Tom did not realize how fortunate it was that the parents in his group had reached that point.

Activity Groups

Activities serve to promote interaction, creativity, and to develop feelings of personal mastery. Middleman and Wood (1990) say of activity that it

is the driving force for whatever words are exchanged. The talk arises from the action, is about the action, and is mediated by it... some persons know what to do with each other as long as they are busy with play, with a project, or even with chores. (p. 135)

Activity groups are particularly effective with children and other populations whose verbal abilities are not well developed. They may also serve as an effective starting point for work with people who are not yet ready to directly address the painful and possibly to them, shameful, problems they face. For such people, it may be easier to start a relationship around pleasurable experiences rather than focusing on hurts and deficits.

Activities are frequently central to socialization groups which aim to help members attain higher levels of social functioning. The activities can convert the group into a microcosm of daily life. As such, they provide opportunities for engaging people in the group process, and helping them express and understand the aspects of themselves that emerge in the course of natural human interaction. Finally, activities offer pleasurable ways to grow and develop.

Conclusion

Field instructors must help students to understand the many ways groups can be formulated, and the implications of these for the group's working agreement and the group worker's practice interventions. Such an understanding provides both guidelines and options for effective practice. Too often, we hear it said that a certain person is not suited for a group. That cannot be, since all of life occurs with other people. The challenge to students is to determine which kinds of groups can be most helpful to the people they seek to serve.

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