



Contemporary Group Work

Charles Garvin

Second Edition

Contemporary Group Work

CHARLES D. GARVIN

The University of Michigan



Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Garvin, Charles D.

Contemporary group work.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Social group work—United States. I. Title.

HV45.G37 1987

361.4

86-9334

ISBN 0-13-170218-1

Editorial/production supervision: Linda Benson

Cover design: Lundgren Graphics Ltd.

Manufacturing buyer: John Hall



© 1987 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.

A Paramount Communications Company

Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-13-170218-1

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited, *London*

Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, *Sydney*

Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., *Toronto*

Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana, S.A., *Mexico*

Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, *New Delhi*

Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., *Tokyo*

Simon & Schuster Asia Pte. Ltd., *Singapore*

Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., *Rio de Janeiro*

**Contemporary
Group
Work**

DEDICATED TO

***The members of my men's support group
who have taught me much about the meaning
of membership: Richard, Tom, Michael A., Cam,
Peter, Gary, Jim, Michael J., Brian, Mark.***

Preface

This book is intended as an introductory text on group work in social welfare settings. As such its purpose is to help the reader to understand how to select members for groups, facilitate the development of groups through beginning, middle, and ending phases, and evaluate with the members the impact of the group experience. Groups are used for many different reasons in such settings and no one book can convey the range of approaches required for all of these. We, therefore, focus much of our attention on groups established to enhance the functioning of individual members. However, a broad, rather than a narrow, conception of enhancing functioning is intended, so as not to preclude this book's application to work with a variety of groups. Interest groups, committees, educational groups, and representative groups can all have this as a major thrust. In our last chapter we focus on task groups, such as committees. We have, consequently, included content that is applicable to all of these situations.

The selection of content for this book has also been guided by several of the author's convictions. First, the actions of the group worker should be to help the group and its members attain mutually agreed on goals. The first major task of the worker and the members is to determine such goals and then to guide subsequent events by these goals or to revise them accordingly. This premise leads to the second proposition that movement toward goals should be monitored and that the worker and the group should acquire the means to do this. Third, the worker's actions should be based on an understanding of research and theory from the

social sciences, and throughout this book we have included content on monitoring changes and on relevant social science material. Fourth, we believe that social workers with groups should use any effective means that are consistent with social work values and purposes. We, therefore, have incorporated many ideas from other disciplines and professions.

An important approach taken in this book is that learning requires an experiential element that includes carefully structured observations. To assist with this, many chapters conclude with a structured exercise or an observational guide. Throughout the book, we present many practice illustrations; the chapters in Part Three are devoted to applications of group methods in groups formed for different purposes; in addition, each contains detailed practice examples.

While extensive discussions of concepts are presented later, it should be noted that the author utilizes many systemic notions. Thus the idea of the worker as a mediator among members, between members, and the group-as-a-whole, and between the group and external institutions is a view that is maintained throughout the book. Also relevant is a group dynamics approach that views group changes in terms of interactions of forces within as well as outside of the group. Finally, we hold a sociobehavioral view that individual behavior is a consequence of social forces and interactions. Cognitive factors are not overlooked, however, as the author is committed to an approach in which group members determine their own destinies by being guided to awareness of group forces as they affect individual behavior.

The organizing principles of the book are twofold: first, a group developmental approach is taken that views worker and member tasks as occurring differently at each stage of group development. Second, a “functional” approach is taken that sees group development as affected by group purposes and agency functions. For this reason, a typology of such purposes is presented early in the book and forms the major basis for the final chapters.

The book is divided into three parts: Part One is devoted to background material that will help the reader to understand the historical as well as current forces from which contemporary approaches to group work emerged. Part Two presents the group phenomena that occur at different phases of the development of the group and the tasks of workers and members in these phases. These include actions prior to the first group meeting, during the “formation” period, the subsequent sessions when members and workers act to attain member goals, and the termination of the group. The chapters on the worker’s actions are divided into those devoted to changing group, individual, and environmental situations. In a separate chapter ways of evaluating these efforts are presented.

Part Three presents the ways group services differ when purposes differ. The chapters in this part utilize the frameworks developed earlier in the book as a way of presenting variations in group development as related to group purpose.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout my years as a practicing group worker, supervisor of this practice, and trainer of social work students, the ideas of a number of people have been of

great benefit to me. First, I wish to acknowledge the debt I owe to my first supervisors of group work practice, Edna Hansen and Rose Cohn; second, to such writers as Robert Vinter and William Schwartz, who on many occasions encouraged and supported my development and who undoubtedly found places where they saw that I benefitted as well as strayed from their contrasting inputs. The work of revising this book was greatly helped by the constructive suggestions from Beulah Rothman.

Next, I owe much to my colleagues at the University of Michigan and particularly to such fellow group work teachers as Harvey Bertcher, Sallie Churchill, Charles Wolfson, and Frank Maple. Of great importance to this work is its typology of group purpose, developed jointly with Paul Glasser.

Finally, all of the ideas here have been expressed, critiqued, and often changed in interaction with social work students. They and their experiences have been a major stimulus for everything I have written.

Contents

PREFACE

xv

Part One

The Background of Group Services

1

CONTEMPORARY GROUP WORK: AN OVERVIEW 1

The Organizational and Environmental
Approach 2

*Clarification of Purpose. Focus on Goals.
A Mutual Aid System. Evaluation of Practice.
Worker Tasks. Values.*

Differing Approaches to Practice 6

Influences Beyond Social Work 9

*Criteria for Use. Approaches Utilizing or
Originating from Psychoanalysis. Approaches
Utilizing or Originating from Social Psychological*

<i>Theories. Approaches Developed from Educational-Psychological Frameworks.</i>	
<i>Approaches Developed from Social Movements.</i>	
Similarities and Differences Among Approaches	19
<i>William Schwartz. Robert Vinter. Emanuel Tropp. Alan Klein. Margaret Hartford.</i>	
<i>Boston University School of Social Work. Helen Northen. Behavioral Group Work.</i>	
Summary	23

2

GROUP WORK ACTIVITIES AND SETTINGS 24

The Significance of the Agency	24
Group Work History	25
<i>The Emergence of Group Work: 1861 to 1927.</i>	
<i>Clarification of the Method: 1928 to 1946. The Diffusion of Practice: 1947 to 1963. The Move to the Generic Method: 1964 to 1979. The Revitalization of Group Work: 1979 and After.</i>	
Agency Conditions that Affect Group Work	35
<i>Why Agencies Establish Groups. How Members Are Referred to or Recruited for the Groups. What Are the Status and Role of the Group Worker in the Agency. Which Resources Do Agencies Allocate to the Group. How Targets for Change Are Selected by Agencies. What Effect Agencies Have on Groups' Social and Physical Environment. How Agencies Interact with Groups' Indigenous Leaders. What Are Agencies' Attitudes to Service Ideologies and Technologies. How Intraorganizational Relationships Affect Groups.</i>	
A Typology of Agency Purposes	43
<i>Subpurposes. Anomie Reduction. Role Attainment. Social Control. Alternative Role Attainment.</i>	
Summary	50
Exercise: Assessing an Agency's Effect on Group Work	51

Part Two

The Phases of Work

3

THE PREGROUP PHASE 54

Group Purposes	55
----------------	----

	<i>Needs Assessment. Organizational Functions and Group Purpose.</i>
Group Composition	58
	<i>Purpose and Group Composition. Ethnicity and Gender. Group Cohesiveness and Composition. Deviance and Group Composition. Program Activity and Group Composition. Assessing Members in Relationship to Group Composition. Selection of Worker or Co-Worker. Selection of Candidates for Groups.</i>
Preparing for Groups	72
	<i>Preparing Members for the Group. Group Size. Preparing the Physical and Social Setting. Type of Group.</i>
Summary	77
Group Composition Exercise	78

4

BEGINNING A GROUP 80

Process of Group Formation	81
Decisions on Group Purpose	81
Assessment in Groups	82
Determination of Norms	84
Emotional Reactions to Group Formation	86
Relationship of Group Worker to Members	87
	<i>Empathy. Genuineness. Warmth.</i>
Relationships among Members	90
	<i>Seeking Similarities. Talking to Each Other. Reducing Distortions. Careful Listening.</i>
Group Structure During Formation	91
	<i>Types of Structures. Structural Changes.</i>
Individual and Group Goals	95
The Group Work Contract	96
Problems in Group Beginnings	98
Summary	100
Group Formation Exercise	100

5

ACHIEVING GROUP PURPOSES THROUGH CHANGES IN GROUP CONDITIONS 106

Actions of the Group Worker	106
-----------------------------	-----

Assessment of Group Conditions 109

Middle Phases of Group Development. Group Structures. Group Processes. Group Culture. Group Resources. Extragroup Transactions. Group Boundaries. Group Climate.

The Modification of Group Conditions 121

Modifying Conditions through Individuals. Modifying Group Conditions through Subgroups. Modifying Group Conditions through the Whole Group. Modifying Group Conditions through Influences from the Environment. Employing the Model for Changing Group Conditions.

Summary 142

Group Development Exercise 143

Program Exercise 146

6

ACHIEVING INDIVIDUAL CHANGE THROUGH GROUPS 149

One-to-One Interactions 150

The Individual as Target of Group Interventions 156

*Factors Affecting Use of Group.
Techniques for Changing Individual Perceptions
Techniques for Changing Individual Cognitions.
Techniques for Changing Individual Affects.
Techniques for Changing Individual Actions.
Techniques for Helping Individuals Solve
Problems. Techniques for Structuring the
Member's Role.*

Phases of Individual Change 165

Environmental Interactions 168

Worker's Roles.

Summary 171

Individual Change through Groups Exercises 172

7

GROUP WORK AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE 175

Rationale for Environmental Change 175

*Interaction with Environment. Labeling Process.
Choosing New Environments and Transactions.*

Selection of Environmental Targets	178
<i>Choosing the System. Choosing the "Level."</i>	
Strategies for Environmental Change	180
<i>Environmental Change Activities Solely for Individuals. Environmental Change Activities Employed by Individuals and Groups. Environmental Change Activities Employed by Groups.</i>	
Summary	187
Environmental Change Exercise	187

8

THE EVALUATION OF GROUP WORK PRACTICE 190

Evaluation of Individual Change of Group Members	192
<i>Evaluation Design. Measurement Techniques.</i>	
Evaluation of Changes in Group Conditions	200
<i>Measurement Techniques.</i>	
Evaluation of Environmental Changes	207
<i>Measurement Techniques.</i>	
Summary	210
Group Work Recording Exercise	210

9

THE GROUP AND ENDINGS 211

Meanings of Endings	211
Worker Tasks	213
Evaluation	214
<i>Members' Evaluation of the Group. Members' Evaluation of the Worker.</i>	
Understand and Cope with Feelings	216
Maintain Changes	218
Utilize Skills in a Variety of Circumstances	220
Utilize New Services	221
Reduce Cohesion	222
Ceremonies	222
Special Termination Issues	222
Summary	224
Termination Exercise	224

Part Three
Variations in Practice

10

WORKING WITH GROUPS TO REDUCE ANOMIE 227

- Pregroup Tasks 228
- Group Formation Tasks 230
- Group Pursuit Tasks 232
- Evaluation 236
- An Example 237
- Summary 239

11

WORKING WITH GROUPS TO ENHANCE ROLE ATTAINMENT 240

- Pregroup Tasks 241
- Group Formation Tasks 243
- Goal Pursuit Tasks 247
- Evaluation 251
- An Example 251
- Summary 253

12

WORKING WITH GROUPS IN SOCIAL CONTROL SITUATIONS 254

- Pregroup Tasks 257
- Group Formation Tasks 259
- Goal Pursuit Tasks 261
- Evaluation 265
- An Example 266
- Summary 268

13

WORKING WITH GROUPS FOR ALTERNATIVE ROLE ATTAINMENT 269

Pregroup Tasks 270

Group Formation Tasks 272

Goal Pursuit Tasks 274

*Minimal Skill Training Groups. Group
Psychotherapy. Activity Groups. Transition
Groups. Patient Government Groups.*

Evaluation 281

An Example 283

Summary 284

14

WORKING WITH OPPRESSED PEOPLE IN GROUPS 285

Pregroup Tasks 289

Group Formation Tasks 293

Goal Pursuit Tasks 294

Evaluation 297

An Example 298

Summary 300

15

WORKING WITH COMMITTEES AND OTHER TASK GROUPS 301

Pregroup Tasks 303

Group Formation Tasks 306

Goal Pursuit Tasks 308

Evaluation 312

An Example 313

Summary 315

BIBLIOGRAPHY 317

INDEX 326

1

Contemporary Group Work: An Overview

Group work, as a social work method, has evolved and changed in the half century since its origin. These changes are the result of altered circumstances, increased knowledge, and an expansion in the number and variety of practice settings. A consensus has developed during this period as to what constitutes social work with groups although different practice models have been created and coexist within this broad consensus.

In the first two chapters of this book we shall provide information on the history of group practice so that the reader might gain a better understanding of the ideas that unify, as well as divide, practitioners of this social-work method. This chapter will present our approach to group work and how it relates to other workers, from both inside and outside the field of social work.

In a recent article, Middleman and Goldberg describe the essential elements of social work with groups.¹ They state that the first element is that the worker “must focus on helping members to become a system of mutual aid.” The main source of help for each member in the group is seen as coming from other members, individually and collectively. A major task of the social worker, consequently, is to assist members to understand this and to work to create a group where mutual aid can and does occur. The specific techniques used by the worker to contribute to this task will be described throughout the book.

¹Ruth Middleman and Gale Goldberg, “Social Group Work,” in *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (New York: National Association of Social Workers, forthcoming).

The second element of social work with groups is that the worker understands and makes use of group processes and helps the members to do the same. We shall have much more to say about group process later in the book. At this point, the reader should understand that we are speaking of the unfolding of events in the group as members solve problems together, express feelings to and toward each other, evolve a pattern of relationships, and influence each other. Group processes can be very powerful forces for the members and may or may not be beneficial in helping members attain their goals. The tasks of the worker are to support processes that are beneficial, to diminish those that are not, and to help members of the group to do the same.

The third element cited by Middleman and Goldberg is that the worker strives to enhance the ability of the members to function more and more autonomously as individuals and as a group. They view the worker to be easing him or herself “out of a job.” To function autonomously may be feasible in some situations as when groups continue wholly on a “self-help” basis; in other situations this may not be possible, at least in the short run during the “life” of the group.

Middleman and Goldberg cite a fourth element which they describe as helping the members to “re-experience their groupness at the point of termination.” We view this as part of the third element in that all of life’s experiences have beginnings, middles, and endings and members are helped to understand and to cope with this when they become conscious of the unfolding of these phases of the group. We believe, therefore, that members should be helped, as much as possible, to understand their group experience as a means of dealing with the many other group experiences they have faced and will face in their lives.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACH

Our practice model was developed from the model generated by Vinter and his colleagues at the University of Michigan.² This extension of the ideas of Vinter and others was originally described by Glasser and Garvin, who sought to develop principles to guide effective practice in the broad variety of social welfare agencies that now sponsor group services.³ Their model, termed “an organizational and environmental approach,” incorporates a diversity of practice procedures by declaring that the purpose or purposes for which the group is established determines the way the members will respond to their group experience and the way the worker will work with the group.

²Martin Sundel, Paul H. Glasser, Rosemary Sarri, and Robert Vinter, eds., *Individual Change Through Small Groups*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1985).

³Paul J. Glasser and Charles D. Garvin, “An Organizational Model,” in *Theories of Social Work with Groups*, eds., Robert W. Roberts and Helen Northen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 75–115.