

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO
THE UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK
AS A METHOD OF INTERVENTION
IN SOCIAL WORK**

by

Lulama Ida Qalinge-Okoro

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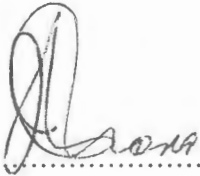
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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in social work at the University of North West, Faculty of Social Sciences hereby submitted, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, and that it is my own original work and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lulu Qalinge-Okoro', is written above a horizontal dotted line.

Lulu Qalinge-Okoro (Mrs)

November 1998

(i)

ABSTRACT

Social group work as a method in social work is based on the premise that people experiencing similarities of psychosocial problems, similarity of need for help, and experiencing stress; if placed in a limited size group over a period of time, under the guidance of a professional social worker, tend to automatically interact. There is evidence that through interaction, they will discover the commonality of their situation or problems. This discovery will result in mutual identification which over time will result in a group bond where members develop a "we - feeling". The "we - feeling" or group bond facilitates the development of resources such as mutual support, mutual control, identification, generalization, collective power and integration of solutions. Hence, social group work is based on the concept of peer support and mutual-aid of and by the group members. The rationale for the use of social group work is based on the commonality of need to receive support, and stimulus in developing self-awareness. Solidarity and mutual aid becomes the core of social group work. Group work can therefore be looked at as a process where mutual aid is central and maximized. It is this solidarity and mutual-aid that makes social group work a more prominent helping model as compared to social casework or one to one intervention.

In the new South Africa, the current scenario in the welfare field is on the developmental approach based on human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy, mutual responsibility and cooperation. With this turn of events, social workers are confronted with the challenge of finding new methods and approaches of mobilizing change in order to raise the living standards of all citizens.

This study therefore seeks to show that group work is an important method which is central to all aspects undertaken by the social work profession.

The study further endeavoured to establish reasons why social group work (valuable as it may be) does not seem to be receiving the emphasis it deserves as a social work method.

A descriptive design using both qualitative and quantitative approach was used in the study. A sample of 109 respondents from the social workers employed in welfare agencies/organisations constituted the major survey, while 25 welfare agencies/organisations as well as 17 social work training institutions were selected to obtain more indepth information.

The samples for the study was drawn from all the nine provinces that make up South Africa. Questionnaires and interviews were the major tools used for data collection.

Literature review covering various aspects on development, professionalization and utilization of the group work method both in South Africa and internationally was integrated into the study.

The central findings, indicated that:- group work is under utilized as a method of intervention in social work agencies/organisations although it has a great potential of success in meeting a variety of clients' needs both as individuals, groups and communities; that most social work agencies/organisations are still not developmentally oriented as more emphasis continues to be placed on casework which has become synonymous with social work;

that the effective utilization of group work in service delivery can facilitate the aims of the RDP. This flows from the realization that group work and community work or community development have much in common in that both methods are developmental in their application.

Against the highlighted findings, recommendations are that:-

- agencies need to move away from over identification with case work and focus on action oriented methods. In service training on such action oriented method is essential.
- The nexus between group work, community work and the RDP is to be realized and utilized to improve service delivery.

(ii)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION

		PAGE
1.1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.2	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	3
1.3	OBJECTIVES	6
1.4	ASSUMPTIONS	8
1.5	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	8
1.6	RESEARCH DOMAIN	12
1.7	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	15
1.7.1	Research Design	15
1.7.2	Methods of data collection	17
1.7.2.1	Survey Design	17
1.7.2.2	Structured Interview	19
1.7.2.3	Literature Survey	20
1.7.2.4	Conference	21
1.8	SAMPLING	22
1.8.1	Sample Selection	23
1.8.1.1	Sample Selection of social workers in S.A.	23
1.8.1.2	Sample Selection of welfare agencies/organisations	25
1.8.1.3	Social work departments of S.A. Universities	25
1.9	ANALYSIS OF DATA	25
1.10	LIMITATIONS	26
1.11	PILOT STUDY	27
1.12	DEFINITION OF CENTRAL TERMS	28

NWU
LIBRARY

	PAGE
1.13 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT	30

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL GROUP WORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION	33
2.2 HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN S.A.	35
2.2.1 Introduction	
2.2.2 Social Welfare Development in S.A.	36
2.3 HISTORICAL VIEW OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK	41
2.3.1 Introduction	41
2.3.2 Group work and the international scene	42
2.3.3 Professionalization of Social Group Work	44
2.4 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL WORK WITH GROUPS IN S.A.	46
2.4.1 Introduction	46
2.4.2 Development of Social Group Work	47
2.5 CONCLUSION	49

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL GROUP WORK AS A METHOD OF INTER- VENTION IN SOCIAL WORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION	51
3.2 THE GROUP AS A SYSTEM	54

	PAGE
1.13 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT	30

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL GROUP WORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION	33
2.2 HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN S.A.	35
2.2.1 Introduction	
2.2.2 Social Welfare Development in S.A.	36
2.3 HISTORICAL VIEW OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK	41
2.3.1 Introduction	41
2.3.2 Group work and the international scene	42
2.3.3 Professionalization of Social Group Work	44
2.4 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL WORK WITH GROUPS IN S.A.	46
2.4.1 Introduction	46
2.4.2 Development of Social Group Work	47
2.5 CONCLUSION	49

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL GROUP WORK AS A METHOD OF INTER- VENTION IN SOCIAL WORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION	51
3.2 THE GROUP AS A SYSTEM	54

	PAGE	
3.3	GROUP WORK AND THE SPONSORING AGENCY	58
3.4	GROUP WORK AND SOCIAL WORK CODE OF ETHICS	60
3.5	SOCIAL GROUP WORK AND MUTUAL-AID	66
3.6	IMPORTANCE OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP IN EVERYDAY LIFE	70
3.7	GROUP VERSUS INDIVIDUAL EFFORT	72
3.8	RELEVANCE OF GROUP WORK METHOD TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCENE	76
3.9	GROUP WORK PRACTICE IN BLACK COMMUNITIES	80
3.10	CONCLUSION	82

CHAPTER 4

THE CONTRIBUTION OF GROUP WORK TOWARDS COMMUNITY WORK AND CASE WORK

4.1	INTRODUCTION	83
4.2	GROUP WORK AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORK	85
4.2.1	The interplay between social group work and community work	85
4.2.2	Group work as an empowerment tool in community work	88
4.2.3	Group Training in community work	91
4.2.4	The importance of Task Groups in community work	94

		PAGE
4.2.5	The Schizm within community work and group work	97
4.3	THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOCIAL GROUP WORK AND SOCIAL CASE WORK	101
4.3.1	Case work - group work approach to chronic medical illness	104
4.4	CONCLUSION	107

CHAPTER 5

GROUP WORK AS A PREVENTIVE, REHABILITATIVE AND DEVELOPMENTAL TOOL:- A CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

5.1	INTRODUCTION	109
5.2	PREVENTION IN SOCIAL WORK	110
5.2.1	The concept of prevention	110
5.2.2	Types or levels of prevention	113
5.2.2.1	Primary prevention	113
5.2.2.2	Secondary prevention	114
5.2.2.3	Tertiary prevention	115
5.2.3	Group work in prevention	115
5.2.4	Strategies for prevention	119
5.3	REHABILITATION IN SOCIAL WORK	128
5.3.1	The concept rehabilitation	128
5.3.2	Social Work and Rehabilitation	130
5.3.3	Rehabilitation programs	133

	PAGE
5.3.4	Group work in Rehabilitation 135
5.3.5	Rehabilitation and the South African Political Scenario 139
5.4	DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL WORK 143
5.4.1	The Concept development 144
5.4.2	Social work and development 147
5.4.3	Group work and Social development 150
5.5	CONCLUSION 153

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

6.1	INTRODUCTION 154
6.2	RESPONSE RATE 155
6.3	EMPERICAL FINDINGS FROM REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS 157
6.3.1	Characteristics of respondents 157
6.4	PROFILE OF AGENCIES EMPLOYING RESPONDENTS 161
6.5	UTILIZATION OF THE DIRECT METHODS OF INTERVENTION 166
6.6	REASONS FOR NON/UNDER UTILIZATION OF GROUP WORK 171
6.6.1	Understaffing and high case loads 172
6.6.2	Group work is not considered as important as case work and community work 174

	PAGE	
6.6.3	Groups are time consuming because of the difficulty related in putting a group together and maintaining it	177
6.6.4	Lack of facilities/resources and lack of support from agencies	178
6.7	PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING GROUP WORK TRAINING	180
6.8	PERSONAL FEELINGS TOWARDS THE USE OF GROUPS	187
6.9	ATTITUDES OF SOCIAL WORKERS TOWARDS THE UTILIZATION OF GROUP WORK AS AN INTERVENTIVE METHOD	189
6.10	PERCEPTIONS OF RESPONDENTS REGARDING THE CONTRIBUTION OF GROUP WORK IN RDP	198
6.10.1	The utilization of the group work method in RDP	199
6.10.2	Aims of RDP	201
6.10.2.1	Womens Issues	203
6.10.2.2	Community Participation	205
6.10.2.3	Health Care/Nutrition	207
6.10.2.4	Social Welfare	209
6.10.2.5	Housing, environment and reticulation services	211
6.11	CONCLUSION	212

CHAPTER 7

WELFARE AGENCIES/ORGANISATIONS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE UTILIZATION OF GROUP WORK IN SERVICE DELIVERY

	PAGE	
7.1	INTRODUCTION	213
7.2	PROFILE OF AGENCIES INTERVIEWED	214
7.3	EXTENT OF GROUP WORK UTILIZATION	215
7.4	NATURE OF GROUPS COMMONLY USED IN AGENCIES	216
7.5	BENEFITS DERIVED FROM UTILIZATION OF GROUP WORK	218
7.5.1	Cost effectiveness	220
7.5.2	Clients learn to communicate, positively compare, identify with each other, and enjoy mutual support	220
7.5.3	Groups empower members	220
7.5.4	Emphasis on self-help	221
7.5.5	Members have an opportunity to ventilate	222
7.5.6	Group members gain social skills	223
7.5.7	Broadening of insight and interpersonal relations and self-confidence	223
7.5.8	Groups facilitate potential for change	224
7.6	REASONS WHY GROUP WORK IS NOT UTILIZED IN WELFARE AGENCIES	224
7.7	PROSPECTS OF INTRODUCING THE USE OF GROUPS IN AGENCIES	229
7.8	QUESTIONS POSED TO AGENCIES THAT DO/NOT UTILIZE GROUPS	230
7.8.1	Issues taken into consideration in the appointment of social workers	230

		PAGE
7.8.2	How group work can help bridge the gap between micro and macro social work	233
7.8.3	Correlation between group work and RDP	233
7.9	CONCLUSION	235

CHAPTER 8

GROUP WORK TRAINING

8.1	INTRODUCTION	236
8.2	SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT OF THE TRAINING INSTITUTIONS	238
8.3	AVERAGE LECTURES OFFERED PER WEEK PER METHOD	240
8.4	PREPARATION OF STUDENTS FOR GROUP MEMBERSHIP	243
8.5	SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS ON BLOCK PLACEMENT	245
8.6	ATTITUDES OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS TOWARD GROUP WORK	246
8.6.1	Students' positive attitudes towards group work	247
8.6.2	Students prefer case work and community work over group work	248
8.6.3	Students consider group work to be too tedious and complicated	249
8.6.4	Students show equal interest in all the three primary methods	250

	PAGE	
8.7	THE PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATORS WITH REGARDS TO THE UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK	249
8.7.1	Social workers/agencies still place more emphasis on case work	251
8.7.2	Practitioners consider group work to be too demanding and time consuming	252
8.7.3	Practitioners are resistant to group work and also do not view it as important	253
8.7.4	Lack of confidence	253
8.8	CONCLUSION	257



CHAPTER 9

MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1	INTRODUCTION	258
9.2	RECAPITULATION OF THE OBJECTIVES	258
9.3	LITERATURE ON GROUP WORK	259
9.4	PROFILE OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORKERS	263
9.5	PROFILE OF SOUTH AFRICAN WELFARE AGENCIES/INSTITUTIONS	263
9.6	UTILIZATION OF THE DIRECT METHODS OF INTERVENTION	264
9.6.1	Over identification with Case work	265
9.6.2	Understaffing	266
9.6.3	Agencies are not supportive to group establishment	267

	PAGE	
9.6.4	Lack of proper groupwork training	267
9.6.5	Race and Culture	279
9.7	GROUP WORK AND THE RDP	270
9.8	RECOMMENDATIONS	271
10.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	279
11.	ANNEXURES	

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. A A - Alcoholic Anonymous
2. APGA - American Personnel and Guidance Association
3. ASWG - Association For The Advancement of Social Work with
Groups.
4. HSRC - Human Science Research Council
5. JUC - Joint Universities Committee
6. RDP - Reconstruction and Development Programme
7. S.A. - South Africa

LIST OF TABLES/FIGURES

		PAGE
Table 1	a	Welfare agencies where respondents are employed 157
	b	Years of service/experience of respondents 158
	c	Qualifications of social workers 158
Table 2	(a)	Location of agencies 162
	(b)	Age of agencies/years of existence 162
	(c)	Social workers employed per agency 163
	(d)	Number of clients served by agencies per day 163
	(e)	Number of clients served by individual social workers per day 164
Table 4		Reasons advanced by respondents for non-utilization of group work method 172
Table 5		Exposure of methods to students during training 182
Table 6		Confidence in handling groups 185
Table 7		Reasons contributing to confidence 185
Table 9		Personal feelings towards groups
Table 10	(a)	Attitudes of respondents regarding benefits derived from group work 191
	(b)	Attitudes of respondents regarding constraints in utilizing group work 192
	(c)	Composite picture regarding the utilization of group work 193

	PAGE
Table 11	Aims of RDP in relation to group work 202
Table 12	Extent of group work utilization 215
Table 13	Nature of groups commonly used in agencies 216
Table 14	Benefits derived from the utilization of group work 218
Table 15	Issues taken into consideration in appointing social workers 231
Table 16	Number of universities offering social work primary methods at different levels 239
Table 17	(a) Average number of theoretical lectures per week per year of study 241
	(b) Average number of hours per week for fieldwork by method 241
Table 18	Attitudes of social work students towards group work 247
Table 19	Reasons advanced by social work educators for under utilization of group work 251
Figure 1	Frequency of utilization of the primary methods by individual social workers 168
Figure 2	Interest of social workers in the use of primary methods 169
Figure 3	Utilization of the three primary methods by different welfare/institutions/organisations 169
Figure 4	(a) Exposure of respondents to group membership during training 180
	(b) Exposure of respondents to group leadership during training 181

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social Group Work is one of the primary methods of social work, the other two methods being casework and community work.

For a social worker to be an effective service deliverer, she/he needs to be well acquainted or grounded with all the three primary methods since the methods tend to complement each other e.g. to counteract high case loads of a similar nature such as marital dispute, or homelessness, a social caseworker may deem it necessary to form a group or to refer these clients to a social group worker who will deal with all clients in a group situation. In a group situation, members identifying through interaction that they experience similar problems will automatically share thoughts, ideas, experiences and integration of solutions. These very same groups could be utilized on a larger scale e.g. they could in turn develop into task groups or self-help groups which could permeate the larger community in the form of organizing community forums where communities could be educated and concientized on how to improve their marriages or informed about healthy family relationships, i.e. community awareness.

With social work adapting itself to the challenges of the new South Africa, the focus of the profession needs to be directed from the medical or clinical approach to developmental work with

empowerment and capacity building taking the highest priority. Social group work as a method in social work appears to be the most relevant method or strategy through which communities can be empowered since common needs, concerns or interests provide the foundation for support groups which could facilitate mutual aid and empowerment. Mabetoa (1993:20) contends that in social work the major method that is used to empower people is group work. The essence of group work is the co-ordination of the various potential mutual help and support systems and other collective efforts of community members to provide for their own needs. Konopka in Allisi (1997:4) further asserts that group work as a method in social work has a capacity for working with people in any field of human endeavour, from community development to education, to therapy, to work with offenders. It is an entity that provides a bond among equals, can have the strength to achieve community good and at the same time, can increase the individuality and creativity of each person within it. Gitterman (1984:18) complements the above authors in indicating that groups can be formed around the following:- (a) typical life stresses i.e. problems-in-living that people experience, (b) life transitional networking including forming groups to deal with common issues and concerns such as teenage pregnancies, single parenthood etc; (c) difficult life statuses e.g. homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy etc; (d) desired and undesired life-changes e.g. marital disputes, divorce, parenthood, old-age etc, (e) environmental networking e.g. advocating for proper sanitation, water reticulation, parents of retarded children etc.

1.2

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Group work is a goal directed activity with people in small groups. It is basically aimed at meeting socio-emotional needs of members. Group work rests on the notion that man is a social being and possesses an inherent social nature. For survival, man must interact with other human beings to satisfy his basic needs. Hence man relies on membership of various types of groups for the satisfaction of his basic needs, including those for emotional warmth, shelter, self actualization, learning etc. (McKendrick, 1987).

According to Sandra Drower in McKendrick (1987:76) survival is linked to the interrelationships formed among human beings, starting with the family. It is through initial socialization into the family group followed by other group experiences such as the peer group, the classroom group and the work group, that psychological health is developed and maintained throughout the life cycle. Hence it is quite evident that since the individual interacts most of his time in groups, many of his problems and misconceptions are likely to emanate from these very interactions. Due to this fact coupled with the importance of healthy group experience, it is acknowledged that many such difficulties are most purposefully resolved with a controlled structured group system. This is the basic rationale for using groups as a method of intervention in social work practice.

Based on the above rationale, social group work needs to be viewed as a basic method which caters for the individual, group and the

community. In essence, group work compliments the other two primary methods i.e. case work and community work. It is therefore the live wire of the social work practice.

It is however, greatly disturbing professionally that through observation and interaction with professional social workers, it has been evident that group work is the least practised method of social work in South Africa, and as well as in other countries e.g. England and America. For example, this concern was confirmed during an in-service training arranged by the then Orange Free State Provincial Administration in 1990 for practising social workers. The objective of the in-service training was to expose practising social workers to different skills in running groups. From the fifty social workers who attended the in-service training only four social workers were involved in running groups. Other social workers expressed that group work was time consuming and that some or many agencies viewed group work as an expensive exercise. Further, it has been evident through students records (i.e. part time social work students in full time employment in South Africa) as well as full-time students with which the researcher has been involved for more than ten years as both a teacher and field work supervisor that social workers always avoid serving individuals through groups. To add to this, third and fourth year social work students are required to do block placement for a period of five weeks and three months respectively in agencies throughout South Africa. From students' reports i.e. from 105 students who were on block placement in 1994/1995 only 10 students were exposed to group work. Even those students placed in hospitals or

health care centres confirmed that health care professionals like nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists etc. are involved in running groups with patients but not social workers.

The same sentiments were expressed at the 1994 symposium hosted by the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups in Hartford, Connecticut. The association expressed the need for the formation of regional liaisons to put group work back in the stream of social work practice by improving group work input in the social work curriculum.



In the 1993 Social Work with Groups Newsletter (Vol. 14/1) Larry Shulman, indicates that the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups has been documenting over the past few years a disturbing and ironic trend in which group work method skills in schools of social work appear to be diminishing. He further contends that the unintended consequence of a shift towards generalist education has been the diminishing of attention to the specific and unique group work skills required to lead groups. This is apparent in the disappearance of unique and required group work courses in the curriculum of American Universities.

Larry Shulman (1993:13) further emphasises that "our association has also noted a trend in which the group work faculty specialist appears to becoming a dying breed. As a result, we are fearful that the trinity of methods upon which the social work profession was based (i.e. casework, group work and community organization) may be losing one

of its important elements in the movement towards two streams... clinical and macro practice. We have also noticed that other related professions, like psychology, nursing etc, are already moving to establish their own claim to working with groups which have traditionally been led by professional social workers”.

In South Africa, Social Work Practice which is a professional social work journal published by the Department of Welfare, Pretoria, portrays that little or no research has been done in group work. This is evident from the fact that there are no articles published portraying any information on work done with groups e.g. an inset in the November 1992 journal issue 3.92 indicated that from November 1983 - November 1992 there is absolutely no article published on group work. From January 1993 up to November 1996 only one article appeared in the journal on group work. The trend tends to indicate that social workers are not involved in running groups or doing any research in group work.

Group work gradually seems to lose its place in social work. This fact has also been confirmed by Joan Parry (1992:18) of San Jose State University when she posed the following question, “Where is social work with groups today?” she further stressed that work with groups is gradually sinking into oblivion.

1.3

OBJECTIVES

The prime objectives of the study are:-

- 1.3.1 To explore and describe the use/utilization of social group work as a method of intervention in welfare agencies/institutions and State Department.
- 1.3.2 To analyse factors affecting the lack of interest or attitudes of social workers towards the use of groups in social work practice.
- 1.3.3 To gain insight into the education and training of social workers with regard to group work.
- 1.3.4 To explore and describe how group work can facilitate the achievement of RDP goals and objectives.
- 1.3.5 To propose guidelines to welfare agencies and training institutions on how group work could effectively be utilized to improve service delivery to facilitate developmental social work in the following ways:-
- (a) The development of effective team work that enhances group work interventions;
 - (b) Work with agencies about how clients and agency needs can be effectively met in groups; and
 - (c) Work to develop skills, knowledge and understanding about group work in agencies through in-service training.

1.4 ASSUMPTIONS

The researcher assume that:

- 1.4.1 group work is under utilized in social work practice.
- 1.4.2 the effective utilization of group work will improve social service delivery.

This assumption is based on the notion that:-

- (a) group work has a valuable contribution in developmental social work;
- (b) the effective utilization of group work will:-
 - relieve social workers of high case loads
 - facilitate empowerment of communities
 - create positive climate for community participation

- 1.4.2 The effective utilization of group work will facilitate successful implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There has not been, to the writer's knowledge, much empirical research conducted in South Africa on the utilization of social group work. Therefore, the writer considers the study justified and necessary

in that it attempts to identify and clarify speculations surrounding the use of groups in the social work profession.

The study conducted by Van Rooyen (1996) titled "Curriculum Development : suggestions from social workers in KwaZulu Natal" proved that group work is one of the most useful methods in social work practice. For example case work was rated by 23.3% of the respondents as a most useful course, group work 34.4% and community work 28.8%. Van Rooyen (1996) indicated that it is particularly noteworthy that group work was seen by over a third of the respondents as being the course that respondents found to be of most use to them once they were in practice. This according to Van Rooyen (1996) is interesting in that group work is often considered to be one of the least used methods of social work practice, and that the issue would be a fertile area for further research related to the application of group work in the current social work context.

The study also seeks to highlight the important issues in group work that can help facilitate better service delivery in social work practice. Of most importance is the issue that effective utilization of group work can help relieve social workers of high case loads and also ensure participation of communities in policy making, planning and project implementation e.g. task groups, empowerment groups, social action groups etc.

Therapeutic forces in groups can contribute much to empowerment of the disadvantaged in South Africa. Empowerment implies that people

will have the opportunity to participate in a responsible manner in the process of deciding on the range of needs and problems that affect them. As the RDP stresses, development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement of people in matters that shape their own lives. The researcher assumes that such can amongst others be achieved through social workers' involvement by facilitating establishment of mutual aid groups, empowerment groups, self-help groups, social action groups, community forum groups etc.

In the post-apartheid era in the new South Africa considerable value can be drawn from cross-cultural social work with groups. The great differences between and amongst the rainbow people hamper the abode in one country. To understand each other as human beings, to assist in warding off racial conflict and to eradicate backlogs South Africans will have to learn soon to make adequate use of group work.

According to Osei-Hwedie, (1996:4), current development suggests that the social work profession needs to mobilize skills and resources in a more creative way to reach a wider segment of the population. Also it must be able to address issues such as racial, ethnic and cultural uniqueness. Such issues cannot be addressed on one to one basis, and also cannot be addressed through large community forums. The only possible manner is through exposing people to small groups where they can have an opportunity to exchange views, share ideas, share in decision making etc. In such groups discussions on socio-cultural intervention can be facilitated. At the socio-cultural level,

group workers should strive to create an atmosphere where structures accommodate diverse cultures to enable them to share in social rewards, and help in creating institutions that accommodate a variety of cultures. Osei-Hwedie (1996:6) further indicates that to meet the needs of multicultural situations and to develop the necessary skills and value orientation, group workers as social workers must perform several tasks including determining and outlining potential areas of interface between the cultures that may act as connecting doorways between them; identifying the core of conflict and their negative consequences; designing processes and guidelines for dealing with conflicts; educating people on the significant characteristics, values, and needs of other cultures; and promoting greater flexibility and adjustment within and among different cultures and their institutions. This in short constitutes creating groups directed at creating cultural awareness and greater cultural sensitivity in order to reduce the problems of socio-cultural dissonance.

The RDP further emphasises that special attention must be paid to the youth. Secondly our youth have suddenly been plunged into an integrated system of education. Deep seated racial attitudes still prevail. Effective utilization of groups can be implemented to help the youth to solve and clarify their problems at the personal and familial level as well as in their immediate environment. Groups can facilitate youth empowerment through sharing of views, experiences and concerns. They will enjoy mutual support, identification, generalization and integration of solutions as well as collective power. Group programmes for training, education and income generating self-

help groups will enable our youth to play a full role in the reconstruction and development of our society.

Our country is plagued by high rate of illiteracy. Adults cannot go back behind the desk to be educated. What they need is education for life. Education for life according to Elaine Cosser (1991:17) is all about a holistic education, an education which allows people to develop into full participants in their communities. Such education can be facilitated through education groups where adults teach themselves what they think is relevant to their own peculiar situations. This holistic education cannot be achieved singly or in isolation hence the importance of groups and cooperatives.

The researcher is of the opinion that with effective utilization of education oriented groups, growth groups, remedial groups, human developmental potential can be enhanced.

1.6. RESEARCH DOMAIN : SOUTH AFRICA

This section espouses to present a brief historical background of the area in which the study was undertaken i.e. South Africa. This, according to the researcher is very important since the historical background of the research domain has great impact on the history of social work as will be discussed in Chapter 2.

According to the National African Congress (1994:2) the history of South Africa has been a daunting one dominated for ages by

colonialism, racism, sexism, apartheid and of course repressive labour policies, which eventually resulted in people living in abject poverty, illiteracy and degradation of the Black population.

South Africa prior to independence was divided into "white classified areas" and the so called Bantustans or Homelands. The former mainly comprised towns, large metropolitan areas, whilst the latter comprised of rural barren land which was relegated to the Blacks or "Bantu's" as they were then known. South Africa was actually paradoxically described as comprising of both the first world and third world.

Verwoerd, the then Prime Minister was the mastermind that entrenched separate development in South Africa. Instead of forming one united South African society, he reinforced that Blacks were not part of South Africa, and each ethnic group was attached to a separate homeland where, in Verwoerd's words, they could develop "full independence". This was the beginning of the Bantustan policy promulgated under the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959.

For almost 18 years the "self governing states" or homelands performed a whole range of governmental functions under the supervision of the white South African domination. The impact of such policies succeeded in declaring Black South Africans as non-South Africans in their own country.

Through the unanimous, persistent struggle of the Black people of South Africa as well as the pressure from the international world, the

incorporation of the homelands in South Africa became inevitable, and at the same time remained a reality on the South African political scene which could not be easily wished away.

In 1994, South Africa attained its own first democratic independence. However, segregation in education, health, transport and employment left deep evident scars of inequality and economic inefficiency, where a large part of the economy was and is still controlled by whites. With the inception of the new government of National Unity under the leadership of Mr Nelson Mandela, South Africa became one country for all South Africans irrespective of race, colour, creed or religion. The country subsequently was divided into nine provinces which comprise the following :

- North West
- Northern Transvaal
- Eastern Transvaal or Mpumalanga
- Free State
- Western Cape
- Eastern Cape
- KwaZulu Natal
- Gauteng
- Northern Cape

The study is therefore conducted throughout all the nine provinces of South Africa.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

Bailey (1987:33) defines methodology as the philosophy of the research process. This involves the assumptions and values that serve as a rationale for research and the standards or criteria the researcher uses for interpreting data and reaching conclusions. Methodology includes the research design, method of data collection, sampling analysis and interpretation of data.

1.7.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design deals with the plan developed to answer a question, describe a situation, or test a hypothesis. It includes the specifications of the types of information needed after the problem has been formulated. Grinnell, (1988) concurs with the researcher's ideology by indicating that research design is a plan which includes every aspect of a proposed research study from conceptualization of the problem right through to the dissemination of the findings. It provides the answer to the question of "what are the means which I shall use to obtain the information I need?" (Mouton & Marais, 1985:38).

The intention of the research design is to plan and structure the research study in such a way that the ultimate validity of the research findings are maximised. The type of research design used in this study is the descriptive design. The study attempts to describe the following variables:-

- (a) The extent of group work utilization by practising social workers.
- (b) The attitudes of social workers towards the use of groups.
- (c) The impact of social work education and training on the utilization of group work by social workers.

The descriptive design was considered appropriate for this study because it attempted to involve the description of the domain phenomenon in terms of separate variables or characteristics. The separate variables as indicated above refers to attitudes, skills in running groups, education and training etc. The study is in fact concerned with descriptive studies with a contextual interest.

This design confirms Behr's (1983:90) ideology that descriptive research is concerned with the conditions that exist, e.g. conditions surrounding the use of group work practices that prevail, (i.e. practice surrounding group work utilization) beliefs and attitudes that are held, (e.g. what attitudes and beliefs do practising social workers have towards group work utilization) processes that are ongoing, and trends that are developing (e.g. trends towards system of integration of the three methods in social work) as well as the developmental approach.

The approach that the researcher followed is both quantitative as well as qualitative. The quantitative approach was done through structured questionnaires directed to practising social workers in South Africa as

well as to all departments of social work of the training institutions in South Africa.

For qualitative approach a structured interview was held with agencies/welfare organisations that do practice group work and those that do not practice group work in their service delivery. This approach was followed because the researcher needed to get a more in-depth information on the utilization of group work, in order to uncover meanings attached to group work utilization, and to examine and describe perceptions, attitudes and behaviours that practitioners have towards the phenomenon under investigation.

1.7.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is defined by Monette et al. (1990:11) as an important part of any research proposal because it does not only give the description of how data will be collected, but also constitutes the basic information from which conclusions will be drawn.

The following methods of data collection were utilized:

1.7.2.1 Survey Design

According to a teaching manual prepared by HSRC, (1993:24) “survey research studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations of sociological and psychological

variables". Further, it is indicated that survey research is necessary to ensure that conclusions about the aspects of reality under investigation have a logical, empirical and objective base, involving the systematic and impartial collection of data from a sample of cases as well as the statistical analysis of the findings.

The tool that was utilized in the survey design was two sets of structured questionnaires:-

- (a) Structured questionnaires directed to practising social workers throughout South Africa.

This questionnaire was designed to basically test the following:

- attitudes and perceptions of practising social workers towards the use of groups in service delivery.
- the extent to which group work is utilized in service delivery by different agencies.
- the exposure of students during training to group work theory and practice in comparison to casework and community work.

The questionnaire was mailed to 500 (five hundred) practising social workers. The sample of 500 social workers was drawn from the list of registered social workers in South Africa

obtained from the South African Council for social work situated in Pretoria.

- (b) Structured questionnaires directed to social work departments of universities in South Africa.

The main purpose of this measuring instrument was to assess the extent to which students are exposed to each of the three basic methods of social work with regard to both theory and practice throughout the four year training programme.

The questionnaire was therefore administered personally to heads of social work departments of universities that were represented during the 1996 Joint Universities Committee for School of Social Work. There were two universities that were not represented at the JUC.

To counteract the cost and expenses of travelling from one university to the other, the researcher used an opportunity of attending the 1996 JUC (Joint Universities Committee) where most universities are expected to be represented. Two universities were not represented at the JUC.

1.7.2.2 Structured Interview

A structured interviewing schedule which according to Behr (1983:149) is normally filled in the presence of the respondent by the investigator, was administered to obtain qualitative data from welfare

agencies. This method was utilized to obtain more in-depth information. This was achieved through agency social workers' group interviews, both with agencies that practice group work and those that do not practice group work. The agencies chosen for group interviews were selected from the responses received from practising social workers. The agencies were selected by means of simple random sampling taking into consideration distance and budget constraints. A total of twenty five agencies/organisations were therefore selected from four out of nine provinces. Of this twenty five, fifteen were agencies that utilize group work as a method of service delivery and ten were agencies that do not utilize group work. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to obtain more qualitative information concerning the utilization of group work.

1.7.2.3 Literature Survey

Literature survey was one form of data collection. Data was collected through reviewing different relevant books, journals, newsletters, manuscripts and reports. The main aim of doing literature survey is to make the researcher conversant with the subject matter by bringing forth different authors' opinions with regard to group work as a method in social work as well as the utilization or non utilization of this method of intervention. It served as a basis for the empirical study.

The literature review made the researcher to conclude that very little has been done on this specific topic. Furthermore, it was noted that

few of the research done on group work in South Africa was undertaken in Afrikaans.

Further literature studies revealed that "Die Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie" is considered the pioneers of group work in South Africa. This may be a factor that prompted afrikaans speaking South Africans to be more interested in group work.

Since almost all group work literature is from the USA and Europe, this helped the researcher to form an opinion about the international view of group work.

1.7.2.4 Conference

In 1994 the researcher had the privilege of attending an international conference on group work in Connecticut, USA. The conference was hosted by the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups.

During the conference the researcher was exposed to different pamphlets, brochures, information booklets etc. on the use of groups in social work practice. The fact that the conference was dedicated to the examination of international contemporary practices of social group workers as well as the exploration of the potential for enhancing practice knowledge and skills, proved to be very relevant to this study.

Records pertaining to the education and training of group workers in different countries were studied and compared to the South African

scenario. This was made possible through the Syllabus Exchange Institutes.

The researcher consulted with group work experts and authors where areas of common concern were identified. One significant concern that came up strongly from the conference was the gradual fading away of group work from the undergraduate social work curriculum; supervision of students during work experience by under-qualified social workers in group work and the general underutilization of group work in service delivery. Gisela Konopka's presentation titled The meaning of social group work, was "a call for social workers to renew their commitment to social action through group work and to dedicate not only our profession, but also ourselves, to its progress".

1.8 SAMPLING

Sampling is the procedure by which the researcher can infer the characteristics of a large body of people (population) although only a few people or part of the population are dealt with or talked to. Hence the necessary part of this process is the determination of what or whom to observe, or who should be selected to answer the questions posed to them in the investigation of the problem.

The main objective of sampling is to gather information on a small number of individuals or entities which can be generalised to a larger aggregate from which the sample came. For purposes of this study, probability sampling was used.

1.8.1 SAMPLE SELECTION

Seeing that the study required three different categories of study, different sampling techniques were employed for each sample selection:-

1.8.1.1 Sample selection of social workers in South Africa.

According to information received from the Council for Social Work there are approximately 8000 registered social workers throughout South Africa. For purposes of this study, probability sampling was used to select social workers from the sample frame obtained from the Council for social work. The sample was chosen as follows:- out of the approximate 8000 social workers, 500 social workers were randomly selected by using every 16th registered social worker. The starting point to systematically select the required sample was randomly determined.



This method was most appropriate because it gave each member on the sample frame an equal chance of being selected. This is so because systematic random sampling refers to maintaining a natural order of the population and selecting every xth element systematically after the starting point has been determined randomly.

The number of respondents chosen from the sample frame was deliberately increased to 500 since the researcher was aware that:-

- (a) The sample frame from the Council for Social Work does not differentiate between practicing social workers and social work educators.
- (b) Some registered social workers are not employed in welfare agencies/institutions. This category includes amongst others social workers in administrative positions within the government service; social workers in industries not performing social work related service e.g. personnel managers etc.
- (c) Registered retired social workers
- (d) Unemployed registered social workers

This meant that responses from any of the above indicated categories would have to be discarded since the questionnaire may not be relevant to their situation.

Despite the abovementioned obstacles it is also a known fact that the response rate of mailed questionnaires is extremely low, hence the deliberate increase of the sample size was the provision to accommodate a lesser response rate. The subsequent response rate received from registered social workers was 131. Out of this number (8) eight questionnaires had to be discarded for reasons mentioned above. A further (15) fifteen was discarded since they were returned by the post office for either change of address, unknown, moved etc.

The final number that the researcher worked on was 108 which constitute 21.6% of the 500 questionnaires mailed to social workers.

1.8.1.2 Sample selection of welfare agencies/organisations

From the 108 responses received from social workers, the researcher identified fifteen agencies that utilize group work and ten that do not utilize group work in their service delivery. The selection of agencies was done by means of simple random sampling. The agencies were selected in order to conduct an indepth study concerning the utilization or non utilization of group work by welfare agencies.

In selecting agencies/organisations, four easily accessible provinces to the researcher were included into the study area. This procedure was followed to limit unnecessary costs due to long distances.

1.8.1.3 Social work departments of South African Universities

There are twenty universities and one college in South Africa that conduct social work education and training. Sampling of universities was not carried out, the major reason being that the researcher aimed at determining the real situation regarding the education and training of social workers in South Africa.

1.9 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis involves the use of some technical tools for weighing evidence, hence any data set is a disorderly collection of numbers which can not be interpreted as such. Generally the first step in the analysis of data is to describe it by calculating certain descriptive

measures such as the mean value and the standard deviation, by tabulating the data in a meaningful way and by representing it graphically. The descriptive techniques form part of descriptive statistics and are applied to a data set with a view to illuminating its main features and facilitating its interpretation. The entire process of data collection, processing and description is motivated by the desire of the researcher to obtain more knowledge about the phenomenon under study.

For purposes of this study the descriptive as well as inferential statistics were used to determine the extent of the utilization of group work and the attitude of social workers as well as employing agencies towards the use of groups as a method of social work intervention.

1.10 LIMITATIONS

There are limitations to the study that are unavoidable.

1.10.1 Although a total number of 500 questionnaires were mailed to social workers, and despite a further follow up done to secure the maximum response rate, only 108 questionnaires were returned fully completed. Although this response rate was not unexpected, as the researcher provided for this eventuality, a greater number of responses would have increased the representativeness of the research.

1.10.2 In identifying agencies which utilize group work and those that do not utilize group work in their service delivery, only four provinces were

included into the study area. This procedure was necessary to limit unnecessary costs due to long distances.

1.10.3 The list of registered social workers from the Council does not give an indication of the agencies/organisations where social workers are employed. This made it very difficult for the researcher to have a cross-section of all agencies employing social workers.

1.10.4 Not all registered social workers are employed in social welfare agencies/organisations. Some registered social workers are employed in industries or government departments where they do not perform social work oriented services. This meant that some questionnaires were returned uncompleted. This affected the number of responses received.

1.10.5 The addresses of social workers provided by the Council have not been updated since fifteen questionnaires were returned as unknown/left/no forwarding address/wrong address etc.

1.10.6 The researcher was compelled to rely on overseas literature as research on the practical implementation of group work in South Africa is greatly lacking.

1.11 PILOT STUDY

After the research questionnaires were completed a pilot study was conducted to test the validity of the measuring instruments. In

pretesting the questionnaires and the interview schedule proper representation of social workers and welfare organizations was emphasised. Taking into consideration that the subject under investigation constitutes an unexplored area of social work, the researcher considered the pilot study to be of utmost importance to test for ambiguity and clarity in the questions.

Respondents for the pilot study were randomly selected from social workers around Mmabatho, Mafikeing, Zeerust and Itsoseng. Ten social workers were selected and the researcher personally administered the questionnaire to them. From ten respondents two agencies were randomly selected for the purpose of a structured interview directed towards a group of social workers employed by the agencies.

After the respondents were interviewed and consulted significant changes were effected to the measuring instruments. Two social work training institutions were also selected.

1.12 DEFINITION OF CENTRAL TERMS

1.12.1 SOCIAL WORK

Morales & Sheafor (1986:19) define social work as the professional activity of helping individuals, groups or communities to enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and to create societal conditions favourable to that goal.

Skidmore and Thackeray (1982:7) complement the above definition by defining social work as a profession that "seeks to enhance the social functioning of individuals, singly and in groups, by activities focused upon their social relationships which constitute the interaction between man and his environment. These activities can be grouped into three functions: restoration of impaired capacity, provision of individual and social resources, and prevention of social dysfunction.

1.12.2 SOCIAL GROUP WORK

Social group work according to the researcher may be broadly defined as a primary method of social work in which individuals are served through the medium of a group experience to meet their common needs for the purposes of prevention of problems, promotion of more satisfying life-styles or treatment of psychosocial problems. Konopka (1976:15) defines the concept in a similar fashion by indicating that: "Social group work is a method of social work which helps persons to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experiences and to cope more effectively with their personal, group, or community problems".

1.12.3 SOCIAL WORKER

Social workers use social work as a profession in helping people improve their social functioning, and their ability to interact and relate to others. The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1968:495) sees a social worker as a professional who is expected,

because of his specialized training and experience, to bring a high degree of skill to the process of helping, and modifying the social conditions, groups of persons and communities.

1.12.4 SOCIAL WORK EDUCATOR

Social work educator is a person who has undergone an approved training in social work, and who further because of his mastery of knowledge and skills coupled with experience in social work is appointed to a university or college to impart the said knowledge and skills to student social workers.

1.12.5 INTERVENTION

Intervention is the term that social workers use to describe what they do. It is therefore the actions created and put into operation by social workers and their clients to overcome the problems caused by changing interactions within the client's social environment. Pierce (1989:157) sees intervention as actions of social workers to help people manage changes that affect their daily social functioning. Hence intervention is central to the social workers goals and objectives.

1.13 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The study is arranged into nine chapters.

The present chapter, (i.e chapter one) is an introductory chapter

outlining statement of the problem, aims of the research, assumptions, definition of terms as well as the methodology of the study.

The literature review is covered in chapters 2-5. Chapter 2 looks at the historical view of social work in South Africa with special reference to group work. This chapter also looked at the international development of social work since this has an impact on the training of social workers in South Africa.

Chapter 3 presents the value of social group work as an interventive method in service delivery. The importance of groups to the survival of all human beings is presented, and the concept mutual-aid is emphasised.

Chapter 4 seeks to establish the symbiotic relationship of the three direct methods of intervention. Specific reference is drawn to how group work can be viewed as a basis for community work as well as how it can be utilized as an extension of case work.

Chapter 5 examines different ways in which group work can be utilized to facilitate prevention, rehabilitation and development of individuals, groups and communities.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 deal with the presentation and analysis of data. Chapter 6 focuses on the interpretation of data from social work practitioners.

Chapter 7 looks at responses from welfare agencies/organisations regarding their perceptions towards the utilization of group work in service delivery.

Chapter 8 discusses the group work training and how it affects or contributes to the utilization of group work in social work practice.

Chapter 9, deals with the findings and recommendations.

The final section contains appendices such as questionnaires, interview schedule and a bibliography.

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CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON SOCIAL GROUP WORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work is a unique profession that includes a wide range of social services and programmes. It is the creation of the 20th century, even though its formative roots are in the late 19th century.

As an activity, social work is unique because it represents a conscious effort on the part of communities to reach out and aid persons most particularly people who are disadvantaged. The desire to help other people is entrenched in the major religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. The Bible tells of ways in which religious individuals assisted the needy. For example the ancient Jews paid a tax for the benefit of the poor. This tax amounted to a tenth of a persons income. During the middle ages, from the late AD 400's to the 1500's, various religious groups devoted themselves to healing the sick and feeding the hungry (World Book Encyclopedia, 1989).

Great changes took place in society during the industrial revolution, a period of many new inventions and great industrial development that began in the 1700's. The growth of populations and industries, together with the movement of people from rural areas to cities, brought such problems as overcrowding, unemployment, and poverty. The growing number of people began to depend on others for help.

During the 1800's, many private agencies were established to aid these people. Working with the needy became a distinct profession in the late 1800's. One agency, the Charity Organization Society, helped the needy in Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. Its counsellors, called "friendly visitors" went to people's homes and performed services, some of which were similar to those of present-day social workers (Imre, 1983).

The New York School of Philanthropy was the first school to train people for jobs with social agencies. This school, now the Columbia University School of Social Work, was founded by the Charity Organization Society in 1898 in New York City. However, the term social work did not come into widespread use until the early 1900's. By that time, many state and local governments in the United States had started to provide social services financed by tax funds. The U.S. government created the social security programme in 1935, during the great depression. Under this program, the government became the major source of public-aid (Fisher, 1980).

Americans who have made important contributions to the development of social work include Jane Addams, Mary Richmond, Grace Coyle and Gordon Hamilton. Addams was a leader of the settlement house movement, which established neighbourhood centers to provide educational and social services. Coyle helped develop group practice in social work. Hamilton formulated one of the major approaches to casework. This approach stressed the importance of establishing specific goals for the individuals receiving help.

2.2 HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work in South Africa was derived mainly from British and American literature. Indeed American and British theories and practice models predominate and have a pervasive influence on how social work is practised. This fact has been confirmed by authors such as Lohove (1965), Towle (1956), and Lowe (1986) in indicating that professional social work emerged internationally as one of the new professions that found a place within the modern world during the early twentieth century. According to Midgley in Patel (1992:28) the borrowing of theories and practice from western social work in the Third World was fostered by the residual model based on a direct imitation of western European and American approaches. This situation resulted in social problems being defined as "private troubles" and their causes were not sought within the nature and structure of society. The approach became basically curative instead of preventive focusing on "social ills" such as vagrancy, delinquency, prostitution, chronic dependency, and abandoned children.

2.2.2 SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The development of social welfare in South Africa can never be divorced from the laws of separate development that infested the country prior to independence of 1994.

McKendrick (1987:6) elucidates that although it is possible to divide the historical development of social welfare into a number of successive stages, the linking theme remains that of inter-racial relationships and the opposition of unequal social groups. The arrival of the Dutch Settlers during the seventeenth century in South Africa marked the beginning of racial conflicts with the inhabitants of the colony. The colonial administrators came with their own values on the inhabitants. The colonisers wanted to civilise the indigenous people and act as the trustees of what they perceived to be civilisation (Mair, in Patel 1992:34).

With each group trying hard to preserve its group identity, racial conflict erupted as the other group i.e the colonisers started feeling superior to an extent of undermining and regarding the indigenous people as inferior.

The emergence of racial discrimination, the defaming of indigenous ways of life, partialism in social service delivery and the fact that whites got the best services, had a powerful effect on the eventual development of social welfare programmes and policies.

With the discovery of minerals in South Africa, which finally led to the process of industrialization, South Africa's social and political structure changed from a predominantly agrarian society to a highly developed industrial one. This change did not certainly favour the blacks as well as their white counterparts because it subjected them to abject poverty and disruption of traditional family structures. The family as an

institution experienced problems in catering for the needs of its members. This led to the development of formal welfare services directed at saving the families. However, attention was mainly directed at providing services for whites and not for blacks. Assistance for whites started from the church and was later provided through volunteers such as women's organisations. Institutions for poor white people were later established focusing on the care of children and the physically handicapped persons for example, the blind, the deaf, the cripple and the cerebral palsied. Mental Health societies catered for the mentally disturbed and defective. This set the foundations for racial capitalism and racial differentiation in social welfare delivery.

In 1929, a scientific investigation was launched into the causes of poverty amongst whites in South Africa. This was funded by the Carnegie Cooperation of New York.

The report of the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry into the poor white problem blamed poverty on South Africa's changing economic and social structure rather than on the individual's inability to take care of themselves.

The Commission came up with two recommendations:-

- a) that the state should be responsible for people's social welfare needs;
- b) that university courses for the education and training of skilled social workers be established. Hence the commencement of

formal social work in South Africa is usually described as being initiated by the report of the Carnegie Commission followed by the "Volkskongres" in Kimberly in 1934. Following the Carnegie Commission, the first Department of social welfare was established in 1937. The Du Plessis Report of 1954 provided a blue-print for social welfare and firmly established the principle of joint partnership between the state and private initiative (Theron and Stulting in Mason, 1983:184).

The first recommendation of the Carnegie report resulted in social policy being adopted. The social policy reinforced the residual approach which enforced that individuals must take primary responsibility for meeting their own needs. This policy also placed the needs of the white population above that of the black population.

With the entrenchment of the apartheid laws of 1948-1990 which denigrated blacks to arid settlements away from civilization, i.e creation of Bantustans the influx control regulation was also implemented to prevent blacks from infiltrating white towns and suburbs. The influx control therefore separated families as blacks had to leave their families behind to come to cities for employment or to provide cheap labour to the white farmers. During their employment in white cities, blacks were normally considered temporary residents in their own country. Thus African poverty became a significant problem, though it was not of importance or concern to the white dominated apartheid government.

Different welfare departments dealing with welfare for whites, blacks, coloured and Indians were instituted. Many of the policies which dealt with welfare needs did not specifically exclude black people but in reality the budgets of the departments which were to administer the laws for Black people were highly inadequate. Social pensions for example were distinctly different with whites receiving their pensions on monthly basis and blacks receiving a minimal pension every second month.

From experience as well as observations social work as a profession was also affected with black social workers serving black clients and white social workers serving white clients. Subsidies for black clients were nil. Salaries for black social workers were minimal and office space was a privilege. Poor relief or what was then named food parcels was limited to mealie-meal, samp, pret cooking fat, 6 candles, Vaseline and matches.

Up to 1994 race has been a primary factor in the allocation of welfare resources, and racial differentiation has been an explicit principle of the South African welfare system. The aftermath of apartheid policy is that it has left most South Africans with limited or no access to adequate health and social services.

With the advent of the new political era in South Africa, a position has been taken that South Africa needs an alternative welfare system which will bring with it certain types of values, philosophies and principles of human rights.

By 1992 the idea of a representative national structure to organise and mobilize the welfare sector on evolving an alternative welfare policy and participating in the process of transformation was mounted (Mazibuko, 1995:6).

South Africa is now transcending the residual model to adopt a developmental approach of welfare which sees welfare as a right and not a privilege for all South African citizens. The developmental model is distinguished from the residual model by its attempt to integrate social and economic policies within an ongoing, dynamic developmental process. It does not compartmentalize social welfare from the economy.

Stein and Gray (1996:44), advocate for the developmental view of welfare because of its following characteristics:-

- a) it views welfare as a basic right;
- b) it takes a broad, holistic view of social welfare;
- c) welfare is considered to be part of all social institutions which have an impact on the quality of people's lives and on their level of social functioning;
- d) state welfare is seen to be the primary means of creating social equality;
- e) on a macro-level the focus of social work is on structural change aimed at redressing inequalities while on a micro-level it encourages clients to become involved in mutual support activities such as self-help groups and economic cooperatives;

- f) globally, there is an increasing recognition of social development and of the need for the international community to work together to eradicate poverty.

With the introduction of this approach, South African social workers need to undergo a paradigm shift on placing more emphasis on macro methods such as group work and community work. Since the new developmental approach emphasises the redressing of inequalities and encourages clients to become involved in mutual support activities, group work appears to be the most relevant method in reaching communities at large. Working with small groups within communities can snow ball to larger social action groups which could encourage conscientization and more environmental awareness.

2.3 HISTORICAL VIEW OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK

2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

While much has been written about the evolution of social casework as well as community organization (as it was then known), relatively very little has been documented about the development of the use of groups in social work intervention.

Historically, from observation, group work has always been a marginalized method in social work. Over the years, attempts to establish a conceptual frame of reference for the practice of group work were hampered by a variety of usages of the term group work

which was considered an "open word" since it meant different things to different people. For example, to some it was a term for catch all functions rather than a term to designate professional service with definite, discrete meaning. It has also been used to describe a job classification of workers, a field of work, a classification of agencies, a philosophy or movement. The word "social" eventually was added to indicate that social group work was a method used by social workers, who were professionally trained to use it as a specialized social service in a variety of settings (Reid, 1981:41).

2.3.2

GROUP WORK AND THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

As with social work, social group work emerged in England and America as a response to social problems engendered by the industrial revolution. It began as a form of social service with various kinds of activities under the auspices of the church.

Since industrialization concentrated on all activities and resources in urban areas, immigrants were forced to abandon their normal ways of life to flock to cities for survival. Overcrowding and other social problems emanated from this movement, and the result was wide spread poverty.

Two important movements that gave rise to group work were established as an attempt to help the poor. -These were the; Settlement Movement and YWCA and YMCA. These movements according to Stein & Gray (1996:41) were concerned with people as members of

social groups and cultures, affected by the social, economic and political conditions in which they lived. These movements emphasised people's participation, community involvement and collective action.

For more insight, these movements will be discussed separately hereunder:-

a) The Settlement Movement

As indicated above, the origin of social group work dates back to the establishment of settlement houses in England. The aim of the settlement houses was to bring about better education and constructive recreational facilities to the poor through the medium of groups to all the members of the family.

Dedicated leaders believed that social improvement could be accomplished by having members of more fortunate classes live or visit among the poor as a result of this a famous young student by the name of Arnold Toynbee went to live in the parish of the St Judas in 1875 to assist the Reverend Barnard. When Toynbee suddenly died, the university settlement association was founded in his memory and was called the Toynbee Hall.

In 1886 Stanton Coit, one of the students who worked in the settlement houses went to America to establish the first settlement house called the Neighbourhood Guild of New York. This idea was carried over by Jane Adams and Helen Gates

Starr in 1899 with the establishment of the Hull House in Chicago.

b) The YMCA settlement

The YMCA was originally the means of evangelisation for young men. It was only after the first world war that it became professionalised. The founder of the YMCA was George Williamson who was concerned with the spiritual welfare of young men. He started organising a prayer group for men, and this group became known as Young Men Christian Association. Other similar organisations developed from the YMCA concept, and these were character building organisations such as the YWCA, the Girl Guides, Camp Fire Girls and Boy Scouts. The idea of these associations/organisations was later carried over to South Africa.

2.3.3

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK

In 1935 the group work section of the National Conference on Social Work gathered for the first time as a separate body. The Association was established to further the interests of group work practice and to help in recruiting and getting more people professionally trained. The outcome of the meeting was the establishment of the American Association for the Study of Group Work. In 1946 the American Association for the study of group work became a professional society for social group work which became known as the American



Association of Group Work which later led to the establishment of the National Association of Social Workers in 1955.

During the 1940's the American Association of Social Work encouraged and recommended the inclusion of group work courses in the graduate curriculum of its member schools, of which less than half offered a sequence in group work.

Today all schools of social work offer one or more classes or curriculum units in group work, and several of them offer a basic sequence or concentration including field instruction, and related experiences in the group work method.

Skidmore, Thackeray and Farley (1991:76) illustrate that in 1962 there were 448 students enrolled in group work in the schools of social work in the United States and Canada. This was an indication of the steady development of professional group work.

Currently, group work practitioners and educators sponsor a quarterly journal entitled *Social Work with Groups*, a journal of community and clinical practice, and an annual symposium for the advancement of social work with groups (Skidmore et al., 1991:76).

2.4 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORK WITH GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The history of social group work in South Africa cannot escape the legacies of the apartheid era. Group work as a method in social work was greatly affected as the government placed more emphasis on case work as subsidies were paid based on the number of cases handled in casework intervention. As McKendrick (1987:62) indicates, until 1967 the South African government's welfare policy provided for subsidization of casework services rather than for general social work services. This resulted in over-concentration on the casework method. Because of the government's policies of placing more emphasis on case work, case work gained more popularity as compared to group work and community work. The result being that there is relatively very little documented on group work in South Africa.

Because of extensive attention on casework, South African social work practitioners have by and large consistently placed emphasis on the use of the group to effect individual change through therapeutic interventions.

Generally, group work is regarded as an ideal method for those in need of "treatment". The use of the group to address the connection between the individual and the social context has been minimized. This meant that the practitioners ignore the historical roots of the group

work method, which is based on mutual-aid, community and social responsibility.

While American social workers have from the beginning been interested in the use of the group experience to enhance participation of group members as citizens and neighbours in areas of social tension and disorganization (Coyle, 1980): within the South African context this is a group work function which has been assiduously avoided. The use of group work method, which contribute to social desirable attitudes through planned group experience and which further aims to address tensions in interracial and inter-group situations has been given virtually no attention (Drower, 1995).

2.4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK

Group work in South Africa originated at the turn of the 20th century subsequent to the Anglo-Boer War. Group work resulted as a response to desparate social conditions which rendered families inadequate in caring for one another due to the disruption of the then existing structures.

To curb such unfavourable social conditions, Afrikaans Women's Organisations sprang up to aid the poor white at the local and community levels. The SAVF [Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie] is one of the prominent women's organisations that contributed greatly to the development of group care. The Dutch Reformed church was also particularly interested in helping the poor whites, through

organizing successive conferences to seek means of ameliorating white poverty through group care.

Work classes in aid of the poor whites were established, and later the subsidization of social work posts by the government made these activities more purposeful as trained social workers took over the responsibility. Due to the success of the work classes, these services were extended to the other sectors of the white population such as youth and the aged.

A break through in social work was reached when the S.A.V.F. encouraged the introduction of group work courses at the University of Pretoria in 1961, under the guidance of Professor J.E. Pieterse who at that time had just come back from America where he studied group work.

With the professionalisation of group work, other welfare organisations started to accept and view group work as a method in social work.

In the early seventies, the involvement of social workers in women's clubs was largely terminated because social workers started to focus their attention on therapeutic groups. It was probably also the group workers' quest for professional identity that made them feel that they were wasting their time by having to teach people skills such as sewing, knitting, preparing food etc. What is more, an attitude of "the sky is the limit" with regard to possibilities for group work was

common among social workers and hence the women's clubs were left in the hands of volunteers.

In the 1980's renewed attention by group workers was once more focused on the white disadvantaged by the white social workers, while Black social workers were more focussed on casework with Black clients.

In the mid eighties, the new realization developed within the social work profession that disadvantaged people of all racial groups can be assisted more effectively by means of social work with groups rather than mostly by means of case work (Hofmeyer 1996).

2.5 CONCLUSION

It is a conclusive factor that the social work profession in South Africa has to a greater extent been affected as well as influenced by the political ideology of the country. The policies of separate development affected service delivery due to the unequal distribution of resources, and also affected the development of the direct methods of intervention.

Due to overconcentration on case work (for purposes of agency survival) other methods gradually faded away. Hence, group work developed much later, and has never been able to compete with case work and community work.

With the new dispensation cutting across South Africa, social workers face a serious challenge of shifting their paradigm in the way of service delivery. This includes working within a multi cultural society and being more developmentally oriented. Theoretically, group work method as it will be portrayed in chapter 3 has major strengths for practice in South Africa because it contains a range of models and intervention strategies of relevance to the South African society.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL GROUP WORK AS A METHOD OF INTERVENTION IN SOCIAL WORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work as a profession addresses itself primarily to the needs of individuals, groups and communities. The three primary direct-service methods of social work are therefore social casework, social group work and community work. However, there are also secondary methods of social work which tend to complement the three primary methods, which are social work administration and research. For purposes of this study the researcher will only concentrate on social group work as a method of intervention in social work.

When we speak of social group work as a method we mean an orderly, systematic, planned way of working with people in groups. A method is a conscious procedure, a designed means of achieving a goal. In its outer aspect, a method is a way of doing something, but underneath the doing we always discover an integrated arrangement of knowledge, understanding, skills and principles.

Social group work may be broadly defined as a primary method of social work in which individuals are served through the medium of group experience to meet their common needs for the purposes of

prevention of problems, promotion of more satisfying life-styles or treatment of problems.

Konopka (1954:15) defines social group work process in a similar fashion: "Social group work is a method of social work which helps persons to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experiences and to cope more effectively with their personal, group or community problems". Konopka (1954:43) further states that a group is one of the strongest and deepest emotional powers in human life because it provides a feeling of belonging, of security, of safety, of realizing that one can contribute to others and that one is somebody. This gives rise to attributes like self-respect and realization of ones worthiness. Group life gives an individual security and nourishment so that he can fulfill his greatest needs while helping others to fulfill theirs too. The group can lend its strength to destructive as well as constructive purposes. This therefore indicates that if groups are properly planned, they can positively contribute to members' growth and development; whereas groups that are not properly planned according to members' needs and aspirations can have a negative impact on group members. Trecker (1972:222) reinforces the above notion in outlining that groups have a tremendous influence on members' behaviour. This influence is not necessarily positive as it may sometimes be the opposite. Hence he emphasizes that group work must possess elements of conscious design and plan.

It is stated by Heap (1984:3) that groups help to alleviate isolation, Konopka (1954:45) supports this by stating that "loneliness is one of

deepest despairs of mankind. It is not something that can be helped by just meeting people. It is a deep inner need that can be helped only by developing an emotional maturity in the individual himself and giving him the kind of association that have real meaning". It is being maintained that many of peoples ideas presuppose group support and mobilization, and that many pleasures are intensified by being experienced collectively.

On the point of collectivity, Henry (1981:22) confirms that groups provide a forum for persons to address issues, work collectively on an issue and participate in decision making. Collective decision making can be more creative than decisions taken alone because the options and resources are expanded and multiplied. Decisions taken tend to be more accurate because of integration of solutions (Heap, 1984:16). As members in a group give and get help, they in turn observe and learn from others. This process provides an installation of hope which is absent in an individual treatment.

According to Corey & Corey (1983:83), members facilitate others' growth as they learn more about themselves through others' past experience. They grow easily when they realise that others have experienced the same problems as theirs, have had the same feelings towards the problem and have succeeded in solving or adapting to the problem. This is further cited by Heap (1984:15) when he states that through the resource of generalization one member is able to generalize his problem as the others express theirs, in a way learning adaptive behaviours from others. This is also cited by the

psychoanalytic theory as stated in Toseland and Rivas (1984:47). The psychoanalytic theory states that individuals work out past unresolved conflicts in a group setting. They gain insight into their own behaviour and this insight is the essential ingredient in changing patterns of behaviour inside and outside the group.

3.2 THE GROUP AS A SYSTEM

Trecker (1970) and Balgopal & Vassil (1983) view a group as a holistic system. In viewing the group as a system, it becomes evident that there are factors that influence the development of the group, therefore the group as a system does not function in isolation. Hence for the group to develop (whether positively or negatively) there is need for interrelationships between the subsystem to be taken into consideration i.e.

- a) The group worker will be influenced by his personal values as well as the professional code of ethics.
- b) The agency as the sponsoring body with its formal and informal values.
- c) The community which sanctions the existence of the group.
- d) The different members forming the group come with their own individual values.

(For more clarity, (a) and (b) above will be discussed at length in the ensuing pages).

Bennis & Slater in Balgopal & Vassil (1983:20) view the above interrelationship in an ecological perspective. They indicate that "the ecological perspective is simply a way of viewing the four dimensions mentioned above. This framework provides an avenue for a broader understanding of the interplay among these four dimensions. It requires a shift from the language of the machine metaphor viz., social engineering, friction, resistance, equilibrium, force field-to the vocabulary of the organic metaphor viz., adaptation, development, cycling, transaction and open dynamic system".

Underpinning the ecological perspective is the assumption that a minimal degree of integration is necessary between the person and various environments in order to maintain and enhance the problem-solving capacities and growth of constituent members in their own habitat. The fundamental task for professional practice in groups is to build a culture that contains within it adequate provision for its own growth and change. This permits the reconciliation of various frames of reference that are represented in the ongoing interrelationships among persons, group and environmental processes. Germain (1979:17) reaffirms that "in an ecological view, practice is directed toward improving the transactions between people and environments in order to enhance the adaptive capacities and improve environments for all who function within them". What Germain actually means is supported by Trecker (1972:35) when he views a group as a holistic

system. Trecker (op cit) sees social group work as "a method with many aspects and many parts which calls for the unified working together of individuals in groups in community agencies committed to defined objectives and helped toward the attainment of these objectives by a worker who works in a certain way. The kind of agency, the kind of group, the kind of worker, and especially, the relatedness of the three make up the group work whole".

Social group work always calls for a professional worker from outside the group. This worker comes with certain skills based on his understanding of persons and his interest in them as individuals. The worker also brings to the group the background of knowledge and experience gained through his academic training and a mature personality. This is exactly what differentiates social group work from an ordinary cluster of people e.g people standing at the taxi rank waiting for the taxis. Further, for the group to survive as a system, group work implies that the people in a group should possess some degree of likeness, interest, similarity of age, likeness of vocation or occupation, proximity of neighbourhood etc. to facilitate reciprocal interaction and maintenance of the system. It implies further that the system will be small enough to give every member an opportunity to participate actively and enjoy the results of group effort with every other member and with the worker. For the system to survive and contribute positively to goal attainment, all the subsystems will engage themselves in program activities which may be social, recreational, educational or interest focused. Group work assumes that the

individual will develop a variety of skills leading him toward a better social adjustment and an unfolding personality.

Bringing home the concept of the ecological perspective, it is interesting to dissect the group structure in order to understand the effects of the subsystems in relation to the entire system. In the South African context the group as a system was subjected to many legal implications imposed on it by the policy of separate development or apartheid. For example, the people of South Africa, especially the black people have been subjected for years to psychological oppression. This oppression has successfully made the black population to be very complaiscent, to lose hope in doing things for oneself and to lose trust in oneself. The paternalistic approach made the people to learn to receive and of course not to query how much they receive or how good it is that they receive. Hence, when such people are put together in the group they expect the leader to tell them what to do, and they also expect to receive handouts. This policy has made people to be very "closed in" because of lack of trust amongst the people. Since the freedom of speech was greatly curtailed, people tend to be very conscious of what they are saying and to whom, and where they are saying it. This greatly affects the dimensions of interaction in the group. If interaction is not reciprocal, the survival of the system becomes affected due to lack of balance or state of equilibrium. On the other hand, the group worker who happens to be a social worker is greatly influenced by the "Bantu" education, which was greatly limiting. The group leader, because of the type of education he/she received, is limited in his/her creativity because she

has to work under strictly controlled situations and also has to watch his/her tongue in order to please the hand that meagrely feeds her/him. Therefore, his/her impact on the system does not fully facilitate its development i.e it does not improve mutual aid inherent in groups as well as the transactions between group members and their environment. On the same note the community or the environment itself is greatly limiting due to lack of resources needed in maintaining the state of equilibrium within the system.

3.3 GROUP WORK AND THE SPONSORING AGENCY

Social work practitioners use group work skills to help members meet their personal needs and to help groups accomplish their goals. As with all other methods of social work, social group work is practised under the auspices of an agency. This fact has been confirmed by Skidmore (1983) when indicating that the agency is the immediate environment of the client - worker relationship. Therefore, the social group worker in his endeavour to help clients through the medium of a group has to do so in relation to the sponsoring agency or institution. This confirms that the knowledge of agency function is necessary since agency function defines the group limits, provides a focus for client intervention and facilitates development of the group. In addition, an awareness of agency policy and procedures which affect group work practice is important in order to ensure a successful group experience. Hence becoming aware of how agencies function as well as practices regarding the use of groups in a particular agency can help the worker to prepare for possible resistance and to evaluate and utilize sources

of support within the agency. Toseland and Rivas (1985:13) also accede to the above notion in elaborating that a group does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in relation to many systems, particularly the system of service delivery that sponsors, legitimizes, and influences its purpose. Usually, there is an exchange of influence between a group and its sponsoring agency. A group is therefore often influenced by the limits of agency resources or agency policy as indicated earlier.

The agency as a sponsoring unit, has an obligation towards groups as well as group leaders to enforce conformity of professional ethics.

Agencies have to see to it that group leaders uphold the values and principles of group work.

Garvin (1981:28-54) identifies the following as key questions to be considered in assessing agency support for group work services:

- (a) Why does the agency establish groups?
- (b) How are members referred to or recruited for groups?
- (c) What are the status and role of the group worker in the agency?
- (d) What resources does the agency allocate to groups?
- (e) What are the effects of the agency on the social and physical environment of groups?
- (f) How does the agency interact with indigenous leaders of groups?
- (g) How do inter-organizational relationships affect groups?

3.4 GROUP WORK AND SOCIAL WORK CODE OF ETHICS

Social group work, like the other two methods in social work, is also subjected to the professional code of ethics. The National Association of Social Workers in America has developed a code of ethics to guide members of the association in their functioning. In South Africa, social workers are guided by the code of ethics as set by the Council for Social Work.

Since social work is an international profession, the code of ethics in South Africa is similar to that of other countries. This code of ethics is an operational statement of the central values of the social work profession. Different authors emphasise different values in the social work profession. Reamer (1995:894) summarised the most frequently cited values in social work, namely; "individual worth and dignity, respect for people, valuing individual's capacity for change, client self-determination, confidentiality and privacy, providing individuals with opportunity to realise their potential, seeking to meet individuals' common human needs, commitment to social change and social justice, seeking to provide individuals with adequate resources and services to meet their basic needs, client empowerment, equal opportunity, non-discrimination, respect of diversity, and willingness to transmit professional knowledge and skills to others". Beyond the values held by all professional social work practitioners, the American Council on Social Group Work is also bound by the philosophy, values and ethics of the profession, and therefore shares a special concern and interest in certain values that are basic to group work practice. As such it

emphasizes a belief in the dignity of the human being, the social responsibility of man for his fellowman, and works towards the extension of the democratic ideal. Some of the key values of group work have been stated by Konopka (1963:69-78) as well as Corey & Corey (1985). Konopka (1963, op cit) suggests that all group workers should agree on the importance of:-

- a) participation and positive relations among people of different color, creed, age, national origin and social class in groups.
- b) The value of cooperation and mutual decision making embodied in the principles of a participatory democracy.
- c) The importance of individual initiative within the group.
- d) The importance of freedom to participate, including expression of thoughts and feelings about matters of concern to individual members or the group as a whole, and having the right to be involved in the decision-making process of the group.
- e) The value of high individualization in the group so that each member's unique concerns are addressed. Trecker (1972:35) reinforces this value by indicating that the individual always remains the central focus of the group and that the individual must not feel lost within the group.

According to Morales & Sheafor (1977), values affecting the worker's actions in group work practice have three distinct sources of origin, and these are:

- (1) Contextual values, which include values derived from society, the sponsoring agency, the social work profession and the group work method. Konopka (1983:62-63) enumerates these latter values as:
 - (a) Elimination of discrimination and enhancement of positive relations among people belonging to different groups, e.g. race, sex, age, religion etc;
 - (b) Co-operation, mutual decision-making and democratic participation among group members;
 - (c) Enhancement of individual initiative;
 - (d) Freedom of participation of group members; and
 - (e) Individualization in the group.
- (2) Client Value System, which emphasize that each individual brings to the group situation a unique value system reflecting his unique experiences. As such a common value system for all group members does not occur. However, the worker should be especially sensitive to the effects on values of members' different cultural, racial, ethnic and religious background.
- (3) Worker's personal value system, which affects the practitioner's relationship with both the group as a whole and the individual

members. In this regard development of self-awareness is essential in order for the worker to distinguish between personal values and group members' values. An inability to do this may lead to the imposition of values on the group and, thus, impairment of the group experience. This therefore confirms that knowledge of values and knowledge of self are two aspects of the knowledge base needed for effective group work practice.

Corey & Corey (1982:39) also outline some of the key values of group work. They suggest that all group workers should take into consideration the following issues in group membership :-

a) Involuntary membership

Members must voluntarily join the group. The members must want something for themselves, they must be receptive. Therefore, members must not be coerced to join the group or, once they are in the group, they must not be forced to participate in activities if they choose not to.

b) Informed consent: The group worker has the responsibility towards clearly and fully informing members of the nature and goals of the group, group procedures that will be used, the rights of members to decline certain activities, the limitations of confidentiality and how active participation in the group may have an effect on them personally as members of the group. The matter of informed consent is related to leaders' making the

members aware of their rights and responsibilities as group members. Leaders also are required by the code of ethics to discuss their responsibilities over members. Such responsibilities include the following:-

- * To exercise reasonable safe guards to minimize the potential risks and hazards of the group;
- * Respect member's privacy;
- * Freedom from undue group pressure;
- * Protection against either verbal or physical assaults;
- * A clear statement of ground rules, policies, and procedures of the group;
- * Instructions concerning what is expected of the participants;
- * Notice of any research involving the group, any observations of the group through one-way mirrors, or any tape recording or audiovisual taping of group sessions; and
- * Full discussion on the limitations of confidentiality, including a statement from the leader concerning how information acquired during group sessions will be used outside the group structure (Corey & Corey, 1982:42).

(c) Freedom to withdraw from a group

As members are encouraged to join the group voluntarily, leaders have the responsibility to also inform members that they may exit from the group at any time they deem it necessary for their well-being. However, since a group is a close knit system, members must also be made aware of their responsibility

towards the entire group. Once members have made a commitment to be group members, they need to have a sense of responsibility towards facilitating group development. Due to this responsibility, members wishing to withdraw from the group, need to discuss this matter with the entire group in order to clear any misconceptions that may prevail as a result of their withdrawal from the group. This may help to restore the state of equilibrium within the group.

d) **Psychological Risks:** Group leaders have the responsibility to inform members of some of the psychological risks that may affect members in the group. Leaders may not assume that members are aware of them. It is also the responsibility of the leader to try and reduce or eliminate such risks. These risks as stated by Corey & Corey (1982:45-46) are:-

- (i) Scapegoating;
- (ii) Breach of confidentiality;
- (iii) Excessive self-disclosure;
- (iv) Danger of inadequate leadership; and
- (v) Possibility of experiencing a major disruption in one's life e.g. changes in lifestyle and values and a loss of security.

Through observation within the field of social work, the researcher has noted with dismay that social workers who use groups purposely avoid informing members about these psychological risks for fear that prospective members will refrain from joining the group. The same

problem has been noted by the researcher in her practical supervision with fourth year social work students at the University of the North-West. This is an indication of lack of efficient group work skill where the social worker fears confrontation or attacks from the group. This further gives an indication that these social workers only feel comfortable when they inform members about the positive side of the group. This is also one of the reasons why some of the groups tend to prematurely terminate.

Corey & Corey (1982:13) concurs with the above statement when they indicate that "group leaders who are easily threatened, who are insecure in their work of leading, who are overly sensitive to negative feedback, and who depend highly on group approval will encounter major problems in trying to carry out a leadership function." Through training and experience group leaders need to have an ability to cope with attacks. This can only be possible if group leaders have positive self-confidence or are assertive enough to deal positively with attacks from group members.

3.5 SOCIAL GROUP WORK AND MUTUAL-AID

Social group work as a method in social work is based on the premise that people experiencing similarities of psychological problems, similarity of need for help and experiencing stress, and if placed in a limited size group over a period of time, under the supervision of a professional worker, will automatically interact. Through interaction, they will discover the commonality of their situation or problems. This

discovery will result in mutual identification which over time will result in a group bond where members develop a "we - feeling". This "we - feeling" or group bond facilitate the development of resources such as mutual support, mutual control, recognition, generalization, collective power and integration of solutions (Heap 1985). Hence social group work is based on the concept of peer support and mutual-aid of and by the group members who become members of the group because of a common life experience, common interest or common need. The rationale for the use of social group work is based on the commonality of need to receive support, and stimulus in developing self-awareness. Solidarity and mutual aid become the core of social group work. Hence, group work can be looked at as a process where mutual aid is central and maximized. It is this solidarity and mutual-aid that makes social group work a more prominent helping model as compared to social casework or one to one intervention. Casework in a group is certainly mutual aid-less. Kurland and Salmon (1993) reaffirm the value of mutual-aid in groups in indicating that "... what remains pivotal, to an articulation of the uniqueness and specialness of group work is the concept of mutual-aid ..."

Furthermore, Glidewell (1975:163) raises the intriguing point that solidarity and mutual-aid are based not only on greater degrees of attraction and perceived similarity among members, but also on the recognition that there are complementary differences which are useful for personal change, e.g.: "Each participant, because of his different resources, supplies another with motives, feelings, or skills which the other could not supply for himself: esteem motives in exchange for

safety motives, supportive affection in exchange for prudent apprehension, instrumental skills in exchange for expressive skill. But the demand for the climate emphasize the homogeneity, de-emphasize or indeed deny the complementary heterogeneity ... in a climate of solidarity, differences in status, power, and competence are left implicit or overtly denied" (Glidewell op cit).

The homogenizing effects of group and member loyalties and mutual support provide a secure base for self-esteem. However, underlying differences are suppressed and one can expect these personal needs to reemerge. The major difference is that their reappearance is lodged within the context of a protective envelope. The shared regard and expectations also relax aggressive defense to the extent that some members will do something unexpected and cycles of exploration, involvement, and conflict will be regenerated, probably in shorter cycles and within a greater sense of safety. Heap (1985) contends that a group provides a safe environment of trying or rehearsing new behaviours. When this occurs, then the next subset, potentially the most productive and designated as the mutual aid system, emerges. Mutual-aid emphasizes the exchange and interchange of ideas, feelings and skills between and among members and the worker. Taking chances, using conflict, and depending on others in a supportive climate of a group is the context for change.

Steinberg (1993:27) complements the above authors by indicating that mutual aid is the process of group members helping one another think things through, not by gift of advice, but by sharing of life experiences,

opinions, feelings, and attitudes. Further, this meaningful exchange is made possible not primarily through the strength of the worker/member relationship but through member/member relationships. Hence, skill is required beyond that which is essential to one-one work, for mutual demands that the client become help-giver as well as help-taker.

Black people are by nature highly gregarious. The concept of mutual aid is as old as mankind, and this on its own is an indication of how successfully groups could be utilized on the South African soil to improve peoples lives.

The writer aligns herself with Steinberg (1993:23) in pointing out that the mutual-aid tendency is so deeply interwoven with all the past evolution of the human race, that it has been maintained by mankind up to the present time, notwithstanding all vicissitudes of history. For every human being who has any idea of the life of labouring classes, it is evident that without mutual aid being practised among them on a large scale they never could pull through all their difficulties. A typical example is the mass democratic movement that was formed by the coming together of the different political groups in South Africa to mutually fight the apartheid regime. In actual fact, neither the crushing powers of the centralized government nor the teaching of mutual hatred have been able to weed out the feeling of human solidarity, deeply embedded in men's understanding and hearts.

3.6 IMPORTANCE OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Groups affect our daily living. When we talk of groups in social work, we are not only referring to treatment groups but we also refer to task groups. As a point of clarification we probably need to throw light on the difference between treatment groups and task groups since both types have a substantial influence in our daily living.

Both treatment and task groups fall under the category of formed groups. They are formed for a particular purpose and they come together through some outside influence or intervention, and they do not usually exist without some sponsorship or affiliation (Toseland & Rivas 1984:14).

The term treatment group is used to signify a group whose major purpose is to meet members' socio-emotional needs. In contrast the term task group is used to signify any group in which the major purpose is neither intrinsically nor immediately linked to the needs of the members of the group. In task groups, the overriding purpose is to accomplish a mandate and complete the work for which the group was convened. An example of a task group would be committees, social action groups etc.

What makes social group work more important or imperative to social work practice is that its procedures, techniques and processes are closely linked with our daily experiences and existence as human beings.

Social group work is based on the notion that groups have a tremendous impact on our existence and well being. It recognizes that:-

- a) Most of our daily living is spent in group situations e.g. at home, school, work, church etc.
- b) Our basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, reproduction) and social needs (belongingness, security, love, self-actualization) are met through interaction with others especially with families, friends and formal - non-formal organizations and institutions.
- c) We affirm our existence through other people; our attitudes, values, aspirations, life-style, etc. become validated through our daily group membership.
- d) Most of our problems emanate from our interaction with others and conversely it is through group membership that we are often accorded the essential support and assistance when troubled. Vinter (1967:3) refers to this as the interactional view of deviance. Vinter (op cit) further contends that all behaviour amenable to change is regarded as socially induced, acquired through learning and related processes; it is exhibited and evoked or constrained within the context of specific social situations.

The interrelationships among human beings are the heart of social group work. People must touch each other. All lives are connected to other lives. Where all human connections are distrusted the human being is very quickly lost. The problem is not being alone but being

isolated, being unconnected, not being counted (Baldwin & Avedon, 1964).

All human beings have an innate need to belong and to identify with a particular group. Klein (1972) notes that group experience facilitates a sense of belonging and security which in turn reduces anxiety and releases a person's resources and energy to tackle problems more realistically. He further notes that group experience encourages self expression and ventilation of suppressed anger, fear, tension etc. because it provides an atmosphere in which it is safe to relate to others.

Konopka (1954:43) alludes to the above information in stating that "a group is one of the strongest and deepest emotional powers in human life; because it provides a feeling of belonging, of security, safety, of realizing that one can contribute to others and that one is somebody. This gives rise to attributes like self-respect and realization of ones worthiness. Group life gives an individual security and nourishment so that he can fulfill his greatest needs while helping others to fulfill their greatest needs".

3.7 GROUP VERSUS INDIVIDUAL EFFORT

Social workers have high case loads consisting mostly of problems mentioned above such as marital disputes, homelessness, poverty etc. Although lately, integrated approach is emphasized during training, it is however disappointing to note that many social workers lean too

much on casework when other methods such as group work could have been more effective in helping to alleviate such problems (especially if the problem impinges on the lives of many people in the community).

In social work with groups, the group worker enjoys a distinct advantage denied the one to one case worker or therapist, since a group is a process-conducting entity whether or not a worker, therapist, or facilitator is present. The worker in a group is not faced with responsibility for initiating and keeping alive a process. Rather, the group members initiate the process when they enter the group. They carry on a complex interpersonal process, acting, making decisions, and doing a variety of other things. The group worker does indeed influence the group process, but does so within the framework of an ongoing series of social events that have their own viability, rhythm and pulse *raison d'être*.

There are a number of advantages in using groups rather than an individual effort to help clients meet their needs and to help organizations accomplish their tasks.

A number of writers e.g. Northen (1988); Yalom (1975); Shulman, (1979) Lieberman and Borman (1979), Heap (1985) have suggested that group treatment has advantages over individual treatment.

According to Toseland & Rivas (1984) and Heap (1985) groups help members to realize that they are not alone with their problems. They

allow members to share their concerns and to hear that others have similar concerns. They also give members the opportunity to assist others by being supportive, giving feed-back, making helpful suggestions and providing important useful information. Lieberman and Borman, (1979) have noted the therapeutic benefit of the "helper-therapy principle" for members of groups that develop on a mutual-aid/self-help basis. As members give and get help, they observe others achieving their goals. This process provides what Yalom (1975) and Heap (1985) refers to as an installation of hope which is absent in individual treatment.

Treatment groups provide other benefits that cannot be replicated in individual treatment. According to Northen in Toseland & Rivas (1984:9), group treatment is the preferred modality when the main problem of a client concerns relationships with others. The presence of others gives members a chance to receive feed-back that can assist them in their change efforts. Peer feed back can be particularly beneficial for adolescents and involuntary adult clients who may resist the suggestions of the worker because he/she is viewed as an authority figure. Group treatment can equally be beneficial for those who face problems of social isolation e.g. the disadvantaged black senior citizens in urban areas or slum settlement areas are most of the time left alone when family members go to work and children are at school, since they cannot afford placing them in old-age institutions.

Racial inequality coupled with racial conflict in South Africa, as a result of apartheid, has successfully mured the average white

population from the experience of the black population. Generally the life situation of the Blacks is not an existential reality to the whites. But without some recognition of commonality, there is little possibility of the emergence of a common nationhood, cutting across race lines, which could help to facilitate the social renewal already under way. For a genuine democracy to develop, and to counteract racial stereotypes, groups can provide a safe environment in which black and white South Africans can begin to move beyond previous definitions of themselves and each other. As Rice (1989:159) has noted, "the group work method has the structure and format for support which allows people to take risks and to change attitudes and behaviour". This can never be achieved through one to one intervention.

There are also advantages to a group as compared to an individual effort in helping agencies or organizations accomplish tasks. In working with people in organizational task groups, democratic participation is often ideologically desirable. Participation through group interaction helps members of organizations feel that they contribute towards their organizations. Resistance to change can be minimized if those who are to be affected by change are given the opportunity to participate in the change through group discussions.

Social change, therefore can never be achieved through one to one intervention, but through collective effort. Thus social workers working directly with the underprivileged can facilitate groups in analysing their positions in the historical moments in which they live, and in determining courses of action for themselves.

If conditions are not improved to meet the needs of group members, groups can collectively apply different strategies to change the system e.g. the two most extreme strategies for change are passive and active resistance. Both have the intent of causing major disruptions in the system at which they are directed. Passive resistance entails non-cooperation with the power structure e.g. refusing to perform assigned tasks, or obstructing the functioning of the system through "sit-ins". People operating singly can never be able to utilize this strategy because they usually perceive themselves as powerless and likely to lose more than they gain when confronting the full power of social institutions. Active resistance on the other hand involves taking an action that is likely to be unpleasant or disruptive to a system. Actions that fall into this category are toyi-toying which is currently common in South Africa. More extreme forms include destruction of property or depriving people, even temporarily of their freedom. Such task groups are normally referred to as social action groups.

3.8 RELEVANCE OF GROUP WORK METHOD TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCENE

As a society undergoing major social change, South Africa presents many challenges to the social work practitioner. Central among these is the search for relevant social work practice. The group work method with its dual focus on the individual and society, is well placed to meet the unique demands and tensions of a South Africa in transition (Drower, 1993:5).

Coughlan (1992:76) in confirming Drower (1987) indicates that in South Africa, changing times and growing needs have led to a realisation that there is a need to extend the scope of social work practice beyond casework. There is currently a strong growth in the call for social workers to engage in intervention strategies that impact beyond the individual and his/her immediate family; as a result many agencies and organisations are involved in a variety of community based projects. However, if we examine the work being done by social workers in all spheres it is clear that the method of casework still retains a central role in practice. It is often felt that there is no other or better way of addressing problems that are traditionally defined as "individual". This has been the result of the failure of social work in South Africa because throughout all the years social workers have been working to no avail to "casework poverty out of the people".

The researcher is not advocating that casework is not an effective method of service delivery in social work, and also does not wish to suggest that groups represent the "only approach" or the "best way" of helping clients understand and cope with their problems, she is merely advocating that South Africa with its peculiar past problems as indicated earlier could benefit more from the use of groups as compared to individual counselling. For example the policy of separate development has made the different population groups to grow ostensibly apart from each other to an extent that living next to one another poses real serious problems. As a system of mutual aid, the group has the potential to release both healing power, and thereby

facilitate personal change, and liberating power and thereby stimulate social, political and economic change. This is exactly what South Africans need. Social group work can assist South Africans to meet the challenges of the present and future. In addition, to survive, cope and find fulfilment, a culturally pluralistic and rapidly changing world requires an awareness that one's own self-interest is linked to the welfare of the larger ecological system, not only to the welfare of one's immediate ecological niche (Brenton, (1989:30). The group as a system can provide a safe haven in which Black and White can begin to move beyond previous definitions of themselves and each other and see each other as having to live together in a one democratic country sharing common values. As Rice (1989:159) has noted, the method has the structure and format for mutual support which allows people to take risks and to change attitudes and behaviour.

Further it is important to note that the professional attitudes and methods of intervention of social workers in South Africa have been greatly influenced by the political history of the country. Thus during the apartheid era the emphasis has been on material assistance which was highly paternalistic in nature. Coupled with the above was the emphasis on casework as was dictated by the then allocation of subsidies. Hence the use of groups to address the connection between individual and the social realities has been greatly minimized to an extent that the group work method seems to be avoided as inefficiently time consuming or as not viable with demotivated or resistant clients. Increasing poverty, with the resultant call for material assistance, has reinforced the belief that the need is for individual and community

services. The role of group work is de-emphasised. The role of groups in social work service delivery is therefore mainly restricted to the functions they perform in community work projects and more evasively in committees.

In the historical conjuncture of a social transformation to a new society, the social workers need to reconceptualize their practice. Emphasis should be on the promotion of social change through mutual-aid. That is to say, social workers need to recognise the need to work for a change in the structure of the society. In this case, a dialectical method based on scientific method/theory of knowledge need to be employed or recognised by social workers. This is described by Wilson (1992:303) "as a collective method, incorporating the knowledge of the social sciences and employing Freire's model of popular education". Thus social workers need to work more directly with the poor by facilitating groups in analysing their own positions in the historical moments in which they live, and in determining courses of action for themselves.

If the Reconstruction and Development Program has to succeed in South Africa, social workers need to be more developmentally oriented by pulling into their work/practice some group approaches and models, since social work with groups fulfils the mandate of the profession to serve minorities, to serve vulnerable populations, and to provide empowerment/enrichment services and mutual-aid to clients or group members who are working together in a democratic process.

3.9 GROUP WORK PRACTICE IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

The social group work method should be the most convenient and easiest method to apply in an African context because groups are commonly used in African communities to resolve varied individual, familial and community problems. For example, it is common practice for most of black people experiencing marital and family problems to discuss such problems at an extended family group meeting before consulting a professional person. Another example which is a common feature amongst black South Africans is their concept of "kgotla". "Kgotla" is normally the traditional leader's abode where people conglomerate at specific intervals to discuss community concerns or problems. Normally people who have access to the "kgotla" are the elders in the community as well as members of the traditional chieftainship. These groupings are normally accorded high respect.

Van Niekerk (1990:63) mentions in this connection that the "communal emphasis has caused many Africans to feel the centre of their identity as being outside themselves, but in the community or in the cultural groupings. It is the individual's participating presence within his own kinship group and not his individual achievements that should be stressed. Individual achievements are only significant in so far as they benefit the own kinship group or grant status to it".

Presently the number of self-help groups among Black South Africans in both rural and urban communities is growing rapidly. "These are

normally groups of people who feel they have a common personal problem, typically concerned with a medical, social or behavioral condition, and have joined together to do something about it" (Richardson, 1984:1). Self-help activities are by their very nature problem oriented and change directed in that they seek to improve intolerable relationships/conditions within peoples environment. Another common group feature is the burial societies, income generating groups, like stockvels, "mogodisano" youth clubs, recreational groups and groups addressing various problems emanating from political and social problems. Although the above mentioned groups cover a large proportion of the problems in black communities, there are still others that remain unresolved because they need intervention by trained social workers. Most of these problems are also amenable to group work intervention e.g. crime, alcohol and drug dependency, marriage and family breakdown, child-abuse, family violence etc. The fact that Black communities are amenable to group focus, makes it easier for social workers to organise around existing groups or to lobby for establishment of both treatment and task groups.

The use of groups increases self-understanding and improves the quality of interpersonal relationships, so innate in all human beings. People normally come together in small groups to escape feelings of emptiness so common in an increasingly technological and dehumanizing society. In group encounters people talk about their concerns and problems in an attempt to discover new ways of thinking, feeling, doing, or simply being, which will make life better for them in

some way. The group experience serves as a living laboratory, for it becomes a mirror in which members see themselves as they are.

3.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to illustrate the value of group work as an interventive method. Further, the importance of group dynamics as a contributory factor towards changing members' behaviour has been stressed.

The spirit of mutual-aid which is only prevalent in groups makes social group work a more prominent helping method as compared to a one - one method of intervention.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONTRIBUTION OF GROUP WORK TOWARDS COMMUNITY WORK AND CASE WORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

From the history of social work, as indicated in Chapter 2, it is evident that in South Africa the three primary methods of social work developed separately at different stages. This was influenced by the political history and policies of the country. Hare and Mc Kendrick in Thurz and Vigilante (1976:65) explain that within South Africa's social welfare system there is for practical and historical reasons a consistent emphasis upon therapeutic services to ameliorate problems already in existence. This was brought about by the then decision of the government to subsidize only the case work method based on the number of cases an agency attended to per month. As a result of this, community work became less and less practised, and group work gradually dwindled to oblivion as agencies concentrated on the method that would bring in monetary gain. As changes swept across South Africa, community work gradually developed along side casework. Welfare Agencies therefore emerged as specialising in case work or community work. Titles like "caseworker" and "community worker" become common, whereas group worker was less heard of. With the onset of new democracy in South Africa, the new buzz words of "developmental welfare" was born, and this approach tends to emphasize social development, empowerment and integration in social work.

If integration of the social work methods has to contribute successfully to developmental welfare, all the three primary methods of social work need to be given equal status of importance, and social workers need to be theoretically well grounded in all methods.

Social workers need to understand that group work is the backbone for both community work and casework. If appropriately utilized, it can greatly complement the other two methods because group work is based on the knowledge of people's need for each other and their interdependence. Skidmore and Thackeray (1988:82) also point out that group work can assist in:

- 1) achieving mutually determined goals;
- 2) achieving desirable change towards problems;
- 3) developing self-enhancement and individual enrichment;
- 4) using a combination of treatment, self-enhancement and personal fulfilment.

The objective of this chapter is therefore to highlight the important role social group work has within the case work and community work arena, and also to look at what all the primary methods can contribute or how they can complement each other in social development.

4.2 GROUP WORK AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORK

Social group work and community work have a common foundation as both constitute the primary methods of social work. They both work with people on a macro level as compared to casework which in most cases deals with clients solely on a micro level. From practical experience it is evident that a large part of a community worker's role entails working with groups. Working with local people to respond to needs and issues generally involves setting up and maintaining groups of people in management committees, working parties, action groups, advisory groups, support groups etc. to achieve desired goals. Whilst most community workers may not pay any special attention to the development of group dynamics and processes; these do have an impact in the development of their community work projects. Further, while many community workers would not describe such work as group work, much of what they do is group work. This dichotomy raises the question of whether community workers could be more effective if their group work skills were enhanced.

4.2.1 THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOCIAL GROUP WORK AND COMMUNITY WORK

Community work as well as group work have their roots in the well established traditions of society, hence the traditional saying that "Motho ke motho ka batho".

In chapter 3 the researcher indicated that human beings are highly gregarious and that the concept of mutual aid is as old as society itself. This is an indication that in all communities there are people committed to the belief that working together collectively can effect social change. To complement the above ideology Osei-Hwedie (1996:215) contends that social work practice emerges from the surroundings and circumstances, or it emerges from both the physical and social environments, and furthermore Midgley (1993) quoted in Osei-Hwedie (1993:215) also emphasises that in the Third World countries, clients are not always amenable to individualized intervention. This is because, for example, in most African societies the individual is a being within a societal or group context and finds character and expression of self within the group. This is a genuine driving force for involvement in community work.

It is also certainly true and factual that community workers make use of groups in all their endeavours in building or helping communities. It is impossible for a community worker to deal with the whole community simultaneously, hence community workers see formation of groups e.g social action groups, task groups, committees etc. as part of their role, while social group workers see the abovenamed groups as an extension of their roles. Hence, although one may define oneself as a community worker, the use of group work skills places one in the social group work role.

Community work and group work are both action oriented. They both bring about improved social functioning and community betterment for all citizens in community settings.

Within a group setting, communities have an opportunity to examine their problems/needs, make their own decisions and formulate their programs of action. These groups finally lead to community initiative and consensus - building, emphasising process rather than outcomes. This approach according to Haricharan (1995:15), is certainly facilitated by the organization of groups able to provide mutual support to community members. This is achieved through the mobilization of popular or political will by existing structures e.g women's groups, youth groups, skills training groups etc. and through conscious decentralization of government mechanisms (Sheafor, 1992). Further, in all communities there are always small and large informal network groups through which needs are met or services provided and social problems resolved e.g. "makgotla", "diphiri" etc. The different types of network groups revolve around different people and provide for specific needs, at times for specific individuals or groups of people. Several network groups make up a web of a community's indigenous self-sufficiency system. These natural groups offer possibilities for preventive intervention, but unfortunately they are inadequately tapped. Community workers need to learn about these types of groups and develop a strategy of using them more effectively.

GROUP WORK AS AN EMPOWERMENT TOOL IN COMMUNITY WORK

Group work serves as an empowerment tool in community work. In South Africa there is a re-awakening to community involvement and/or participation through the recognition that this country has a vast majority of its citizens who have fundamental human needs that have not been satisfied due to former development policies. Through a paternalistic form of social service delivery in the past, certain approaches had to be accepted e.g. unequal distribution of resources. On the basis of political campaigns to win the hearts and minds of the people of South Africa, particular approaches were adopted. One such approach that has become a key word in political and social developmental circles is empowerment.

The concept empowerment means different things to different people. To some it means participation and to others it means self-reliance, transformation, consciousness raising, giving training etc. It is therefore an open-ended concept (Mokgohloa, 1995:2).

According to the researcher empowerment is owning and controlling of resources which finally lead to mutual self-help. This is basically so because self-help groups are a powerful and constructive means for people to help themselves. The basic dignity of each human being is expressed in his or her capacity to be involved in a reciprocal helping exchange.

According to Sheafor (1992) empowerment is best defined as a group process where people who lack an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources. As a result, poor communities can more explicitly assert rights and responsibilities in determining the direction of their own development. The basic assumption in empowerment oriented practice within the community work context is that the consciousness raising process central to self-empowerment, leads to identification of the group processes as the most potentially productive medium. Hence to facilitate development, the role of community workers should be to promote the construction of empowering groups that are multifunctional in nature. The functions of these groups should include amongst others mutual aid, (as was indicated in chapter 3) education, skills building, self-help and social action. Empowerment/empowering groups which are multifunctional in nature, may promote development and growth, collective problem solving social change, and they also have a major impact on identity and self-concept. They also give life and meaning to local democracy through changing socio-economic/political structures and institutions.

Groups are therefore the optimum medium for empowerment on all levels of social development. Groups that seek change in the environment are empowering, and face to face "grass-roots" groups in neighbourhoods and communities bridge on "interstitial area" between group work and community work (Lewis 1983:209).

Cox (1991:81-83) outlines the following functions of empowerment oriented group work in a community context:

- a) Trends and patterns in the environment can more quickly be determined as the group explores the environment;
- b) Group members provide mutual support with respect to clarifying and understanding the problem they face;
- c) The group provides a medium of mutual social-emotional support for members in their struggle to cope with and bring about change in both the personal and political aspect of the problem;
- d) The group serves as a site for training in skills and acquiring knowledge needed for increasing competence in all aspects of empowerment i.e personal change or social action activities;
- e) The group can take action(s) intended to bring about environmental change;
- f) The group can assist group members in the community to cope with or challenge the outcomes or results of the change provoking action.

The African National Congress in its RDP also stresses the importance of empowerment in doing away with the ills of the past. Hence the empowerment of people is of prime importance to South Africa's programme of reconstruction and development.

The S.A government identified marginalised communities, women, youth, rural and disabled people as significant groups for empowerment. Since group work is a natural vehicle for empowerment, the above indicated groups can benefit considerably from group work because although people are responsible for their

own learning, a great deal of learning occurs in groups. Morals, affectional ties, exchange of views and mutual identification of members in a group enhance learning. These groups will also influence the formation or modification of values, beliefs, attitudes and actual behavioural changes.

4.2.3 GROUP TRAINING IN COMMUNITY WORK

The concept of training is also central to empowerment. The concept of training according to the researcher refers to a two sided form of training i.e. training people at grass-roots level and training trainers and development workers. Training programmes in community work can easily be accomplished if carried out through the medium of groups and through continuously evaluating group dynamics.

Training programmes in groups must at all times focus on empowering communities to identify development needs and to establish the necessary institutional framework to undertake development initiatives as well as to manage and maintain the development process.

In addition to the above, it is very important that in formulating strategies for training, emphasis should be given to indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge can be obtained through different types of network groups, task groups, community forum groups, community leadership groups etc. If all these groups are systematically coordinated and synthesised it will constitute what the Reconstruction and Development Programme emphasizes i.e. placing the responsibility for planning, social change and development in the

hands of the community. In this regard self-reliance is fostered through the use of indigenous forces and resources.

Skills for income-generation, the training of indigenous workers as well as the training of community work facilitators are all essential to facilitate and maintain improved community functioning.

To demonstrate the feasibility of the above, the researcher would like to cite an example of the group she was involved in as part of her study. A group of married unemployed women in the village of Bodibe in the North West Province was started by the researcher. The aim of the group was to learn different skills for income generation. The group composed of 8 women, all of them unemployed.

In the group, the group members expressed a desire to learn skills that they can in turn utilize to maintain or sustain their families.

Fourth year social work students of 1994 were invited to come with different skills they had to train group members (extra-group transactions).

Three students opted (with the help of a specialist from the local Manpower Centre) to teach group members crocheting, sewing and making of internal decorations e.g. making artificial flowers from discarded plastics and nylon materials. At the end of their training course group members divided themselves into three groups to teach other unemployed women skills they learned. Thus they provided a service to the community at a charge because trainees had to pay a fee for the training. The local school is currently still being used as a

training centre. Occasional flea markets are arranged at month end to sell completed merchandise.

In addition to technical skills training the original group was also trained on budgeting, basic bookkeeping and marketing techniques. It suffices to mention that the initial group was not immune to developmental problems. In the initial stage members were reluctant to commit themselves to the group. They expected to be showered with hand-outs. As the group developed through the leaders intervention in facilitating interaction and communication, planning and decision making was facilitated until the group reached the stage of cohesion where they now felt committed to their course and increased collective ownership of the group. The group demonstrated the mutual aid which characterizes the stage of intimacy, i.e. norms of mutual aid developed. The group handled differences and potential conflict easily. Having asserted their own leadership and temporarily put aside issues of power and control, the members' energy was directed towards task accomplishment. Empowerment through participation in group processes had positive outcomes for individual group members, hence empowerment begins with the individual and leads to collective group action.

The researcher further asserts that the South African contemporary communities in transition needs to be exposed to a variety of development oriented activities which are basically empowering. Some of these activities have been indicated by Gray (1996:11) as proposal writing, fundraising, running meetings, drawing up

constitutions etc. These activities can comfortably be accomplished through the medium of group training.

4.2.4

THE IMPORTANCE OF TASK GROUPS IN COMMUNITY WORK

Weil (1988) contends that all community work practice is definitely grounded in and carried out through task groups. In social work, task groups may be formed in organizations or communities to plan services, improve service delivery, improve social conditions, empower groups and communities and further social justice. According to Toseland and Rivas (1984:26) task groups are commonplace in most agencies and organizations. They are used to find solutions to organizational problems, to generate new ideas, and to make decisions regarding many different issues. All task groups involve planning, decision making and carrying forward actions which will impact on an agency, an inter-organizational network, a community or special population. The effects of task groups greatly impact, and are intended always to impact an environment and social relations beyond the life and interaction of members of the group, e.g. group advocating for improved sanitation in the community or a group advocating for development of food gardens to combat the problem of malnutrition in a village. Such task groups will work with different professionals e.g. health workers, teachers, and also other parastatals like Agrico, Local government department, Education department etc.

To complement Weil (1988), Mondros and Berman-Rossi (1991:203) emphasise that as community workers go about their business of acquiring influence to induce change on specified issues, they need simultaneously to be concerned about building task groups that are firm, invested, and committed to work. Having such a working or task group enables the community as well as the worker to be in an ongoing state of readiness to pursue new issues and negotiate agreements with external systems.

A typical example to illustrate the above is the concept of "Gotong-Royong" as illustrated by Baba (1995:5-6). The words "gotong-royong" mean cooperation in the Malay language. The philosophical force or ideology behind the concept is that on becoming a person or helping others become persons, one needs to understand the meaning of helping others who are in need of help. This approach conceptualizes that in order to implement change one must try to seek help within his/her own group or community, thus members of a community are responsible or expected to lend such help.

The "gotong-royong" approach conceives that self development can be achieved through working in task groups. The approach does not emphasize individual growth, but propels a person to be responsible for his/her own growth or behaviour through his/her own interaction with a group.

The approach traditionally requires members to focus on a specific task that needs to be achieved. The task normally concentrates on the physical development of the villages or communities, such as building

bridges, playgrounds, community centres, roads, as well as to perform certain celebrations and rituals such as religious activities, weddings and funerals. This approach is widely practised in communities especially when help from outside is not forthcoming. For instance, rather than having to wait for a local government to build a road or a community centre, members of the community would mobilize themselves to perform these tasks. Members believe that they do not have to wait for outsiders in order to gain something for their own benefit. They believe they can achieve everything they want through the group concept of "gotong-royong".

The group does not force or expect its members to engage in every task that the community is undertaking. However, through various activities, especially those activities that benefit all members in the community, people learn to develop some sense of responsibility. They believe that eventually inactive members will contribute something when they are ready to participate for the sake of their own community.

This example, firstly, demonstrates how a group within a community can spread its wings to bring about change in the entire community. The spirit is that people view their development in relation to their environment. People need to develop a spirit of mutual aid and social responsibility.

Secondly, this example demonstrates the importance of different issues in group membership and also the development of group processes. The "Gotong-Royong" is a typical example of a self-help task group

which concentrates on a specific task at hand and continues with the task until a complete product is attained. In the process of working towards goal attainment several group processes develop, e.g. norms, values and standards, group influence, cohesion, decision making, role allocation etc. and members become committed to achieving their desired goals. Members are not forced to join the group, which enforces the principle of self-determination and democratic participation. Members join the group because they feel they need to belong and because they have the desire to contribute towards their own development.

4.2.5 THE SCHIZM WITHIN COMMUNITY WORK AND GROUP WORK

Since most community workers organise around developing groups, there is need for them to be deliberately attentive to how groups develop, function, and are sustained. In most instances, the community worker's interest in achieving valued outcomes often overshadows and diverts attention from the relationship between group development and community achievements. Birnbaun et al. (1988) also believe that community work practitioners are inevitably engaged in facilitative work with task groups, but are often somewhat disadvantaged in their preparation by a schism between the current literature (and often curricula) of group work and community work.

This situation is more prevalent in South Africa where social workers (from observation) have a tendency of ignoring group dynamics when

dealing with community projects. In this regard it would seem that community work is viewed as community work per sé and is never looked at in relation to group work or any other method of social work. This compartmentalization of the methods in South Africa has been prompted by the past apartheid era which channelled social workers to concentrate on clinical or one to one treatment intervention models. Later, when a turn to community work emerged, group work remained in the back stage, and social workers emerged to engage in community practice with limited knowledge or understanding of large group aspects of intervention (residualism).

Hence, in most instances, the majority of the community workers fail to utilize group dynamics developing in groups because their focus in the past was on project development and not group development. In South Africa many projects fail to develop because apparently community workers are unable to recognise group dynamics which possibly could successfully contribute to project development. The system of compartmentalizing group work and community work must be discouraged if social workers want to achieve improved social functioning and development for communities.

Mondros & Berman-Rossi (1991:204) fully concur with the above concern by indicating that there are numerous pitfalls within community work with regards to the utilization of groups. They indicate that "community workers normally create difficulties for themselves by not attending to how and why people join groups, the meaning of group experience for individuals, and group processes in

general. Community workers normally incorrectly assume that people join solely out of interest in issues and prepare themselves to discuss only the issue at hand as well as the desired ends. Consequently, they may fail to detect cues about the secondary expressive concerns of members, further because in group meetings, particularly initial ones, community workers may wrongly assume that only instrumental matters are of importance".

When recruiting and selecting members, community workers often wrongly perceive that the people with whom they have had initial contact will enthusiastically join and participate. Because they impute universal zeal, they tend to place unrealistic demands upon them. Such presumptions are what eventually lead to pre-mature termination of projects.

From experience community workers tend to assume that once formed, a group should continue to operate harmoniously. They normally view the emergence of sub-groups and conflict as threatening. This fear of group syndrome enforces conformity by exerting a high degree of control over the expression of conflict in the group. They generally regard interpersonal conflict as an unwelcome interruption which must be resolved before a group can "move on". It is perceived as an event extraordinary to real process. Such control invariably can produce the very behaviour the worker wishes to avoid.

Group workers are educated to see ambivalence and concerns about power and control as normative aspects of group participation and

group process (Mondros & Berman-Rossi :203). They become aware that conflict and sub-group formation are part and parcel of any developing group. It would be helpful if community workers develop similar understanding and comfort with the idea that such behaviours are to be expected and are inevitable.

It is important in this regard to indicate that the community work literature and curriculum which South African students are exposed to is in considerable need of updating to accommodate changing political, economic and social climates and resources.

Most of the social work literature commonly used in South African universities is clearly grounded in the practice experience and social, economic climate of England and/or United States, and is foreign to the South African situation. Contemporary South African students view most of this literature as history unrelated to their generation.

There is a dire need in South Africa to improve community work literature and to build within it the concept of group methods and skills, and further, essential values need to be clarified and reintegrated into task group and macro-practice; and macro-practice models need to be updated to reinstate needed community practice.

With the rapid socio-political changes that have evolved in South Africa in recent years, the social work profession faces major challenges to develop a curriculum that is relevant to the peculiar South African situation. It would have to go well beyond its traditional

individual centred model of delivering services and give preference to a macro-oriented approach which emphasises group theories and models. In brief this calls for the indegenization and pragmitization of the curriculum in most areas of the study.

4.3 THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOCIAL GROUP WORK AND SOCIAL CASEWORK

Group work as a method cuts across all other primary methods of social work. This is so as group work can complement both community work and case work. The researcher indicated at length how group work can complement community social work, and it suffices at this point to indicate how group work can be used to facilitate better understanding of client's problems and how social workers can use group work to achieve individual therapeutic goals. The researcher does not suggest that groups represent the "only approach" or the "best way" of helping clients understand and cope with their problems. In some cases, groups may be the most appropriate intervention in a client's life. In other cases, groups may be used as a supplementary form of treatment or as the next step a client takes after completing some individual counselling. For example, a growing number of authors including the researcher, have observed that group treatment as a follow up from individual counselling is a particularly significant and helpful form of therapy for adults who were sexually abused in childhood (see for example,

Bruckner & Johnson, 1987; Cole, 1985; Cole and Barney, 1987; Kelly-Garnett, 1989; Knight, 1993; Mennen & Meadow, 1993).

It is evident that social case work has been the prominent method of intervention in social work. Most social workers feel most comfortable with one - one intervention with the total exclusion of other methods. On the contrary, South African social workers are prone to complain about large case loads which very often prevent them from doing home visits. It is necessary to mention that group work can be utilized by caseworkers to minimise case loads especially of clients experiencing similar problems or concerns.

Marital disputes are common to most agencies. Social workers spend most of their time dealing with individual marital disputes overlooking the importance of forming groups with such clients to alleviate such chronic recurring problems.

Some social workers view groups as a second-rate treatment modality. They are convinced that interventions for individuals, couples and families are more valuable and appropriate. If groups are used in their work setting, they probably think that cost factors are the primary consideration. More clients can be served by one practitioner in a given amount of time, and when budgets are tight and personnel are overworked, the economy of groups could seem paramount (Corey & Corey, 1987:204).

The situation as portrayed by Corey and Corey (1987) is somewhat different in South Africa. The difference is that most social workers

have an attitude towards group work due to the history of social work in South Africa whereby social welfare agencies encouraged social workers to concentrate on case work for subsidy purposes. Hence, South African social workers tend to overlook the fact that group work is often the treatment of choice, not just because monetary rands are stretched but because the inherent values in the group process result in self-understanding, healing, and change on the part of the participants.

It is important to understand that social work with groups is not the casework transaction multiplied by x number of individuals. The central premise of social work with groups is that it is the very multiplicity of helping relationships in the group which both quantitatively and qualitatively enhance the helping process.

With South Africa taking a new turn towards the developmental approach, Gray (1997:8) in *Social Work Practice* argues that a progression to the "new" requires dispensing with the "old". She identified several aspects of the "old" which social work needed to discard, among them its preoccupation with casework. This is an indication that casework, important as it may be, may have to give way to more developmentally oriented strategies. For example in working with offenders, juvenile delinquents, pregnant teenagers, abused children, neglected old-age citizens, battered wives etc, caseworkers need to be more rehabilitative and preventive orientated. This will require them to integrate macro approaches rather than being individually orientated. Group meetings, or sessions can bring better

understanding of problems, and also contribute to assertiveness and a more positive view of the self which in turn will result in better coping skills. Consultation and education in groups can be more effective than when carried out individually. Toseland & Rivas (1984:89) emphasise that groups help members to realize that they are not alone with their problems and also provide other benefits that cannot be replicated in individual treatment, e.g. the presence of others gives members a chance to receive feedback that can assist them in their change efforts. Peer feedback can be particularly beneficial for adolescents, juvenile offenders or involuntary adult clients who may resist the suggestions of the caseworker, because he or she is viewed as an authority figure (Northern, 1982). Group work can also play a major role in helping clients with chronic medical illness. Individual counselling with such patients can always be followed by group counselling to reinforce understanding of the illness. The following section will attempt to indicate how group work can successfully complement case work with clients having chronic medical illness.

4.3.1

CASE WORK - GROUP WORK APPROACH TO CHRONIC MEDICAL ILLNESS

One aspect of casework that deserves special mention is social workers working with clients having chronic medical illness e.g. epileptics, mental retardation, HIV/AIDS, traumatic injury etc. In most cases social workers deal with such patients on an individual basis. Group work with such clients is only sometimes practised in institutions, which indicates that clients e.g. epileptics, HIV/AIDS

patients etc. not committed to institutions are never exposed to group treatment. Epileptics, for example are very difficult to deal with. Most of them have a problem of accepting that they cannot do everything for themselves. They have a serious problem of understanding their limitations. Caseworkers alone, can never be able to convince such clients, but if such clients are in a group situation, they can generalize their problems and also identify with each other. Collectively they can encourage each other to accept their situation. Formation of self-help groups with such client populations can have far reaching effects. Social workers need to understand that group work is not only for clients committed to an institution, but clients within communities living with families can also benefit from a group work situation.

Clearly, disabling medical conditions such as those mentioned above, pose unique and unusually severe stress for the person who must adapt his or her sense of self and life style to the limitations imposed by the illness. While advances in medical technology have lengthened patient survival and improved the expected medical course of many of these conditions, there remains concern about the psychological and interpersonal quality of life available to these patients and their families.

Yet, despite a growing recognition of the impact of chronic, disabling medical illness on family life, and despite a comparable appreciation of the role of the family in the success or failure of adaptation to disabling illness, there have been remarkably few psychosocial interventions focused on family issues, needs and stresses during the

chronic phase of the illness. Those programs that do exist are designed primarily to provide ongoing education and supportive therapy to the individual patient alone, with the total exclusion of the significant others in the life of the client. For example a case of HIV/AIDS bound to disturb the equilibrium of the whole family system, as well as his/her other relationships. Social workers in most cases will offer individual counselling to the HIV/AIDS patient with less emphasis on how other sub-systems' functioning is being disrupted. When family focused interventions are at all offered, they typically occur at two points in the illness process; at the time of diagnosis when family members are given a plethora of information about the illness, its care requirements, and its expected course; and during the terminal phase of the illness when patients are either dying or have become too debilitated to make decisions or care for themselves. This indicates that families in most cases do not get help with the stress of living with a chronically disabled family member. These are the very instances where case-workers can utilize structured group therapy with a psycho-educational approach. The group sessions can be made up of all family subsystems e.g. spouse, children, grand-children including extended families like parents/parents in-law, aunts, sisters, brothers, depending on the intensity of the relationship to the patient. Very close friends to the patient can also be included in such group sessions.

On a wider scope, group sessions can include different family members experiencing similar problems of having a patient with a chronic disabling medical problem. Such groups would/should use a

stress and coping paradigm rather than a psychopathological model in its attitudinal stance towards chronic illness. Families, thereby establish a group atmosphere that encourages a non blaming review of past family coping efforts and an exploration of new strategies for tackling illness-related family issues. Further, in a group, families can be taught about the illness, what to expect, and how to modify the family environment accordingly.

According to Gonzales, Steinglass & Reiss (1989:72) the educational aspects of group intervention serve two main therapeutic goals. The first is to impart information concerning the illness itself - its etiology, symptoms, expected course, the environmental determinants of exacerbations, and the conditions conducive to optimal quality of life. Information and sharing of views help families and patients anticipate disruptions and changes in life style required by the illness, thereby increasing their capacity to cope constructively with these transactions. A second and perhaps the most important effect of patient, and family education in groups is that it reframes the definition of the illness as well as the responsibility of the illness on the entire system. This approach can successfully lead to family rehabilitation and prevention of further medical illnesses with families.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Group work as a method of intervention in social work is the live wire of social service delivery. This is so because, if appropriately and adequately used, it can greatly complement both case work and

community work as it is based on the knowledge of people's need for each other and their interdependence.

Community work and group work for example, are both action oriented. They both bring about improved social functioning. Within a group setting, communities as well as individuals have an opportunity to examine their problems/needs, make their own decisions and formulate their individual or collective programs of action.

CHAPTER 5

GROUPWORK AS A PREVENTIVE, REHABILITATIVE AND DEVELOPMENTAL TOOL:- A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Social group work concentrates primarily on providing group experiences to meet normal developmental needs to help prevent social breakdown, and facilitate corrective and rehabilitative goals, and to encourage popular participation as well as positive social action. Prevention, rehabilitation and development are the cornerstone of all social work programmes because they promote optimal social functioning and social stability.

The draft white paper for social welfare as gazetted on February 2, 1996, emphasises the importance of prevention, rehabilitation and development, as well as some of the proposed national developmental social welfare strategies.

Social workers pursuing rehabilitative and preventive purposes are found in a variety of settings such as mental health clinics, correctional institutions, children's homes, hospitals, child welfare agencies, public welfare agencies etc.

As it is known, social workers are concerned with the enhancement of the quality of life in a variety of ways. Hence, the enhancement of the quality of life of families lies at the heart of developmental and preventive services - services poised at the opposite end of the continuum to rehabilitative services, which address chronic needs or problems (McKendrick, 1991:22).

McKendrick (1991:23) further asserts that the social worker in his/her delivery of services would move appropriately along the developmental-preventive-curative-rehabilitative-continuum, participating in the establishment of developmental and preventive services in the community at crucial junctures and making this available to whole populations. Such endeavour would be aimed at providing basic services, preventing problems and crises from arising, strengthening family coping skills, and developing accessible resource networks. This is an indication that social workers in their endeavour to deliver effective service delivery have to consider programmes that are developmental, preventive, treatment and rehabilitatively oriented.

5.2 PREVENTION IN SOCIAL WORK

5.2.1 THE CONCEPT PREVENTION

Prevention in social work refers to early intervention that enables communities to avoid problems or dysfunctioning. It is normally directed at large groups of people who do not necessarily manifest problems. The base for prevention offers an interesting blend of

behavioral science and community work approaches. Examples include a wide range of interventions such as parent effectiveness, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, maternal child health programmes, suicide prevention, anti-poverty campaigns, self-help initiatives, public awareness etc. The social work approach to prevention is related to the modalities and methods that emerged in the early 1960's. Beginning with social reform, charity organisation and the initial venture into public social services, the profession has made a major leap from its preoccupation with social casework and direct services to a broader notion of generic social work practice and training (Whittman, 1978). The conception of preventive casework first came to light in 1961, and also in 1962 with the proposal of a definition of preventive social work (Bracht, 1978:205).



This definition assumes or perceives preventive social work as "an organized and systematic effort to apply knowledge about social health and pathology in such a manner as to enhance and preserve the social and mental health of the community (Bracht op cit).

Bloom (1981:49) sees prevention as a type of problem solving, a process which employs the well-tested stages of problem-solving in somewhat modified form because of the unique character of preventive activities that deal with future problems or unfulfilled potential.

Skidmore et al. (1991:328) say prevention indicates action that crushes off something from happening. Stated positively, it is the process of

action taken so that antisocial behaviour or personal, family, or community problems are minimized or do not arise at all.

Theoretically it means the doing of something so that personal and social pathology will not develop.

Skidmore et al. further indicate that prevention in social work is perceived in two ways. These are:

- (a) proper action taken so that the personal, family, or community problems do not arise at all; and
- (b) action taken so that personal, family and community problems are not repeated even though such problems existed at the outset.

5.2.2 TYPES OR LEVELS OF PREVENTION

5.2.2.1 Primary prevention

Bargal (1988:14-16) defines primary prevention as an "intervention at a point in time in the life of an individual, social group or community prior to the onset of illness or maladjustment". This definition tallies with the English saying that "prevention is better than cure" whilst McKendrick (1991:) says prevention is concerned with keeping the vase intact, rather than trying to repair the broken pieces. This means that not all social work services have to wait until there is disintegration or dysfunctioning of the individual before intervention can be applied. Primary intervention precedes such situations.

Primary prevention aims primarily at imparting or disseminating information that individuals, families groups or communities can use to healthy living. McKendrick (1991:32) indicates that emphasis in primary prevention is on informed and interactive self-determination among all relevant parties in a given preventive situation, the goal being to help all parties form a working social system by accommodating their mutual privileges and responsibilities.

Wagenfeld (1972) sees primary prevention as taking two basic forms:

- i.e (a) intervention in life crises of individuals; and
(b) altering the balance of physical, social, cultural and psychosocial forces in the community.

Rae-Grant, (1979:3) defines primary prevention as "that which aims at reducing the incidence of new cases of disorder, disabilities and dysfunctions in a population; reducing stress in the environment; raising individual and group immunity to stress; the development of optimal potential; the promotion of competence in its broadest sense; improving the quality of life in target populations; and raising the general health of childhood population".

A close scrutiny of the definitions of primary prevention indicates that although they are not identical, they are all greatly related in that there is substantial agreement about its abstract definition as well as its main focus, which is emphasises the broad twin goals of enhancing people's psychological health and forestalling the development of psychological problems.

5.2.2.2 Secondary prevention

The draft white paper for social welfare (as gazetted, 1996:164) conceptualizes secondary prevention as being aimed at the identification of problems and early intervention into the lives of individuals, families and groups who are at risk of developing social problems before the situation becomes critical.

Early intervention is designed to enhance development, minimize potential delays in development; remedy existing problems, prevent further deterioration, limit the acquisition of additional handicapping conditions and/or promote adaptive family functioning (Katz et al. 1995:15).

Secondary prevention, by contrast, involves techniques that seek to reduce the prevalence of a disorder by reducing its duration. There are two distinct pathways to secondary prevention; and these are:-

- a) to identify prodromal signs of serious disorders early, so that prompt effective steps can be taken to avert dire psychological consequences; and
- b) to identify signs of dysfunction as soon as possible, and use the best available methods to stall more serious problems developing later.

A common element in all secondary prevention efforts is the sense that systematic early case findings bring with them the possibility that the duration of the disorder can be reduced.

5.2.2.3 Tertiary prevention

Tertiary prevention normally occurs at the stage where an individual or family faces critical problems or dysfunction. The focus therefore is on intervention and prevention of further deterioration or malfunctioning e.g intensive family or group therapy for abused wives. McKendrick (1991:328) alludes that tertiary prevention is focused mainly on the chronic and serious illness and includes attempts to reduce pain and suffering. However the researcher does not feel comfortable with McKendrick's view because tertiary prevention is not only concerned with chronic or serious illness, but can refer to other social problems as well, e.g rehabilitation of a disintegrated family or the rehabilitation of street children.

5.2.3 GROUPWORK IN PREVENTION

In the beginning of this chapter, the researcher indicated that most social work programmes are preventive oriented. This is so because prevention in social work service delivery in the field of family and children's services is congruent with an ultimate goal of providing children with what is needed to grow and develop into contributing adult members of society and of living in responsible harmony with themselves and their environment (Kadushin, 1977:16). Further, this

is so because, Bargal, (1988:14) emphasises that prevention is a form of intervention at a point in time in the life of an individual, group or community prior to the onset of illness or maladjustment.

Since group interaction is the social force through which individual growth and development take place, and since group work uses group influence to facilitate change, the group work method seems more relevant as a means towards prevention.

Looking at Rae-Grant's, (1979:3) definition of prevention as outlined on page 114 of this chapter, the researcher would like to unpack his definition in order to indicate how effective group work can be utilised in prevention programmes.

Firstly Rae-Grant indicates that:-

- (a) primary intervention indicates that which aims at reducing the incidence of new cases of disorder, disabilities and dysfunctions in a population. This involves consultation and teaching at group level. For example, teaching and imparting knowledge to groups of pregnant mothers; groups of mothers having physically or mentally disabled children; groups of mentally disabled children etc. People with such problems cope or learn more effectively in groups where there is commonality of a problem.
- (b) reducing stress in the environment; raising individual and group immunity to stress. One of the aims of group work as stated by

Heap (1985) is reducing or alleviating problems in the members environment. Group programmes or group activities can be utilized to reduce stress in the environment.

Corey and Corey (1985:126) consider programme activities to be more than simply another set of techniques for enhancing group experience. Through group activities, individuals can express their creativity in their environment, approach situations in a manner that generates new perspectives on themselves and their environments, communicate with others on more levels than those available in strictly verbal interactions, and develop new interest and talents. Heap (1985) further contends that groups also serve as a means of recreation, and also alleviate isolation.

- (c) development of optimal potential and the promotion of competence in its broadest sense.

It is only in groups that members are able to measure their potentials and capabilities against each other. It is also in groups where members are able to discover as well as develop their potentials. The process of feed back in groups coupled with positive group influence can help members to develop and grow.

Wilson and Ryland in Alissi, (1980:169) confirm the above by indicating that most social agencies serving groups have two purposes in common, i.e. to:-

- * help individuals use groups to further their development into emotionally balanced, intellectually free, and physically fit persons; and
 - * help groups achieve ends desirable in an economic, political, and social democracy.
- (d) improving the quality of life in target populations and raising the general health of childhood populations.

The group experience guided by the worker may help to facilitate the normal social growth process and the extension of effective social functioning. Further, through collective experience and interpersonal exchange the individual develops skills, expresses latent talents, fulfils potential for growth and finds enrichment of life which could not be achieved as adequately through individual experience. Such groups would according to Alissi (1980:67) include some of the creative arts, interests, intellectual and philosophical discussions, or action groups in which the individual member grows and finds a fuller life experience through the group, not available to him through individual activities.

Working with children in groups is in its own way preventive. Since children constitute tomorrow's population of adults, exposing them to preventive programmes such as Life

Education, can curb lots of social problems, and contribute to them growing up to be responsible future citizens.

It is a true fact that children learn better in groups; children stimulate each other in groups; and peer group influence can facilitate change faster than through individual intervention. In groups, children have an opportunity to experiment with relationships to other children in a more protective and freer environment; they also have an opportunity to discuss specific problems growing out of their difficulties e.g teenagers in groups tend to be more open about their feelings towards the opposite sex. Through talking about the adolescent myth, they can be given realistic information which can deter them from irrational behaviours so common with teenagers.

5.2.4 STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION

According to McKendrick (1991:32) social functioning for purposes of preventive intervention is studied from a "wellness" rather than an "illness" perspective. What it entails is that preventive strategies must be promotive of wellness and health.

Statistics from the World Health Organisation indicate that it is more cost-effective to prevent than to treat. The following strategies have been developed by the researcher based on literature and personal observation using groups as a vehicle toward goal achievement:

(a) Community awareness

In the ecological framework of group work, groups are perceived as a system which interfaces between the individuals and their environment. This framework is based on the premise that there is a direct relationship between social groupwork groups and the members' natural environments. This therefore means that attention needs to be given to ensure that these two dimensions complement one another. This is actually where community or public awareness comes in. Communities need to be made aware of factors debilitating between/amongst them and their natural environments. Communities need to know, have a feel and fully understand factors that cause stress, ill-health, conflicts, dysfunctioning etc. It is through understanding and being aware of our environments that prevention can be applied. Community awareness can easily be achieved through using groups. This concept is of course based on the premise that a central organizing theme in ecology, means that people need each other to survive and grow. Individuals exchange affection skills and ideas not only solely in small face-to-face encounters, but also accept and negotiate these encounters according to pathways that are embedded in family traditions and community belief systems.

However, group workers have to acknowledge that they are not the end for all the needs of their members and that groups are only a facilitative mechanism to assist in gaining public

awareness and developing skills to help the members' deal with internal and external struggles.

In the process of helping members understand and get a feel of their environment the ecological framework can enable the worker to help map the members' total environment, provide knowledge about the various social networks and support systems operating in the members' environment, and how these could be mobilised effectively in helping to meet the members' needs.

The worker's intervention in facilitating public awareness or community awareness enables members to explore and understand uncomfortable differences between their personal and social identity because if there is lack of awareness or discrepancy between these two perceptions, the individuals functioning will be disturbed. This disturbance can range from difficulty in family relationships, to peer relationships, work situations etc.

(b) Consultation and Education

Education in groups can always be linked to the above concept of community awareness. This is so because in creating awareness one has to impart knowledge and skills. Education in prevention plays a major role in facilitating corrective purposes, growth and enhancement, restoration or rehabilitation. Educational groups for prevention purposes concentrate on

helping members learn about themselves and their surroundings. They are aimed at increasing members' information or skills, and they also often include opportunities for group discussion to foster learning. In such groups the worker concentrates on both the individual learner and on the group as a whole as a medium for learning, reinforcement and discussion.

Since life events are never static for too long, and since common sense and experience emphasize that change is fairly constant and pervasive, education in prevention needs to be a continuous process that emphasizes the developmental learning needs as well as positive social experiences of individual group members.

Examples of educational groups for prevention purposes are amongst others, adolescent sexuality groups; pre-marital counselling groups; marriage enrichment groups; groups for pregnant teenagers; or preparation for parenthood groups; groups for prospective foster parents or adoptive parents; social action groups aimed at improving essential amenities in the village etc.

It suffices to mention at this point that lack of education is a major barrier to prevention. In view of the conditions of poverty that contribute to ignorance, apathy and lack of exposure to health and other resources and facilities to individuals in deprived communities in South Africa, it can be

expected that such individuals will be uninformed as to the causes, effects as well as mean of prevention of disorders. This makes people to be filled with misinformation as well as superstitions. To counteract such problems and misinformation in any education oriented venture, cultural beliefs should be understood by all who are involved in prevention activities. Education programmes should therefore be planned and implemented with the full participation of the people to whom they are directed. W.H.O (1972) warns that since change implies the substitution of one thing for another, every effort should be made to ensure that information given to people in the education process is scientifically sound as well as culturally acceptable.

Education as well as community awareness can be carried out through means that are accessible, understandable and conceivable to all structures of the community. This calls for effective programme activities that will actively involve all structures of the community.

Bruner in Balgopal and Vassil (1983:146) theorize that people learn through active stimulation of the musculature system in addition to the more passive mode of cognition. He further indicates that learning occurs through three systems; through manipulation and action; through perceptual organization and imagery, and through the symbolic apparatuses of cognition and

language. Social group work often is a form of education and all three systems of learning should be engaged.

Programme activities as shared activity accord an opportunity for group members to cooperate as well as compete with each other. Cooperation and competition are the two societal dynamics which influence the functioning of all individuals. By introducing appropriate programmes and activities, group members can be provided with a testing ground to assess themselves as cooperative and/or competitive individuals.

(c) Support groups

According to Gitterman (1989:5), support is integral to the group modality. It provides a major rationale for the provision of group services. Such services are what are often referred to as support groups.

Gitterman (op cit) further contends that "support can be metaphorically compared to providing the function to a group that energy provides to machinery".

To emphasize the above statement, support groups are an integral and natural outcome of the mutual problem solving process. As group members begin to feel supported by others in the group, they often feel that they are not alone in the way that they think and feel; because the support they receive in the group makes them feel comfortable to share their confusion, anger, helplessness, guilt, resentment, depression etc. This is

exactly why support groups are said to be therapeutic in nature. Further, the caring and acceptance that develop in a support group are a powerful healing force. In a group (for example) that the researcher conducted with parents of mentally retarded children whose aim was amongst others to prevent the abuse of such children, compassion and support was given not only by the group leader but also by other parents. Individuals within this group were able to risk being vulnerable as they sense that what concerns them is also important to others in the group. Hence in support groups the sharing of feelings is often even more intense.

White and Madara (1992:18), reinforce that the development of support groups is basically founded on people's need to find others like themselves who have experienced a similar problem. They further state that mutual support help groups are especially attractive to persons undergoing a transition that requires a shift in social roles e.g pregnant teenager.

In forming a mutual support group, the social worker's initial task is to identify a clear purpose. Common needs, concerns or interests provide the foundation for support. The social worker as a group leader must start with a clear idea about group purpose, translating commonality into specific operational tasks.

(d) Networking

Networking is a very important strategy in prevention. In

networking, different groups can share information and promote interconnectedness or form a matrix structure.

A matrix structure can resolve some of the problems of taking a hierarchical or systems view of how teams or groups fit into organisations or agencies. In this case individuals are assumed to form part of a normal hierarchical structure or part of their normal groups within an organisation, but representatives are drawn from different groups to make up task teams/groups which work on a particular task or product.

Gitterman (1989:7-8) outlines the following groups based on the concept of networking:-

- i) Life transitional networking includes forming groups to deal with common life transitional issues, concerns or an approaching crisis e.g puberty stage, birth of a first child, giving birth to a physically disabled child, unwanted pregnancy, loss of a spouse or child etc.
- ii) Environmental networking includes forming groups to deal with common issues and concerns such as isolated senior citizens, families with AIDS patients, parents of retarded children, welfare rights, women's rights, children's rights etc.

- iii) Interpersonal networking includes forming groups to deal with common interpersonal issues and concerns experienced within natural systems or units e.g couples, families with delinquent children, children in substitute care like children's homes etc.

Support groups tend to be either long term and open-ended with members that exit from the group being replaced by new members. However when a common membership core remains intact, these groups provide long lasting emotional support, social contact and instrumental assistance.

(e) Social Action

On a more radical note, Kessler and Kessler, (1975:576) maintain that prevention in some areas may require social and political changes to improve the quality of life. The above authors, like many other observers of social pathology like Bower, (1969) and Bloom. (1965) argue that "patchwork solutions will not do, and that the whole structure of our polluted, industrialized, overenergised, over-crowded, sexist and racist society breeds such massive human injustice and distress that the only hope for prevention is for major social reorganisation. Social action groups are a viable system for social and political changes to improve the quality of life because they entail taking of collective action with the intention of changing the groups environment.

Social action in social work is seen as an effort to bring into public discourse that which, according to the consensus between power-holders and the public, should remain in the shadow of public debate, but also in the shadow of the great social movements.

Since prevention of mental and emotional disorders is seen as the exclusive result of the abolition of injustice, discrimination, economic insecurity, poverty, unemployment etc, social action groups seem to be the perfect strategy for the abolition of such social injustices which calls for the realisation that inequities in the distribution of power are at the root of the problem.

5.3 REHABILITATION IN SOCIAL WORK

5.3.1 THE CONCEPT REHABILITATION

The field of social work explains rehabilitation as the last level of prevention. Programmes designed to prevent or reduce the residual and adverse consequences of rooted disorders in individuals, families, groups or communities are formally designed as tertiary prevention; but are better known as rehabilitation. Skidmore et al. (1991:151) illuminate that tertiary prevention or rehabilitation is designed to prevent or stop further deterioration of disease or problems.

Skidmore et al (op cit : 329) further elucidate that rehabilitation is more than stopping a disease process; it is also the prevention of

complete disability after anatomic and physiological changes are more or less stabilized. Its positive objective is to return the affected individual, family or group to a useful place in society and make maximum use of his/their remaining capacities.

A rehabilitative service refers to services aimed at restoring impaired functioning. It further seeks to make changes that will alleviate specific handicaps to the functioning of individuals in their social roles.

Further, rehabilitative services encompass clients discharged from controlled situations e.g hospitals, correctional institutions, children's homes, residential treatment, as well as people with mental or physical disabilities to help them re-adapt back into the community. In South Africa for example, the Department of Correctional Services is moving from the ideology of punishment to that of rehabilitation, with the objective of enabling the prisoner to lead a socially responsible and crime free life in the future (Draft New Correctional Services Act, 1997).

It would seem that rehabilitation falls at the other end of the prevention continuum because prevention does not have to wait for a breakdown to happen before intervention takes place, whereas with rehabilitation the client has already reached a stage of total breakdown or dysfunctioning. Thus McKendrick (1985:24) illuminates that rehabilitation is selected when the adaptive capacities of the family or group, are weakened or lacking. Thus the role of the social worker in

this instance will be more restorative, reconstructive and curative in nature.

5.3.2 SOCIAL WORK AND REHABILITATION

Social work as a profession deals with a wide variety of clients needing rehabilitation in one way or the other.

Such rehabilitative services cover a wide spectrum of clients ranging from:-

- a) Health care/mental health services e.g mentally and physically disabled clients; mentally ill including schizophrenics, chronic medical illnesses such as epileptics, coronary heart disease, diabetics, alcoholics etc.
- b) Family and child welfare services e.g marriage and family counselling, teenage counselling, foster care, adoption, child protective services, reconstruction services, physical neglect and abuse etc.
- c) Correctional services e.g prisoners, parolees, juvenile delinquents, street kids, youth in detention, half-way houses etc.

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The goal of rehabilitation in social work is therefore to:-

- (a) enable the person to live to the fullest capacity possible, focusing on the achievements rather than disability or dysfunctioning.

- (b) Encourage independence as far as possible and also to encourage self-care.
- (c) Facilitate adjustment to disability and information giving about community resources and services.

As with prevention, the client and his family are the key members of the rehabilitation team. In actual fact for rehabilitation to be more effective, it has to be looked at in an eco-systems perspective. Such a perspective incorporates the person-in-transaction - with - the environment stance developed by writers such as Gordon (1969); Hearn (1969); Germaine and Gitterman (1980); and Bloom (1987). This perspective affirms that people must be viewed and helped within their social and physical environments (McKendrick 1990:11). An example to illustrate this will be the case of an alcoholic. For an alcoholic to succeed in maintaining his sobriety, the family (both nuclear and extended), friends, work situation and community must be conducive to his being or keeping sober. If the environment as well as the significant others are not supportive enough, the rehabilitation programme will be greatly hampered and the change may be impossible and not feasible. Therefore for rehabilitation to be effective, it must be based on an integrated model which touches all aspects of life of the individual. Brown and Highson (1987:25) reiterate the above statement by indicating that rehabilitation must involve a number of primary features. First, there is recognition that mental handicap, mental illness and physical disability are the result of a variety of interacting primary and secondary negative social impacts.

But each individual is not only subjected to negative situations or events, for, primary and secondary positive impacts also occur. It is argued that, in order to understand the rehabilitation process and to apply an effective model of rehabilitation to each individual, family or group, these positive and negative impacts must be recognized and detailed at the programme-building stage. These represent in a way the quality that recognizes that each individual, family or group is unique in its own unique environment, and determine for that individual, family or group a specialized and independent programme.

Another requirement relates not so much to the individual per sé, but to the nature of rehabilitation programming, because there appears to be a structured hierarchy which can be viewed in the framework several continua.

Rehabilitation procedures provide the basic rules upon which any continuous rehabilitation programme can be built, but these have to be applied at different levels. There also appear to be concrete and abstract developmental processes. This sequence of developmental steps can be arranged into a longitudinal plan and divided into areas of functioning (e.g institutional care, sheltered workshops, vocational training, social training, home training and community activities). The process relates to how an individual's sequence of learning interfaces within different areas of environmental stimulation and represents the areas which give an inclination that if all significant others are made part or members of the group, the perception towards the client may greatly improve and this will have lasting results of the rehabilitation

programme. The encouragement from the family, the understanding of the problems or illness by the family, the opportunity of talking and discussing facts about the problem or disease can make the family to have a better perspective of the situation.

5.3.3

REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

With South Africa coming from the state of apartheid which basically constituted psychological as well as physical oppression, social workers need to concentrate on rehabilitation within communities.

During the apartheid era, there was a tendency for rehabilitation programs to be concentrated in institutions with the total exclusion of communities. This meant that the government utilized psychiatric hospitals, prisons, reformatories and other related institutions to achieve their goals. This, according to Shahanden (1985:13), was the most inappropriate means of rehabilitation because of the separation of the individual means of rehabilitation from his/her support systems e.g family, friends, employment, school, etc. This therefore means that the individual can only function or behave appropriately when she/he is in the institution's environment. In most cases relapse occurs as soon as the individual is exposed to the larger community. This happens because basic difficulties in coping with real life problems have not been dealt with.

An example of such a situation can be a prisoner released on parole who suddenly finds himself more vulnerable in the crucial phase of

reintegration after leaving an institution, having lost contact with his support systems. Because of this, the family as well as the community tend to feel less capable, suspicious and not involved in providing assistance, having relinquished their responsibility to the institution. Shahanden (1985:13) concludes that such rehabilitation programs can only have long term negative consequences for all concerned and considerably reduce the chances of recovery. Another problem associated with rehabilitation programmes within an institution is that clients are not encouraged to take an active role in determining their rehabilitation process. The institution has a tendency to impose programs and put limits in ways of behaving, thus they are rarely intimately involved in determining their own needs, in setting their own goals or in resolving important problems.

The administration and coordination of rehabilitation programs depends largely on the political structure of the country. The new South African dispensation discourages institutionalization and encourages community based care or rehabilitation. For example South Africa has amongst others shifted from the ideology of punishment in prisons to that of rehabilitation and community corrections. With the general restructuring of the whole government structure a number of innovative programs are being implemented aimed at developing a sense of autonomy and a positive self-image. These are generally organized within the community and have a socially useful function e.g primary health care is advocated in most areas, the government has invested in building community health

centres; and lately the government is contemplating on implementing community correction programs and privatising prisons.

Such programs may therefore benefit different groups of people or clients such as psychiatric patients, mentally retarded people, the physically disabled, the aged, unwed mothers, pregnant teenagers, alcoholics, prisoners etc, and it may also benefit the community through the improvement of the quality of life. In this way emotional and social maturity are encouraged in the individual through constructive community based programs. There is also need to co-ordinate programmes with those of the private sector which can assist in generating greater community involvement and participation.

5.3.4 GROUPWORK IN REHABILITATION

As discussed in the section on prevention, groupwork can play a very important and vital role in rehabilitation. People who need rehabilitation are normally people who have already experienced some form of deterioration of behaviour, disease or problem. Based on Heap's model of group resources, people, experiencing similar pain, problems, disease etc. if put together in a limited size group over a period of time, will automatically interact, share concerns and experiences. People who have been through similar experiences are best teachers to one another because they can identify with one another and also be able to generalize their behaviour. The integration of solutions and collective power makes one to feel that he is not isolated but part of the whole. Alcoholics will for instance cooperate

more with other alcoholics, and the testimony of one may influence others' behaviours because "he simply knows where he is coming from".

To support the above statement the researcher would like to directly quote the words of Altman & Crocker (1982:3), "Alcoholics have, for years, thwarted the attempts of people to help them. They have confounded professionals with their resistance, their lack of insight, their failure to respond to treatment. In the eyes of the social workers and most other helping people, they have been frustrating people/patients, who failed appointments, did not pay their bills, and refused to get well".

With the advent of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, some began to achieve sobriety. As membership in this mysterious society grew, more alcoholics recovered. They stopped drinking and either resumed or started satisfying ways of living. However, many continued to appear in physical and mental health offices, and continued to drive therapists crazy. Skilled professionals who treated alcoholics on a one-to-one basis wondered why they failed despite their best efforts, and what A.A. had that they did not.

The most significant answer lies in the use of a group. Actively drinking alcoholics are isolated people with virtually no positive self-image. They are loners who, when they begin to interact with other recovering alcoholics, discover a common bond. As interpersonal

communication replaces isolation, hope, acceptance and a sense of belonging dispel loneliness.

The analogy is common to all people who are experiencing some form of deterioration, or whose adaptive capacities are weakened or lacking. Because such clients have already lost themselves, the use of groups in rehabilitation settings has evolved into the "treatment of choice" due to the effectiveness of results.

The specific dynamics of rehabilitation necessitate a variety of groups corresponding to particular stages in the recovery or adaptive process, each group possessing its own unique purpose, structure, function and style of leadership.

The groups, attended in consecutive order, are designed to meet the clients' changing needs. Clients in groups move from acquiring information and working on denial and avoidance of problems to accepting their disease e.g. T.B. patients or epileptics. The magic words in this case are nothing but identification and generalization.

Groups in the early phases of rehabilitation have little feeling content characterised by resistance and ambivalence and a lot of structure and repetition. In ensuing phases, there is less structure and more focus on feelings. The early stages also take into account the patients' or clients' perceptual difficulties and the need for visual aids such as movies, slides, testimonies, in the form of comedies or tragedies; repetitions and clarity. The leadership styles change from active involvement in

the early stages to less active involvement later on, as clients take on more responsibility for their group. When clients reach this stage of the group, they now share resources such as mutual control, mutual support, generalization, collective power and integration of solutions (Heap 1985:). The role of the group worker at this stage will be to facilitate the group process and help members get in touch with and work through their real feelings while they acquire additional coping skills.

In a rehabilitation setting the group deals with the realities of the problem e.g it could be the realities of being in prison, of being an alcoholic, an epileptic, HIV/AIDS patient, having a mentally retarded/or physically disabled child etc. Such realities can be achieved or obtained through group education programmes, networking, awareness campaign groups and action groups.

It is very important to look at rehabilitation from an eco-systems perspective. This calls for the involvement of all the significant others to be involved in the rehabilitation process. This also reiterates the point indicated earlier in this chapter of community based rehabilitation. Zimberg, Wallace & Blume, (1978:36) suggest for example that alcoholic behaviour is built into the family's equilibrium and does not necessarily vanish with the onset of sobriety. The predictable drunk is no longer so predictable. Roles begin to change. Family members struggle with fears of a relapse. "Waling on eggs" becomes a common practice. The family experiences overwhelming anomie. The same situation can also be applicable to a mentally ill

person or prisoner whereby the family will always view him/her with suspicion and some element of stigmatization. However, if the rehabilitation process involves all members that have meaning to the clients, this will alleviate all the indicated fears. This gives an inclination that if all significant others are made part or members of the group, the perception towards the client may greatly improve, and this will have lasting results of the rehabilitation programme. The encouragement from the family, the understanding of the problem or illness by the family, the opportunity of talking and discussing facts about the problem or disease can make the family to have a better perspective of the situation.

5.3.5 REHABILITATION AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL SCENARIO

Under the section on "Rehabilitation programs", mention is made that South Africa as a result of its past political legacies, can benefit from groups. This specifically involves rehabilitating people from racial stereotypes, barriers and social distance.

If South Africa needs to portray a real true rainbow nation, communities have to learn to live side by side in harmony and peace. It is a true fact, that South Africans apart from the truth and reconciliation need to rehabilitate themselves as individuals from the bondages of the apartheid era. This means that people need to give

each other an opportunity to air their anger, frustrations and depressions of the oppression by equally sharing those feelings in an environment that is not threatening.

At this juncture the researcher would like to align herself with Drower (1993:5) when she indicates that the group work method with its dual focus on the individual and society is well placed to meet the unique demands and tensions of a South Africa in transition. She further indicates that group work as a method of practice in South Africa has an enormous strength because it contains a range of models and intervention strategies of relevance to the South African society.

In her article Drower (op cit) demonstrates how group work was utilized to bridge inter-racial differences and barriers between and among black and white women in Johannesburg, South Africa and to further help them to search for common identity and together to explore their visions of the democratic South Africa.

The outcome of Drower's group encounter was positive in that all women both black and white were willing to give and receive from each other, they all worked together for social change, and the exercise acknowledged the connection between individual health and societal health and the fact that the former can be enhanced through action directed at social betterment.

Brenton (1989:18) confirms that the group as a system of mutual aid has the potential to release both healing power, and thereby facilitate

personal change, and liberating power, and thereby stimulate social, political and economic change, while Coyle (1980:42) equally affirms that American group workers have always been interested in using group experience to enhance participation of group members as citizens and neighbours in areas of social tension and disorganization.

Following on the external/international experiences, group work in South Africa can equally help develop social consciousness and strengthen community participation where people can work together to overcome racial stereotypes, stigmatization, and negative attitudes. This can begin by firstly letting different races in the group share their concrete experiences and attitudes, and secondly proceed to reflect on those experiences in order to effect positive change. This can be described as a dialectical method of integrating theory with practice; beginning with the concrete experiences of the group participants (practice). This method helps members to develop a critical scientific understanding of those experiences (theory), and leads members to more strategic action based on the new and deeper understanding (practice). This is an on-going collective process, with a high level of participation, in which people teach each other and learn by doing (Wilson, 1992:309).

With the new education system, South Africa has facilitated free and open education. This means that children of different races find themselves plunged into a system that is foreign to them. The system suddenly expects them to interact and cooperate with each other and to portray the unified democratic South Africa. The result of this is

children experiencing conflict, reacting to each other by using racial stereotypes and negative verbal abuses. This is a confirmation that South African children need to be rehabilitated in order to be able to challenge stereotypes and cultural biases. Group work as indicated earlier can be utilized to integrate school children. This is so because rather than restricting practice to a conceptual segment of the client's behaviour, the group work potency lies precisely in its ability to deal with relevant expressions of dysfunction along the full experiential range, individual-to-individual, individual - in and individual - to group, and individual and group in their social milieu (Sirls et al. 1980:195).

According to Glassman and Kates, (1989:1059) engaging ethnic and racial phenomena is a formal and necessary function of social group work. Sandra (1993:9) confirmed that the method is well placed to provide an opportunity for black and white South Africans to search for common leverage and identity.

Anderson in Dubois and Miley (1998) suggests that small groups are significant resources for persons who need to develop social competencies, especially those experiencing powerlessness, alienation, and hopelessness; being victimized; not feeling understood in their current human relations; and/or feeling inadequate in changing systems of which they are part.

In groups for rehabilitation, racial groups in South Africa can benefit from the following mechanism for change as outlined by Dubois and Miley (19 :222):

- a) Altruism: helping others by putting others' needs ahead of ones own in the group.
- b) Cohesiveness : belonging to a group of people who are perceived as understanding and accepting one's self.
- c) Universality : feeling less different and more like others in the group.
- d) Interpersonal learning : getting information on how one impacts on others in the group and experimenting with different ways of relating to these others.
- e) Installation of hope : being encouraged to change or create change by experiencing its possibility in the group.
- f) Social learning : through initiation and through doing, developing skills to negotiate social systems in one's own behalf and on behalf of others.

5.4 DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

5.4.1 THE CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Social work as a profession is developmental in nature because it promotes a dynamic process of growth, change and progress. Hence, according to McKendrick (1991:20) enhancement of the quality of life of families lies at the heart of development.

The goals and objectives of development therefore require continuous efforts to reduce and eliminate major sources of social distress and instability for the family as a unit of society.

Development in social work is focused on helping people to deal with the social needs and problems they face which can best be met by bringing about change in their immediate environment. This is a clear indication that development is always people centred. The Copenhagen Declaration of 1995, espoused that development is central to the needs and aspirations of the people, and that people must be at the centre for sustainable development, and that they are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with their environment.

According to Lombard (1991:108) people's skills and participation are of the utmost importance in the development process, because they are the instrument and target of development.-

In the past, during the apartheid era, development was focused on the top down approach which entirely divorced or excluded the majority of people from the development process. This situation was further compounded by lack of coherent and all inclusive development policies. The result of which is that services in most areas of the country virtually collapsed. This traditional centralised, topdown approach of development is recently being challenged, with emphasis placed on a decentralised development approach using empowerment and total inclusivity to better outcome.

The final chapter of the RDP (ANC : 1994), describes the goal of democratising the state and society, of transferring actual power to ordinary people and of ensuring accountability and accessibility to development. In relation to the ANC's, RDP policy, people have a right to participation and to development. In reiterating the above Lombard (1991) stresses that development must always take place within the community context. It should not only be in the mind of policy makers or on paper. As a concept, development has to be directed rather at change in society which includes related social and political improvements. Communities should be allowed to take responsibility for their non development, and it should not only primarily aim at the establishment of infrastructures, but at establishing the human developmental potential.

The major tendencies in a people centred development will be the equal distribution of power and benefits, strong local-control and accountability, community and ecological regeneration, resilient self-

reliant local economies within an inter-linked yet stable global system (Community Development Draft White Paper, 1996).

In the new South Africa, the current scenario in the welfare field is on development based on human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy, mutual responsibility and cooperation. The respect for human rights as a new concept in South Africa cannot be separated from human development, social enrichment, and economic development. The recognition of this nexus is essential if people-centred development is to promote the realization of the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and human rights of all people.

Support programmes and economic activities, public policies through which individuals, groups and communities can express their initiatives and creativity and which enhance the wealth of all communities, must be fundamental basis for social development. These are important concepts in development because the developmental process cannot simply be realized through the free interaction of market forces. Public policies will be necessary to correct market failures, to complement market mechanisms, to maintain social stability and to create a national and international economic environment that promotes sustainable growth. Such growth should promote equity and social justice, tolerance, responsibility and involvement (Copenhagen Declaration, 1995).

5.4.2 SOCIAL WORK AND DEVELOPMENT

Social work in South Africa can not be seen separately from the past apartheid legacies that contributed to the large portion of our communities being steadily disempowered over decades and denied access to resources and opportunities to fend for themselves. In addition to the above, the very large sections of the population affected by the then political ideology, were excluded from development initiatives to such an extent that their capacities and potential to help themselves did not develop or expand. This resulted in basic needs not being met, and hence the wide spread poverty in South Africa.

With the dawn of new democracy in the country, social workers suddenly find themselves confronted with the problem of finding new methods and approaches of mobilising change and development in order to alleviate the wide spread poverty.

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Lombard (1991) espoused that to address development problems and concomitant mass poverty, it is necessary to shift the emphasis of social work service from rehabilitation to prevention and development. This is in line with one of the goals of the national developmental social welfare strategy which is to provide rehabilitative, preventive, developmental and protective services and facilities as well as social security.

The gazetted white paper for social welfare (1996) states categorically that welfare should contribute to the eradication of poverty through a developmental approach.

The developmental approach emphasises the following aspects:-

- a) it discourages dependency;
- b) it promotes inclusivity in development; and
- c) it facilitates a multi-faced, multi-sectoral approach. This is based on the premise that no single agent on its own can achieve development. It must be a question of shared responsibility and joint efforts on the part of many actors e.g. state, provincial and local government, and all other stakeholders in welfare.

To be in line with the recent political changes, the South African welfare system is moving towards a development paradigm. It has to give up its dominant role as the instrument of government caring for those in need through the delivery of services and it must recognise the link between welfare and development (Gray, 1996:9).

The indication here is that social workers need to be more creative in coming up with programmes that will facilitate poverty alleviation. The government has already introduced a variety of developmental programmes that need to be implemented by social workers in consultation with other stakeholders. Some examples of such programmes are; the Flagship programme for unemployed women with children under five years, youth commissions, free education for

school going children up to matric; maternal and infant care; primary health care etc.

Gray (1996:12) states that developmental social work should endeavour to promote the following:

- a) a people-centred philosophy;
- b) welfare as a human-right;
- c) the prevention of social problems;
- d) awareness through education;
- e) equality of resource allocation and service provision;
- f) populist forms of intervention, including community development;
- g) community participation in all stages of care from planning through evaluation; and
- h) multisectoral work.

The most important aspect of developmental social work is empowerment of people because, if people are empowered, they can be in a position to develop and change and hence manage their own development. Emphasis should be on the people within the process rather than the actual physical development. In both economic and social terms, the most productive policies and investments are those that empower people to maximise their capacities, resources and opportunities.

The Copenhagen Declaration, (1995) enforces the importance of empowerment in stating that empowerment and participation are essential for democracy, harmony and social development. All members or sectors of society should have the opportunity, through empowerment to exercise the right and responsibility to take an active part in the affairs of the community in which they live. Social workers who are developmentally oriented, must endeavour to see to it that the obstacles that have always limited the access of the majority of the people to decision-making, education, health-care services and productive employment must be eliminated through encouraging owning and controlling of the resources. In this light, empowerment can start to be seen as a "new rights policy implying people owning their learning". In this process people gain abstract goals, and abstract needs refers to internal and permanent goals such as self-reliance, human dignity and self-sufficiency (Swanepoel, 1992:2).

5.4.3 GROUP WORK AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

This section will focus on the nexus that exists between group work and social development. It is necessary to mention at this juncture that social development provides the context within which development takes place. It is a multisectoral approach to poverty alleviation and requires that all sectors of society work together towards social upliftment or social change: (Gray, 1996:10).

The goals and objectives of social development require continuous efforts to reduce and eliminate major sources of social distress and instability in family and in the society.

Whatever the auspices of group practice, at its core is the objective of promoting individual growth through group experience; group work practice therefore always seeks to empower people in groups towards the realization of shared goals for change.

Group work like social development (as an approach and outcome that is to be achieved) like group work, puts empowerment as its central focus. In both instances empowerment requires the active engagement of collectivities of individuals working together towards shared objectives.

Earlier in the chapter it was indicated that development cannot succeed if people are not empowered, and in chapter 4 mention was made of group work being the best tool for empowerment.

Group work and social development have a common heritage as both have their ideological roots firmly planted in the social conditions of the last half of the 19th century. However, group work and community organization, as it was known then, developed methodological identities of their own. Group work practice, as part of its professionalization, became identified with personal growth-oriented-

agency-based services. Community organisation also shifted its focus away from social activism to agency-based activities such as social administration, policy, planning etc.

With increased professionalization, social activism shifted from the centre of social work's concerns to its periphery. Social development therefore arose out of the social action vacuum (Estes, 1991:8).

Estes (op cit) further discusses the junctures in areas of development activity where social development and group work practice converge.

The first of these is personal and group empowerment through self-help, mutual aid and conscientization.

Self-help groups are a powerful and constructive means for people to help themselves and each other. The basic dignity of each human being is expressed in his or her capacity to be involved in a reciprocal helping exchange. Mutual-aid is the process of group members helping one another think things through, sharing life experiences, opinions, feelings and attitudes. It is further the extension of responsibility by a group of people who share a common concern. Mutual-aid is basically the give and take within a collectivity. Conscientization is making people aware of their rights and needs. It refers to the process by which people unravel the psychological bindings that tie them to a sense of powerlessness and to the end-state of more humane and just societies (Estes, 1991:8).

The second juncture is based on the fact that group work has an enormous potential in the area of conflict resolution. The practice experience of both group work and social development has focused on reducing the negative or adverse power relationships that exist between members of a more powerful majority group.

The third aspect is that of nation building. This refers to the process of working towards integration of a society's social, economic and cultural institutions at all levels of political organization. This basically involves the active participation of all citizens toward realignment of a coherent national framework.

5.5

CONCLUSION

An important strength of group work is its professional ideology, practice tradition, and continuing commitment to individual and collective change through group experiences. Further, group work's tradition of working toward the elimination of broadly based social oppressions is one of its more significant contributions to the social work profession, and that group work's history of client advocacy, institutional change and social reform adds credibility to its claim as an important contributor to prevention, rehabilitation and social development. Group work is an important basis of social development. The aims of people determining their own social and economic destinies can easily be achieved in groups. Groups for children and youth are the best preventive medicine the profession has to offer. Even children who have been labelled as "problem children" can change their views of themselves by offering help to others.

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the assumption that group work as a method of intervention in social work practice is greatly under utilized although it has immense value of being an important feature of any development process. When a number of people come together to create a group, a social process that creates unique group properties is set into motion. These properties are generated only within the group and result from the interaction of the group members. These can be utilized by social workers in helping individuals to use the group experience for a variety of personal psychosocial needs.



To prove or disprove the assumption of under utilization of group work, different methods of data collection were used to test the following:-

- (i) The extent to which group work is utilized by social workers in service delivery
- (ii) The impact of social work training on the utilization of the method
- (iii) The interest and attitudes of social workers towards the use of the method

- (iv) Factors that may contribute to the under utilization
- (v) To test the knowledge of practising social workers with regard to the implementation of group work in the RDP

This chapter therefore deals with the presentation and analysis of data obtained from the different measuring instruments. Presentation of data will be dealt with in two ways, i.e. by means of tables and figures. Normally, as it is portrayed in this study, tables will reflect the responses to specific items in the questionnaire and interview schedule, while figures have been utilized to simplify qualitative data. Graphs have also been used to complement tables and figures.

The objectives of the study have been revisited, and the researcher has explicitly attempted to capture important themes and linked them to the original objectives and basic issues of the research as a whole.

Where applicable, findings will be compared to theory. Data from the three data gathering instruments will be compared for any significant correlations. Where applicable, generalizations will be effected to prove or negate the assumptions.

6.2 RESPONSE RATE

The following methods of data collection were utilized:-

- a) a structured questionnaire was mailed to 500 registered social workers throughout South Africa, and 109 out of 500 questionnaires were received back. This constituted 21.6% of

the targeted respondents. However, it must be indicated that in calculating frequencies, it has become evident that some respondents did not answer all questions, hence there are missing frequencies varying between 1 and 4.

- b) a questionnaire was personally administered to Social work departments of training institutions in South Africa. There are 19 social work training institutions, and all were included in the study.
- c) a structured interview was conducted with groups of social workers in different agencies throughout South Africa. Twenty five agencies were visited. Groups ranged from three to twelve social workers per group.

Each data collection instrument will be analysed separately in the following sequence:-

- (a) Questionnaires from social workers
- (b) Interview schedules from social workers employed in different welfare agencies/institutions
- (c) Questionnaires from training institutions

6.3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS FROM REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS

6.3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The following tables and information give an indication of the different observable characteristics of respondents. These are:-

- (a) Agencies or institutions employing respondents;
- (b) Years of experience; and
- (c) Qualifications of respondents

The characteristics are reflected in the following tables:

Table 1(a) Welfare agencies where respondents are employed

Type	No of respondents	%
State welfare agencies	49	45,4
Correctional services	7	6,5
Private welfare organizations	45	41,7
Places of safety/children's Homes	7	6,5
Total	108	100,1

Table 1(b) Years of service/experience of respondents

Years of service	No of respondents	Percentage
0 - 3	31	28,4
4 - 6	36	33,0
7 - 10	19	17,4
11+	23	21,1
Total	109	99,9

Table 1(c) Qualifications of Social Workers

Qualification	No of respondents	Percentage
B.A. (SW)	45	41,3
B.A. (SW) Hons	36	33,0
MA (SW)	9	8,3
PhD (SW)	0	0
Other	19	17,4
Total	109	100

According to table 1(a) it is conspicuous that the majority of respondents are employed in state welfare agencies or institutions (51.9%) under different line departments such as 45.4% are under the auspices of the Department of Welfare and Population Development and, 6,5% are administered by the Department of Correctional Services. Mazibuko (1995:9) confirms this notion by indicating that through the years the state has always been the major employer of social workers. The reason for this lies in the notion that welfare

delivery in South Africa has from its inception been controlled and regulated by the government through different acts of parliament. Hence, the state's task has always been the provision of statutory personal social service programmes, overall planning of social welfare, and social security provision. Such state agencies are spread throughout the nine provinces, and are normally referred to as public welfare agencies because they are sponsored by the government, and are subject to the political ideology of the ruling government. This category also includes social workers employed in host agencies such as state owned hospitals. A further 41.7% of respondents are employed in private welfare agencies/welfare organisations. This sector comprises of community - and church-sponsored welfare organizations and has primary responsibility for non-statutory personal social services (McKendrick 1987:25). Patel in Mazibuko (1995:19) identified 1,641 local voluntary welfare organizations registered in terms of the National Welfare Act of 1978. The majority of these private welfare organizations are affiliated to the various national councils but retain their autonomy.

A small percentage (6.5%) of social workers are employed in places of safety or children's homes which can either be classified as private or public.

Table 1(b) shows that (61.4%) of respondents have between 0 - 6 years experience in social work service whereas 17.4% have 7-10 years experience. A study conducted in 1983 is consistent with this finding whereby Matthias (1983) indicated that the majority of social

workers 52.1% have between 1-5 years experience, followed by 18.6% who have 6-10 years experience.

From this table it would seem that the more experienced social workers tend to leave the social work practice. The reason for this may be due to the fact that they get absorbed into senior positions in industries, government, parastatals and academic institutions. It is necessary to indicate that since independence, there has been an observable exodus of social workers from practice to take up senior positions in government administrative departments whilst other "older" social workers most probably preferred to opt for retrenchment or early retirement.

As reflected in table 1 (c), 41.3% of social workers graduated with a Bachelors in social work degree and 33.0% with an honours degree. Only 8.3% obtained a Masters degree in Social Work. This could lead to a notion that mostly newly qualified social workers tend to work in the field of social work practice, and that as soon as they acquire higher qualifications and experience they tend to move on to better paying posts outside the social work profession.

This notion may well correspond with what has been portrayed in table 1(b) which indicateds that most respondents had working experience of 0-6 years.

The notion of basic qualifications of social workers as indicated in this study corresponds more or less⁷ with information given by Matthias (1983) where she indicated that a total of 52,9% of social workers in her study completed a three year degree, 37.1% completed an honours

degree, and only 9.3% received a Masters degree. It would seem that the educational situation of social workers in practice has not changed much from 1983 up to 1997.

The profile of social workers in this study can therefore be summarised as follows:-

- (a) the majority of social workers are employed in the government service (51.9%);
- (b) the majority (61.4%) have between 0-6 years experience; and
- (c) most respondents (41.3%) have completed a Bachelors degree, 33% Bachelors degree Hons. and only 8.3% have graduated with a senior postgraduate degree i.e MA(SW). Furthermore 17.4% indicated other qualifications such as higher diploma in social work, or auxilliary social work.

6.4 PROFILE OF AGENCIES EMPLOYING RESPONDENTS

South Africa as a cosmopolitan country is comprised of people from rural areas, urban areas and settlement areas commonly known as "mekhukhu". However, almost 65% of the South African population live in rural areas characterised by poverty and lack of appropriate resources (Kuskus 1998; Anderson 1997). The following tables aim at giving an indication of where most welfare agencies where respondents are employed are located; the age of the agency i.e how long the agency has been in existence; number of social workers employed in agencies/state departments as compared to people

serviced by the agency/organisation; and number of clients serviced by an individual social worker in a particular agency.

Table 2(a) location of Agencies

Location of Agency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Rural	15	14,0
Urban	56	52,3
Both urban & rural	31	28,0
Settlement areas	6	5,6
Total	107	99,9

Table 2(b) number of years in existence

Age of existence	Number of Respondents	Percentage
0-3 years	4	3,7
4-6 years	5	4,7
7-9 years	8	7,5
10+	90	84,1
Total	107	100

Table 2(c) number of social workers employed by agency/welfare organisations

No of social workers employed	Number of employing agencies	% of employing agencies
1-3	55	54
4-7	27	27
8+	18 } 45	18
Total	100.0	99

Table 2 (d) number of clients served by the agencies per day

No of clients per day	No. of Agencies	Agency by %
1 - 20	35	34,3
21 - 40	24	23,5 } 57,8
41 - 60	15	14,7
60+	28	27,4 } 42,1
Total	102	99,9

Table 2(e) number of clients seen by an individual social worker per day

No of clients	No. of social workers	Social Workers by %
1 - 10	70	71,4
11 - 20	24	24,2 } 95,6
21+	4	4
Total	98	99,8

As table 2(a) indicates, 52.3% of welfare agencies are located in urban areas and only 14.0% are located in rural areas. This table shows a discrepancy and an uneven distribution of welfare resources in South Africa. As indicated earlier, almost 65% of the South African population live in rural areas. The interpretation is therefore that people in rural areas are inadequately served by welfare agencies. From observation it is evident that most welfare agencies are located in towns or cities. This means that people from rural areas have to travel to the city centre for welfare services.

Table 2(b) portrays the age or number of years in existence of agencies where respondents are employed. The majority of agencies, 84.1% have been in existence for more than 11 years. This is an indication that most South African welfare agencies are expected to be well established because of long existence. On the contrary, it may be interpreted that because of long existence, South African welfare agencies may have been trapped in the old government policies of unequal distribution of welfare resources, race inequalities etc. Table 2(a) tends to reinforce this notion of inequality and unfair distribution of resources as shown by the limited number of agencies located in rural areas (14.0%) where most of the Black communities are located.

From table 2(c) it would seem that most agencies (55%) employ between 1-3 social workers and 45% employ between 4 and 8. It is very difficult to comment on this state of affairs since the size of the agency is not known. Different possibilities exist e.g most agencies may be smaller in size, the population served may be small, agencies

may be gravely understaffed due to several reasons, etc. However, when looking at table 2(d) there is an indication of a discrepancy in that the table portrays that 57.8% of agencies serve between 1-40 clients per day, and 42.1% serve up to more than 41 clients per day. This may suggest that agencies are understaffed. The issue of understaffing has been confirmed in table 4 where 20% of respondents indicated that understaffing in agencies prevents them from utilizing group work. This fact has also been confirmed by Anderson (1997:2) including to the fact that the ratio of all social workers to the general population is 1:10 322. Given the ratios of the population per social worker it can be reflected that there is a greater need for more social workers to be employed by agencies.

Table 2(d) confirms and complements tables 2 (e) in indicating that 95.6% of individual social workers employed in agencies service up to 20 clients per day.

The profile of the South African agencies in this study can therefore be summarized as follows:-

- (a) The majority of agencies are centrally located within towns and cities at the total neglect of rural areas which constitute the greater population of the country.

- (b) That most welfare agencies have been in existence for more than 11 years which may call for a paradigm shift from the old order to the new developmentally orientated approach.
- (c) That most welfare agencies are greatly understaffed with high case loads.

The question of under staffing and high case loads was echoed repeatedly during agency group interviews. Social workers interviewed in groups repeatedly expressed that due to high case loads they are deprived of the opportunity to utilize the other two primary methods of social work as well as research. They indicated that most of their time is spent on case work since most agencies encourage the use of the case work method. Matthias (1983), in her study conducted amongst practising social workers, confirms that 55% of the social workers she surveyed were originally employed as caseworkers, 0.7% were employed as group workers, 2.1% were employed as community workers, and 38.6% were employed to practice a combination of methods. This therefore indicates that the larger proportion of social workers are employed to practice casework only and hence the problem of high case loads. This notion overlooks the fact that regular use of group work can counteract these high case loads.

6.5 UTILIZATION OF THE DIRECT METHODS OF INTERVENTION

The assumption of the study is that group work as a method of intervention in social work is highly marginalized and under utilized.

The following tables portray the frequency of utilization of each method; the interest shown by social workers in the use of each method using a 3 point scale; and frequency of the use of methods by different agencies. A comparison of the tables will indicate whether a particular method receives more priority over another method. The tables will also confirm or negate the assumption that group work is under-utilized.

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FIGURE 1 FREQUENCY OF UTILIZATION OF PRIMARY METHODS BY INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL WORKERS

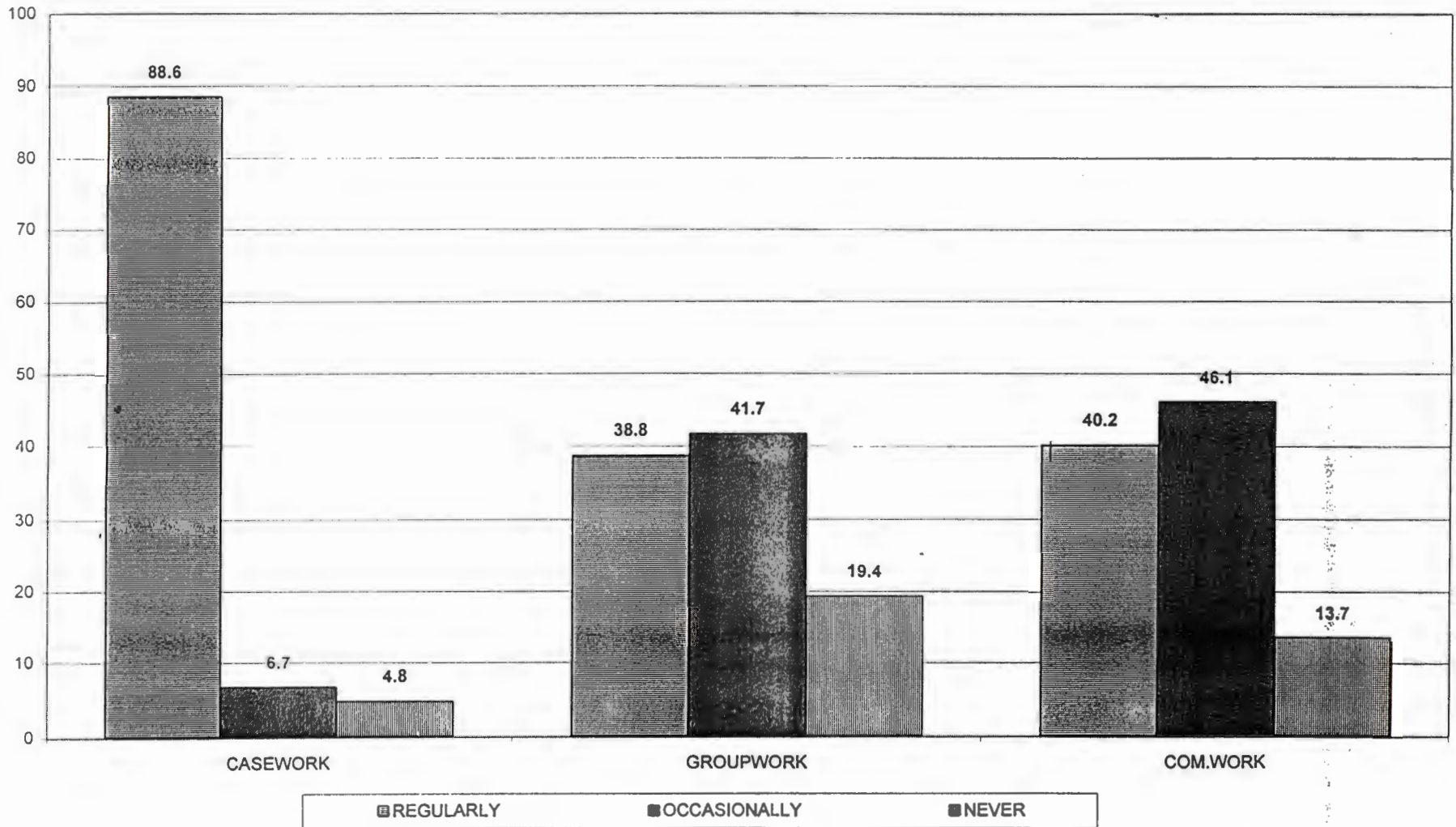


FIGURE 2: INTEREST OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE USE OF PRIMARY METHODS

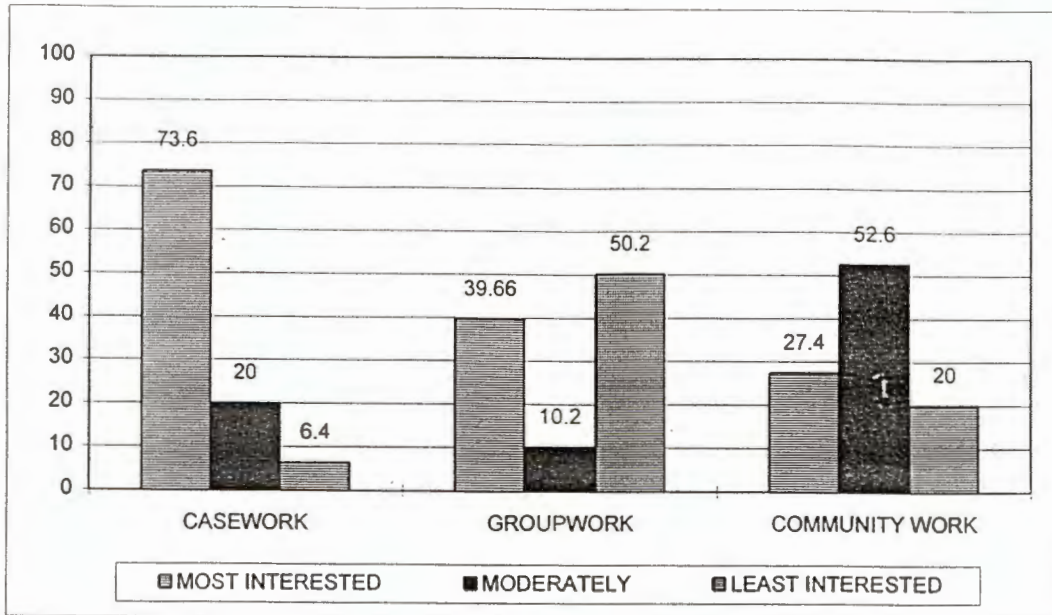
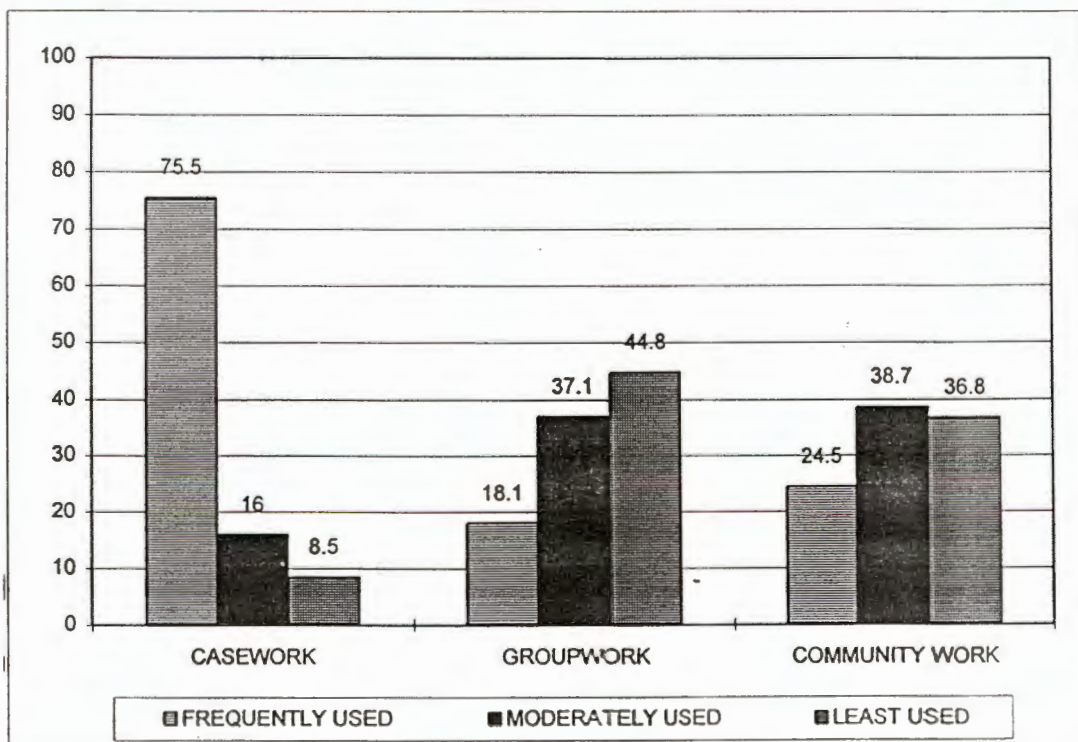


FIGURE 3: UTILIZATION OF THE THREE METHODS BY DIFFERENT WELFARE AGENCIES/INSTITUTIONS/ ORGANISATIONS



Figures 1, 2 and 3 illustrate the frequent use as well as the preferences of social workers and agencies in the utilization of the three methods.

Figure 1 indicates that 88.6% of individual social workers regularly use case work as an interventive method. This frequency of use is clearly portrayed in figure 2 that more social workers (73.6%) show interest in case work, and therefore find themselves concentrating on casework at the neglect of the other two methods. It would seem that agencies also encourage the use of casework. This assumption is proved by figure 3 which indicates that 75.5% of agencies frequently use case work in service delivery.

It would further seem as indicated in figure 1, 2, 3, that group work and community work are not considered as very important in that social workers only seem to use group work or community work as the opportunity presents itself, and that there is no concerted effort to use group or community work. This statement is confirmed in Figure 1 with 41.7% of occasional use of group work and 46.1% of the occasional use of community work by social workers.

Further, looking at the mentioned figures it is conclusively clear that group work is the least utilized method of intervention in social work. This is based on the following:-

- (i) Figure 1 indicates that only 38.8% of individual social workers regularly utilize group work; and
- (ii) Figure 2 confirms that only 39.66% of social workers show interest in the use of group work

- (iii) Figure 3 indicates that only 18.8% of agencies regularly utilize the group work method.

To reinforce the above statement, it is necessary to look at the other end of the continuum to assess the possible non use of the different methods. Figure 1 indicates that 4.8% of respondents never practice casework whereas 19.4% of social workers never utilize groups and 13.7% never utilize community work. The percentage of non utilization of group work is higher than that of casework and community work.

6.6 REASONS FOR UNDER/NON-UTILIZATION OF GROUP WORK

The following table outlines the different reasons given by respondents concerning the under utilization or non utilization of group work. Respondents were requested to offer only one response which they considered to be the main reason for the under utilization of the Group work method. This therefore accounts for the low percentages portrayed in table 4.

Table 4 Reasons advanced by respondents for non-utilization of group work method

Reasons	No	%
(i) Under staffing and high case loads	21	20.0
(ii) Group work is not considered as important as casework and community work and there is a greater tendency by agencies to emphasise casework	22	21.9
(iii) Clients feel uncomfortable in groups due to apathy and general resistance to groups	13	12.3
(iv) Groups are time consuming because of the difficulty related in putting a group together and maintaining it	10	9.5
(v) Lack of facilities/resources for group work	6	5.7
(vi) Agencies are not supportive to group establishment	7	6.7
(vii) Transport and distance	6	5.7
(viii) Social workers do not favour the use of groups as an interventive approach	8	7.6
(ix) Lack of appropriate training in group work since training institutions mostly emphasise casework and community work	3	2.9
(x) Overtime : In most instances sessions are held after hours	8	7.6
Total	104	99,9

6.6.1 UNDERSTAFFING AND HIGH CASE LOADS

As reflected in the table a reasonably high number of respondents (20%) blame staffing and high case loads as the main reason for under utilization of group work. This reason correlates with table 2(c) and 2(d) which indicated a discrepancy in the number of social workers employed as compared to the number of clients served by the agency per day.

It would also seem that a high case load is as a result of under staffing where social workers are compelled to concentrate on casework only. The study conducted by Anderson & Groenewald (1997:2) on social

work manpower in the North West Province revealed that there is approximately 1 social worker for every 16,931 people of the North West population. This gives an indication of understaffing in welfare agencies. Though the situation in the North West Province can not be generalized to the rest of the 9 provinces, the findings indicated in the previous pages of this chapter allow the researcher to comfortably generalize the above statistics as all the Provinces indicated an imbalance in the ratio of social workers to the total population.

The issue of high case loads has also been advanced by several authors such as Anderson and Rocher (1980), Loewenberg (1977), Matthias (1983), Lund and Patel (1995).

Matthias conducted a survey in 1983 amongst South African social workers and concluded that:-

- (a) A small portion of social workers, 25.3% have case-loads below 60 cases per month.
- (b) The higher proportion of social workers, (74.7%) have caseloads well over 60 cases per month; and
- (c) 90.8% of social workers employed at child and family welfare organizations have caseloads of over 60 clients per month.

Lund & Patel (1995:6) indicated that the ratio of social workers to the general population of South Africa is 1:10 322. Looking at the state of the art it would seem that not much has changed from 1985 up to

1998. On the international scene, Loewenberg (1977:126) confirms that it is generally acknowledged that most caseloads in public welfare agencies are too large, but there is not yet any agreement on the optimum size of the case loads. He further states that on the contrary lower case loads is not an anticipation that social workers will render better service delivery.

The researcher aligns herself with the above author that lower caseloads may not necessarily improve service delivery to communities and also may not automatically increase the use of group work, but at the least it will give a social worker an opportunity to consider alternate methods of intervention. For example, the social workers, during agency group interviews (which were a means of follow-up to the responses from questionnaires), felt that they do not have sufficient time at their disposal to put a group together since they are always under pressure to meet dead lines for the statutory work they perform on a daily basis. This therefore leaves them with limited time to practise group work.

6.6.2 GROUP WORK IS NOT CONSIDERED AS IMPORTANT AS CASE WORK AND COMMUNITY WORK

Respondents (21.9%) indicated that under-utilization of group work is due to the fact that social workers find case work and community work more important than group work.

This factor has been theoretically proven as it is connoted to the history of social work in South Africa as well as internationally. This draws from the fact that social case work has always been the predominant method. This eventually led casework to be viewed as synonymous to social work. Because of this history, agencies are also more inclined to case work (Figure 1, 2, 3), and clients have come to know social work as a one - one profession. Allissi (1997:4) confirms this by indicating that group work is definitely considered inferior to any one - one relationship.

In South Africa (as indicated in chapter 4), agencies were compelled to concentrate on case work because of the then policy of the government to subsidize only the case work method based on the number of cases attended to per month.

As changes swept across South Africa, community work gradually emerged along side case work. Welfare agencies started to view social work as case work and community work.

This is also emphasised by McKendrick (1981:153) who found that social work departments in South African universities aimed to develop greatest competency in social case work, followed by community work. The aim was therefore to prepare social case workers with supplementary community work and social group work skills. In this regard, Matthias (1983:94) concluded that:- "the largest single percentage of social workers (45.8%) practice case work exclusively. A combination of case work and group work is practised by 9.3% of the social workers, and 14.9% combine casework and

community work in practice". It would seem that this legacy of practice still lives with us to date.

6.6.2 CLIENTS FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE IN GROUPS DUE TO APATHY AND GENERAL RESISTANCE TO GROUPS

The next significant reason advanced by respondents (12.3%) is that social workers are not keen on starting groups or using groups as an interventive method since clients feel uncomfortable in groups because of apathy, and that there is a general resistance to groups.

In chapter 3 the researcher has confirmed the above reason by indicating that due to the history of our country, the black population tends to be very complaiscent, and "closed in" because of lack of trust amongst people. Since the freedom of speech was greatly curtailed, people tend to be very conscious of what they are saying and to whom. The apathy which was facilitated by the paternalistic approach, made people to want to receive instead of actively participating in their own affairs, hence the resistance and lack of commitment to groups. However, with the new dispensation coupled with the RDP the situation is gradually changing.

6.6.3

GROUPS ARE TIME CONSUMING BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTY RELATED IN PUTTING A GROUP TOGETHER AND MAINTAINING IT

This reason given by 9.5% can be looked at from two different view points:-

Firstly, because historically casework was so well developed and other methods relatively undeveloped, social workers tended to have an unquestioned conviction in the efficacy and supremacy of the case work method, and therefore tended to concentrate on this method to the almost total exclusion of group work. Because of this, group work was seen as time consuming and too tedious. This delayed the development of the model and also obscured its effectiveness as a therapeutic method.

Firstly, it has been observed that social work is characterised by poor salaries, heavy case loads, long hours and nervous strain of exhausting statutory work. These factors tend to affect the social workers use of the innovative intervention modalities such as group work, and hence view it as time consuming.

Secondly, respondents felt that putting a group together requires extra energy and time when considering issues such as advertising the group, writing a proposal, announcing the group, selecting members etc.

The third aspect was that not all members are always eager to attend sessions, and this tends to delay and discourage group development.

6.6.4 LACK OF FACILITIES/RESOURCES AND LACK OF SUPPORT FROM AGENCIES

A number of respondents (12.4%) gave lack of facilities/resources as well as lack of agency support as the reason for under utilization or non-utilization of group work. The interpretation here which was also confirmed during group interviews is that agencies are generally not supportive towards group intervention. This has been confirmed in this study by Figure 3 which indicates that only 37% of agencies utilize groups as part of their service delivery as compared to 75.5% that mainly utilize case work.

Lack of facilities in this regard refers to infrastructure e.g. appropriate venues for group sessions, lack of funding, lack of adequate resources etc. Toseland and Rivas (1985:13) accede that groups do not exist in a vacuum. They are agency based and depend on agency sponsorship for survival. In chapter 3, the researcher alluded that a group is often influenced by the limits of agency resources, since program activities have to be within the agency budget. The agency as a sponsoring unit, has an obligation towards the survival and maintenance of groups.

Nested in this reason of lack of resources and support is also the issue of transport and distance which has been indicated by 5.7% of the respondents. Though 5.7% may seem insignificant, the issue of lack of transport hampers the utilization of group work in the sense that, during group interviews, social workers raised concern with regard to lack of transport to get to where the people are since they have to cover widely scattered communities and villages. To compound the

situation, respondents indicated that agencies are not always willing to allow social workers to use agency vehicles after hours since it is sometimes imperative to conduct sessions after hours to accommodate working clients. The issue of overtime, though insignificant was alluded to by 7.6% of respondents.

The problem of transport and distance also affects group members. Clients sometimes have a problem with transport in reaching agencies for group sessions. Since agencies are mostly located in the centres of towns or cities, as portrayed in table 2(a), agencies tend to be out of reach for members. This becomes more serious in instances where sessions have to be held during evenings or after working hours. In other instances group members may simply not have financial means to reach the agency and conversely agencies may not have resources to collect group members to and from agency centres.

6.6.5 LACK OF APPROPRIATE TRAINING IN GROUP WORK (2.9%)

Lack of appropriate training in group work was alluded to by 2.9% of respondents. This issue can easily be related to the historical development of the methods as reflected in chapter 2 which proved that casework developed a body of knowledge before group work and community work. Because of this head start, it is more developed and refined. This has resulted in university departments of social work concentrating their teaching on the casework method (Matthias, 1983).

to be comparatively minimal to case work. This, however, is changing with greater emphasis being placed on community work.

6.7 PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING GROUP WORK TRAINING

Since it has been confirmed that case work is the predominant method of intervention used by respondents in service delivery, it was necessary for the researcher to assess the impact of group work training on social workers. The rationale for this perception or attitude audit was to assess whether the training received equipped them with all the necessary requirements to provide them with adequate skills to lead groups. The other issue was to assess whether group work as a method received equal exposure as compared to the other two methods.

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FIGURE 4(a) EXPOSURE OF RESPONDENTS TO GROUP MEMBERSHIP DURING TRAINING

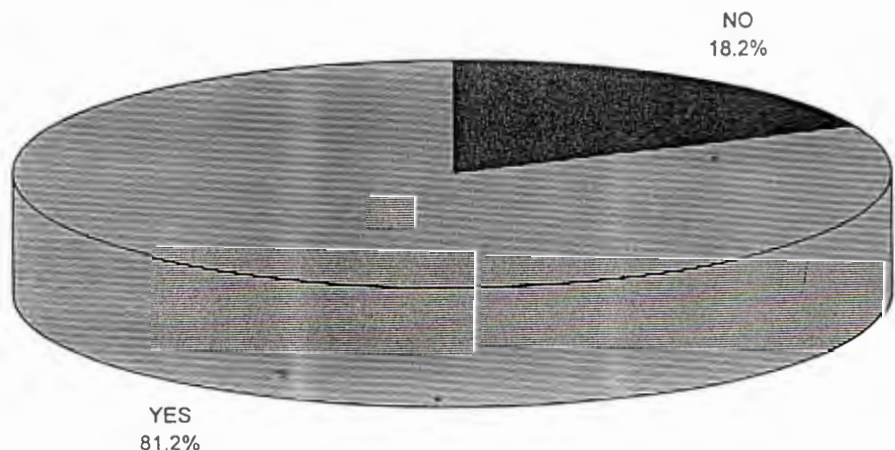
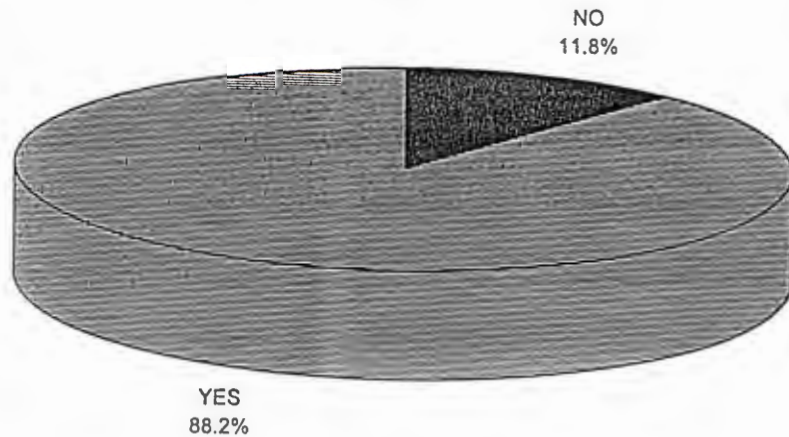


FIGURE 4(b) EXPOSURE OF RESPONDENTS TO GROUP LEADERSHIP DURING TRAINING



According to Corey and Corey (1985;38) it is ethically imperative for anyone who intends to be a group worker to have experience of being a group member because this gives leaders an experience of what it means to be a group member, and therefore they are able to empathize with group members.

Equally important is the opportunity for leaders to be exposed to group leadership at different times during their training. This according to Corey & Corey(op cit) leads to insights and awareness in that the leader can get to know his strengths as well as weaknesses. Leaders

competent etc. With reference to Figure 4(a) and (b) it is evident that the training of respondents did offer them an opportunity of being group members as portrayed by 81.2% of respondents as well as an opportunity of exposing them to group leadership 88.2%. This is an indication that the group work training received by respondents complied with the Ethical Guidelines for Group Leaders as stipulated by the APGA i.e. American Personell and Guidance Association (Corey & Corey, 1985:34). The International Association for the Advancement of Social work with Groups (of which the researcher is a member) still upholds same value.

Table 5 Indication of which method received most or least emphasis in both theoretical and practical training

	Theory			Total	Practice			Total
	1	2	3		1	2	3	
<u>Methods</u>								
Case work	87.2%	4.6%	8.3%	100.1	73.6%	14.2%	12.3%	100.1
Group work	33.3%	53.7%	13.0%	100	39.6%	45.3%	14.2%	99.1
Com work	30.6%	18.5%	50.9%	100	27.4%	23.6%	48.1%	99.1

* 1 - most emphasis

* 3 - Least emphasis

Figures 4a and (b) as well as table 5 attempt to give an indication of how respondents were exposed to each method in both theory and practice during their training. The issue here is that all methods constitute what social work is, and therefore for a social worker to

have a balanced view of the therapeutic process, social workers need grounded knowledge of each primary method of social work.

In contrary to this, table 5, clearly portrays that not all primary methods received equal emphasis during training of the respondents. It would seem that the case work method once more is reported to have received more emphasis in both theory and practice as shown by 87.2% for theory and 73.6% for practice as compared to 33.3% for group work theory, 39.6% for practice and 30.6% for community work theory as well as 27.4% for community work practice. This means that more emphasis was laid on teaching case work, and the rest of the methods shared the remainder of the time. Looking at the other end of the continuum, it is very important to look at the most versus the least as a way of validating the data. According to the table only 12.9% of respondents felt that case work received least emphasis as compared to 66.7% for group work and 69.4% for community work. These numbers correlate neatly with information for practice e.g 26.5% for case work as compared to 59.5% for group work and 71.7% for community work.

Because of the emphasis placed on case work during training and also at welfare agencies as indicated in figure 3 many social workers tend to concentrate almost exclusively on this method. As a result of this teaching approach, social workers have developed greater skill in case work, and they consequently tend to have a more limited knowledge of group work and community work. This information reinforces information born in figures 1 and 2.

It is however imperative to underline that group work seems to have had more emphasis placed on it i.e 33.3% for theory and 39.6% for practice as compared to community work, mentioned by 30.6% for theory and 27.4% for practice, whereas in social work practice, community work seems to receive more emphasis than group work (see Figure 1 and Figure 3). The issue here may still be related to the attitude of the agencies towards the three methods. As table 2(b) indicated, 84.1% of agencies have been in existence for more than 10 years. This means that South African welfare agencies are still entrenched in the old system of welfare delivery, which promotes case work and therefore calls for a paradigm shift to a more dynamic and flexible outlook on service delivery.

In tables 6 and 7 below, respondents were requested to assess the impact of group work training on the utilization of the method. This was based on the following aspects:-

- (a) to determine whether the group work training they received empowered them with confidence that can successfully allow them to handle groups;
- (b) to identify factors that contribute to their confidence; and
- (c) to look into factors that contribute to lack of confidence in handling groups successfully.

Table 6 Confidence in handling groups

Response	No of respondents	%	
Confident	96	88	} 11.9
no confidence	5	4.6	
Uncertain	8	7.3	
Total	109	99.9	

Table 7 Reasons contributing to confidence in handling groups

Reasons		Yes		No		Uncertain		Total	Total
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
(i)	I have extensive literature/theoretical background in group work method	89	82	8	7.3	4	3.7	101	93
(ii)	I have sufficient practical experience through actual handling of groups	83	76	8	7.3	9	8.2	100	92

From table 6 it is conclusive that most respondents (88%) are positive that the training they received equipped them with confidence in handling groups, whereas only 11.9% of respondents indicated the contrary. This information seems to be in contradiction with information born in table 5 which confirmed that the respondents' social work training emphasized the case work method (87.2%). The issue here would be to expect respondents to feel that the training did not adequately expose them to the group work method since concentration has been on case work. Another discrepancy is in comparing Table 4(ix) and table 6. In table 4(ix) 2.9% of respondents indicated that one of the reasons for under utilization of group work is lack of appropriate training in group work since training institutions

mostly emphasize case work and community work. On the other hand though 2.9% may seem insignificant, this reason carried more weight when looked at in relation to other reasons put forward by the respondents for non/under utilization. On the other hand it can be looked at as a confirmation that only a small insignificant percentage of respondents felt that their group work training was not appropriate or sufficient. If the later argument is pursued, it will therefore confirm or reinforce Tables 6 and 7.

The explanation in this instance could be that though respondents may have confidence in handling groups, factors or reasons outlined in table 4, may actually prevent or hamper them from utilizing group work in their service delivery.

To complement table 6, respondents were asked to advance reasons that make them feel that their training equipped them with confidence in handling groups. The following reasons as indicated in table 7 were advanced:-

- (i) Extensive literature/theoretical background in group work method (82%).
- (ii) Sufficient practical experience through actual handling of groups (76%).

A smaller percentage 23.9% of respondents indicated that their training did not equip them with confidence in handling groups due to the following reasons:-

- (i) insufficient training in group work;
- (ii) lack of proper integration of theory and practice; and
- (iii) lack of assertiveness.

In conclusion, it can be deduced that social workers do have confidence in handling groups as an interventive method. However, because case work receives more emphasis in welfare agencies, group work tends to be neglected, and this gradually leads to social workers losing interest. The loss of interest in return results in social workers losing confidence in group utilization due to lack of continued experience.

6.8 PERSONAL FEELINGS TOWARDS THE USE OF GROUPS

The following table espouses to assess the personal feelings of respondents in relation to the utilization of the group work method.

Table 9 Personal feelings towards groups

Feelings		Yes		No		Uncer tain		Total	Total
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
(i)	Fear of group syndrome	4	3.7	95	88.0	9	8.3	108	100
(ii)	Feeling too exposed	5	4.7	96	89.7	6	5.6	107	100
(iii)	Fear of negative feed-back from group members	9	8.4	93	86.9	5	4.7	107	100
(iv)	Taking too much responsibility for the failure of the group	34	31.8	61	57.0	12	11.2	107	100
(v)	Lack of control	6	5.6	91	84.3	11	10.2	108	100
(vi)	Fear of complexity of the interrelationships that exist in the group	14	13.0	85	78.7	9	8.3	108	100

Table 9 gives a picture that respondents generally have positive feelings towards groups. This could be associated with information derived from table 6 which indicated that 88.2% of respondents have confidence in handling groups. Logically if one is confident in doing a particular task it stands to reason that all aspects indicated in table 9 do not prevail. However, a significant number of respondents, 31.8% expressed a feeling of being too overwhelmed with taking responsibility for the group especially if groups fail. This feeling can further contribute to lack of interest in handling groups.

The question however remains; why then is group work under utilized in social work practice.

Looking at the entire research study, the following possibilities are evident:-

- (a) Agencies do not encourage the use of group work in service delivery as indicated in (Figure 3).
- (b) Social workers generally have little interest in group work (Figure2).
- (c) There is no group work continuity after completion of training. The fact that group work is not popular in social work practice, discourages social workers from using groups as an interventive method.
- (d) Under staffing and high case loads as indicated in table 2(c), table 2(d), and table 4.1.

6.9 ATTITUDES OF SOCIAL WORKERS TOWARDS THE UTILIZATION OF GROUP WORK AS AN INTERVENTIVE METHOD

Though the previous chapters have proved the immense value of group work in contemporary social work practice, not much has been done by practitioners as well as employing agencies to encourage the extensive and effective use of the method.

Discussions earlier on in the chapter revealed that the predominant method of intervention in social work practice remains casework, with only a small percentage of practitioners utilizing group work.

This section is aimed at determining the attitudes of social workers towards group work as a method of intervention.

In determining the attitudes of respondents, the responses were categorized into the following:-

- a) Benefits that respondents associated with group work.
- b) Disadvantages/negative aspects surrounding group work.
- c) Overall or composite picture regarding the utilization or non utilization of group work.

Table 10 (a) Attitudes of respondents regarding benefits derived from group work

Benefit	Agree		Disagree		Uncertain		Total Respondents	Total %
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
9.1 Group work is the best tool for empowering communities	73	69.5	12	11.4	20	19.0	105	99.9
9.2 Group work if effectively utilized can help counteract large case loads	104	95.4	2	1.8	3	2.8	109	100.0
9.3 Group work can always be used in working with large communities	103	94.5	2	1.8	4	3.7	109	100.0
9.4 Groups can be used to mobilize and concientize the larger communities e.g social action groups	107	98.2	2	1.8	0	0	109	100.0
9.5 An important value of social work with groups is that of participatory democracy and citizenship building	85	78.0	5	4.6	19	17.4	109	100.0

Table 10(b) Attitudes of respondents regarding constraints in utilizing group work

Constraints	Agree		Disagree		Uncertain		Total Respondents	Total Percentage
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
10.1 Group work has been marginalized because of lack of assertiveness/self confidence on the part of social workers	28	25.7	51	46.8	30	27.5	109	100
10.2 Agencies normally do not encourage working with groups	65	59.6	20	18.3	24	22.0	109	99.9
10.3 Social workers feel that groups are time consuming	58	53.2	33	30.3	18	16.5	109	100
10.4 Social workers on average lack sufficient training skills in handling groups	37	34.6	42	39.3	28	26.2	107	100.1
10.5 Resistance to work with groups amongst social workers appears to be very high	84	77.1	10	9.2	15	13.8	109	100.1

Table 10(c) Composite picture regarding the utilization or non-utilization of group work

Statement	Agree		Disagree		Uncertain		Total Respondents	Total Percentage
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
11.1 Groups have often been a relatively marginal service in a system that favours one to one intervention	65	59.6	20	18.4	24	22.0	109	100
11.2 Group work is underutilized in social work profession	84	77.1	10	9.2	15	13.8	109	100.1
11.3 If social workers have to use groups more frequently, in-service training on group leadership need to be encouraged or introduced	92	85.2	5	4.6	11	10.2	108	100

Table 10(a) bravely confirms that all respondents are convinced that there are benefits derived from utilizing groups. These benefits can be utilized or enjoyed by social workers as professionals or can be used to the benefit of the group members. One such benefit on the part of the social workers is that group work can be utilized to help counteract large case loads as indicated by 95.4% of respondents.

This issue covers the concern raised by respondents in table 4 where they indicated that one of the reasons for non-utilization of group work is high case loads. The explanation according to table 10(a) is that frequent or extensive utilization of group work can help counteract large case load. This issue was also indicated in chapter 1 where it was highlighted that group work can be utilized to counteract high case loads of a similar nature e.g marital dispute, homelessness etc.

In chapter 4 group work was extensively discussed as an empowerment tool. It was discussed that in South Africa there is currently a re-awakening to community involvement and/or participation through the recognition that this country has a vast majority of its citizens who have fundamental human needs that have not been satisfied due to former development policies.

Table 10(a) reinforces information indicated in chapter 4 whereby 69.5% of respondents agreed that group work is the best tool for empowerment. Further, 98.2% of respondents positively alluded to the fact that group work can successfully be utilized to mobilize and conscientize the larger communities and more importantly is the indication that the important value of social group work is that of participatory democracy and citizenship building, as indicated by 78.0% of respondents.

Table 10(a) further complements information discussed in chapter 4 in highlighting that it is impossible for a community worker to deal with the whole community simultaneously, hence community workers

should see formation of groups e.g social action groups, task groups, committees etc. as part of their role, while group workers see the above named groups as an extension of their roles. To validate this information 94.5% of respondents agreed that even when working with large communities group work can always be used since social workers can not work with the whole community at the same time.

Contrary to table 10(a), table 10(b) elucidates constraints that hamper the utilization of group work. It is interesting to mention that these constraints correlate with reasons advanced by respondents for non utilization of group work (see table 4).

Looking at table 10(a) and table 10(b) it would seem that respondents dissociate themselves from the issue of non utilization and prefer to see the problem as being "outside" the self. There is a tendency to blame "someone out there", for example table 10(b) portrays that 59.6% of respondents attribute the issue of non-utilization of group work to the failure of agencies in encouraging practitioners to use the group work method. This information correlates with information derived from table 4; respondents advanced the following reasons for non utilization:-

- agencies are not supportive to group establishment;
- lack of agency facilities/resources for group work; and
- under staffing, which contributes to high case loads.

Table 10(b) also indicates that 46.8% of respondents disagree with the fact that group work has been marginalized because of lack of assertiveness or self confidence on the part of social workers.

Only 25.7% of respondents agreed to the above statement.

A disparity however appears here when 77.1% of respondents positively agreed that there is a high resistance from social workers in utilizing groups. Probably the resistance may be due to respondents' belief that groups are time consuming as indicated by 53.2% of respondents in table 10(b).

Another discrepancy appearing in table 10(b) is the issue of lack of sufficient training skills in handling groups as portrayed by 34.6%. In tables 6 and 7 respondents felt that the training they received equipped them with sufficient skills i.e 88%, 82% and 76% respectively, whereas as in Table 10(b) respondents contradict themselves by indicating that on average social workers lack sufficient training skills in handling groups. A fair percentage i.e 34.6% agreed with this statement whereas 26.2% were uncertain, giving a total of 60.8%. Same issue was alluded to in table 4, though only a small insignificant number (2.9%) raised this issue.

With this issue coming up every now and then, it leaves the researcher puzzled or confused to make a definite generalization with regards to group work training. If need arises, this could be a matter that calls for further research.

Table 10(c) gives a conclusive picture of how respondents perceive the utilization of group work. This table confirms the researcher's assumption that group work is underutilised in social work practice as portrayed by 77.1% of the respondents.

The historical development of the three direct methods of intervention as reflected in chapter 2 showed that casework developed a body of knowledge before group work and community work. This therefore resulted in casework being a more prominent method and therefore resulted in other methods being marginalized. This has been confirmed by 59.6% of respondents as shown in table 10(c).

There is an indication that social workers, (though this was refuted in table 7) need more group work skills to facilitate the use of group work. Though table 7 proved that respondents are of the opinion that their training adequately exposed them to group work theory and practice; and table 6 also proved that respondents feel that they are confident in handling groups, table 10(c) gives a different picture in that 85.2% of respondents agreed that for social workers to use groups more frequently, in-service training on group leadership needs to be encouraged. This to the researcher is an indication that respondents need more theoretical as well as practical exposure to groups. It may be argued that the need for in-service training is not necessarily an indication of lack of exposure or lack of knowledge; but in this case information obtained from table 7 does not correlate with the information portrayed by 85.2% of respondents in table 10(c). This leaves the researcher with feelings indicated earlier on in the chapter

that respondents' evaluation of their feelings about group work (table 9) is not realistic and valid. The reason for this is based on a number of contradictions and discrepancies detailed above.

In conclusion, though respondents indicated that the training they received is sufficient to empower them to comfortably handle groups; and further that they have positive feelings towards groups, respondents fully supported the notion that group work is marginalized and underutilized. The final generalization therefore reverts back to agencies that do not encourage practitioners to include group work intervention in service delivery.

6.10 PERCEPTIONS OF RESPONDENTS REGARDING THE CONTRIBUTION OF GROUP WORK IN THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (RDP)

One of the assumptions of this study is the belief that the effective utilization of group work will facilitate successful implementation of the RDP, and in return will improve social service delivery.

This assumption is based on the notion that the effective use of group work will:-

- facilitate empowerment of communities; and
- create a positive climate for community participation.

To prove the validity/correctness of this assumption, it was necessary for the researcher to investigate how respondents perceive the contribution of group work towards the successful implementation of the RDP.

6.10.1 THE UTILIZATION OF THE GROUP WORK METHOD IN THE RDP

In chapter 1 it was indicated that therapeutic forces in groups can contribute much to empowerment of the disadvantaged people of South Africa. Empowerment implies that people will have the opportunity to participate in a responsible manner in the process of deciding on the range of needs and problems that affect them. As the RDP emphasises, development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement of people in matters that shape their own lives.

The researcher believes that such actions can amongst others be achieved by social workers' involvement in facilitating the establishment of mutual aid groups, empowerment groups, self help groups, social action groups, community forum groups etc.

The study on the role of social workers in the implementation of the RDP conducted by Masibi, (1996:109) proved that 53.7% of respondents indicated that group work can be utilized to train and educate communities. Training and educating through groups has been proved to be more effective than training the community as a whole because of the numbers involved. This issue was discussed much

broadly in chapter 4 where Weil (1988) alluded to the fact that all community work practice is definitely grounded in, and carried out through task groups. Task groups may be formed in organizations or communities to plan services, improve service delivery, improve social conditions, empower groups and communities and further social justice.

In addition to the above, it is very important that in formulating strategies for training and for empowerment, emphasis should be placed on indigenous knowledge. This indigenous knowledge can be obtained through different types of network groups, task groups, community forum groups, community leadership groups etc. If all these groups are systematically coordinated and synthesised, they will constitute what the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) emphasizes, i.e placing the responsibility for planning, social change and development in the hands of the community. In this regard, self reliance is fostered through the use of indigenous forces and resources. As indicated by Seoka (1998:4) who is the Chairperson of the National Welfare Social Service and Development Forum, a shift must be made from a hand out facility to capacitating people to do things for themselves through the developmental approach. People must be moved from dependency to self-reliance.

Furthermore, with the use of group work, group life within the community can be identified, and potential leaders will emanate from such groups. The involvement of the leaders of these groups in community activities will eventually encourage the involvement and participation of members of the group. This will lead to the

development of leadership and human developmental potential, which in turn will promote self reliance. This relates to the emphasis of the RDP of total participation and involvement of communities as well as representation of communities in forums and other related structures.

6.10.2 AIMS OF RDP

To assess how group work can facilitate achievement of the aims of the RDP, respondents were requested to indicate by means of a seven point scale, areas of the RDP which can best be served by using the group work method. According to the scale used, 1 indicates the best area that can be served by group work and 7 the least used area.

Table 11 RDP aims that can best be achieved through the use of group work

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		Total		Index
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
<u>Aims</u>																	
(i) Housing	15	14.4	6	5.8	7	6.7	10	9.6	10	9.6	15	14.4	41	39.4	104	98.5	615
(ii) Environment	15	14.4	5	4.8	14	13.5	13	12.5	18	17.3	32	30.8	7	6.7	104	100	450
(iii) Healthcare/ Nutrition	32	30.5	27	25.7	20	19.0	18	17.1	4	3.8	2	1.9	2	1.9	105	99.9	264
(iv) Social security & social welfare	29	28.2	16	15.5	13	12.6	18	17.5	12	11.7	10	9.7	5	4.9	103	100.1	327
(v) Reticulation Services	8	8.2	6	6.1	14	14.3	9	9.2	22	22.4	14	14.3	25	25.5	98	100	467
(vi) Facilitate community participation	42	40.8	17	16.5	15	14.6	12	11.7	9	8.7	7	6.8	1	1.0	103	100.1	263
(vii) Women's issues	50	47.6	18	17.6	13	12.4	11	10.5	6	5.7	2	1.9	5	4.8	105	100.5	246

The above table used a 7 point scale to obtain a more effective weighting of the social workers' perceptions with regard to how group work can help facilitate achievement of the aims of RDP.

Calculations to arrive at an index figure was undertaken as follows:-

1 represented most use

7 represented the least

The number of responses to each category was allocated with points according to the specific rating scales. The end result therefore indicates that the category with the least index points portrays an aim

of RDP that can best be facilitated through the use of group work. These will be discussed individually in their descending order.

6.10.2.1 Womens Issues

A number of events have taken place in South Africa since the 1994 independence. These events serve to further underscore South Africa's commitment to the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women. One such important event is the 1995 Beijing Conference on women which provided an enabling environment in which women from around the world could voice their grievances and put forward their ideas for improving the situation that faces women today. Such events created a re-awakening among South African women to stand up and demand what is due to them.

Table 11 above therefore indicates that women's issues (with the total index of 246) stands high as an aim of RDP that can successfully be achieved through the utilization of group work.

Sirls in Drower (1993:8) articulates that the unique contribution of group work in social work is contained in its very breath. "Rather than restricting practice to a conceptual segment of the client's behaviour, its potency lies precisely in its ability to deal with relevant expressions of dysfunction along the full experiential range, individual - to - individual, individual - in - and individual - to - group, and individual and group in their social mellieu" (Sirls in Drower, 1993:9).

As a system of mutual aid, a group has an enormous potential to release both healing power, and thereby stimulate social, political and economic change. Groups are further well placed to provide at grassroots level an opportunity for women to search out their common identity and together to explore their vision for the future.



The group, whether it be a self-help group, task group, social action group, treatment group etc., has a potential to provide a safe haven in which South African women can begin to move beyond previous definitions of themselves and each other. Rice (1989:159) has alluded to the issue that the group work method has the structure and format for support which allows people to take risks and to change attitudes and behaviour that is defeating. The issue of behaviour and attitude change was repeatedly stressed during the South African National Intersectional Workshop hosted by the Interim Committee on the World Summit for Social Development in May, 1998. The general consensus was that there is need to expend more energy at grassroots level to help women to start looking at life in a more realistic manner, and to begin to take responsibility for their own lives. One important issue that was indicated was facilitation of encouraging women to work in groups with the aim of helping out another think things through - not by the gift of advice, but by the sharing of life experiences, opinions, feelings and attitudes. It is important to remember that this meaningful exchange is not made possible by the strength of the social worker/member relationship, but through the member/member relationship. If this can be achieved, it will constitute what the RDP preaches i.e "our people, with their aspirations and

collective determination, are our most important resource. The RDP is focused on our people's most immediate needs and it relies, in turn, on their energies to drive the process of meeting these needs" (ANC 1994:5).

6.10.2.2 Community Participation

Table 11 reflect that respondents believe that the use of group work can help facilitate community participation. This is indicated by the total index of 263. The RDP concept is purely based on community participation as well as the principle of inclusivity as it continuously advocates that people should be involved in all development programmes by being made part of the decision making at all levels of governance.

To facilitate people's participation in national, provincial as well as local issues, people need to be empowered. Empowerment is equated with intra-psychic change, self-care competency, group self-help and social action which can only be achieved through the use of groups.

Within the larger context of an empowerment framework for practice, group work models have added insight into both the purpose and functioning of empowerment oriented group work, for example, the model of mutual aid by Gitterman (1996). A mutual-aid approach to practice refers to a professional approach to work with groups which has as its driving force a combination of three inseparable elements:

- belief in the potential for multiple helping relationships in the group;
- a primary intent of helping group members harness and use this potential; and
- a perspective of professional role based on a set of specific skills (Steinberg, 1993:27).

In the context of social work with groups, mutual aid has been viewed in different ways, but as a fundamental dynamic of group work practice, its core has held fast; as it continues to convey faith in members' ability to communicate and work on interpersonal issues; helping people not only to help themselves but to help each other as well; helping members identify their self-interest with that of others; and creating or furthering linkages between members as they engage in active participation in nation building.

Empowerment is central to social development, and social development can never take place without community or people's participation because it requires the active engagement of collectives working together towards shared objectives.

Mutual aid as well as empowerment can easily be achieved through the use of groups. It is these very groups that will in turn determine community participation in all spheres of development.

6.10.2.3 Health Care/Nutrition

As indicated in table 11, respondents are of the opinion that group work can be utilized to achieve the aims of the RDP through improving primary health care and better mental health e.g total index of 264. According to the RDP, the mental, physical and social health of South Africans has in the past been severely damaged by apartheid policies and the related consequences. This therefore calls for the restructuring of the health care system, including a rationalized public administration emphasizing primary health care.

The government has recently done much in promoting primary health care at grass-roots levels. Clinics have been erected at different villages to bring health services closer to the people.

Primary health care as a system of service delivery can make use of groups in training and educating people about health aspects. Due to high levels of illiteracy, most communities are ignorant about health issues including nutrition. Through groups, different target populations can be educated on proper methods of eating, cooking to prevent under nourishment; effects of teenage pregnancy, preparation for parenthood, abortion, alternatives to abortion, safe sex, HIV/AIDS etc.

To cite an example of ignorance due to illiteracy, Simbulu and Coughlan (1995:14) reported on the problem of the increase in teenage pregnancies in township areas near Port Elizabeth. In addition to this problem, there were also a number of related issues including lack of

proper information on birth control, sexually transmitted diseases and high risk of a second pregnancy.

After proper consultation, it was evident that there was a need for teenage mothers to receive interventive support services. Group work was viewed as an appropriate interventive medium as it is a helping process designed to correspond to specific instances of individual need, based on a view of man as in constant interaction with others (Benson in Coughlan and Simbulu, 1995:14).

Through the use of group work, a positive environment was created and the development of group processes contributed to goal achievement. The goals were indicated as:-

- (a) to consider the role of their pregnancies and the birth of their children in their lives;
- (b) to encourage a return to formal schooling;
- (c) to reintegrate them with their communities;
- (d) to educate them about sexually transmitted diseases and contraception; and
- (e) to educate them about child development.

The overall objective was to empower the girls in such a way that they can deal with their present situation as well as the approaching crisis of child rearing. As a result of the group intervention and the belief in group processes, the teenage girls felt that they had established relationships that would assist them in the months ahead and that they were better informed about their current situation.

This was a testimony of how powerful a group can be as an effective medium of intervention. Through the creation of a mutual support system, group work continues to provide benefits to clients that are lacking in a casework relationship.

Through the use of groups, the teenage girls could prevent further pregnancies, promote their well being and self-awareness, and rehabilitate themselves from further maladaptive behaviours.

Self-help groups for people with permanent physical disabling diseases can also help complement medical intervention e.g cases of epilepsy, psychiatric patients, HIV/AIDS, alcoholism etc. Patients suffering from such disabling medical conditions respond better to treatment when exposed to other people with similar conditions. Guiterrez (1990) suggests that the group context can be used for the following tasks: accepting the member's definition of the problem as she/he sees it; identifying and building upon existing strengths; engaging the group members in a power analysis of the situation; teaching specific skills; and mobilizing resources or advocacy. Out of this group context, integration of preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitation services can be fully achieved.

6.10.2.4 Social Welfare

The total index of 327 confirmed that group work can be utilized to facilitate better social welfare delivery, to keep pace with current changes. The present South African welfare sector is currently

organising itself in an inclusive, representative and participatory fashion with the aim of engaging constructively in the transformation process. The welfare sector acknowledges that there is need to change focus. Today because of this, the South African welfare sector is facing the challenge of reviewing its priorities with respect to human need, the appropriate allocation of resources and methods of service delivery.

The White Paper for social welfare underlines the need for a developmental approach in the planning and provision of social welfare services.

The developmental approach challenges the welfare sector to become engaged in the wider socio-economic, environmental and geo-political arenas in order to fundamentally change the circumstances under which the poor, the unemployed and the marginalised find themselves and to improve the quality of life they experience. As espoused in the RDP empowerment and capacity building, amongst others, remain the cornerstone for any development approach and, since development is people-centred, there is need for welfare workers to be more macro-oriented in service delivery. As indicated by a number of respondents, the effective use of group work can facilitate involvement of people in their own development and can also be the best tool for empowerment, capacity building, and community building.

6.10.2.5 Housing, environment and reticulation services

A smaller number of respondents felt that group work can effectively be utilized to promote better housing (615); promote conducive environment (450); and reticulation services (467). The researcher was however concerned about the insignificant number regarding housing. This is due to the fact that most South African communities are highly gregarious as they fully believe in mutual aid. The black people in particular are prone to what is called "Letsema". This is a situation where they believe in helping each other in groups or cliques to provide shelter for one another. This system is still prevalent to date where you find people congregating in groups to establish the "mekhukhu's" (tin house) in settlement areas. In rural areas this is also still very rife and this can be referred to as self-help housing. The advantages of self-help housing as identified by Carter (1994:63) are as follows:

- (i) it permits households to finance their own dwellings at a cost they can afford;
- (ii) it encourages individual independence of action and decision making;
- (iii) it can, (and does in most cases) proceed with little or no state assistance as members tend to rely on each other;
- (iv) it utilizes peoples' unskilled labour;
- (v) it leads to the improvement of a skill within a community;
- (vi) it creates a demand for indigenized materials; and
- (vii) it generates job opportunities and togetherness

6.11 CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis of data, it can be concluded that group work is greatly underutilized in social service delivery. The reason for this is that most agencies as well as social workers still spend more time on individual clients' case load and statutory duties. This results in minimal time being spent on primary social care and preventive work in the form of group work and community work. This therefore does not afford agencies as well as practitioners time to be involved in development programs.

It can further be concluded that group work has a more significant role to play in facilitating achievement of the aims of the RDP. The use of groups makes it easier to carry information across, and creates a platform where people can have an opportunity to comfortably share views, opinions, concerns whilst contributing or participating in decision making at different levels of their lives. This follows the notion that when a number of people come together to create a group, a social process that creates unique group properties is set into motion. These properties are generated only within the group and result from interaction of the group members. They can be utilized by social workers in helping the individuals to use the experience for a variety of personal self-fulfilling attitudes which can lead to self awareness, self-esteem and finally self-empowerment.

CHAPTER 7

WELFARE AGENCIES'/ORGANISATIONS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE UTILISATION OF GROUP WORK IN SERVICE DELIVERY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Social work is basically an agency based profession. What social workers do, how they do it tends to be influenced by the policy, rules and regulations laid down by the administrators. Therefore the agency policy as well as its history directs the way in which service delivery is carried out.

According to Bostwick in Steinberg (1993:26) there has been very little research into agencies' actual practice with groups, i.e what it is exactly, that they are actually doing "out there". Further, there is no research ever done on the agencies' conceptualization and implementation of the group work method per sé. As a result of this, knowledge and information about the extent to which social work practitioners recognize the place of mutual aid (so central a dynamic to social work with groups as well as to the RDP) remain vague.

The discussion in Chapter 6 revealed that the predominant method of intervention used at social work agencies is still social case work, with only a small percentage practising group work and community work. It further revealed that most agencies in South Africa have been in existence for more than ten (10) years. These two factors put together have an

inevitable effect on how social workers discharge their services. This chapter is aimed at determining how agencies as formal structures influence or facilitate the use of the three primary methods in their service delivery.

7.2 PROFILE OF AGENCIES INTERVIEWED

From the questionnaires that were mailed to the sample of social workers throughout South Africa, 109 responses were received. The researcher subsequently categorized the responses based on agencies that use group work as an interventive method and those that occasionally or do not utilize group work.

The results proved that 63% of agencies do not utilize group work as an interventive method, and only 37% of agencies utilize group work as part of their service delivery.

A structured group interview was conducted with twenty five agencies selected from the two categories, i.e fifteen from the category of agencies that do utilize group work and ten from agencies that do not utilize group work. The purpose of the group interviews was an endeavour to obtain more in-depth information from social work administrators as well as other social workers employed in the agency. This aspect can be considered as a means of validating information received from respondents. The rationale in this instance is based on the fact that social workers who completed the mailed questionnaires did so in their individual capacity as professional employees of the agencies.

7.3 EXTENT TO WHICH GROUP WORK IS UTILIZED

The following table attempts to identify the extent to which group work is utilized by the fifteen agencies that claim to make use of group work in service delivery.

Table 12 Extent of group work utilization

Extent of utilization	No of agencies	%
ongoing groups throughout the year	6	40
as need arises	9	60
Total	15	100

The above table shows that only 40% of agencies that utilize groups have ongoing groups throughout the year. The majority of the agencies (60%) conduct groups as need arises, i.e as and when the opportunity presents itself.

This information corresponds well with information born from table 10(c) on page 193 which confirmed that group work in social work practice is highly marginalized . The reasons for marginalization as well as under utilization remains, among others, the concentration on case work by welfare agencies as well as high case loads due to understaffing.

This information proves that even among those agencies that claim to utilize group work, most of them (60%) do not concentrate on groups but use groups occasionally or as need arises. It would seem that there is no concerted effort or commitment on the part of agencies to encourage

social workers to conduct groups as often as possible though social workers confirmed that the use of groups can amongst others help counteract large case loads (Table 10a, page 191).

From observation it was evident that agencies/institutions that concentrate more on group work are those that specialize in a certain field of service e.g. correctional services, institutions that deal with alcohol and substance abuse, agencies dealing specifically with foster care and or adoption cases etc. Public welfare agencies, due to their generalistic approach, mostly overlook the value embedded in the group processes.

7.4 NATURE OF GROUPS COMMONLY USED IN AGENCIES

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The following table aims at indicating different types of groups commonly used in agencies that use groups as an interventive method. The classification of the nature of groups was based on Toseland & Rivas (1985:15). This classification was selected in order to simplify quantification of groups.

Table 13 Nature of groups commonly used in agencies

Classification of groups	No. of groups	%
Treatment groups	5	33.3
Task groups	6	40.0
Self help groups	4	26.6
Total	15	99.9

Table 13 reveals that the most commonly used type of group is the task group as is indicated that 40% of agencies conduct task groups. Task groups according to Toseland and Rivas (1984:15) signify any group in which the major purpose is neither intrinsically nor immediately linked to the needs of the members of the group. The overriding purpose in task groups is to accomplish a mandate. Task groups that were commonly referred to during interviews were committees and project management teams. This gives an indication that task groups are only used in relation to project development. Treatment groups were commonly utilized by 33.3% of the agencies. Treatment groups according to Toseland & Rivas (1984:15) refer to groups whose major objective or purpose is to meet members' socio-emotional needs. The purpose includes meeting member's needs for education, growth, behaviour change or socialization. Treatment groups that were commonly referred to during interviews were educationally oriented groups, which aimed at creating awareness through increasing members' information or skills. Rehabilitation for purposes of restoring members to their former level of functioning was repeatedly referred to as being part of treatment groups. However, it is important to indicate that the concept of purpose in groups is not always easy to understand because rarely do groups exist for a single purpose because in most cases groups involve both meeting members' personal needs and accomplishing one or more group mandates. The last category of groups is self-help groups as indicated by 26.6% of agencies. The use of self-help groups in developmental social work is a force that the helping profession must reckon with. This is so because self-help groups are multiplying as a result of the social climate in the country, and the shortage of professionals to conduct groups. It is important that social

workers should seek a new partnership with clients involved in self-help groups and work towards designing models of helping that go beyond the familiar dimensions of problems and methodology.

7.5 BENEFITS DERIVED FROM UTILIZATION OF GROUP WORK

The benefits and value of group work have already been discussed in chapter one, four and six. To validate literature review in this research, it was necessary to interview agencies that utilize group work as part of their service delivery to ascertain whether there are any benefits that the agency as well as clients derive from utilizing groups.

Table 14 Benefits derived from the utilization of group work

Benefits	No. of agencies	Total percentage
Using groups is cost effective for the agency	15	100
Clients in groups learn to communicate and positively compare, and identify with each other. There is a feeling of sharing	15	100
Clients enjoy mutual support	15	100
Groups empower members in different aspects of their lives	15	100
There is always emphasis on self help	15	100
Members gain a sense of being safe and are comfortable to disclose their concerns and problems. They have an opportunity to ventilate freely	14	90
Group members gain social skills	13	70
There is broadening of insight and interpersonal relationship	12	60
Groups instill self-confidence in members,	12	60
Groups facilitate potential for change	12	60

From the above table it is evident that agencies generally concur that there are benefits that agencies and clients enjoy from using groups. This corresponds with information indicated in table 10(a) in chapter 6. These benefits will be discussed individually.

7.5.1 COST EFFECTIVENESS

All agencies interviewed (100%) fully supported that utilizing groups is cost effective for the agency. This is derived from the fact that instead of dealing with clients having similar problems individually it sometimes saves time to help them simultaneously together in the group, because in the group members rely on one another for help instead of relying entirely on the worker as members in a group give and receive help, they in turn observe and learn from others. According to Corey & Corey (1983:83), members facilitate others' growth as they learn more about themselves through others' past experiences. They grow easily when they realise that others have experienced the same problems as theirs, have had the same feelings towards the problem and have succeeded in solving or adapting to the problem. Because groups provide mutual support for persons to address issues collectively, members enjoy mutual aid as well as integration of solutions. What members enjoy in the group is mutual support. Because groups provide mutual support for persons to address issues collectively, members can count on each other instead of going back to the worker everytime problems arise. Groups can therefore be utilized by caseworkers to minimise case loads especially of clients experiencing similar problems or concerns. They can also be used to disseminate information to communities on issues that affect the lives of

people eg. marital disputes, HIV/AIDS, abortions, teenage pregnancies, child abuse etc.

7.5.2 CLIENTS IN GROUPS LEARN TO COMMUNICATE, POSITIVELY COMPARE; IDENTIFY WITH EACH OTHER, AND ENJOY MUTUAL SUPPORT

All agencies (100%) fully agreed that there is value for members in joining groups. It was indicated in Chapter 3 that members in groups provide a forum for persons to address issues, work collectively and together participate in decision making.

In groups members identify with others, and this identification facilitates acceptance and a sense of belonging. From acceptance, identification, and a sense of belonging, develops mutual support. The important value of mutual support was repeatedly echoed in all agencies interviewed as one important benefit that clients enjoy in groups.

7.5.3 GROUPS EMPOWER MEMBERS

All agencies interviewed concurred that groups provide a medium through which members can be empowered. The word empowerment groups was used more frequently and more loosely to mean groups such as parenting groups, young adult groups, groups for teenagers, sewing groups, gardening groups, brick making, candle making, life skills etc. As discussed in Chapter 4, the basic assumption in empowerment oriented groups is that of consciousness raising process which finally

leads to self-awareness. Agencies however, indicated that the goals of empowering people through groups vary from one type of group to another and are largely determined by the factors impinging on the nature of the organizing group, conditions of service, people's needs and desires, and the agency's purpose and functions.

7.5.4 EMPHASIS ON SELF-HELP

All the agencies interviewed (100%) espoused that self-help leads to independence and self-reliance. Self-reliance in groups is facilitated by the spirit of mutual aid. Hence self-help is based on the concept of peer support and mutual-aid and the group members who become members of the group because of a common life experience, common interest or common need. The rationale for the use of self-help groups is based on the commonality of need to receive support, and stimulus in developing self-awareness. Solidarity and mutual aid becomes the core of self-help groups. Hence self-help can be looked at as a process where mutual aid is central and maximized. It is this solidarity and mutual-aid that makes social group work a more prominent helping model as compared to social casework or one to one intervention. Casework in a group is certainly mutual aid-less. Steinberg (1993:29) reaffirms the value of mutual-aid in self-help groups which extends far beyond mere expression of sympathy. Instead it embraces many types of possible interchanges, including those which are confrontational in nature.

Glidewell (1975:163) raises the intriguing point that solidarity and mutual-aid is based not only on greater degrees of attraction and

perceived similarity among members, but also on the recognition that there are complementary differences which are useful for personal change, e.g: "Each participant, because of his different resources, supplies another with motives, feelings, or skills which the other could not supply for himself; esteem motives in exchange for safety motives, supportive affection in exchange for prudent apprehension, instrumental skills in exchange for expressive skills. But the demand for the climate emphasizes the homogeneity, de-emphasize or indeed deny the complementary heterogeneity ... in a climate of solidarity, differences in status, power, and competence are left implicit or overtly denied" (Glidewell, op cit).

7.5.5

MEMBERS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO VENTILATE

A favourable percentage of agencies (90%) confirmed that group members enjoy a benefit of feeling safe and comfortable in groups to talk and discuss their problems. Groups normally provide a haven where members can comfortably express their views and even provide an opportunity for members to rehearse their newly acquired behaviours in a safe environment of the group. Due to interaction, members discover that they have something in common. This discovery automatically facilitates interaction. As interaction becomes more pronounced, members develop a sense of commonality. It is this commonality that makes members comfortable to disclose their feelings and to ventilate their long suppressed feelings.

7.5.6 GROUP MEMBERS GAIN SOCIAL SKILLS

Agencies (80%) indicated that one of the benefits that members enjoy in groups is gaining social skills. This benefit can be equated to empowerment, because gaining social skills transforms the individual group member towards self understanding and self-sufficiency. As group members help one another to think things through, not by gift of advice, but by sharing of life experiences, opinions and feelings, members automatically gain social skills that can help them face and understand their daily problems. No individual can learn social skills in isolation, people need to compare and compete with each other to recognise and appreciate their social skills and learning.

7.5.7 BROADENING OF INSIGHT AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS/GAINING SELF-CONFIDENCE

Agencies (70%) regarded broadening of insight and interpersonal relations as well as gaining self-confidence as a benefit on the part of group members. Heap (1977) states that one of the aims of group work is to help members gain insight into their own situations or problems. Through interaction with each other, members learn, model and gain different aspects about their lives. Further, through interaction and identification, members learn to communicate and in return learn or develop interpersonal relationships. All these factors contribute to self-understanding as well as self-confidence.

7.5.8 GROUPS FACILITATE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

Most agencies (60%), agreed that the use of groups can facilitate change amongst group member's behaviour. Konopka (1954:43) elude that a group as a social system is one of the greatest and deepest emotional powers in human life; because it provides a feeling of belonging, of security, safety, and of realizing that one can contribute to others and that one is somebody. This gives rise to attributes like self-respect and realization of ones worthiness. It is these values that facilitate the potential for change.

In summing up table 14, it is necessary to indicate that group work is a result of small series brought together. One most important benefit of groups is to counteract the "hollowness" created when individuals live only for themselves. Groups are about teaching people to do things for themselves, building on their strengths, and helping them to think through important values like responsibility. According to Konopka (1998:14), groups are not about "making people"; but "bringing out" people.

7.6 REASONS WHY GROUP WORK IS NOT UTILIZED IN WELFARE AGENCIES

Interviews were also held with 10 agencies that do not utilize groups in their service delivery. The focus of the interview was to determine reasons why agencies do not encourage the use of group treatment.

Reasons that were advanced during agency group interviews correspond greatly with reasons indicated by social work respondents as portrayed in table 4 and 10(b).

The following reasons were indicated:-

(i) Lack of proper group work training

Agencies repeatedly echoed that most training institutions do not emphasise the importance of group work during training. Institutions still continue to emphasise case work.

Another issue that came up very strongly was the issue of integration of theory and practice. Agencies felt that there is more concentration on theory without exposing students to purposeful practical handling of groups. Students are more often encouraged to use imaginary groups.

Sentiments were raised that group work practice in institutions is not well structured because trainers have a tendency of allocating groups to students. This prevents students from being creative in arranging, planning, advertising for groups or getting a group together.

It was evident during the interviews that social workers that graduated less than five years ago share the same sentiments with those that graduated more than five years ago, though there was common consensus that the situation is gradually changing with more emphasis being placed on community work.

(ii) People are reluctant to participate in groups

Agencies concur that due to the historical development of social work in South Africa, welfare agencies tended to portray social work as a therapeutic one - one profession. Clients have consequently come to know social work as a profession where you walk into the worker's office and receive advice or help and walk out. This therefore created dependency on the social worker and hence clients become reluctant in taking responsibility for their problems through group participation. It was also indicated that the resistance on the part of clients towards joining or participating in groups is being capitalized on by social workers in agencies who normally believe that there is absolutely nothing the agency can do if clients are not willing to join groups. This normally presents a sense of defeat.

(iii) Language/Cross-cultural problems

Agencies felt that due to the diversity of cultures in South Africa it is mostly impossible to conduct groups. The common problem cited was that in cosmopolitan areas agencies deal with clients from different ethnic groups who can only communicate in their own ethnic dialect. This problem hampers communication and interaction in the group.

There is general belief that language is a barrier during the group process. The question of language, race and culture is typical of the South African rainbow nation. On the one hand White social workers feel they can not conduct groups with black clients

because of language problems and that groups conducted through the medium of English hamper reciprocal interaction and communication since members cannot articulately express their feelings.

On the other hand black social workers feel there is resistance from white clients in groups conducted by black social workers. Black social workers equally feel resistant towards conducting groups in Afrikaans. This does not mean however that there are no mixed cultural groups that have been successful. Social workers within the correctional services amongst others have prided themselves on mixed groups that have been successful and beneficial to members.

Cross-cultural problems stems from people's beliefs, morals, traditions, religion etc. An example of black males feeling threatened to open up during group sessions was indicated. Religious beliefs such as females not feeling comfortable mixing with men; certain topics relating to sexual encounters or sexuality also posed problems.

The issue of language did not only refer to black and white languages. The problem of language amongst black people was cited especially in provinces like Gauteng where agencies serve clients from different ethnic groups e.g Xhosas, Zulus etc. who can not communicate in other languages besides their own. There was

a general feeling that social workers need to be exposed to cross-cultural studies/training, through in-service training.

(iv) Lack of group work awareness

Agencies repeatedly echoed that there is general lack of awareness amongst social workers with regard to use of groups. This was said to be due to the fact that agencies are not always supportive towards group establishment. This lack of support discourages workers from indulging in group treatment. Because agencies are not supportive, social workers gradually lose touch with groups and finally group work dwindles away, and social workers gradually become less aware of the value, power and effect of the group processes.

(v) Understaffing

Almost all agencies indicated that it is impracticable to conduct groups due to understaffing. This issue corresponds with information born in tables 2(c), (d) and (e) on page 163-164. The issue of understaffing correlated with high case loads where social workers spend most of their time attending to case work. This, agencies confirmed, leaves them with limited or no time to plan for groups.

7.7 PROSPECTS OF INTRODUCING THE USE OF GROUPS IN AGENCIES

Agencies were further asked to indicate if there were opportunities to conduct group work in their work situation or to ascertain whether agencies can benefit by introducing the use of group intervention.

All the agencies interviewed confirmed that they can benefit from utilizing group intervention, and that possibilities do exist to conduct groups, but the following conditions were laid down:-

- government must employ more social workers;
- agencies must fund groups and provide an appropriate infrastructure;
- over-time must be paid for conducting groups after hours;
- in-service training must be provided to empower social workers with group skills and co-leadership skills;
- cross-cultural social work need to be emphasized during training; and
- training institutions must re-visit their group work curriculum to give group work equal exposure with the other two primary methods

7.8 QUESTIONS POSED TO BOTH CATEGORIES OF AGENCIES I.E AGENCIES THAT UTILIZE GROUP WORK AND THOSE THAT DO NOT UTILIZE GROUPS

The following information was solicited from both categories of agencies interviewed. The total number of agencies interviewed was 25. The rationale for posing the following questions was:-

- (a) to ascertain how social workers are employed in different agencies i.e. whether agencies sometimes require social workers with special interest in particular methods.
- (b) to ascertain the knowledge of agencies as to how group work can help to bridge the gap between micro and macro social work.
- (c) to assess the agencies awareness of how group work can contribute to successful achievement of the aims of the RDP.

7.8.1 ISSUES TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN THE APPOINTMENT OF SOCIAL WORKERS



Since this is a category of agencies that involves both those that claim to practice or utilize groups, as well as those that do not, agencies were asked about specific issues to be taken into consideration in appointing social workers in their agencies. The focus was on whether social workers employed in agencies that do group work were specifically appointed to do group work or are all social workers expected to utilize

the generic approach or whether social workers decide on their own as individuals to conduct groups.

Table 15 Issues to be taken into consideration in the appointment of social workers in welfare agencies

Responses	No. of agencies	Total %
1. Social workers are not appointed on any specialization of methods.	8	32
2. Social workers run groups out of their own free will.	7	28
3. The agency expects social workers to run a certain number of groups per year.	2	8
4. Social workers at agency level have no say as to who and how posts are filled since the employment of social workers is done at a different level e.g head office.	6	24
5. Social workers are tested on their group skills during job interviews	2	8
Total	25	100

The above table indicates that social workers are basically appointed on a generic basis as it is indicated by 32% of the agencies interviewed.

This is significant because from observation, social work advertised posts usually do not specify methods required. Emphasis is laid on qualifications, experience and registration with the Council.

Social workers who conduct groups as part of their service delivery do so out of their own interest or out of assessing a need for group treatment. This is portrayed by 28% of all agencies interviewed and will partly account for social workers employed in agencies that utilize the group modality.

Twenty four percent of respondents confirmed that employment of social workers is done from the Head Office or at different managerial levels. This means that social workers apply for posts based on the three criteria stated above i.e. qualifications, experience and registration with Council for Social Work and that specialization in any of the methods is insignificant.

However, only 8% of the agencies indicated that their agencies emphasize the use of groups as a primary method of intervention e.g. some agencies require social workers to conduct at least 4 groups per social worker per year. This statement corresponds with the 8% of agencies that indicated that social workers are tested on their group skills during interviews for social work positions.

7.9 HOW GROUP WORK CAN HELP BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN MICRO AND MACRO SOCIAL WORK

Agencies indicated that group work forms a bridge between case work and community work.

This was based on the rationale that group work can serve as an extension of case work as well as serve as a means of reaching more people in communities. With the changes cutting across South Africa, social work needs to move away from individual therapy and to concentrate more on developmentally oriented methods. Group work can successfully be utilised to attract community participation by starting on a smaller scale and, through snow balling-effect reaching greater segments of the community.

7.10 CORRELATION BETWEEN GROUP WORK AND THE RDP

This question was posed to assess whether agencies are aware of how group work can contribute to successful achievement of the aims of the RDP.

The following ideas were indicated:-

(a) Community involvement

Group work can facilitate involvement of people in the process of change and decision making. This was possible through conducting empowerment groups, self-help groups as well as social action groups.

(b) Education

It was indicated that conducting programmes with an educational purpose can be effectively achieved through the use of groups where members can easily acquire skills, information, awareness etc.

(c) Health Care

Health awareness programmes can be facilitated, organized, coordinated and conducted through groups. These community awareness programmes could include education and information on AIDS/HIV, contraceptives, nutrition, teenage pregnancies, etc.

(d) Rehabilitative Services

Agencies indicated that rehabilitative, curative and preventive services are at the core of the RDP. Formation of self help groups comprising alcoholics, prisoners, abused women and children etc. can help facilitate restoration of impaired functioning.

(e) Women issues

Through groups, women can be exposed to different types of information e.g knowing their rights as mothers, wives, and workers. Programmes such as assertiveness training, communication skills and conflict resolution skills can be encouraged through groups.

(f) Job Creation

Having a job means having a source of income. Most of unemployed people in South Africa have very limited or no skills at all. Skill development can be facilitated through creation of self-help projects and income-generating groups.

7.9 CONCLUSION

Though agencies were of the opinion that group work can be utilized to promote self-development, capacity building, empowerment through training and education, there is evidence that agencies are still resistant to change. This was indicated by lack of enthusiasm in engaging in action oriented methods of service delivery. There is repeated concern with regard to understaffing and high case loads without any initiative of looking into how to counteract such problems.

The fact that group work is perceived as 'labour intensive', too tedious, and time consuming clouds the agencies' initiative in seeing or discovering the value embedded in group processes. Group processes can be very powerful forces for the members and may or may not be beneficial in helping members attain their goals. Hence, there is need for agencies to support group processes that are beneficial, to counteract those that are not, and to help group members to do the same.

CHAPTER 8

GROUP WORK TRAINING

8.1 INTRODUCTION

On the international scene, social group work educators have voiced grave concerns about the shift to a generalist approach to teaching social work practice (Middleman, 1987; Bronbaum, 1993; Wayne & Garland, 1990; Steinberg, 1993). This trend has resulted in social workers working with groups without appropriate preparation (Glassman & Kates, 1986; Middleman, 1989; Steinberg, 1993).

The paucity of group content in the classroom is mirrored in many field practice where students either work exclusively with individuals and families, or work with groups without adequate supervision. The above sentiments have been raised by Ramey (1993:10), in indicating that most undergraduate programs as well as graduate programs do not prepare students for social group work practice. Ramey further contends that "the presumption that just any social work lecturer can teach social work with groups is completely false. Most have been educated in work with individuals. They continue to let such concerns dominate their courses in spite of the stated curriculum".

Gitterman (1997:4) shares similar sentiments by indicating that the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups continues to be concerned about the decreasing emphasis on the teaching of group work in social work education. He further expresses the notion that

social work education continues to turn its back on group work practice. An unintended consequence of this has been the diminishing of attention to the specific and unique group work skills required to successfully lead groups.

On the South African scene the situation is apparently not much different. This was proven in the previous chapter where most social workers as well as agencies prefer to work with individuals and families with little or no use of group intervention. The researcher has also noted with concern that most students placed in different agencies for field work return to the university with little or no group experience. This is so because a great number of agencies do not utilize the group work method, since this method is highly marginalized (see table 10c) and social work practitioners gradually lose touch with the group work modality. Students therefore find themselves doing group work without proper professional supervision.

The aim of this chapter is to assess the extent of group work training as compared to the other two primary methods of intervention. The rationale for this assessment is based on the assumption that group work is under utilized or marginalised because during training students do not receive adequate group work training.

Since chapter 6 and 7 proved that more emphasis is laid on case work in social work practice, and also since some practitioners expressed sentiments that group work is not emphasised during training, the researcher needed information from training institutions to ascertain the

issue of group work marginalization during training. Seventeen social work training institutions were contacted through questionnaires to ascertain whether group work does receive equal exposure as compared to case work and community work with regard to both theory and practice.

8.2 SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENTS OF TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

Social work departments as integral parts of the total university are governed by the general policy of the said institution, as well as the Council for Social Work with JUC playing a greater role. Hence some universities offer their four year social work program on a semester basis whilst some do so on a yearly basis. Within this category of yearly or semesterised system, some institutions have modularized their programs whilst others run full courses. It is important to indicate that it has been very difficult for the researcher to weight modularized courses as compared to full courses because different universities place different weights on modules and full courses. It has also been very difficult to calculate the exact number of lectures per week per method (for both theory and practice) since some universities focus on the integrated approach especially in the 3rd and 4th year level.

The following tables give an indication of the levels of study at which group work theory is offered. This information is then compared with similar information relating to case work and community work.

Table 16 Number of Universities offering social work primary methods at different levels of training

Year	Group work			Community work			Case work		
	Module	full course	total	Module	full course	total	Module	full course	total
1	3	0	3	3	0	3	3	0	3
2	1	12	13	1	10	11	0	11	11
3	2	5	7	0	6	6	0	4	4
4	2	4	6	2	7	9	1	6	7

* Due to some universities offering both modules and full courses, there is a double counting which accounts for a larger number of universities than indicated.

The interpretation of the above table indicates that students are exposed to group work (as well as the other two methods) throughout all the year levels of study either as modules or full courses. However, at first year level all universities teach group work as well as the other two methods as modules. This is so because primary methods are normally taught as an integrated introductory course at the first year level.

At second year level, a total of 13 universities offer group work; 11 universities offer community work, and equally 11 universities offer case work. It would seem that more universities emphasise group work at second year level.

At third year level, 7 universities offer group work, 6 offer community work and 4 offer case work.

At fourth year level it would seem that more universities offer community work (9) followed by case work (7) and lastly 6 universities offer group work.

In summing up this table, one can conclude that social work students are mostly introduced to group work at second year level, and continue to the third year level. At fourth year level the count goes down. This is so because most universities alluded to the fact that at fourth year more attention is given to the integrated approach. Irrespective of the above, table 16 does give a view that group work is not marginalized during training since it gets more or less equal exposure with the other methods throughout the four year training program.

8.3

AVERAGE LECTURES OFFERED PER WEEK PER METHOD

Since the previous table (table 16) explained the breadth of the presentation of group work by year levels, the researcher deemed it necessary to explore the depth of group work presentation by means of determining the lecturing time value for both theory and practice. The following tables therefore attempt to identify the number of theoretical lectures as well as the practical exposure associated with each primary method of intervention. This is aimed at gaining an indication of how many lectures on average are allocated for each method.

Table 17(a) Average number of theoretical lectures per week per year of study by method

Method	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Average No. of lectures per week
Case work	2	2	1	1.5	1.62
Group work	2	2.5	1.5	1	1.75
Community work	1.5	2	2	1.5	1.75

Table 17(b) Average number of hours per week for field work by method

Method	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Average per week
Case work	0	3	3	2	2
Group work	1	1.5	2	1	1.5
Community work	0	3	3	3	2.25

Table 17(a) reflects that during training, group work receives proportionately the same exposure as other methods, with case work receiving slightly lower exposure than the other two methods, as indicated by 1.62 for case work and 1.75 for both group work and community work. This corresponds with social work practitioners' view that the group work training they received equipped them with adequate skills to handle groups.

There is an apparent discrepancy in the views of social work practitioners and training institutions with regards to the

overconcentration on case work during training. Social work practitioners indicated that the training they received concentrated mostly on case work whereas table 17(a) shows that case work actually received lower exposure compared to group work and community work. The discrepancy between social work practitioners and training institutions could be the result of universities having adapted their curriculum to meet the changing needs of communities. Some universities indicated that as far back as the late 80's attention was given to the decrease in case work and more emphasis laid on community work. This change was also facilitated by the Council for Social Work as well as the JUC.

An additional matter which contributed to the change is the realization of the government to change the subsidy policy from case work to subsidising welfare programs. Currently this has been intensified by the emphasis placed on the RDP.

Table 17(b) indicate that hours spent on group work practice are considerably less than those spent on case work and community work. Proportionately (excluding block placements) it is approximately 60; 68; 45 hours per year for case work, community work and group work respectively.



The reason for the discrepancy between table 17(a) and 17(b) could be that more concentration is placed on theory as compared to practice. This confirms what social work practitioners alluded to in indicating that during training more emphasis was laid on group work theory as

compared to integration of theory and practice in group work. The reason surrounding this controversial issue may be the fact that during case work practice, students are mostly given an opportunity to deal with actual cases whereas in group work they are compelled to use laboratory and imaginary groups. This, as social work practitioners indicated does not give them the real practical implementation of working with real groups.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis portrayed in Tables 16, 17(a) and 17(b) proves that the difference in the exposure to methods throughout all the year levels of study in both theory and practice is not statistically significant at the 5% level of significance. This therefore implies that all methods receive more or less equal exposure. (The Friedman X^2 test was used as well as the SAS statistical package).

8.4 PREPARATION OF STUDENTS FOR GROUP MEMBERSHIP

In addition to the theoretical as well as the practical exposure of students to group work, the researcher was interested in finding out how training institutions prepare students for group membership. As indicated in chapter 6, it is ethically wrong for leaders to conduct or lead groups if they have no experience of having been group members.

Universities (88.2%) indicated that they do afford students an opportunity to be group members at different levels of the program. This is achieved in one or more of the following ways:-

- (a) Students become part of laboratory group sessions
- (b) Students are allocated group assignments
- (c) Group supervision
- (d) They become members in skills training programs

However, 11.8% of universities indicated that their program does not afford students an opportunity of being group members due to the following reasons:-

- (a) Time constraints as well as understaffing
- (b) Lack of sufficient group work opportunities or resources

Generally most universities confirmed that the group work component given to students is adequate to equip them with knowledge and skills to comfortably handle groups on completion of the four year program. This is achieved through exposure to theory and practice with regular supervision and report writing. This information blends well with information in tables 16, 17(a) and 17(b) which proved that group work is given more or less equal exposure with other primary methods of intervention. This was also supported earlier by practising social workers who indicated in table 6 on page 185 that the training they received adequately equipped them with confidence in handling groups and also table 7 on page 186 where 88.1% of respondents confirmed that they have extensive literature/theoretical background in group work method.

8.5 SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS ON BLOCK PLACEMENT

Block placement is one of the requirements for the social work program. Universities place students with different agencies for a specified period of time. The time frame for block placement varies from one university to the other.

During block placement students are normally supervised by practising social workers at agency level. Some universities also do occasional visits to different agencies to supervise their students.

However, some universities normally experience problems of supervision especially with regard to group work. In most cases students do not get exposure to the actual handling of groups, because it has been established that 63% of agencies do not utilize groups in service delivery. This means that students' field experiences and supervision do not always offer the experiences required for beginning competence. In most instances they organise groups out of their own initiative, and regrettably agencies consequently fail to offer them support and adequate resources for group development. In addition to this, training institutions alluded to the problem of group work supervision during placements. The following were cited as reasons contributing to the problem of group work supervision:-

- (a) Lack of sufficient group work opportunities, in agencies
- (b) Agencies are still case work oriented

- (c) Supervisors are most of the time not skilled or interested in group work.

Contrary to the above, a number of universities indicated that generally they do not experience problems of supervision with regard to other methods.

8.6 ATTITUDES OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS TOWARDS GROUP WORK

Training institutions were asked to assess the attitude of student social workers towards group work as compared to the other two primary methods of intervention. These attitudes were subsequently arranged into 6 categories, and will be discussed individually.

Table 18 Attitudes of student social workers towards group work

Attitude	No. of universities	%
(i) Attitudes are positive but get dampened during placement by unmotivated social workers towards group work	11	64.7
(ii) Students prefer case work and community work because they find them easier to handle.	8	47.0
(iii) Students consider group work to be too tedious and complicated as compared to case work and community work.	7	41.1
(iv) Students show equal interest in all the methods.	7	41.1
(v) There is new excitement towards groups by students.	6	35.2
(vi) Students initially feel intimidated and anxious about groups but through supervision they tend to gradually develop confidence.	5	29.4

8.6.1

STUDENTS' POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS GROUP WORK

Training institutions indicated that students generally have a positive attitude towards group work. This was confirmed by 64.7% of the universities. However, training institutions lamented that this positive attitude in most cases gets dampened by the experience of students during field placement. It is evident that since most agencies are not group work oriented, students miss out on the challenge of doing purposeful group work. The attitude of the agencies with regard to failure in supporting group intervention as well as failure to encourage practitioners to conduct groups tends to have a negative impact on students. This information confirms the findings as portrayed in table 4 on page 173 and table 12 on page 214. Table 12 categorically confirms that only 40% of agencies that do utilize groups have ongoing

60% use groups only when an opportunity present itself. Chapter 7 also confirms this problem in indicating that only 37% of the South African agencies do utilize group work.

Further table 4 confirmed that group work is underutilized because agencies are not supportive to group establishment, hence lack of appropriate resources to facilitate group development. It is these confirmed issues that contaminate the positive attitude that students develop during training. It is also this very contamination that make students to loose interest in group work when they finally complete their program.

8.6.2 STUDENTS PREFER CASE WORK AND COMMUNITY WORK OVER GROUP WORK

Fourty seven percent of training institutions confirmed that students generally prefer case work as well as community work over the group work method. Some of the reasons advanced by training institutions are that students find case work and community work more comprehensible than group work. Another reason related to the attitude of lecturers towards group work. The question here, is how motivated are educators themselves towards the teaching of group work, and do they sufficiently motivate students. The contention in this case surrounds the fact that most social work educators were educated in the system that favoured case work, and they conducted their practice in agencies that favoured case work. Some of them worked for agencies that did not favour group work prior to becoming educators. This certainly has an impact on their

JUC meetings and conferences over years, group work never formed the nucleus of any discussions. Berman-Rossi (1994:3) reinforces this notion in indicating that in reviewing a lengthy list of national and international conferences, there is little presentation and discussion of group work theory, skill, practice etc. in spite of the relevance of group work to practitioners, agencies, and communities. Mostly attention has been given to developmental issues without indicating the importance of group work as the medium or basis of development. This reason fits in well with Ramey's (1993:10) notion that the presumption that just any social work faculty member can teach social work with groups is completely unfounded. Ramey further states that most social work educators have been educated in work with individuals and families, and therefore continue to let such concerns dominate their teaching in spite of the stated curriculum.

8.6.3 STUDENTS CONSIDER GROUP WORK TO BE TOO TEDIOUS AND COMPLICATED

One observable attitude of students is that they perceive group work as being too demanding and complicated. This refers to issues such as finding the group, recruiting members, announcing the group and also maintaining the development process of the group. This was indicated by 41.1% of training institutions. This issue was also raised by practitioners in table 4 on page 173 where they strongly felt that one of the reasons for underutilization of groups is that they are considered to be too demanding and taxing emotionally and physically. This again could be influenced by the attitude of the lecturer.

8.6.4 STUDENTS SHOW EQUAL INTEREST IN ALL THE THREE PRIMARY METHODS

Training institutions (41%) felt that students view all the three primary methods of intervention in the same light.

This, the universities attributed to the focus on the integrated approach where all methods are integrated and given equal opportunity to facilitate social functioning.

8.7 THE PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATORS WITH REGARD TO THE UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL GROUP WORK

To assess how social work educators view the utilization of group work in social work practice, training institutions were asked to indicate whether they consider group work to be under utilized in social work practice.

The responses from training institutions showed that all universities (100%) contacted fully agreed that group work is under utilized in social work practice and consequently advanced different reasons for under utilization. (Training institutions were given the liberty to advance more than one reason).

Table 19 Reasons for under utilization as advanced by social work educators

Reasons advanced	Number	%
(i) Emphasis is still on case work.	9	34.6
(ii) Practitioners consider group work to be too demanding and time consuming.	7	27
(iii) Practitioners are resistant to group work and also do not view it as important.	5	19.2
(iv) Lack of confidence on the part of practitioners.	3	11.5
(v) Social workers focus on crisis work and not so much on empowerment/development.	2	7.7
Total	26	100

8.7.1

SOCIAL WORKERS/AGENCIES STILL PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON CASE WORK

A meaningful percentage of training institutions (34.6%) are of the view that one of the reasons for under utilization of group work is the over identification of practitioners and agencies with the one-to-one intervention. This issue as discussed in previous chapters has historical connotations which seem to be embedded in most agencies. Gray (1996:10) confirms this ideology by indicating that most social workers continue to practice case work which prevents them from tapping the effectiveness of other methods.

Training institutions therefore confirm that the training of social workers has absolutely no impact on underutilization or non utilization of the group work method. This confirms the assessment or conclusion agreed upon that the issue of under utilization is the result of the welfare agencies' perceptions towards the said method.

Based on this, it would seem that welfare agencies/organisations have not kept pace with new developments. An example could be the minimal contribution of the welfare agencies towards the RDP.

8.7.2 PRACTITIONERS CONSIDER GROUP WORK TO BE TOO DEMANDING AND TIME CONSUMING

Training institutions (27%) are of the view that under/non utilization of group work is facilitated by the practitioners' perception or attitude that group work is too tedious, demanding, complicated and time consuming. This issue was raised by practitioners themselves (see table 4 on page 173). One of the training institutions referred to group work as "labour intensive". This notion created further questions or dilemma in the researcher's mind in looking at efforts, problems and time normally spent on getting projects off the ground. Organising communities for any projects seems equally tedious and time consuming, yet, practitioners involved in community work do not normally consider the method as too demanding and time consuming.

Looking at it from the other side of the coin, the study revealed that community work is not as popular as case work in most agencies though the situation is gradually changing towards the use of more community work.

8.7.3 PRACTITIONERS ARE RESISTANT TO GROUP WORK AND ALSO DO NOT VIEW IT AS IMPORTANT

Training institutions (19.2%) related the issue of under utilization to the resistance of practitioners towards groups. This, training institutions referred to as lack of awareness on the part of practitioners as to the value embedded in groups, as well as the value of group work in community development. The issue of resistance to work with groups was confirmed by practitioners in table 10(b) on page 192 where 77.1% of them agreed that resistance to work with groups amongst social workers appears to be very high. The issue of in-service training was repeatedly referred to as a way of creating a re-awakening spirit, and also creating awareness of the value of group work. The issue of the importance of in-service training was indicated by 85.2% of the respondents as portrayed in table 10(c) on page 193.

8.7.4 LACK OF CONFIDENCE

A small percentage of training institutions (11.5%) gave lack of confidence on the part of practitioners as one of the reasons for under utilization of group work. However, this reason was refuted by practitioners in table 6 on page 185, where 97% of respondents reflected that they have confidence in handling groups, and also in table 7 page 186 where 88.1% of respondents indicated that they have extensive literature/theoretical background in the group work method and 83% indicated that they have sufficient practical experience in handling groups. In table 9 on page 188 practitioners further gave an indication that the non-utilization of group work does not lie within them

as practitioners but put the blame on some phenomenon outside themselves. According to them the problem lies with "somebody" out there.

8.7.5 PRACTITIONERS FOCUS ON CRISIS WORK AND NOT SO MUCH ON EMPOWERMENT/DEVELOPMENT

Though the above reason was indicated by a smaller percentage of training institutions (7.7%), its value is worth discussing, because it was referred to by the practitioners in chapter 6. The practitioners are of the opinion that they are most of the time under pressure dealing with crisis cases that present themselves everyday due to understaffing (see tables 2(d) and (e)). It was also indicated that practitioners are in most instances under pressure to complete or meet dead lines for statutory work. Because of the focus on case work, as well as the problem of understaffing agencies tend to ignore important aspects such as empowerment and developmental issues.

This is certainly one of the aspects that have always contributed to the failure of the social work profession in South Africa. As one of the social workers said for a long time South African social workers have tried in vain to case work problems out of the clients. This does not mean that case work is not a viable method of intervention but the danger lies in the over use of it at the exclusion of action oriented methods.

According to Gray (1996:10) social work agencies have attempted to respond to the need for developmental social work, and many have attempted to incorporate community development. The problem has however been that they have always done this while still trying to fulfil their statutory duties and to maintain existing obligations to individual clients.

The White Paper for social welfare states emphatically that welfare is now moving to a developmental approach, which among others should do the following:

- * contribute to the eradication of poverty
- * discourage dependency on welfare
- * promote the active involvement of people in their own development
- * employ a multifaceted, multi-sectoral approach
- * encourage partnership between the state, provincial government and all other stakeholders in welfare.

With this in the picture, welfare agencies/organisations need to adopt a new paradigm. This poses a challenge to social work agencies to become engaged in the wider socio-economic, environmental and geo-political arenas in order to fundamentally change the circumstances

under which the poor, the unemployed and the marginalized find themselves and to improve their quality of life (Brown & Partah, 1998:1).

To achieve this people need to be empowered to take control of their lives. The use of groups remains to be the power to reckon with in training, educating, developing and creating awareness. If community development is to form the central focal point in social development, practitioners need to learn or develop interest and belief in the group processes since this can be easily achieved through establishment of different types of groups.


8.8

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been proven that the group work method is not marginalized during the training of social workers. The Friedman X^2 test found that the difference in exposure among the three methods of intervention is not statistically significant at the level of 5% level of significance. This implies that all the three primary methods receive more or less equal exposure. It can further be concluded that the training institutions are convinced that the group work training they provide is adequate to equip students with knowledge and skills to conduct groups after completion of the program. If this is the case, the why of underutilization still remains with the welfare agencies.

The following issues can therefore be generalized as factors affecting the utilization of the group work method:-

- * Lack of properly trained group work educators with sufficient group work experience.

 - * Since universities do not have a choice of agencies to place students, block placements tend not to be conducive to group work practice since many agencies do not offer appropriate opportunities as well as supervision. This issue was confirmed by Matthias (1983:221) in indicating that supervisors at agencies do not have the necessary knowledge to guide student social workers in the implementation of group work and community work projects. There is a general feeling that because supervisors lack knowledge, social work students are at a disadvantage because they do not receive proper guidance. From this instance, it can be deduced that the situation that existed in 1983 is still prevailing today. There has not been much change with regard to the attitude of agencies towards more action oriented methods of intervention.
- 
- * Agencies where students are mostly placed are not accredited. Due to limited welfare agencies, especially in areas where historically disadvantaged universities are located, universities do not have a choice of selecting amongst different agencies.

 - * Generally agencies are not enthusiastic about group intervention thus affecting the attitude or morale of students towards group work.

CHAPTER 9

MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, the researcher will draw conclusions from both the literature and empirical study.

9.2 RECAPITULATION OF THE OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this study was to gain knowledge regarding the utilization of group work as an interventive method in social work. This was achieved through literature review, questionnaires to social work practitioners and social work training institutions as well as interviewing welfare agencies/institutions. More specifically the objectives of the study are:-

9.2.1 To explore and describe the use/utilization of social group work as a method of intervention in welfare agencies/institutions and State Departments.

9.2.2 To analyse factors affecting the lack of interest or attitudes of social workers towards the use of groups in social work practice.

9.2.3 To gain insight into the education and training of social workers with regard to group work.

- 9.2.4 To explore and describe how group work can facilitate the achievement of RDP goals and objectives.
- 9.2.5 To propose guidelines to welfare agencies and training institutions on how group work could effectively be utilized to improve service delivery to facilitate developmental social work.

9.3 LITERATURE ON GROUP WORK

The study revealed that there is not much written in South Africa about group work. Much of what has been written in this area draws largely on the literature from other countries, particularly the United States of America and Britain.

The literature reviewed has helped in identifying the value of groups in human existence, and has further thrown light on how South African social work practitioners can utilize groups for preventive, rehabilitative and developmental issues.

The aspect that was espoused throughout the group work literature is the concept of mutual aid and empowerment. Mutual aid as an integral part of group work has the potential to release both healing power, and thereby facilitate personal change, which in turn stimulates social, political and economic change.

Furthermore it is indicated that human beings are highly gregarious, and that the concept of mutual aid is as old as society itself. This

reflects that people are committed to the belief that working together collectively can effect social change. Henry (1981:22) acknowledged that groups provide a forum for persons to address issues, work collectively on an issue and participate in decision making. Collective decision making can be more creative than decisions taken alone because the options and resources are expanded and multiplied. The relevance of group work to community work was emphasised. As indicated by Alissi (1997:6) group work's greatest contribution to community work is its emphasis on self-help, on the strength of ordinary people to accomplish their goals through group association. Mary Follet in Alissi (op cit.) stressed "faith in humanity, not faith in poor people or ignorant people, but faith in every living soul". Accordingly, in group work practice, there is no condescension and such faith helps to break down the concept of "we" and "they" the emphasis being on the responsibility of those in need includes the active participation of the people themselves, self-help, and volunteer participation. Social group work normally speaks of "members", and not "clients". With this thinking, the practice of social work cannot be restricted to alleviating individual problems, but must also include community action and social reform.

Regan & Lee (1992:49) confirm that a large part of a community worker's role entails working with groups. Working with local people to respond to needs and issues generally involves setting up and maintaining groups of people in management committees, working parties, action groups, support groups etc. to achieve desired goals.

While many community workers would not describe such as group work, much of what they do is group work. The question therefore remains - could community workers be more effective if their group work skills were enhanced? This calls for greater attention to be given to developing knowledge of the interplay among social work, community work and social action groups. The opposite question also needs to be asked, i.e should social group workers be taking a more active interest in their community setting? Is it a question of giving community workers more group work skills, or teaching social group workers to be more open to community concerns and issues in their area of work.

The issue of empowerment in and through groups was found to be in line with the aims of the RDP and that the frequent use of group work as an empowerment tool can help facilitate prevention, rehabilitation and development. These three aspects continue to be the cornerstone of the RDP. According to Lee in Alissi (1994:31) the empowerment group utilizes the principles, knowledge base, and skills of the empowerment approach and explicitly defines empowerment as purpose, content, process and outcome of the group's work. It is not a support or mutual-aid group, nor a "therapeutic group", nor is it a consciousness raising or critical education group, nor a political action group. It is basically all of the above. As a result, poor deprived communities can more explicitly assert rights and responsibilities in determining the direction of their own development.

The basic assumption in empowerment oriented groups is that the consciousness raising process central to self-empowerment, leads to identification of the group process as the most potentially productive medium.

Estes, (1991:8) refers to the nexus that exists between group work and social development - an interdisciplinary field of practice in which group workers carry important roles. Whatever the auspices of group work practice, at its core is the objective of promoting individual growth through group experience; group work practice always seeks to empower people and groups toward the realization of shared goals. Social development is therefore both a field of practice and an outcome that is to be achieved through the practice of group work. As empowerment is central to groupwork, empowerment also remains a central objective of social development activity. They both require the active engagement of collectivities of individuals working together toward shared objectives.

An important strength of group work is its professional ideology, practice tradition, and continuing commitment to individual and collective change through group experience. Group work's tradition of working toward the elimination of broadly based social oppressions; institutional change and social reform remains a valuable contribution to the RDP.

9.4 PROFILE OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WORKERS

The study revealed :-

- (a) that most South African social workers have an experience of between 0-6 years in the field of social work;
- (b) that most of them are employed in state welfare agencies;
- (c) most have under graduate qualifications; and
- (d) most prefer or have special interest in case work. Hence case work became the most popular method of intervention among social work practitioners.

9.5 PROFILE OF SOUTH AFRICAN WELFARE AGENCIES/ INSTITUTIONS

The study revealed that most South African welfare agencies/organisations/institutions are:-

- (a) located in urban areas;
- (b) in existence for more than 10 years;
- (c) understaffed;
- (d) not supportive to group work
- (e) case work oriented; and
- (f) not development or empowerment oriented

UTILIZATION OF THE DIRECT METHODS OF INTERVENTION

The assumption of this study is based on the notion that:

- (i) group work as one of the primary methods of intervention is under utilized irrespective of its valuable contribution to the developmental approach;
- (ii) the effective utilization of group work will improve social service delivery; and
- (iii) the effective utilization of group work will facilitate successful implementation of the RDP.

From the onset of this study, it was indicated that for a social worker to be an effective service deliverer, she/he needs to be well acquainted or grounded with all the methods of intervention as well as the secondary methods since the methods tend to complement one another.

Even with the latest emphasis on the integrated approach, social workers need to have knowledge of the interventive methods in order to be able to intervene at a variety of levels to the benefit of the clients.

The social work practitioner adopting an integrated approach to practice, regards the transactions between the individual and his environment as the central focus of practice. Intervention in the environment, as part of the interventive strategy, may require the use of group or community development. This therefore will require the worker to be well equipped in all other methods of the profession.

Ramey (1993:10) indicates that "the presumption that an integrated curriculum in social work is adequate preparation for social work with groups has been shattered by many recent studies". He further maintains that this is so because the group content almost always gets short shrift. To back up his fears Ramey (op cit) also gives the following exposition regarding the integrated approach. One "integrated practice course was reported to have had one class session devoted to "groups". The instructor told the class to break up into groups and discuss what it meant to them to belong to a group. That was it".

With regard to the utilization of the direct methods of intervention, the study confirm that group work is under utilized in service delivery. The reasons for under/non utilization are found to be due to the following:-

9.6.1

OVER IDENTIFICATION WITH CASE WORK

The over identification with or concentration on case work was found to be due to the legacy surrounding the history of social work in South Africa. Literature has proved that historically agencies were subsidized on the basis of case work intervention i.e on the number of individual cases attended to per month. Group work and community work programs were not considered for subsidization.

Because of this, agencies had to focus on case work for survival purposes. Practitioners reported that 88.6% of social workers

frequently utilize case work; 73.6% of them are greatly interested in case work and 75.5% of agencies utilize case work. This coupled with the fact that 84.1% of South African welfare agencies have been in existence for more than ten (10) years gives an indication that agencies are still trapped in the old South African ideologies of perpetuating the over concentration on case work.

9.6.2

UNDERSTAFFING

Practitioners alluded to the issue of understaffing as contributing to the non/under utilization of group work:

Due to understaffing, practitioners are compelled to maintain the status quo regarding the use of case work. The study found that most agencies are highly understaffed and yet the agencies' case loads remain very high, e.g 54% of agencies have employed between 1 and 3 social workers; whereas 58.5% of the very agencies serve between 1 and 40 clients per day. In addition to the above, 95.3% of individual social workers see up to 20 clients per day.

This reflects a huge discrepancy between the number of professional social workers employed in agencies and the number of clients served. This, according to respondents, leaves them with no time to organize groups or organize communities for developmental projects.

Interviews with welfare agencies further revealed that social workers may be willing to venture into the use of group intervention only if

government/agency management can modify the staff establishment to allow for employment of more staff.

9.6.3 AGENCIES ARE NOT SUPPORTIVE TO GROUP ESTABLISHMENT

The study revealed that most agencies are not supportive to group establishment, hence the failure to provide resources or facilities for group development. The issue of lack of resources and/or facilities referred to amongst others proper venues for group meetings, transport especially for after hours or week ends, and payment for over time.

9.6.4 LACK OF PROPER GROUP WORK TRAINING

The findings relating to group work training revealed significant variations amongst social work practitioners as well as training institutions. During interviews agencies reflected that most training institutions do not emphasise the importance of group work during training. The emphasis is still considered to be on case work.

A further concern related to the aspect of integration of theory and practice, as agencies reflected that institutions tend to concentrate on group work theory without exposing students to purposeful practical implementation of groups. Students are more often encouraged to use imaginary groups.

Social work respondents revealed that practitioners are of the view that not all primary methods received equal emphasis during training. Case

work method received more emphasis in both theory and practice as shown by 87.2% of theory and 73.6% of practice as compared to 33.3% of group work theory, 39.6% of practice and 30.6% of community work theory as well as 27.4% community work practice.

As a result of this teaching approach, social workers have developed greater skill in case work, and they subsequently developed limited knowledge of group work and community work.

In contradiction to the above, the study reflected that 88.2% of respondents confirmed that the group work training they received empowered them with confidence to successfully handle groups. This discrepancy poses a dilemma which leaves the researcher very uncertain about the group work training. However, 2.9% of respondents did indicate that one of the reasons for under utilization of group work is lack of appropriate training in group work. This confirms that only a small insignificant percentage of respondents feel that the group work training was not appropriate or adequate.

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If the later argument is pursued, it will confirm that the majority of respondents are satisfied with the group work training, and will subsequently confirm the view of training institutions that group work is not marginalised during training. The specific finding in this instance is that though respondents may have sufficient training that equipped them with all the confidence they need to conduct groups, the negative attitude of the agencies towards groups may actually prevent them from utilizing group work in their service delivery.

Another variation was reflected by the training institutions. All training institutions contacted, confirmed that the group work training they offer to students is adequate to equip them with skills and knowledge to handle groups. Training institutions further revealed that group work is certainly not marginalised during training as the difference in exposure among the three methods of intervention was not statistically significant. This therefore implies that all direct methods of intervention receive more or less equal exposure during the different levels of training. This information correlates well with the respondents' views that the training they received equipped them sufficiently with skills to handle groups. The explanation for this could be due to the fact that universities have over the years restructured their curriculum to meet the ever changing needs of communities. For the past 6 years universities have dramatically restructured their programmes towards a more developmental approach.

9.6.5

RACE AND CULTURE

The study revealed that the diversity of the cultures in South Africa creates serious problems with regard to the implementation of group work. The South African rainbow nation is made up of the complexities of cultures, traditions, language, religion etc. This diversity creates barriers in the communication and interaction in groups.

The problem of race and culture is more prevalent in cosmopolitan areas where agencies serve clients from different cultures as well as

different ethnic groups. In these cosmopolitan areas, language becomes a major barrier during the group process.

As a result of this, white social workers feel inadequate to conduct groups with black clients. Conversely, black social workers feel equally inadequate to conduct groups with white clients especially if Afrikaans is to be used as a medium of communication. Black social workers have also experienced resistance from white clients in groups. Cultural issues also play a major role in communication breakdown. Example of black males feeling threatened to open up during group sessions in the presence of female group members has been noted. Religious beliefs such as females not feeling comfortable mixing with men threaten the group survival.

The issue of language does not only refer the black and white races. This also affects communication amongst blacks from different ethnic backgrounds. For example in cosmopolitan provinces like Gauteng social workers serve clients from different ethnic groups e.g Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, Pedi etc. Some or most of these clients are only able to communicate in their original language.

9.7

GROUP WORK AND THE RDP

With reference to the RDP, the study revealed that social workers confirmed that the aims of the RDP that can best be achieved through the use of group work are as follows:-

- Women's issues
- Active community participation
- Health care/nutrition
- Social welfare

The magic word in groups for the achievement of the above, is mutual aid and empowerment. Mutual aid is integral to the group process. The use of groups facilitates carrying of information across e.g. teaching women about their rights and responsibilities; creating a platform where people can have an opportunity to comfortably share views, opinions, concerns whilst contributing or participating in decision making at different levels of their lives, thus creating active community participation.

As indicated in the text, this follows the notion that when a number of people come together to create a group, a social process that creates unique group properties is set in motion. These properties can be utilized in a variety of personal self-fulfilling attitudes which can eventually lead to self-awareness, self esteem and finally self-empowerment.

9.8

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considered from a broad perspective and bearing in mind some discrepancies mentioned, it can be concluded that the assumptions postulated in this research were affirmed.

The consistency of the findings in the various areas which were investigated in this study provides certain pointers for action. In the light of the findings indicated above, the following recommendations are put forth:

- * The social work profession in South Africa is at a very critical stage in its development. This is as a result of the rapid changes sweeping across the country. Just as every segment of the new South Africa is in the process of transformation, South African welfare agencies are no exception.

If social work practice has to compete with other professions in the global context (especially those that are entering into the arenas of counselling, group care and social development), it is highly recommended that it actively position itself towards the developmental paradigm. This means that agencies need to see themselves as part of the whole and therefore need to work towards changing policies that help to maintain the ideologies of the old South Africa.

- * Agencies have to move away from over identification with case work and focus on action oriented methods.
- * Group work as an integral part of community work needs to be encouraged. Agencies need to change their outlook or attitude towards group work as being "labour intensive" and start to

view it as an important tool towards empowerment and development.

There is need to enhance community workers' skills in group work and conversely to encourage group workers to take more active interest in the community setting.

- * If agencies have to take an active part in the eradication of poverty and to discourage dependency they need to be actively involved in organising around groups. Projects can never succeed without the development of the group processes. It is these processes that facilitate the ultimate goal achievements. According to literature studies it was indicated and confirmed that community developers make use of groups in all their endeavours in building or helping communities. It is impossible for a community worker to deal with the whole community simultaneously, hence community workers should learn to see formation of groups as part of their role, while group workers in community work/development see the groups as an extension of their roles. As a result of this, although one may consider oneself as a community worker, the use of group work skills places one in the social group work role.

- * Agencies need to look at the feasibility of employing more social workers since there is a serious concern that high case loads hamper the utilization of other direct methods of intervention.

With more social workers on the staff establishment, an equal division of labour can be utilized to have other professional social workers concentrating on group work and community work. Case workers can counteract the problem of high case loads by referring clients with similar problems to group workers. Group workers can in return facilitate community awareness and community involvement through social action groups, committees or task groups and finally self-help groups.

At the outset of this study it was indicated that the direct methods of intervention need to be utilized in a way that they complement each other e.g family and marital disputes, which constitute the largest case loads in most South African agencies, can be dealt with in group situations. This is based on the rationale that in a group situation, members through interaction identify with each other as they discover that they experience similar problems. This results in them sharing thoughts, ideas, experiences and integration of solutions.

- * Social work practitioners must be continuously exposed to in-service training to upgrade and update them on new developments in group and other related issues. This will serve to increase their awareness on the value embedded in groups. This awareness will counteract the resistance social workers have towards conducting groups. The awareness and reawakening as a result of in-service training can further

facilitate the spirit of team work for more action oriented developmental work.

The in-service training will also help to change or restructure the practitioners' attitudes towards group work and subsequently increase their insight towards the utilization of groups in service delivery.

There are two possible ways that can be utilised to offer training to welfare agencies. One alternative is for training institutions to offer certificate courses in group related issues. These courses can be extended to other occupational groups such as child care workers, community development workers, primary health care workers, lay councillors etc. They can be short courses ranging from two weeks to a full semester. A second alternative will be to offer courses through state welfare departments. Through social work departments of the training institutions forming partnerships with state welfare and provincial state departments can be encouraged to organise workshops at agency level and invite professional group workers to conduct such workshops at different intervals.

Until social work with groups is restored centrally as foundation knowledge for all social workers, institutions need to intensify group work training by teaching group methods and skills to practitioners at agencies and organisations where practice with groups is essential. Practitioners must be taught how to find

ways for conceptualizing service in group terms, how to reach out and create program innovations, and how to be comfortable in working with and through groups. Further, they must be taught skills to work with committees, boards, funding sources etc.

The end analysis of the in-service training will therefore be:-

- (a) to rekindle interest of the practitioners in the use of groups;
- (b) to connect people who have a common interest in utilizing the group modality;
- (c) to learn from practitioners about their needs related to improving their skills with groups.

* With regard to the training of social workers, it is recommended that social work students need to be exposed to cross-cultural studies to prepare them to work across race, culture, creed or religion.

Since South Africa is declared a rainbow nation, social work students need to be exposed to all sectors of the community. They need to be educated to accept diversity within universal unity. Training institutions need to declare a common body of social work knowledge and skills which is appropriate for diverse tasks in a multi-cultural and plural society.

- * Some form of agency accreditation for placement of students needs to be developed to protect the interests of students and to promote effective and appropriate exposure of students to all methods of intervention. This can be followed by mandatory periodic workshops between agency supervisors and training institutions where problems and expectations can be discussed by both parties.

- * Specialization in methods needs to be encouraged at post-graduate level in order to influence the dearth of masters' or doctoral graduates for faculty positions with group work knowledge and practice experience. This can be achieved through:-
 - (a) developing post-graduate level group work materials;
 - (b) providing intensive workshops for instructors supervising Masters' as well as Ph.D. students;
 - (c) providing resources for group work dissertations.

There is little that has been done in post-graduate research in group work. Mostly we rely on research findings from the social and behavioral sciences.

There is need to develop data to support the claim that there is lack of proper group work education and training, and to identify what difference that makes in the production of group work oriented practitioners.

A recently completed research study by Steinberg (1992) provided evidence of need for post-graduate specialization in group work. The study revealed that there were differences in the way respondents conceptualized the groups, exercised control, and viewed their role and use of self. For example, respondents with group work education expected conflict to occur as a natural consequence of group life and also viewed conflict as an opportunity for group development. Those with limited education in group work had the tendency to regard conflict as an intrusion into the group's development process.

There is also need to present the articulation of group work's uniqueness and importance, and evidence that group work education and training make a difference to a wide range of people such as students, colleagues, agency supervisors and administrators.

The researcher would like to end this research report with the following quotation from Kurland and Salmon (1993:16):

"Social group work is a very positive and optimistic way of working with people. It is truly empowering. It is truly affirming of people's strengths. In fact, the very act of forming a group is a statement of belief in people's strengths, a statement of belief that everyone has something to give to others. In today's troubled world, real group work is needed more than ever. We cannot let it disappear".

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APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE TO SOCIAL WORK EDUCATORS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Title of Study : Investigation into the utilization of Social group work as a method of intervention in Social Work

Researcher : L.I. Qalinge-Okoro - University of North West

The researcher requires information to ascertain the impact of group work training on the utilization of group work by practising social workers.

This questionnaire is sent to all universities that offer social work training in South Africa, and is strictly confined to the three primary methods of social work i.e groupwork, casework, community work etc.

The educator's cooperation and willingness to provide this study with representation and meaningful data will be highly appreciated.

1. Name of University _____

2. Address _____

3. Telephone _____

4. Is your 4th year social work program offered on a semester or yearly basis?

yearly

semester

5. At what level/s in your four year social work training program is group work theory offered? Indicate at each level, whether it is taught as a module or full course.

Yearly System	Semester System	Module	Full Course
First year	First year 1st sem		
	" " 2nd sem		
Second year	secondyear 1st sem		
	second year 2nd sem		
Third year	Third year 1st sem		
	Third year 2nd sem		
Fourth year	Fourth year 1st sem		
	Fourth year 2nd sem		

6. At what level/s in the four year social work training program is case work and community work theory offered. Whether as modules or full course (If your program is offered on a yearly system please complete block A, and Block B for semester system).

A) Yearly System

	Community Work		Case Work	
	Module	Full course	Module	Full course
First year				
Second year				
Third year				
Fourth year				

B Semester System

	Community Work		Case Work	
	Module	Full course	Module	Full course
First year				
Second year				
Third year				
Fourth year				

8. Indicate the number of formal theoretical lectures per week allocated for each method in each of the four year levels.

	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year
Case work				
Group work				
Community work				

9. Indicate the number of hours per week allocated for each method for practical field work in each of the four year levels.

	First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year
Case Work				
Group Work				
Community work				

10. Does the Department afford students an opportunity to be group members before they can be group leaders?

 Yes

 No

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- 10 a) If yes, indicate in what way and at what level/s

b) If no, indicate the possible reasons

11. How is the group work component within the social work training program adequate to equip students with knowledge and skill to comfortably handle groups on completion of the four year program.

12. Do you (as a university) experience any problems of supervision of students on block placement with regards to groupwork

Yes

No

12.1 If yes, outline such problems

13. In your opinion, what is the attitude of social work students towards group work as compared to case work and community work

14 Do you consider groupwork to be under-utilized in social work practice.

 Yes No

14.1 If yes indicate reasons why you consider groupwork to be under-utilized.

Thank you for your time!

QUESTIONNAIRE TO REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKERS
IN SOUTH AFRICA

Title : Investigation into the utilization of Social groupwork as a method of intervention in Social Work.

Researcher : L.I. Qalinge-Okoro

The researcher as a professional social worker requires data on the extent of groupwork utilization in the field of social work.

This questionnaire is sent to all practising social workers employed by welfare agencies/institutions/organisations.

The researcher is doing this study in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work.

The social worker's cooperation and willingness to provide this survey with representation and meaningful data will be highly appreciated. Please be assured that your valuable responses will be kept under strict confidence.

You need not indicate your name on the questionnaire since it is strictly anonymous.

It is requested that the respondent put a cross (x) in the relevant block, to indicate the response. .

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QUESTIONNAIRE TO PRACTISING SOCIAL WORKERS

1 Give the identifying particulars of the agency/organization/institution to which you are attached

1.1 Name of agency _____

1.2 Type of agency _____

1.3 Address (Postal) _____

1.4 Telephone No. _____

1.5 Location

Rural

Urban

Both Rural and urban

Urban settlement

1.6 How long has your agency/organisation/institution been in existence?

0 - 3 years

1

4 - 6 "

2

7 - 10 "

3

10+

4

1.7 How long have you worked as a Social Worker (Length of service).

0 - 3 years

1

4 - 6 "

2

7 - 10 "

3

10+

4

2. Work Setting

2.1 What is the area of specialization of your agency/institution/organisation. (If applicable tick more than one)

a) Family & Child Care	1
b) Physically handicapped	2
c) Blind/deaf dumb	3
d) Health Care (Specify)	4
e) Alcohol & Drug abuse	5
f) Mental health	6
g) Correctional Services	7
h) The aged	8
i) General - (no specialization)	9
j) Other specify	10

2.2 Indicate number of social workers employed by your agency

2.3 Indicate the number of clients seen/served by the AGENCY per day

0 - 20	1
21 - 40	2
41 - 60	3
60+	4

2.4 Indicate the average number of individual clients YOU PERSONALLY see per day

0 - 10	1
11 - 20	2
21+	3

2.5 Indicate number of groups YOU currently lead/run per week/month

Per week	<input type="text"/>
Per month	<input type="text"/>

2.6 Indicate number of ongoing community projects YOU are involved in

2.7 Indicate the frequency with which the following primary methods are utilized by you personally as an individual professional Social Worker.

Primary method

Frequency of use

	Regularly	Occasio nally	Never
Casework	1	2	3
Groupwork	1	2	3
Community work	1	2	3

2.8 Using a Three Point Scale place in order of preference the particular primary method of social work which interest you most to that which interest you the least (1 for most interested, 3 least interested).

Social Case Work

Social Groupwork

Community work

2.9 Using a three point scale rank the utilization of the following primary methods by your agency (1 for the method mostly utilized and 3 for the least utilized method)

a) Case work

b) Groupwork

c) Community work

2.10 If groupwork is the least utilized method indicate reasons why it is not used more extensively

2.11 Indicate the nature/type of groups (treatment/task) that your agency is currently running/or involved with.

3. Groupwork Training

3.1 Please state your own qualifications

BA SW	1
BA SW (Hon)	2
MA SW	3
PHD SW	4
Other (specify)	5

3.2 During your training as a social worker have you ever been involved in groups as a group member?

Yes	1
No	2

3.3 During your training have you ever had an opportunity of being a group leader as part of your practical training?

Yes	1
No	2

3.4 Looking back at your entire social work training, indicate which method received most emphasis and which received least emphasis with regard to both theoretical and practical training. Indicate by means of 1 2 3 next to each, with 1 being the method that received most emphasis and 3 least emphasis.

Theoretical Training

Practical Training

Casework

Groupwork

Community work

3.5 Based on your training are you confident in handling a group?

Yes

1

No

2

Uncertain

3



3.5 a) If yes indicate reasons why you consider yourself confident in handling groups

Yes No Uncertain

i) I have extensive literature/theoretical background in the group work method

1	2	3
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ii) Sufficient practical experience through handling actual groups

1	2	3
---	---	---

iii) Other reasons (specify)

3.5 b) If No indicate reasons

Yes No Uncertain

i) Lack of skill in handling a group due to in-sufficient training in group work.

1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3

ii) Lack of proper integration of theory and practice.

iii) Lack of assertiveness.

iv) Other reasons (specify)

4. Attitude Questions

Read each of the following statements carefully and indicate whether you generally A-agree or D-disagree or U-uncertain by crossing (x) in the option which mostly correspond with your response..

	A	D	U
4.1 Groupwork is the best tool for empowering communities.	1	2	3
4.2 Groupwork if effectively utilized can help counteract large case loads.	1	2	3
4.3 Even when working with large communities groupwork can always be used since social workers can not work with the whole community at the same time.	1	2	3
4.4 Groups can be used to mobilize and conscientize the larger community e.g social action groups.	1	2	3
4.5 An important value of social work with groups is that of participatory democracy and citizenship building.	1	2	3
4.6 Groups have often been a relatively marginal service in a system that favours one to one intervention.	1	2	3
4.7 Groupwork has been marginalized because of lack of assertiveness/self confidence on the part of social workers.	1	2	3
4.8 Agencies normally do not encourage working with groups.	1	2	3
4.9 Social workers feel that groups are time consuming.	1	2	3
4.10 Social workers on average lack sufficient training/skills in handling groups.	1	2	3
4.11 If social workers have to use groups more frequently, in-service training on group leadership need to be introduced.	1	2	3
4.12 Groupwork is underutilized in the social work profession.	1	2	3
4.13 Resistance to work with groups amongst social workers appears to be very high	1	2	3

6.2 In your own opinion indicate how group work can help facilitate the achievement of the aims of RDP.

7. Indicate any suggestions you would like to make concerning the utilization of groupwork.

Thank you for your time!!

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR AGENCIES IMPLEMENTING GROUPWORK AND THOSE THAT DO NOT IMPLEMENT OR PRACTICE GROUPWORK

The response to the questionnaires sent to a sample of practising social workers through out South Africa gave the researcher an indication of agencies that implement or practice groupwork as well as those that do not make use of it.

Your agency has therefore been selected to represent agencies that do/not implement groupwork as a method of intervention.

1. *Does your agency utilise groups as a method of intervention in social work practice.*

a) i. *If yes, indicate to what extend is group work utilised as compared to the other two primary methods.*

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ii. *Indicate nature of groups commonly used in your agency.*

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iii. *Indicate benefits derived from utilizing groupwork.*

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iv. *Are social workers specifically appointed to do group work or are all social workers responsible for generic social work or do they decide on group work on their own initiative/by choice.*

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b] i. *If no, give reasons why group work is not utilised in your agency.*

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ii. *Are there possibilities of conducting group work in agency, i.e. can the agency benefit by introducing group work.*

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iii. *Would your agency social workers feel comfortable conducting groups if the opportunity arises?*

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2. *What is your opinion with regard to the training of social workers in group work?*

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3. *How do you think group work can help bridge the dichotomy between the macro and micro conceptualization in social work practice.*

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4. *Do you see any correlation between group work as a method of social work and the RDP, or how can group work in your agency help facilitate growth and development in communities.*

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