

Teaching and practicing group-work for social justice: A critical reflection on power and process

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that groups and group-work practice are potential sites for working towards social justice. This demands a robust understanding and critique of *power*, reflexively applied into group-work practice. The attainment of social justice presupposes group-work practice that is emancipatory, action orientated, and imbued with individual and collective accountabilities towards understanding privilege and inequalities in power. By way of example, we illustrate our argument by critically examining group-work practice in relation to power and social justice considerations, particularly focusing on clinical, educative, and peer facilitated lived experience groups. Our aim is to teach group-work and apply group-work in our practices in a manner that is transformative, emancipatory, self-empowering and aligned with social justice agendas. Here we explore key themes and principles of group-work theory and practice, through practice reflections to illustrate the potential for groups as a vehicle for social justice praxis.

Keywords

Group-work; Groups; Social Justice; Power; Mental Health; Group-Work Education.

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Introduction

Staff and volunteers from diverse disciplines and training backgrounds have historically facilitated an array of groups across the mental health sector in inpatient, community, government and non-government settings, including group retreats and respites for carers. Although perhaps increasingly marginalised, such groups are primarily targeted at different ‘patient’ groups and families for therapeutic ends, reportedly to enhance their mental wellbeing. Due to various discursive practices that rely on the dominance of medico-scientific parlance in mental health, traditional group-work models that invoke clinical expertise tend to position the facilitator as expert, while simultaneously relegating the group participants as ‘in need of help’ and hence the locus of the problem to be addressed. Biomedical and psychiatric constructs and nomenclatures are heavily contested, even within the discipline of psychiatry (Aftab & Waterman, 2021).

Furthermore, the dynamic of privileging expert discourses may also occur in peer group spaces, particularly those under the umbrella of psycho-education. This institutionally derived power and authority risks problematising and pathologising human distress as deviant and constructing service users as sites for governmental control and risk management (Rose, 2010). Families, too, can become conduits for the medical gaze and perpetuating biomedical understandings of mental distress. The same could be said of group-work educators, who are commonly positioned as knowledge holders and students as empty vessels (Freire, 1972), a legacy of the white, Eurocentric preoccupation with reason and hierarchies of knowledge and expertise (Rose & Kalathil, 2019).

Consequently, rather than being spaces for liberation and freedom, group-work practice can readily become oppressive, and counter to the aims and ideals of furthering social justice. At the same time, Guth et al., (2019) argue that “the evolution of an agenda of social justice, specifically within group-work, has involved a long-standing history to ultimately interrupt social conditions producing barriers, disenfranchisement, and marginalisation” (p. 2). In other words, groups may be used in the pursuit of citizenship and social justice.

In this paper we take Guth et al., (2019) as a point of orientation by reflecting on the challenges and potentials for group-work practice. As authors, we wondered about the Mahboub & Hendrick & Hodgson & Gibson: Teaching and practicing group-work for social justice: A critical reflection on power and process

implications of group-work from service user perspectives, and we began by asking critical questions about the ways that group-work may function to serve as instruments of social regulation, rather than emancipation. We were curious about the potential for group-work practitioners to critically examine their power and positionality within their practice. In coming together as authors, we share a range of different contexts that we each bring to this paper—group-work educator/practitioner, lived experience educator and group-work practitioner, and group-work service user. From these varied backgrounds and experiences, we began to notice how the literature seemed to lack a contemporary and critical perspective on group-work. We held shared concerns and questions over the lack of a social justice and emancipatory lens in group-work, and worried about how it was becoming narrowly focused on the pursuit of individual repair. We also observed how group-work education seems to have become more marginal in the curriculum of social workers and occupational therapists, lacking a critical engagement with power and lived experience expertise. Accordingly, we discuss and conceptualise the use of power and process in ways that further a social justice agenda through disruptive practices. The authors draw on their diverse experiences from social work, occupational therapy, critical psychology and personal lived experience of delivering and receiving a range of group work experiences. We present an interdisciplinary reflection and a critical theoretical analysis on group-work theory and practice for social justice. We begin by defining what we mean by social justice and power.

Social Justice and Groups

Social justice is an ethical principle but also denotes individual and collective attempts to bring about justice along cultural, political, sexual, gendered, social, ecological or economic lines. Practices towards social justice involve emancipatory responses to inequities and forms of oppression (McLaren & Leonard, 1993). Social justice means to name, identify, and address problems such as discrimination and inequality, by appealing to principles of inclusion, anti-discrimination, and equality. This requires advocacy, empowerment, participation and fairness in distribution (Watts & Hodgson, 2019) and an action orientation that may include counter-cultural or disruptive practices. Therefore, social justice can be seen as a principle and practice.

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Social justice is found in human narratives of emancipation where people locate their agency in social and political change. Theoretically, social justice concerns: fairness and equality in social and economic distribution; the attainment of people's rights, autonomy, dignity and recognition; processes that facilitate participation and democratic decision-making; and actions to critique and transform systems and structures of injustice (Watts & Hodgson, 2019). This may also include critical theory informed approaches to examine dominant ideas and relations of oppression (Agger, 2006). For example, the idea that mental distress is fundamentally a bio-medical phenomena addressed by medication and therapeutic group-work that must be facilitated by 'treating experts', erases the intersectional and structural antecedents of distress. Although, many advocates for social justice may seek to amplify the voices of those from the most marginalised groups and communities— like Ruth Patrick we ask: 'for whose benefit' (2017) are services that target these groups created? Critical theory seeks to call into question and disrupt relations of oppression and domination, to arrive at a more comprehensive account of distress and what should be done.

The philosophical origins of social justice are centred on a growing consciousness of the way that institutions are basically repositories for countless daily practices that create the conditions for injustice. At the same time, institutions hold the potential to be transformed into agents for enabling social justice (Jackson, 2005), holding possibilities for groups to find ways to 'use' power to serve needs as people themselves identify them. Furthermore, individuals, groups and communities can draw on knowledge and collective wisdom for self-liberation and self-determination.

It is this agentic notion of social justice that has long been articulated as a central value and guiding ideal in many activist movements and the helping professions such as social work (Watts & Hodgson, 2019). Our view is that social justice should be conceptualised as a form of praxis, where "theory and practice always work together and unite in the dialectical and political act of knowing" (McLaren & Leonard, 1993, p. 54). Social justice praxis is reflexive in that it demands understanding privileged positionings and the different kinds of knowledge and methods that invariably guide practice. Social justice praxis is relational and collective, in that it "requires enormous, collaborative, and resourced social responses from all members

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of society, reflecting our ‘relational responsibilities’” (McNamee & Gergen, 1999 cited in Reynolds, 2013, p. 60). It is in our collectivity, as said by Lilla Watson, that our liberation is bound together (cited in, Sundbery & Latham, 2018, p. 72).

Power and Groups

Social justice practice requires a particular interest in power, particularly because power shapes the conditions of injustice, but can also be seen as a force for social change (Finn & Jacobson, 2003). Social injustices are then the result of historical and structural factors, and therefore attaining social justice requires collective action and harnessing and using power responsibly (Kam, 2014). For example, the injustices experienced by First Nations people are the consequences of past and ongoing colonisation. Colonisation has a long history, but the patterns of racism, discrimination and disadvantage are sewn deep into social and political systems and institutions. Transforming these structures and facilitating healing and recognition requires sustained collective work, and attention to power (Green & Baldry, 2008).

In the group-work literature, power is associated with (dis)empowerment, and movements for progressive social change (Naicker et al., 2016). Movements for social change have historically involved a variety of group models, each of which has had to grapple with internal conflicts and struggles over power, including dealing with the sexist, classist and racist proclivities that arise in human group interactions—including those that profess allegiance to progressive social justice agendas (Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1988). There are, therefore, potentials and pitfalls to examine. For example, Drumm (2006) argues that “social group work principles, theory and skill bases formulate a powerful potion for spelling and dispelling the forces that obstruct growth and freedom for the people we work with, our agencies and ourselves” (p. 19). This is the promise of the power of group-work. At the same time, groups can be containers for “mistrust, competition, power struggles, personal or theoretical disagreements, intimacy overload, envy among co-leaders, and incompetence” (Atieno Okech, 2008, p. 237).

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Critical Theoretical Analysis of Groups and Group-Work

Reflective practice is proffered as one way to help keep a critical eye on the use of power in group interactions (Atieno Okech, 2008). Others have called attention to the way that social inequalities and injustices are ever present in group and community relationships, proposing a people-centred and open dialogical approach to engaging with power differentials (Kelly & Westoby, 2018). Empowerment is also argued as a principle for addressing stigma, marginalisation and discrimination that impact people's participation in groups (Naicker et al., 2016). At the same time, empowerment is contested for its limited engagement with more critical understandings of power, and interpersonal abuses of empowerment 'over' others. In practice, this means critical engagement with experiences of disempowerment, 'power over', the use of space, agenda setting, decision-making and ethics associated with group purpose, intentionality and relation to self and to others with power (Naicker et al., 2016). In the context of the experience of trauma, group modalities and practices that entail critical engagement and sensitivity with power dynamics are crucial.

These ethical principles of critical reflection intersect with politicised, hitherto silenced lived experience understandings, where lived experience here means to purposefully transform and critique power that has resulted from structural and intersecting forms of discrimination. It is often the grass roots collective rallying, or individual angry outcry and outrage that comes from trying to fight for epistemic (hermeneutical) justice (Fricker, 2007); to find the words to describe how power makes its presence felt and speaking truth to power.

In our discussions together, we thought about our diverse experiences in group-work and decided to construct three reflection pieces that depict this diversity. The reflections below represent group-work from a clinical perspective, a service user/practitioner perspective, and a group-work educator perspective. These different reflections were chosen to demonstrate different angles and perspectives of the use of power, social justice potential, and our critiques of group-work contexts and process. The reflections offered us a way to compare and contrast such varied methods, values and experiences in group-work, so as to clearly highlight the limitations and transformative possibilities for emancipatory social justice practice. We discussed and worked on these author reflections using several reflective cycles, Mahboub & Hendrick & Hodgson & Gibson: Teaching and practicing group-work for social justice: A critical reflection on power and process

being mindful ourselves to embody good group-work processes in our own group discussions as authors together—establishing process, sharing power, listening deeply, creating safety, working relationally and collaboratively reflecting on our own group processes. The value of this kind of reflective writing has helped us articulate and examine our own experiences for the purpose of learning. This this kind of inquiry adds a layer of depth and understanding to group-work practices, and the ethical implications of the work that commonly go unexamined.

Reflection 1: Lived Experience and Groups

Social justice praxis then aims to name and make visible the impact of historical, social, cultural and economic discursive networks that conspire together to maintain the status quo and resulting oppressions. Authors LM and JG illustrate this point by describing how their interest and involvement in group-work practice and education for socially just outcomes is derived from their lived experiences:

LM: My interest in group-work, comes from my own lived experience of finding healing and connection within a range of groups over many years, the majority of which were offered outside of clinical settings. In the non-clinical therapeutic groups, some were psychodynamic and cathartic in nature, where skilled facilitators both held space for and shared their own raw emotion, which enabled us all to do deep anger, shame and re-parenting work, other groups were spiritual healing groups or discussion and learning groups where we reflected together on our recovery journeys as a collective, all healing from trauma and abuse. I have also been a participant in groups within clinical settings as a patient of mental health services, many of which were helpful. As a result of my diverse experiences, I am interested in power (implicit and explicit), control and the construction of expertise. Also, as a result of these experiences, I have been drawn to, and encountered many opportunities to assist, co-facilitate and facilitate groups. These eclectic experiences afforded me the opportunity to observe both good and not so good group process. I am particularly interested in creating robust group process and in group member perspectives.

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Specifically, I am curious about how to co-create a group dynamic where people feel safe enough to speak up and speak their truth and raise concerns and challenges to facilitators as they arise. I am mindful that no matter how much as a facilitator I want to create this kind of safe space, there are variables that are at play which can impede this. It is therefore up to me to continually reflect on my practice and look for opportunities to continually name and cede power.

JG: I became a mental health professional because I needed mental health support growing up. As a 21-year-old I sat in group therapy and felt like something was finally helping to turn my life around. I wondered about the facilitators: Who were they that got to do this kind of raw and powerful work with people? One was a psychologist, and one was an occupational therapist. The occupational therapist was the more charismatic group facilitator of the two, so knowing nothing about either profession I decided I would become an occupational therapist and facilitate groups like that myself.... Fast-forward a number of years and I find myself as a graduate OT on an acute mental health unit. I'm excited to start working. The therapy team sit down each week and plan the group program for the unit. I ask how the groups on offer have been chosen and am told that this is the rotation of groups that have been in use for a long time. We run daily groups on the unit and therapy intensives where people come in from home. The psychiatrists decide who goes to what group or program. Sometimes it hasn't even been discussed with the person, but it's in the file so they are expected to attend. They can do creative activities or coping skills. Too bad if neither of these meets their needs. An older man says it feels infantilising to do crafts in "creative activities". He'll need to take it up with his doctor because that's the allocation for him. Many people have had so many stays and of such duration that they have done all the group offerings many times. They are fed up. "Repetition can always help!" we chorus. "This is how you show you are getting better!" Some days I will have 17 people in a group because everyone has to be somewhere... it's not therapeutic. At least, people tell me, they can still smoke here.

The testimonies of LM and JG aptly demonstrate the diverse theoretical and practical orientations of group-work and the tensions between them. As illustrated, groups can be spaces for emancipation and liberation, just as they can be clinical prescriptions concerned with compliance, social order and perceptions of what supports ‘wellbeing recovery’ or demonstrates ‘getting better’. This is reflective of the field of mental health, which is occupied by biomedical, ‘containment’, individualistic and interventionist understandings of mental distress and somewhat silent on ideas such as connection, belonging, social determinants and structural barriers to ‘wellbeing recovery’ that are embedded within activist understandings.

Mental Health Contexts for Group-Work Theory and Practice

A more critical perspective to group-work can be recovered by turning to the way group-work has been developed as a tool for activism. The consumer activist movement followed a similar trajectory to that of disability rights activism—both of which surged in momentum during the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. These rights-based movements traversed women’s rights, gay rights, black rights, disability and mad rights, and activists fought against inequality and social injustice in their various corners but also came together often in solidarity due to intersecting injustices (Crenshaw, 2017). These movements saw a resurgence in the call for civil rights and civil liberties and the fight to uphold social justice and human rights became quite widespread. From the testimonies above, we can observe that groups are parked squarely in this context, both as potentials for healing, change and connection, as well as spaces for the perpetuation of professional power and expertise.

Reflection 2: Group Facilitation

The hearing voices approach offers a further illustration of measures to fight for people’s civil liberties, social justice and human rights by grappling with the tensions between, for instance, biomedical, psychological, trauma, and political and socio-economic understandings of hearing voices. Hearing voices group facilitators provide group members with information and resources about diverse frameworks of understanding madness or explanatory frameworks (many of which share in the contestation about the construct of “mental illness”),

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and knowledge of the research that there is contestation of the idea that voices are meaningless imaginary ‘hallucinations’ associated with a diagnosis of schizophrenia (Corstens & Longden, 2013). Rather, voices are seen as meaningful and meaning-filled ‘data’ that can be made sense of (Longden, Corstens, Escher, & Romme, 2012). Rather than providing a narrow, reductionist explanatory framework for understanding one’s voices or visions experiences, the hearing voices approach invites critical questioning along trauma informed lines inviting people to explore, not what’s wrong with them, but what’s happened to them (Dallos & Johnstone, 2014). Questions such as those in a structured interview developed by experts by experience and experts by profession surface discussion that explores psychological and emotional distress and the impact of trauma and adverse childhood (and adult) experiences (Clements, Coniglio, & Mackenzie, 2020). Hearing voices groups also invite group members to reflect on the structural and intersecting barriers for their ‘recovery’, expanding their potential to make sense of their experience their own way. This affords people the opportunity to name oppressive discourses such as ‘schizophrenia’ which Deegan (Deegan, 2011, online) argues is “not a clinical diagnosis but a condemnation of your humanity” and instead argues that one has the right to name one’s own experience (e.g., psychospiritual crisis, voices of the ancestors etc.).

It is the aim of hearing voices groups that through connection and shared experiences as peers, people can examine the shackles of dominant institutional notions of ‘mental illness’ and choose their own explanatory framework to name their experience. The following is a vignette based on LM’s experience of facilitating a hearing voices group session, demonstrating how a group can be the site for such exploration, including exploration of alternative understandings and responses to distress while moving towards emancipatory social justice and citizenship.

LM is a hearing voices (HV) group facilitator, co-facilitating with Z (a volunteer) when a group member mentions that they had been “feeling suicidal”. Z jumps in, advising the person they had “better stop speaking like that”, and “to consult their doctor as soon as possible”. LM shared that she noticed the quick response and is wondering if, as a group, they might pause and catch the quick transaction that

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occurred.

LM commented that talk of suicide can feel uncomfortable and pondered if this might be because so many of us have been taught that talking about 'wanting to die' is taboo in our society, and that this is the domain of professionals. Moreover, that a kind thing to do is to refer people talking about this on to those professionals, and so it is not surprising to find ourselves doing so as a demonstration of our act of caring. LM also noted that for many of us, this then leaves us without a place to discuss such intense feelings and she wondered if this might have just occurred here. Z agreed and said that they had felt uncomfortable and worried too, and that speaking to a doctor or clinician is indeed the only thing they had been taught as a response.

LM invited the group to reflect on the ideas within the hearing voices approach group principles. This led to discussion on how the principles encouraged group members to be accepting of diverse experiences and welcome discussion on them. The group reflected that there were few spaces where one could talk freely like this and not be pathologised, medicated or hospitalised. The group also pondered Intentional Peer Support (IPS) founder Shery Mead's position that "suicidal is not a feeling it's an action but that we've gotten kind of used to talking about the most painful difficult feelings in the language of suicide and the result of that has been a direct link with assessment and evaluation and even we as peers have gotten used to working in that way especially around crisis" (Morgan, 2014).

They discussed this, and how easy it is, even as peers, to adopt clinical ways, and how few places there were to learn other ways of responding to people who are feeling deeply. Someone mentioned Emotional CPR and Alternatives to Suicide groups and the conversation really blossomed at that point.

Following this discussion, LM invited anyone who had also experienced such intense feelings that lead to one thinking about wanting to die to share. Different members talked about the overwhelming nature of such feelings, with many sharing what they were connected to in their own lives in terms of experiences of poverty, racism, homophobia, unemployment, feeling constantly surveilled and trapped in a revolving

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door medical system, and feelings of alienation and hopelessness that arise from this and how this can feed our voices. They talked about the key question of the HV approach which is 'are we actually experiencing the 'symptoms' of schizophrenia or the impact of distressing voices and the antecedent events that led to them?' and can we name this for ourselves? Similarly, the group normalised the impact and intensity of such major life struggles and got passionate about the importance of freedom and the kind of social justice that gives rise to full access to sufficient resources as full citizens to live a safe and fulfilling life.

Arguably, service users may or may not have been introduced to emancipatory ideas in group-work settings and may inadvertently be subsumed by the agendas of the facilitator and the organisational and discursive contexts and purposes that pre-structure their work (for example, facilitators may implicitly praise or reward compliant behaviour if it suits their purpose). There may not be spaces for service users to contest the group-work norms and practices that have been decided in advance for them. However, given the opportunity services users and participants may lean into invitations to share power, reflect, co-design processes, and develop a more emancipatory agenda to the group-work purpose. In the reflection above, we argue that attention to matters of power and process can make a big difference to the transformative possibilities of group-work for delivering more just processes and outcomes.

Teaching and Practicing Group-Work for Social Justice

It is not uncommon for academics from health science disciplines and various health and human service professionals to teach, practice, and experience group facilitation. Group-work theory and practice is a required aspect of professional training for many professions and is receiving “increasing attention... becoming an intervention of choice, because of... demonstrated effectiveness, cost efficiency, and ease of use” (Gitterman & Knight, 2016, p. 103). At the same time, group work education in tertiary settings is seen to be declining (Tyminski & Concannon, 2012).

Occupational therapy, for instance, has a moral foundation that incorporates a justice focus (Frank, 2012) and within occupational therapy's Scope of Practice Framework, the attitudes, Mahboub & Hendrick & Hodgson & Gibson: Teaching and practicing group-work for social justice: A critical reflection on power and process

skills and knowledge to work in groups (Occupational Therapy Australia, 2017) in a way that furthers social justice is required. However, there is concern that in attempting to legitimise itself in the medical establishment, the profession may have turned towards a more individualistic and biomedical focus (Hocking & Townsend, 2015) that decentres such values. Similar arguments have been made about social work, which has been criticised for reinforcing a ‘two tier society’ with historically a curricula that focusses on a “study of ‘them’, as distinct from ‘us’” (Jamrozik, 2005, p. 225). Social work, like occupational therapy, has been criticised for lacking active engagement with social justice concerns in its endeavour to professionalise (Mullaly, 2007; Townsend & Marval, 2013) and both professions have been known to subscribe to oppressive ideologies (Abberley, 1995; Walter, Taylor, & Habibis, 2013).

Some authors call for a revitalisation of group-work education, so that the powerful nature of groups working for social justice is not lost to the idea that group-work is a ‘soft skill’, which is in “danger of being absorbed into generalist practice” (Drumm, 2006, p. 17). This is in line with a growing momentum around social justice concerns in occupational therapy education, with programs expected to produce graduates with a “strong sense of social justice” (WFOT, 2016, p. 12) who address “issues of occupational justice in practice” and recognise and manage “any inherent power imbalance in relationships with clients” (Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, 2018, p. 6).

Reflection 3: Teaching Group-Work Methods and Skills

Emphasis on concepts of social justice, power, and practice skills in carefully managing group processes, including reflexivity, self-awareness, critical reflection and meaningful engagement with lived experience voices is vital in group work. This focus goes beyond conceptual understandings to provide experiential learning experiences where students can feel, model and practice emancipatory group-work skills. Bruce Tuckman’s (1965) well-known five stages of group-work, outline some pedagogical processes that assist students to think critically about group-work, power and the potential for group-work as actions towards social justice. While a useful model, Tuckman’s theory is dated and critiqued for its limited

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applicability in modern-day practice, for instance in relation to online group-work practice (Bonebright, 2010). We also wonder about power and how it is held, played out or felt during the so-called 'storming' stage of Tuckman's model.

In AH's unit, students are introduced to Tuckman's five stages of group-work: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning over the course of four weeks in their third year of their Bachelor of Social Work studies. The unit aims for praxis, in that alongside learning about the theory of Tuckman's stages students experience working in small groups to develop a psychosocial educational group. Facilitation is central, with each group member practicing their facilitation skills to include all voices, balance power, guide rather than direct, and attend to the unique dynamics for their group. The power one holds as facilitator is explored and experienced.

The various ways people 'show up' in groups is further explored with students as we role play Tuckman's group stages. Students are encouraged to practice roles different to those they commonly identify, meanwhile learning from their peers the many and diverse task and process roles in group-work. We focus on positions of power and where power is felt (and importantly when it is not) in groups, and while an incomplete analysis of power, this focus alerts students to the various forms of power exerted in and through groups. For example, gender imbalances commonly mimic that which is apparent in society. In our typically female dominated course, often but not always, the few male students stand out. Often, yet not always, male students take charge in stereotypical and predetermined (even expected) ways within workshops, by speaking first, dominating conversations, first to answer questions or demonstrate a task. Within the smaller student groups, often but not always, male students are frequently observed directing other (usually female) group members in tasks and processes and speak for the group on its behalf (mimicking the patriarchal adage 'for their own good').

A different approach to group work that aims to model the power in and of groups is one that facilitates the sharing of knowledges, skills and values already existing in the
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classroom – students are not empty vessels to be filled (Freire, 1972). Typically, students expect learning to come only from the teacher (in a didactic way), usually positioned at the front of the class assuming an ‘expert’ role. When group activities illuminate the many skills, knowledges, and values existent, students learn of their own resources, talents, and skills, those of others, and how, collectively, there is power in working with these group resources to facilitate change as the group itself wishes to see change.

We can see here that in the educational setting it is possible to move beyond mainstream notions of group-work and unsettle traditional relationships and expertise between student and educator, in order to model and teach a more process driven understanding of group-work practice, tied to a social justice ethic. We argue that students can connect group-work practice to transformative purposes, learning from a more experiential educational experience. In these instances, students can come to have a more embodied understanding that groups hold power, knowledge and expertise within them. Normative and stereotypical prejudices and taken for granted assumptions can be deconstructed through critical pedagogies, which help model and prepare students for critical practice.

Conclusion

Given the abuses of power that can occur within group-work settings, we argue that every effort needs to be made to upskill facilitators to enable them to be able to critically examine not only their process and practice but also their assumptions related to normal human emotions and their putative pathology. Our insights suggest that critical reflection on the purpose, intent, method and processes used to enact group work (as a matter of routine work), would add value to the way groups are aligned and intentionally linked with social justice values. Furthermore, we conclude that there can be value in utilising lived experience educators, service users and academics together as co-reflectors and provocateurs, to name and challenge various oppressive practices that might occur within groups. This can go a long way towards de-centering and unseating the ways that power hierarchies can become entrenched in practice. One practical way to do this is to create the conditions of safety to elicit frank and fearless feedback from participants about their experiences in groups and

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examine the extent to which the work of the group is helping or hindering one's freedoms and potentials for citizen power and social justice. Furthermore, a serious commitment to changing one's practice in light of honest feedback will also help here. Contemporary group-work teaching practice suggests that reflexivity to lean into and hear complaint and deeply listen, with attention to power differentials, self-awareness and process awareness are key to the practice of socially just group-work. We contend that re-centering group-work in health professional education with an explicit social justice orientation can make important contributions to further social justice causes.

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