

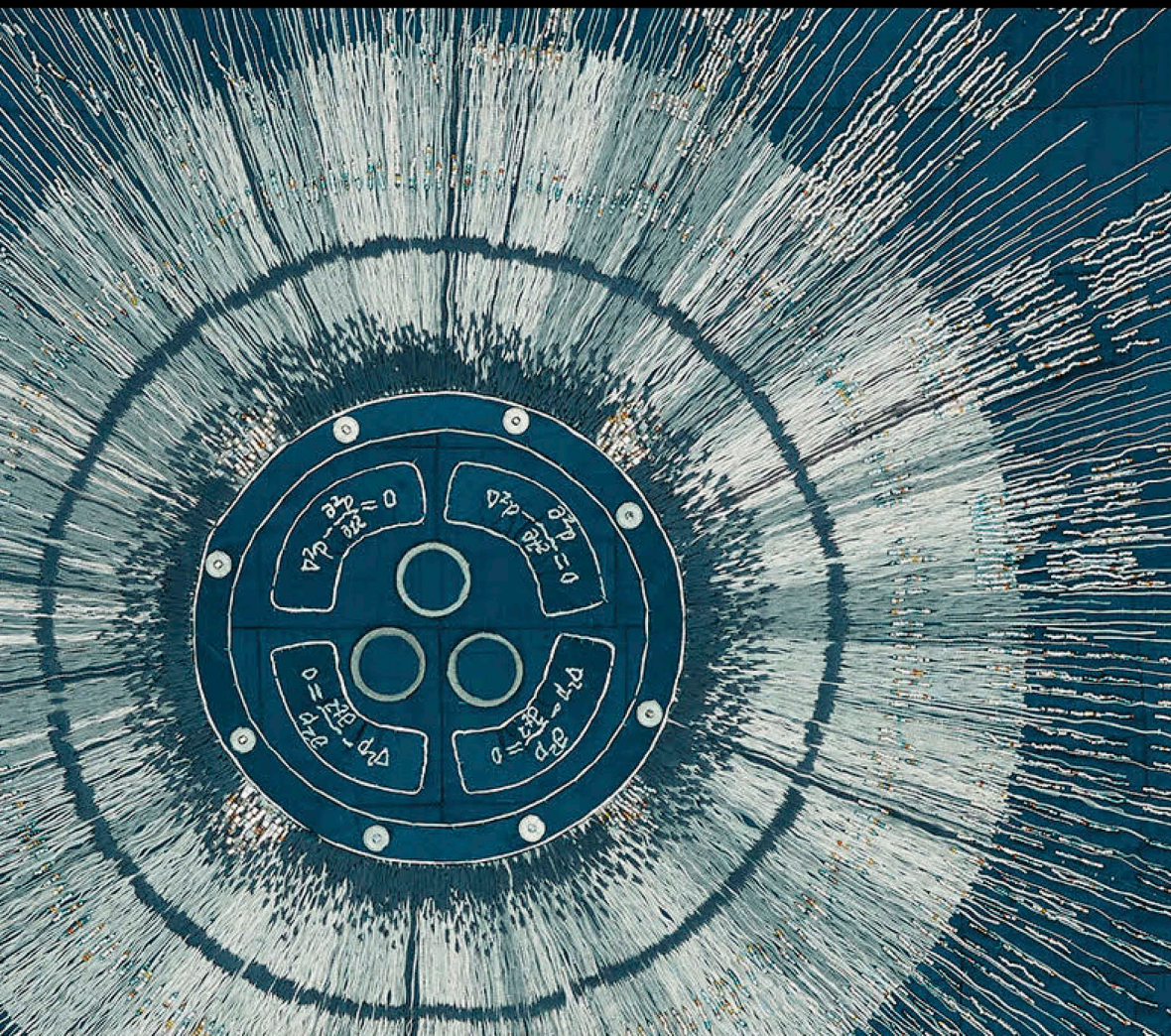
INNOVATIONS IN  
TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS:  
THEORY AND PRACTICE

ROUTLEDGE

# Groups in Transactional Analysis, Object Relations, and Family Systems

Studying Ourselves in Collective Life

N. Michel Landaiche, III



“Michel Landaiche has done us all a great service in bringing together his excellent writing on living and learning through groups. For those not familiar with his work, Landaiche brings his understated style to exploring his longstanding experience of working with groups. Opening with a cautionary hesitation about being in group processes, Landaiche expertly navigates the complexity of group life that, in its unfolding, demonstrates that neither he, nor us as readers, can be anything other than immersed in the business of being together. Transactional analysis had its early history rooted in group work, which whilst innovative in its time, has at times, been overlooked as the central arena in which our practice and training takes place. In this much needed title, Landaiche resets the dial, reminding us of the enduring complexity and promise of what it is to be with others.”

**Giles Barrow**, MA, MEd, PGCE, TSTA-Education, author and co-editor of *Educational Transactional Analysis*

“Perhaps the best treatise on the nature of collective life that I have ever read. Landaiche brilliantly integrates object relations and other psychoanalytic theories of the mind with transactional analysis, family systems theory and the author’s own unique perspectives honed over the course of a lifetime in and out of the treatment room. Indeed, it is the interweaving of personal and theoretical that makes this work unique and compelling, providing the reader with both an overview and deeply sophisticated understanding of the complex nature of groups. This book will be of great value to anyone with an interest in how we learn, lead and function in groups—psychotherapy, classroom, societal and the gamut.”

**Steven Kuchuck**, DSW, president of IARPP, the International Association for Relational Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy; editor of the Gradiva Award-winning *Clinical Implications of the Psychoanalyst’s Life Experience: When the Personal Becomes Professional*

“Michel Landaiche draws up the work of the ‘three B’s’—Berne, Bion, and Bowen—to offer an understanding of group cultures, group process, and the experience of learning in groups. Written in a voice both clear and humble, this book addresses the somatic, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of group life and work. While the content is rich and stimulating, I found the ways in which Landaiche involves himself deeply and honestly into his own learning in and about groups, an exceptional demonstration of compassion and respect for

the other. I hope this book will be translated into French, so that I will be able to recommend it to my students and clients.”

**Isabelle Crespelle**, psychologist; psychotherapist;  
teaching and supervising Transactional Analyst-Psychotherapy;  
co-founder of the French School of TA;  
and co-founder and former VP of the French Federation  
for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy

“This is a timely compilation of thought and practice about groups and social systems. The author brings his wealth of experience and reflection on the many aspects of conscious and unconscious group process. A must-read for organizational consultants and for any professional who works with the notion that the direction for organizational transformation is already existing in the client organization, only covered by unconscious inhibitions.”

**Servaas van Beekum**, drs, TSTA-Organizations;  
winner of the 2015 Eric Berne Memorial Award

# GROUPS IN TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS, OBJECT RELATIONS, AND FAMILY SYSTEMS

Groups are arguably an essential and unavoidable part of our human lives—whether we are a part of families, work teams, therapy groups, organizational systems, social clubs, or larger communities. In *Groups in Transactional Analysis, Object Relations, and Family Systems: Studying Ourselves in Collective Life*, N. Michel Landaiche, III addresses the intense feelings and unexamined beliefs that exist in relation to groups, and explores how to enhance learning, development, and growth within them.

Landaiche's multidisciplinary perspective is grounded in the traditions of Eric Berne's transactional analysis, Wilfred Bion's group-as-a-whole model, and Murray Bowen's family systems theory. The book presents a practice of studying ourselves in collective life that utilizes a naturalistic method of observation, analysis of experiential data, and hypothesis formation, all of which are subject to further revision as we gather more data from our lived experiences. Drawing from his extensive professional experience of group work in a range of contexts, Landaiche deftly explores topics including group culture, social pain, learning, and language, and presents key principles which enhance and facilitate learning in groups.

With a style that is both deeply personal and theoretically grounded in a diverse range of studies, *Groups in Transactional Analysis, Object Relations, and Family Systems* presents a contemporary assessment of how we operate collectively, and how modern life has changed our outlook. It will be essential reading for transactional analysts in practice and in training, as well as other professionals working with groups. It will also be of value to academics and students of psychology, psychotherapy, and group dynamics, and anyone seeking to understand their role within a group.

**N. Michel Landaiche, III, Ph.D.**, has practiced for 30 years as a psychotherapist and group facilitator. He also provides training and supervision for counselors, therapists, and organizational consultants in his hometown, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, and in Europe.

INNOVATIONS IN TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS:  
THEORY AND PRACTICE

Series Editor: William F. Cornell

This book series is founded on the principle of the importance of open discussion, debate, critique, experimentation, and the integration of other models in fostering innovation in all the arenas of transactional analytic theory and practice: psychotherapy, counseling, education, organizational development, health care, and coaching. It will be a home for the work of established authors and new voices.

<https://www.routledge.com/Innovations-in-Transactional-Analysis-Theory-and-Practice/book-series/INNTA>

*Titles in the series:*

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF SCHIZOPHRENIA  
The Naked Self  
*Zefiro Mellacqua*

GROUPS IN TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS, OBJECT  
RELATIONS, AND FAMILY SYSTEMS  
Studying Ourselves In Collective Life  
*N. Michel Landaiche, III*

CONTEXTUAL TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS  
The Inseparability Of Self And World  
*James M. Sedgwick*

GROUPS IN  
TRANSACTIONAL  
ANALYSIS, OBJECT  
RELATIONS, AND  
FAMILY SYSTEMS

Studying Ourselves in Collective Life

*N. Michel Landaiche, III*

First published 2021  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
and by Routledge  
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2021 N. Michel Landaiche, III

The right of N. Michel Landaiche, III to be identified as author of this work  
has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the  
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or  
utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now  
known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in  
any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing  
from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or  
registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation  
without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-367-36920-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-36921-7 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-0-429-35191-4 (ebk)

Typeset in Times  
by Swales & Willis, Exeter, Devon, UK

# CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	viii
<i>Permissions</i>	x
Introduction	1
1 Engaged research	9
2 The shared bodymind	23
3 Learning and hating in groups	38
4 Social pain dynamics in human relations	55
5 Looking for trouble in professional development groups	69
6 Maturing as a community effort	88
7 Groups that learn and groups that don't	94
8 The learning community	113
9 Principles and practices of group work	123
10 Closing reflections	143
<i>References</i>	150
<i>Index</i>	164

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have so many friends, family, colleagues, and mentors to thank for my maturing, my coming to understand the human condition, and my stumbling with determination toward a meaningful life, in particular my mother, Carol Ann Comstock Landaiche, and my father, Nemour Michel Landaiche, Jr.

In the context of this book, I especially want to acknowledge and express gratitude to my first formal group teachers and mentors, Nick Hanna and Vicky Lahey, both of whom brought their group sensitivities, enthusiasms, and skills to my early learning while I was in graduate school at Duquesne University pursuing my master's in counseling with an emphasis on group work.

As a subsequent step along this path, I was so very appreciative of the chance to learn the Tavistock group-as-a-whole method through the steady and powerful presence of Frances Bonds-White, who facilitated an experiential study group of which I was a member for several years in Pittsburgh. Her manner of being in a group still accompanies me through my more difficult encounters, offering me a way through to some emerging insight.

My understanding of group, family, organizational, and social processes was also greatly enriched by my encounter and subsequent long years of learning with Jim Smith, who introduced me to Bowen's family systems theory and the human science of phenomenology. As one of six cofounders of the Western Pennsylvania Family Center, Jim worked closely with and learned from principal cofounder Paulina McCullough. He also played an integral role in that organization's ongoing efforts to teach and continually learn Bowen theory, the framework of which provides the foundation for my theorizing and practice today.

Learning object relations theory was significantly mediated for me through my regular encounters, over a number of years, with Charelle Samuels, a senior psychotherapist and supervising consultant in my professional community. She offered a weekly reading group for many years along with her more embodied approach to psychodynamic theories,

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

a unique perspective that integrated well for me with the group-as-a-whole methodology and the theory of natural family systems.

My subsequent thinking about social pain was greatly influenced by the work and writings of Herb Thomas, a psychoanalyst who also practiced in the Pennsylvania prison system. His views on what he called “the shame response to rejection” helped me identify, understand, and begin to work more productively with the often explosive reactivity that can occur in families, groups, and other collectives when the cycles of rejecting and counter-rejecting escalate past the point where any of us are able to think and stop the harm we are inflicting and receiving.

Finally, I have been indebted to the international transactional analysis community, with its long and solid tradition of exploring group and organizational processes as well as its attention to human learning. I have been especially influenced in my understanding of human development by the approaches and writings of Giles Barrow and Trudi Newton and by my opportunity to co-facilitate experiential learning groups over the past 15 years with William Cornell. His encouragement to me to write has also played an invaluable part in the life of this book, as has Jo Stuthridge’s editorial guidance. It has also been a privilege to work closely with the ten dedicated members of the Romanian TA community: Traian Bossenmayer, Marina Brunke, Ioana Cupsa, Dana Anca David, Diana Deaconu, Irina Filipache, Radu Gheorghe, Karina Heiligers, Ioana Maria Pirvu, and Georgiana Rosculet. All of them have been part of my “Studying Ourselves in Collective Life” group, which has met annually in Bucharest since 2015. Finally, I am deeply grateful to Robin Fryer—the longtime managing editor of the *Transactional Analysis Journal*—who has served as a mentor for my professional writing. She has offered me a structure governed less by strict rules and more by the discipline and emerging recognition of the feel for clarity, which has also left me with sufficient space for passionate inquiry into the nature of my professional calling.

# PERMISSIONS

The following articles were originally published in the *Transactional Analysis Journal*,

© International Transactional Analysis Association, Inc.

Chapter 1 first appeared as “Engaged Research: Encountering a Transactional Analysis Training Group Through Bion’s Concept of Containing,” *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 35, 2005, 147–156.

Chapter 2 first appeared as part of “Skepticism and Compassion in Human Relations Work,” *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 37, 2007, 17–31.

Chapter 3 first appeared as “Learning and Hating in Groups,” *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 42, 2012, 186–198.

Chapter 4 first appeared as “Understanding Social Pain Dynamics in Human Relations,” *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 39, 2009, 229–238.

Chapter 5 first appeared as “Looking for Trouble in Groups Developing the Professional’s Capacity,” *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 43, 2013, 296–310.

Chapter 6 first appeared as “Maturing as a Community Effort: A Discussion of Dalal’s and Samuels’s Perspectives on Groups and Individuals,” *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 46, 2016, 116–120.

# INTRODUCTION

Most of us, like it or not, are significantly involved with human groups of various kinds: families, organizations, communities, nations, and other human collectives. For better and for worse, our lives are socially entangled, whether we are designated as our groups' leaders or members.

To this day—and for all the years and effort I have put into studying groups and figuring out how to work with them—part of me still wants nothing to do with them. Part of me still believes that, one day, I can finally break free of collective life, that I can just get away from all these other annoying, sometimes frightening people!

Yet I have also observed, over and again, that every time I indulge these fantasies, every time I try to eliminate my part in community—in family, in organizations—I kill a part of myself. I actually only eliminate my chances of fulfillment, for which I need this fact and facet of my human life, rough as that fact can be, at times, to stomach.

Now, as I enter what may be, in all probability and with good fortune, the last 20 years of my life, I want to bring my group work to some greater integration, to some better understanding of my evolving outlook. I want to gather, revisit, and reflect on the meanings of this work largely to discover how it might help me in these final years to achieve what still matters greatly to me in terms of my own maturing; the welfare of my children, nieces, and nephews; and the growth of those who ask me to work with them to achieve their own maturational aspirations. I also want to collect these efforts for the benefit of my many colleagues and other fellow humans who are likewise involved in figuring out how to collaborate for the benefit of our collectives and the individuals who comprise them.

What can we learn together that might reduce the harm and suffering we seem unable to avoid entirely? Whatever our specific roles—as leaders or as members—how might we each want to show up differently, more productively, and with greater satisfaction within this key dimension of our lives?

I invite you to join me in this effort, as I felt welcomed by so many who were working on this for long years before me. In consequence of that

transgenerational process, I stand in considerable gratitude for the benefits that have flowed my way. I look forward to learning what good may also flow toward, through, and from you, my readers.

### **Our personal histories with groups**

What are the many ways we have each been affected by our lives within our various groups? How might we carry that history into our current lives, perhaps with little awareness?

For myself, although my formal interest in this topic began just over 30 years ago—when I went to graduate school to study group therapy, human dynamics, organizational processes, and family systems—it would be more accurate to say that groups have been massively compelling to me for well over 60 years. This began when I was born into the overfunctioning, eldest position of what would eventually become nine siblings. As a boy, I received early, intensive training in observing and managing group process. My concerns in those early years had primarily to do with herding the others, tallying to make sure all were accounted for, and ensuring that group behavior was sufficiently contained to avoid our father's ire.

My group interests shifted sharply when, at age 13, I was sent away to an all-male, Catholic boarding school where I was relentlessly bullied for the 4 years I was there, emerging with a profound fear of groups given their apparent powers to devastate. I was then keenly sensitized to being on the outside position of a group's hostility. And while still in high school, I resolved with all my being to become a psychologist with the hope of understanding the inner workings of the minds that could band together in such acts of terrorizing. Yet I became that person so absorbed with scanning outside myself for trouble that it never occurred to me to be interested in understanding myself.

As a result, when in college, I fairly quickly gave up that psychological line of work when I discovered that I could not tolerate the emotional, bodily experience of hearing what went on inside other humans. I couldn't stand that affective dimension of people's lives. It wasn't until I had a substantive psychological breakdown of my own, just before turning 30, that I finally went into my own personal psychotherapy and began to work on knowing myself. Only then could I begin listening to others.

In 1989, I decided to go back to school to get my master's degree in counseling. This is when my long-standing preoccupation with groups finally found its more formal, professional route to the study of their structural, nourishing, and destructive elements.

Up to that point in my career, I had been working primarily in the field of corporate communications and marketing, so my original intention in going back to school was to learn group facilitation for consulting purposes. But my first training placement was as a group therapist in an

agency in Pittsburgh called Family Resources, where we offered groups for families affected by childhood sexual abuse. Walter Smith—one of the cofounders of the Western Pennsylvania Family Center where I later studied—was then the clinical director at Family Resources. He introduced us to the concepts of Murray Bowen’s family systems theory, inviting us to look at the symptoms of child abuse in light of each family’s broader dynamics and history. That experience influenced me to become a psychotherapist—to work with personal, psychological issues rather than with organizational ones—and much of my early work as a therapist occurred in groups. Moreover, in spite of that early exposure to Bowen, my formal group training was originally in the psychodynamic tradition, particularly in the Tavistock approach based on Wilfred Bion’s ideas. I also eventually found my way to the international transactional analysis community where, in addition to being introduced to Eric Berne’s writings—much of it on group and organizational processes—I also found a professional community with which I could begin discussing and developing my thinking. That led, over time, to the papers and ideas that are collected and reconsidered here.

### **Sidling up to the primal horde**

In the past five years, I have been focused less on aspects of facilitating groups—as the designated leader—and more on my membership in them, certainly as a family member, but also as someone working in a sizably anxious institutional system, as a citizen of my possibly reactive country, and as an organism of this world. What does it mean for me to be alive on this planet, at this time? Indeed, my understanding of effective group leadership is much informed by what I have come to see as effective group membership, which I will explore in more detail in subsequent chapters.

More so, I have been interested in what groups can give me that I cannot get elsewhere, interested in what they allow me to achieve—maturationally and productively—that I cannot achieve solely on my own. Given those possible gains, how can I manage myself in the intensity of my various groups without resorting to my usual strategies of over-functioning and cutting off when the emotional climate heats up?

It’s true that for all the thinking, reading, and studying I have done with regard to groups, part of my interest in them is still an emotional process—still seeking to secure an inside position, wanting to avoid expulsion, aching to run things my way. And that’s where my relationship with groups is still so often fraught with hatred and fear.

Think of a time you may have seen a child frozen in terror. You may have noted an expression of intense, highly focused attention directed toward the source of that terror, as if the child was trying desperately to outwit the threat or at least to figure out how to slip as quietly and

undetectedly away as possible. That's how groups riveted me for many years, from adolescence on. Then, in the latter 30 years of my life, my relation to groups gradually shifted. I became less fearful, though ever-respectful of the group's greater power; less inclined to hating them all the time; more engaged by what groups could do productively; then little by little seeking them out for what I needed from them. And now, as I amble into my sixtieth decade, I begin to feel what seems strangely like love, in the sense of caring, a protectiveness and affection of the kind that likely lurked behind my anxious, harried management of my early sibling group. Yes, groups can still be scary and frustrating. But they also represent my human life, the ground of my being in this world. Whatever their disappointing shortcomings, something opens more warmly within me when I can accept my groups as they are, when I stop wasting my time wishing they were some other way.

Sometimes we arrive at this kind of acceptance and appreciation of one another as individual members of our groups. And with this can come the sense of groups as embodying the future, the ongoing nature of our more limited, individual lives.

### **Studying ourselves in collective life**

One of the key themes of this book is that of studying ourselves—getting to know ourselves—in the human groups of which we are each inextricably a part. To “know thyself” seems to require knowing one's place and way of being as also integral to one's groups of various kinds. Even my own internal, subjective experience—that which gives me my personal sense of individual identity—is profoundly interconnected with and influenced by that larger living force that surrounds me, a force that is also paradoxically generated by me as well as by the others with whom I am grouped.

I think of this noticing and distinguishing my inner and outer systems as a form of naturalistic, observational research, which in later chapters I will link to the tradition of science as well as to the phenomenological tradition in philosophy and psychology.

For me there is an element of hope and humility in adopting this kind of research orientation. It suggests that we can face and make contact with some of the more disturbing aspects of human life in a way that we might also gradually take in and work with. And it suggests that we can let go of the idea that we will arrive at a final understanding or conception, that for every momentary sense of wholeness we may feel or articulate, the next moment will open onto a possibly wider, perhaps more chaotic vista. Our work of knowing ourselves can never be done. Yet we can take what grace might be available in our latest approximations.

This is also the spirit in which I will take up what I see as the never-ending process that is human learning.

### **The human condition**

I am borrowing the title of Hannah Arendt's (1958) classic in philosophy, *The Human Condition*, as a way to talk about our process of learning in relation to two key questions: (1) Where do we find ourselves and (2) What constitutes a self, our individuality?

That is, to figure out how to get to where we want to go—to follow and achieve our aspirations—we first have to know where we are: our human condition, our fate, if you will. And to know this, we begin with sensory experience, a mind–body in relation to others and to a whole world. Yet what is this body, we might wonder? What is this world in which we find ourselves? Perhaps most importantly, who are these fellow creatures among whom we find ourselves? In short, to know ourselves and our world, we must study ourselves in collective life, not as isolates.

I think there is strong evidence for the contention that humans are a highly social species (like ants, naked mole rats, and bacteria); thus we can usefully speak of human groupings (families, organizations, and communities) as natural living systems. We are a multigenerational form of life requiring metabolism, responsiveness, and reproduction; composed of ecosystemic, interrelated parts that are all in dynamic motion; both infinite, in one sense, and yet quite finite, quite mortal.

### **The human bodymind**

Another recurrent theme in this book is the human body or, as I like to call it, the human bodymind. I use this phrase as a way to talk about the interplay within a body of its various aspects and constituents as well as the interplay among human bodies (see Chapter 2 in this volume).

For example, the individual human has a body with a triune brain whose functioning is affected by the proximity, activity, and reactivity of other individual human bodies with their minds. Thus, human neurophysiology can be described as interdependent and cross-regulating, a collaboration and conflict between physiological and neurological processes (between body and mind), and a collaboration and conflict between individual and group (between forces for togetherness and forces for individuality). All of these tensions have the potential for both productivity and destructiveness.

Even human neurological processes (i.e., perception, memory, and concept development) function collectively when we make use of others to verify what we see, to help remember what we know, and to create new ideas and tools. To give just one example, the scientific community builds on interdependent findings to construct a communal, more reliable knowledge base, a foundation from which new findings can then emerge.

As I will explain in more detail in the chapters to come, I see the lifelong, human learning task as involving the integration of the data of experience

with the breakdown of that integrating process leading to dysfunction—insanity, repeated mistakes, disorientation, inflexibility, violence, war, and so on. In the words of philosopher Mark Johnson (2017), “Studying our embodiment, and all its implications for who and what we are, helps us learn how to be at home in our world” (p. 228).

### **Legacies: an intersection of frameworks for encountering group life**

Many thinkers and teachers have influenced my approach to group work, which I will acknowledge more specifically in the pages to come. Yet I want to say here how much I am particularly indebted to the legacies of Eric Berne, Wilfred Bion, and Murray Bowen—whom I affectionately refer to as “the three Bs.” Although it is outside the scope of this book to articulate more fully the areas of intersection and significant differences in their distinct frameworks, still I find it interesting that all three men served in the military during one or both of the World Wars, all came into first-hand contact with post-traumatic symptoms in soldiers and believed it important to include patients in treatment decision-making, and all three were initially influenced by and then departed substantially from the psychoanalytic theory that was orthodox in their times.

For all their differences, however, all three men, adopted a variant of the research attitude in their work and when developing their theories of which group, organizational, and family system processes were of central importance. Perhaps most importantly for me, their perspectives attracted individuals who formed learning communities around those ideas and practices with the hope of extending those initial conceptions. Within the transactional analysis community, for example, Oded Manor (1992) offered his own perspective on these three traditions and their interconnections in his article “Transactional Analysis, Object Relations, and the Systems Approach: Finding the Counterparts.”

These communities have, in turn, been actively present to nurture my own growth and thinking about human life in groups.

### **An intuitively developing vision**

The chapters that follow appear in the sequence in which they were written over the course of nearly 15 years, during which all were either published as articles or given as presentations. And although they were not written with any conscious, overarching vision or narrative in mind, I am keeping their chronological sequence for this book because the chapters tell the story of a gradually developing perspective on group life, a story of the kind that I believe many of us could tell based on our own experiences, even though the details and manner of expression would certainly vary significantly.

As I look back over the unfolding of these particular papers and presentations, it is as if I were writing a story I did not know I was writing. I can now see connections among these papers that I did not realize were there at the time of their composition, much as we each may come to the archive of our collected and collective materials with a view and understanding that is renewed with each new reading. Today I can see the discernible pattern that I believe progressively helped me in my group encounters and gave me the framework I find so useful today. And what, I wonder, will I see when I read this tomorrow?

It is more obvious to me now, in retrospect, that as I wrote, I was integrating the various theories I was being taught while also developing my own perspective. This more personal view came as a result of steady involvement with groups of many kinds—therapeutic, training, work teams, and families. And my sense of this integrating led in time to my interest in learning processes, for both individuals and collectives, giving me a sense of the interplay and influencing that occurs between the neurophysiology of individual humans and that of human groups, our social species, on our way to learning our world.

Today, for example, when I find myself overwhelmed with the data of a particular group's life, I can more easily and intentionally remind myself to step back, to adopt an attitude of what I call *engaged researching*, thereby giving myself room not to know but to trust in this basic human capacity of reception. It is a place to begin that is always reliably there.

I am then more able to look more closely at the emerging details and nuances of what I have called the *shared bodymind*, that is, the conception and awareness of the intimate, complex interaction between the body and mind—the neurophysiology—of the individual person and the dynamic interplay and mutual influencing among multiple individuals comprising that organism called a human group.

My next endeavor led me to look more closely at my experience of *learning and hating in groups*. With a now greater capacity for tolerating the intensities of group life—part of which required a conceptual scaffolding—I could look more honestly at the degree of my hatred of groups and my concomitant destructive strategies for discharging that hatred, which, of course, proved to be shared by many of my fellow group associates. At the same time, I could begin to see and feel for the first time what groups could offer by way of extraordinary benefit, especially in the form of the learning that has been so important, albeit challenging, for my life.

Over time, my understanding of the neurophysiological interplay in groups has been informed by emerging research in neuroscience. In particular, I became intrigued by what I saw as a recurrent dynamic in human relations, that of the *social pain response* identified by a group of social-cognitive researchers in the early part of the twenty-first century. This idea offered me a way to conceptualize a common social system process that

can appear, on the surface, highly variable, often showing up in explosive forms. Yet beneath these outer manifestations, I began to see a recurring underlying pattern, and that offered me a means of languaging such situations when they emerged so heatedly in groups and in my life generally.

With this increased bodily and conceptual capacity, I turned to what I called the process of *looking for trouble in groups*, especially those that were explicitly intended for professional development and growth. I could now deliberately seek out the areas of greatest difficulty in my groups—making active contact with those areas of trouble—which allowed me and the group to engage with what I came to see as the most important areas for growth and learning for a particular group and its members.

Over time, I began to conceptualize this generative learning process in terms of *maturing as a community effort*, an interplay not just of our disorganized neurophysiological states but also of our movement forward in integration, meaning-making, and increased bodily and mental capacities for encountering life.

All of these stages of my development have now brought me to thinking in terms of *groups that learn (and groups that don't)*. This has greatly expanded my conception of human learning processes, which, in turn, has informed the principles and practices that can potentially facilitate such group learning, such collective and individual maturation, to borrow from Winnicott.

Can we each be curious about the sequencing of our own histories—as individuals, families, organizations, communities, and other abiding human collectives—as a means of discovering the patterns at work outside our awareness and sometimes, by providence, simply the result of natural, life-supporting developments in time?

That is the meaning that emerges for me in the rereading of my own work. And you, in reading as you will, may make other patterns and meanings, may see things I missed, and will surely bring a different sensibility and legacy to bear. That, to me, is one example of what can make community life so generative. The clearer I can become about my own perspective and the more I can put it into some form of expression, the more I can then welcome, even eagerly solicit, the varying views of my colleagues, friends, fellow citizens, and family members. I am grateful for being heard and, at times, corrected.

One thing I like about this book being a collection—written over time, with no overarching plan—is that it will necessarily be incomplete and will spare me the compulsion to write a single, fully integrated theory, which in any case I could never do.

I also have a sense of needing to approach this as I would the making of an artwork, with less expectation of consciousness and more alert to the signs of an emotional, aesthetic impact, more respectful of my own more spontaneous expressiveness, the current limit of my maturing.