

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him.
-Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

A key feature of learning is to work within a team environment. The student may find themselves working in a team environment comprised of students of different gender, political and religious beliefs, ages and life experiences etc. It is well recognized within the literature that the interdependence of the knowledge, skills and competencies across group members can lead to innovative problem-solving and active learning. Groups are a part of social life. Each of us is a member of many different groups (Bennis & Shepherd, 1956). Before my social work course I had not really thought about all the different types of groups that exist as having a similar structure, and as going through similar processes, whether it be a group of professionals conferencing on a topic, a study group, a committee determining policy changes, or sporting group discussing next weeks strategy of play (Forsythe, 1990, 1998). Many of the groups that a person is a member of can impact greatly on their lives – either positively or negatively.

On reflection I can see how being placed into a group, instead of choosing one myself to be in one, would represent many group formations in the professional world. In the workforce people are often put into teams without having a choice. So it seems that becoming a member of a group without actively participating in the formation has some real world practicalities. Learning in small groups is very powerful. The development of trust and communication within a group is what leads to the creation of a "team" mentality. Collaborative learning has helped me to break down problems such as understanding a theory, and to look at it from different angles. I believe this has given me a much more comprehensive understanding of class materials.