I knew right from the start that I was not in the right group. In fact, there were a few people in the group that I was not really interested in getting to know as well as I knew we would during this project. But I also know, from experience with "things happening like they are supposed to", that I am in the right group - that is, it will work out perfectly in the end (it always does). I also think that it is better that there are people in the group that I don't know that well or am not comfortable with, because that provides me with the opportunity to challenge myself. So when June asked me straight after the lecture whether I wanted to swap groups with her (because she wanted to be with Marlena, and she didn't like the people in her group), I said no. I knew that it was important to stay in the group I was in, as it was random and we don't often get to choose who we associate with in work, study or any situations other than social. Sometimes we even have to associate with people we don't want to socially, because of associates of the people we hang around with. Also, I like to think of myself as giving everyone a 'fair go', and so I couldn't possibly change groups as a matter of pride.

It was clear from the start today that we were going to get the work done. Marlena, Gina and myself were vocal right away: Marlena particularly focussed on what we had to do. I know I wanted to get things moving as quickly as possible, and Gina made sure that we started with some ground rules. Consequently, by the end of the double session, we were able to get quite a bit of work done. We established that the sessions needed to be facilitated, to keep everyone on track, and after some indecision, resolved to have a different facilitator each week. Who the facilitator will be is to be decided each week, based on who wants to. It was clear to me, even in the resolution of this one simple question, that there were some people in the group who liked to deliberate for a while about things, while others wanted the decision made as quickly and logically as possible. Leadership roles also became quickly apparent, as some group members were eager to facilitate the group, while others baulked at the suggestion that we decide the weekly facilitator by drawing names out of a hat (as they did not, under any circumstances, wish to take on that responsibility). The way we decided to operate the facilitation aspect of the group
seemed the fairest to everyone, but I have reservations as to how successful such an unstructured plan will be. However, I am willing to wait and see. It was also decided that we should have a scribe each week, so that everyone is not too busy taking notes to participate in the discussion. This scribe is to be chosen each week by the same method as that of the facilitator.

Next, we discussed the ground rules for the group, which, after listing things like starting at five past the hour (like with a lecture), not speaking over others, listening to other points of view, etc., basically came down to respecting each other.

The logistics of our group dealt with, we proceeded to design a group to run. The process was similar to the other decisions we had made during the session: some wanted to write lists, some didn’t speak at all; but the process was democratic, with constant assurance from everyone that they were happy with each stage.

During this initial session, we were definitely in a pre-affiliation stage. There was certainly hesitancy and wariness, even on the part of those of us that were 'taking control' and moving things forward (we were just using this leadership and efficiency to cover feelings of vulnerability). I feel that this would not have occurred if we had chosen our own groups, as I know that the people I would have been working with in that situation all know each other well enough to be past that kind of behaviour (although there is always the possibility that we could revert!). I also feel that we moved into the power and control stage by the end of the double session (although we were still in pre-affiliation as well), particularly when we were ascertaining what our topic was going to be. Some group members did not really want to talk, and others moved the session forward powerfully.

I felt frustration during times of indecision, as it seemed that once the group had ostensibly made a decision (and the facilitator had even repeated and clarified this for the scribe), some group members (one in particular) would then need to again clarify, and sometimes go over, the reasoning for the decision made. It seems to me that the one particular group member, 'Jo', who constantly needed to reiterate points after a decision had been made, was not listening unless s/he wanted to, and often made comments out of context. This behaviour seems to indicate a need to be noticed. Despite this, I feel that the first two sessions were very successful and productive, and I feel positive about the ability of this group to complete our task.
Session 3

I facilitated this session. I had decided, as we were not in a ‘formal’ lecture, and our group could be run however we liked, that morning tea would be a good idea (and of course everyone would like me because I had such a good idea). I brought juice, strawberries and biscuits. Everyone was hesitant to take anything at first, and even when I helped myself and opened everything. Finally, I asked who else would like a drink, and was able to entice a few people to have a glass of juice, poured by me. When the food was passed around (rather than sitting on a table in the middle of the room), people were more willing to take some. However, a situation arose whereby we were talking about something to do with the group we were proposing to run, when out of the blue, Jo made a comment to another group member about a strawberry stalk that had not yet been placed in the bin. I felt disbelief at this statement, which I felt clearly showed that her/his attention had not been on the topic we were discussing. Obviously it is O.K. to be in our own thoughts but the frustrating truth was that we had to go over points that Jo missed purely because her/his lack of attention. I challenged Jo about the necessity of the comment s/he had made, and about his/her general sarcasm, after which Jo apologised. I asked Jo not to apologise (unless s/he was aware of what the apology was for). This was a power struggle, which I now think was used by me to assert my authority over Jo, and although I feel justified in my comments, I also recognise that I was seeking the power position as much as her/him. However, I felt at the time that this was deliberately disruptive behaviour, and began to look at Jo as both disruptive and irrational (the issue was not an important one but I had noticed that Jo was fixated on the strawberry before s/he had said anything). We were able to get the work of the session done despite this incident, as we moved onwards and it was not discussed again.

Session 4

I feel that the intimacy stage was beginning during this session. We seem clear on our boundaries and confident of our group goal to complete the task, and are becoming more comfortable working together. Decision making seemed easier, as we are becoming more practiced at it. Mariana brought morning tea, and I feel like it is becoming traditional (which was my intention!). The filling of the positions of facilitator and scribe seem to be successful so far, with
people volunteering each week. I have noted, however, that it is those of us in leadership roles that are volunteering. We looked at the purpose of the group we were to run, and further clarified other points. Gina again took a leadership role (although Helen J. was the facilitator this week - this must have been difficult for Helen, but she took it in her stride), suggesting that we break everything we need to do down into individual assignments, so that we could go and do some research before next session. Also, everyone was to bring in suggestions of possible theories we could use, as we were unsure about this, and weren't able to work it out in the group. I was the scribe during this session. I did not mind doing this, but I can recognise now that I do feel that there is an expectation that I am one of the people that will volunteer for roles such as this. Helen J. is showing up as an encourager and also an innovator, as she always has something to say in support of the facilitator, is easy-going (as illustrated by this session) and has good suggestions for what to do regarding the group because of her placement at REFS.

Session 5

Gina wrote a list of all the sections we had to complete, and people volunteered to do certain sections. This went smoothly, with no conflict about who was going to do what (surprising). The group seems to be solving problems and issues regarding the project quite easily. I ran off and spoke to the lecturer about theoretical perspectives (which the group was confused about). I was glad to do so, as I wanted to get out of the room - I think this is because although we had decided what everyone was doing, there was still some reiteration of points for the benefit of two group members in particular. I found this hard to deal with. However, I have also found it difficult that a few of the group members are quite willing to give their opinions once asked, but will tend not to volunteer them. I guess that at this stage, I feel that there is no reason why they cannot actively participate in the conversation. Sometimes, I do not feel like being vocal all the time, and want to listen to others, and I wish that these quieter people would take over the conversation for a little while so that I do not feel like I have to continuously be a vocal participant. I feel like I do not have the luxury of 'tuning out' for a few minutes every now and then, as I am looked for to move the conversation forward when it becomes stagnant (not that I haven't voluntarily taken on that role!). After speaking to the lecturer, I was able to clarify that social learning theory was the most suitable theory for our topic, and was greatly pleased that it had been clarified, both for
myself and for the group. The sense of group success was more exciting for me than if I had just worked it out for myself. Gina brought morning tea - it gives the sessions a less formal feel which I think is indicative of the relatively relaxed way we are dealing with all issues as they come up. I think that, rather than having any conflict about aspects of the project, some group members get anxious about what we have to do, and this may be another reason for the going-over of points after some of us feel the points have been well established. We agreed to do research, pertaining to our questions, for next week’s session.

Session 6

Mariana facilitated this session. Although she started relatively quietly (and still comes across that way), she definitely displays leadership qualities. Unfortunately, I think it is difficult for her to express this ability, due to the other strong leaders in the group, and this was evident today, as she was not really given the chance to facilitate the group powerfully. Sandra had done good research about activities we can use in our sessions, and it was great for her to take such an active part in the conversation. I found this really interesting and encouraging, but some group members were very disengaged in the conversation. We were also distracted, however, by the Social Work Students lunch, as three of the group members (including myself) are committee members and had to leave early to prepare. This did not seem to pose a problem for anyone in particular however the group seemed a little more disjointed than usual; our focus was not as strong. Four of us agreed to meet before the next session, to decide which activities we wanted to include. The location for this meeting was set, so that any other group members who wished to be involved in this discussion could attend (and would be welcome).

Session 7

I was frustrated today, as we had all brought sections of work we had done, and one group member kept seeking reassurance for not having been able to find enough information, or good enough information (this was an issue last week, but had not really affected me). This week the group member went on and on about it, and was looking to me for support. Although I felt frustration, I consciously made the effort to smile and encourage this group member, as I understood that s/he needed my validation. This person often looks to me for encouragement, but for some reason I felt intolerant of her/him today. I was further frustrated by
another group member, who constantly brings up the written assignment word for word, in a way that is not relevant to the discussion of the moment. We then have to stop and explain where we are. I am not sure whether this group member has really made the effort to get involved in the group, and does not say much. However, I can acknowledge that this person may have had difficulty participating because of certain issues.

Although we still seem to be working together well, and are comfortable in moving forward on the project, it seems that people's emotional needs have been coming out this week. I don't know why this is, but my own high sensitivity and tension this week are (I assume) indicative of the general 'high strung' aura in the group today. Any conflict is being resolved quickly, and I think this is because of time constraints, and a shared purpose to have the work completed. However, I think that because of this, we have 'skated over' some issues we may have had to address had we more time in the group. I think that although the group will be successful in meeting the work requirement, it was not as successful at addressing emotional and personal issues that are unavoidably going to come up. The way to avoid this happening, and have a group that is successful in all aspects, would be to carefully plan each session before the group started something we were unable to do with our group. We could have done it in the first session; however, this would have been difficult because we were not sure exactly what we wanted to achieve. Rather, I think I have learnt what I would like to achieve in a group such as this during the process of being in the group - which I may not have been able to anticipate.

**Session 8 - Final Session**

In this final session, mindful of lectures about termination, we debriefed. Everyone spoke freely about the positives such as that we thought the group functioned very cohesively (although this may have been attributable to our time limit and joint goal to complete the project because we had to). Jo, once again, patronised a quieter group member by asking more than once if she had something to say. No-one spoke of the tension that had been created by Jo. although I did mention my frustration at having points reiterated to the point of exhaustion. This was illustrated again during this session just before I spoke of it; and some group members were not listening when I said that I thought the going over of points was due to people not listening. The inattention and impatience during this session was, I feel, attributable to the
group members feeling uncomfortable about termination of the group - unsure of how to end our alliance. We mentioned termination in our 'debriefing'; however, we did not discuss feelings of uneasiness or discomfort (probably because of these feelings). I feel the termination of the group could have been a lot more open than it was, and it was unfortunate that one group member that particularly wanted to speak about some issues (unknown by me until I saw her later today) was not present. It was indicative of the uneasiness in the final session that there were conversations with various group members after the final session today, where we were all able to voice views we had not been able to during the session. One group member, Jo, approached me seeking validation that the group had been successful overall (something we had established repeatedly during the final session) - and I was finally able to speak about the tension created by her/him. I did this without placing blame or making her/him wrong, and I think s/he was able to take it on in a small way; in fact, I now feel that s/he may have been seeking reassurance that the group had gone well particularly because of the knowledge of his/her contribution. However, s/he did justify his/her behaviour regarding a certain other intimidating incident during the final session, when I mentioned it I think Jo became the 'scapegoat' of the group, and because of this I do not blame her/him at all - if it had not been Jo, it would have been someone else. I do not feel resentment towards members of the group who I felt caused conflict; rather, I acknowledge that a group must consist of people taking on different roles, and all are necessary for a group to function effectively. I felt good after expressing how I felt to Jo, as I had felt uncomfortable speaking about her/him to other group members rather than to him/her directly. This also completed the group powerfully for me, as I have now said everything that was there to say, and now feel that I am complete with the whole experience.