

Editorial

I recently made one of my longest ever journeys in order to attend the Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development 2022 (SWESD, 2022), which took place in South Korea last October. With an eye to climate change and the environment, I have travelled in recent years less often than before – a decision further enforced at times by the global pandemic and the periods of confinement which we have experienced of late. Conflict in various zones across the world is another factor that can influence travel decisions. These factors have combined to severely curtail my opportunities to attend presentations and conferences and the opportunities to renew old and make new connections that are part of attendance at such events. There was something very appealing about the prospect of attending a conference and being part of the large gathering of the global network of the social professions which attendance at SWESD 2022 made possible. The pandemic has been felt in many ways, and one of these has been the reduction in opportunities to meet in person with others who share common interests and goals. When my paper was accepted by the Conference organisers, it was not difficult to decide to attend despite the long haul travel required; it helped me realise how much I missed opportunities for being present with others with similar interests and concerns.

When planning my presentation, it seemed important to draw attention to this felt need to connect with others. My paper addressed our shared humanity, our need to connect and to understand that we are stronger as a human collective when we respect and support each other – we are all in this world together and it is to the detriment of all if we leave anyone behind (Kirwan, 2022). My paper spoke of the sense of hope (Collins, 2019) that is essential in social work practice and which is often found and developed through shared understanding and collective effort. Group cohesion and its benefits contrast sharply with the destructive force of splitting and othering when groups fragment.

The Conference lived up to all my expectations and more.

Contributors from across the world shared examples of their work and research – we listened, we learned, we discussed and we debated. We knew it was a special point in time because we had succeeded, despite many obstacles, in coming together.

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People come together in all types of settings and for all types of reasons. The mutual aid and therapeutic potential of being in a group with others is powerful and is employed in many different settings. The articles in this issue illuminate this powerful dynamic across a range of contexts. In the first article by Willa J. Casstevens and Kim Stansbury, they present their study of a community-based racial equity and social justice action group which used cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) to assist in dealing with points of tension within the group. The article, titled '*An application of CHAT analysis to a community-based action team*', explains how the CHAT analysis model carries the ability to identify and understand points of conflict which in turn can assist the overall functioning of the group and, as they point out, help to constructively and positively resolve the identified points of conflict.

In '*A place where I am always welcome: A thematic analysis of what belong to Alcoholics Anonymous means to its members*', Lisa Ogilvie, Julie Prescott and Jerome Carson explore the meaning of belongingness to members of the AA organisation. The benefits of felt belongingness to a larger collective are found to be wide-ranging with study participants not only reporting greater success with maintaining sobriety but also reporting strong feelings of connectedness and acceptance within the organisation as well as experiencing at a personal level more hopeful and positive personal outlooks on life.

The relationship between group functioning and the deployment of mobile technology within the group is considered by Anna Bussu and Sam Burton in '*Higher education peer mentoring programme to promote student community building using Mobile Device Applications*.' They conclude that the use of mobile technology can help to build and consolidate the sense of community among the target undergraduate population. For example, mobile communication was used to help organise events, to maintain contact in between in-person meetings and generally to promote the building of a sense of community among the students.

The final article of this issue is '*Considering the rules of brainstorming*

in untrained idea generating groups'. David Dryden Henningsen and Mary Lynn Henningsen illuminate the power of group interactions and dynamics and how these influence behaviour in groups. This article provides a thought-provoking insight into the generation of ideas by groups, namely brainstorming, and considers how these insights can be used to harness the inherent potential of groups to generate new ideas and think differently.

Each of these articles provides important knowledge on how groups operate and function, and how the potential of groups can be harnessed and positively applied in many different ways. They also highlight the complexities in group performance as well as the sometimes life-changing benefits that membership of groups can bring.

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References

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