

Editorial

In this issue, we have five papers and two book reviews, all covering important themes but with some common features. All look at the importance of using research to evaluate the effectiveness of groupwork as a practice method, and the theories that underpin their work. In an attribute that is common to groupwork, most of the papers in this edition describe practitioners' own account of leading groups, thereby demonstrating the close link that continues to be forged in relation to groupwork theory and practice. Of these papers, one is from Canada and a second from Australia – which again highlights the important international links that we have created through the journal over the years. It is hoped to strengthen these links in the future by continuing to publish papers from outside the UK, and through encouraging attendance at conferences whenever possible. The Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups Annual Symposium – described in the last edition of *Groupwork* – is an important event in this regard, and so too is the European Groupwork Symposium. The theme for this year's York Symposium is on Inter-professional Groupwork, and will take place in York from Wednesday 6th to Friday 8th July 2005. Further details of this symposium, and Calls for Papers, can be found at the end of this journal. Please note that for the second year running, a number of bursary places have been made available to ensure that the York Groupwork Symposium is accessible to practitioners and students. It would be helpful if colleagues could publicise these bursary places.

In the first of two papers set in the north of England, Buckingham and Parsons give a moving account of two time-limited therapeutic groups for female adult survivors of sexual abuse. The theoretical framework that informs this work combines a Rogerian 'client-centred' approach with group analytic techniques. Considerable

coverage is given to the methods used to evaluate the outcome of this work, which shows that a significant reduction in the clinical symptoms that women experience can be achieved using structured, time-limited groupwork. Evidence of this kind is important – not only for participants and group leaders – but also for funders. Indeed, the success of Buckingham-Parsons' work has led to further therapeutic groups of this kind being set up.

In contrast to Buckingham and Parsons' more general account of their work, Caplan's compelling paper uses a number of groupwork examples to provide an in-depth analysis of the part played by 'active' and 'passive' interventions. Drawing on the approach adopted in the 'Canadian Groupwork Model' (CGWM), Caplan reminds us that in order to enable group members to take risks and to take ownership of the therapy process, group facilitators need to create a 'favourable' setting and 'positive environment'. Group facilitators also need to be aware of the important role they play, and the way they use active and passive interventions to sustain group momentum, to track group members' emotional state and to help participants to take responsibility for their behaviour.

A thorough account of the link between theory and practice, and the importance of evaluating the effectiveness, is evident in a fascinating article by Day. Drawing on the principles of action research, an experiential learning approach and the work of Webster-Stratton, the paper describes a facilitated four-session parenting course for parents of children with behavioural and emotional problems. Set once again in the north of England, the article gives a brief account of the focus of each session and how the facilitators worked with parents to improve their parenting skills. An evaluation of the success of this work, which has been running for seven years, shows an improvement in almost all the difficult behaviour that the children demonstrated before the work began.

With the introduction of the new degree and masters in social work in the UK, Lindsay's paper on the value of group learning on placement is highly relevant and timely. It looks at this topic from a range of important perspectives – the general use of groupwork in social work education, the benefits of group supervision, the advantages and disadvantages of group learning in practice – and

how these are experienced by students and practice teachers (assessors). Many points indicated in Lindsay's review of the literature are confirmed in a study conducted in Northern Ireland, where Lindsay looked at the views of 102 social work students over a two-year period – a study that emphasises the importance of group learning in social work education.

A final paper in this edition by McDermott provides a scholarly and rigorous exploration of how we might develop our research designs in relation to groupwork. This theme is analysed from two key perspectives – the researcher who is 'outside' and the researcher-practitioner who is 'inside' the group and group process. In both cases, McDermott argues that it is important for practitioners to adopt a range of methods in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the groupwork undertaken, whether based on positivist or interpretist research designs. McDermott calls for groupworkers to be more adventurous in the research designs adopted – and to be more open and honest when it comes to evaluating the effectiveness of work undertaken.

Since taking over as Co-Editors of this journal, Mark Doel and I have been impressed by the expressions of support we have received from colleagues – both within social work, and outside. We have also been inspired by the commitment we have received from members of the Editorial Board, our peer reviewers, subscribers and the journal's publisher, David Whiting. We are particularly indebted to our peer reviewers (assessors) whose contribution has been invaluable in relation to the detailed and sensitive feedback and encouragement they have given to contributors. We would also like to extend a special thanks to our Associate Editor, Alison Skinner, who proof reads the articles for each edition, as well as organizing our book reviews. Alison's work is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

Several contributors have commented on the helpful and insightful comments they have received and we would like to thank our reviewers on their behalf. We are acutely aware, as editors, that it is this kind of collective effort, and the quality of articles we receive, that underpins the success of the journal. We hope that through our collaborative efforts, we will continue to enhance the reputation of *Groupwork* and ensure that the journal

becomes widely acknowledged as an influential publication in the field of groupwork. We are excited at this prospect – a prospect that is enhanced by the articles and reviews included in this edition of *Groupwork*.

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Co-Editor