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'What works' in groupwork? Towards an ethical framework for measuring effectiveness

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***Abstract**: Groupwork has been emerging as a key choice in methods of intervention with young people, parents and children in recent years and is now implemented by a wide range of professionals and non-professionals, in a variety of settings and agencies. Simultaneously, the requirements to evaluate and measure effectiveness in line with the drive for evidence based practice have presented groupworkers with some difficulties in finding evaluation strategies and methods which are appropriate and which reflect both processes and outcomes, effectiveness and experiences.*

In this article I will examine the growth of groupwork as a major method of intervention for many so-called 'social problems' in terms of the use of power in groups and the diversity of theoretical perspectives which may be informing the new groups. I will argue that, while evaluation is an essential element for groupwork practice, engagement with others in groups requires critical reflection and analysis of the conceptual base for these activities. I argue that the groupwork tradition is largely grounded in social work as a profession and because of that has developed knowledge and skills which are moderated and grounded in a particular professional culture, with its attendant values and ethical stance. The paper concludes with a call to return to this ethical positioning as a starting point for evaluating groupwork and for promoting its effectiveness through a sensitivity to power and control issues in groups.

***Keywords**: ethics; groupwork; power; and effectiveness*

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Introduction

In recent years, we have seen the growth in interest in groupwork in a diverse range of health and social care settings and whilst this is to be applauded, there are two particular trends that are worrying in terms of its revival as a method of creating change in people's lives. The first issue to consider is the wide range of situations where groupwork is increasingly the method of choice in creating change and whether the literature which guides and informs practice has kept pace with recent change. Particularly, whether new and emerging applications of groupwork are underpinned by a clear understanding of the ethics and values required to carry out 'good' groupwork. The second point concerns the power of groups: the power to transform in a positive sense can also be used to control and create change in coercive and detrimental ways. There are well known examples, in both academic texts and in wider literature, of practice which is guided by principles of self determination and voluntary participation and yet, in practice, the ends are often used to justify the means, in terms of using the group as the medium for change.

The analysis of the effectiveness of groupwork, therefore, needs to pay heed to costs as well as benefits, and to process as much as outcomes, to sustainable growth and change for individuals and also for general progression in groups. 'What works' in groups needs, therefore, to be located in a context where the power to transform is located with the members of groups, not the leaders or outside interests. In this paper I will try to tease out how an ethical framework for groupwork, which is grounded firmly on a sound 'evidence-based' set of methodologies might frame practice across a wide number of disciplines, professional settings and groups.

Groupwork as a method of intervention

The 'group' has historically been utilised as a vehicle or medium for creating change in individuals, groups, families and communities and particularly agencies, in all sectors in the UK and elsewhere. Its popularity has waxed and waned over the years and groupwork, including 'working in groups' (Doel and Sawdon, 2000), seems to

be experiencing something of a 'rebirth' in recent years. The growth is, however, uneven in that while groups have become a dominant means of intervening in people's lives, for example in health settings, in education and youth justice and in community programmes such as Surestart, there has been a noticeable reduction and restriction in the use of groupwork in social services departments and in social work in general. There are many reasons for the way that services (and in particular, groupwork) have been reconstructed within the current political climate which have been analysed more effectively by others such as John Harris (2003) and Bill Jordan (2000). But an examination of recent changes in the way that groupwork has been employed in health and social work and social care highlights the notion that groupwork is no longer the sole property of social work.

Historical perspectives on the use of groups as a method of intervention

The first European Groupwork Symposium was held in 1991 and at that time, Ken Heap forecast that the future of groupwork in Europe would be one that embraced an 'interprofessional' approach, where groupwork

> … extended over the entire range of social and health services, it was highly eclectic, interprofessional, innovative and creative work. Social workers had the choice either to become territorially defensive, asserting their special competence, or they could develop training and consultative roles. Sharing leadership with other professionals and accepting as enriching rather than threatening the dissolving of the walls around groupwork as a specifically social work method. (Heap, 1991, p.13)

Groupwork has traditionally been carried out by a wide variety of workers and volunteers, in a diverse range of settings and purposes, using a wide range of theoretical and conceptual frameworks to inform both process and outcomes. It is this diversity which renders groupwork such a valuable tool for change-making in people's lives, both individually and collectively. For instance, social work and community work both have long histories which include using the medium of the group to

bring people together to share concerns, issues and give support, as well as challenging oppressive practices and campaigning for change. This particular use of groups is possibly associated with the body of knowledge we have come to know in the UK as 'social action' (Mullender and Ward, 1991). This approach is characterised by its commitment 'first and foremost upon anti-oppressive principles and the notion that people can gain collective strength through working in groups' (Aubrey, 2004, p.12). The other end of the theoretical continuum is typified by psychoanalytic approaches to understanding how people function and behave in groups. Within a psychoanalytic framework the internal world of each individual is 'revealed' within the group, providing an arena for therapeutic intervention, led by a group analyst or therapist. Most of these ideas were developed with or about people who were troubled and distressed and had sought or been referred for psychological or psychiatric help. There is also a strong body of thought from humanist psychology and the personal growth and development field which has influenced groupwork practice directly, such as encounter groups, gestalt therapy and person-centred groups. According to John Rowan (2000, p.6), Shaffer and Galinsky (1989) 'offer a very good account of groups that have been developed over the years', which I can personally endorse – if you can access it! Pamela Trevithick (2005) has also produced an excellent explanatory summary of theories underpinning different groupwork approaches in the journal *Groupwork*.

There is a clear danger in applying these theories uncritically, outside the milieu that was responsible for their conceptualisation, since they clearly take a particular stance in relation to the role of the leader as 'expert'/ therapist and see group participants as needy and suffering from particular psychological or mental health difficulties, which are the focus for intervention or 'cure'.

A 'renaissance' for Groupwork?

Groupwork has experienced a period of rapid changes and challenges in the years since the first Groupwork Symposium met, and some of these are described in past issues of the journal, which could be said to represent a recorded history over time. Anecdotally, we seem to have been witness to an increase in the use of groups as a method of creating/

facilitating change, across a spectrum which includes the personal and the political. It is also clear that groupwork has become a popular method of engagement with a range of professional and non-professional bodies and that there is an inspiring range of 'sorts' of groups thriving which include social action groups, community groups and groups within the self help/mutual aid movement. Increasingly, however, we also see groupwork being led or facilitated by professionals and others who have little opportunity for training, reflection or supervision of their practice. It is in these circumstances where a critical appreciation of issues around power, oppression and the need for ethically grounded practice is most likely to be absent and where careful consideration of how and why we are intervening in the lives of often vulnerable and marginalised individuals, using a powerful medium such as groupwork, is neglected.

While in many ways this expansion is to be encouraged and applauded, we have also seen a growth in what Doel and Sawdon (2000, p. 60) refer to as 'working in groups', as opposed to groupwork, where individual casework has been replaced by what might be termed 'casework by numbers'. This trend has been largely driven by resource and economic issues and serves to maintain the fallacy of groupwork as a 'cheap' option'. Delivering groupwork in this way has led to the development of programmes where the content and delivery are targeted at combating specific behaviours in individuals in a replicable, formulaic way which thus allows for standardised evaluation of their effectiveness and the measuring of pre-specified outcomes. The National Probation Directorate would serve as a good example of this strategy, as would some parenting skills groups delivered by a variety of agencies and professionals. These programmes have been shaped by the 'what works' notion, which has influenced much of the public services provision and evaluation in the past twenty years.

> '…groupwork appears to be going through something of a renaissance in youth justice. One needs to look no further than youth justice plans produced by Youth Offending Teams (YOT) to identify current popularity of groupwork as a method of working with young offenders. This renaissance has not occurred in a vacuum and the increasing popularity of groupwork must be understood in relation to current policy developments in youth justice, the punitive discourses which shape its direction, and the criminological roots of the 'what works' paradigm.' (Yates, 2004, p.116)

What has been evident to me personally, in the thirty years that I have been involved in groupwork, has been a consistent view that groupwork has become separated from the social work profession in the UK and lost its place as a method of intervention for individuals and others. The contribution made by social work to groupwork thinking has been a limited one in recent years, particularly in terms of principles and values which should underpin practice. Despite a plethora of handbooks, manuals and other texts produced in the 1980s and 1990s, recent publications have become less generic (more specialist) in focus and therefore more attention is paid to content and tasks in groups, rather than process and interaction (Doel and Sawdon, 2000). In my view we have seen the emergence of a groupwork culture which increasingly sees groupwork as a cure for every social ill, where these are understood as a deficit in social functioning or behaviour located in the individual, rather than in structural or political realms and where, as a consequence, a diffusion or dilution of the theoretical concepts informing and shaping practice has taken place. This phenomenon reflects what Oded Manor refers to as the 'Columbus Syndrome', where differences in groupwork practice could be due to differences between organisational settings, each with a precise (and often prescribed) set of needs each requiring a 'new' brand of groupwork:

> … every time a new need is identified workers may imagine that they must discover a new continent: a totally different form of groupwork has to be invented - from scratch. Such bursts of creativity can be exciting yet also debilitating. Ignoring previous knowledge can lead to the neglect of important needs of group members. At worst, workers may be involved in exacerbating group members' situations. (Manor, 2000, p.vii)

Understanding what has gone before in terms of skills, practice and knowledge enables practitioners to compare and reflect on their own experiences and to develop a value base about their practice which is not dependent upon the setting or the organisation they work for. All forms of groupwork are shaped by assumptions about the relationships between participants and leaders/facilitators, the reasons for the existence or need for a particular group and the expectations of both agencies and the state and participants. Some value/ethical stances are

of course, more explicit than others, for example the social action model of groupwork, and easier to perceive in the actions and approach of the workers in those groups. Without an understanding of these issues, groupworkers can find themselves ungrounded and reliant on models of groupwork that are more predictable and replicable, rather than responsive to the needs and expressed wishes of participants.

Understanding group dynamics and values

Bob Broad (1991) produced a very clear and helpful analysis of the range of methodologies informing social work and groupwork practice, which has withstood the test of time very well, in terms of understanding the context within which groupwork takes place as a method of intervention by state and other agencies. I have reproduced his helpful tables below. His analysis of power and the way this shapes models of intervention is useful in identifying particular assumptions underpinning the various models and styles within groupwork. It can be used by any groupworker to locate the perspective of the agency or organisation which employs them and provides insights into the links between leadership styles, models of groupwork and the way that service users/participants are positioned and socially constructed by our interventions. For example, the social control model, which can be observed in many statutory agencies, is characterised by viewing groupwork participants as deviants, with individual behaviour problems in need of rules and discipline provided by an agency which 'polices' their activities (Table 1). In groupwork terms, these underlying assumptions, or value positions lead to directive styles of groupwork, where participants have limited rights and where the function of the group is premised on individual discipline (Table 2).

Broad's conceptual framework is indicative of the attention that was being given in social work and groupwork in the 1990s to issues of power, oppression and inequalities, which unfortunately seems to be less important in terms of informing practice nowadays. More crucially, it is a discourse that many, practising groupwork in agencies where social work is not the primary profession, are unaware of. It is this lack of a clear value base and a critical understanding of the impact of intervention that is becoming a primary concern in terms of the groupwork (and perhaps social work practice) of the future.

Table 1
Broad's characteristics of models of social work (1991, p.20)

Contextual Themes	*Social Justice*	*Social Welfare*	*Social Control*
Labels used by SWs	Survivors/victims	Clients	Deviants
SW's dominant view of problem	Social conditions/ oppressed populations	Individual and area disorganisation Individuals in need	Pathological behaviour/ unregulated population
Goal	Empowerment/ entitlement	Containment/help/ Colonisation	Punishment/ encirclement
Role of agency	Advocate/facilitator	Harmoniser/mediator /rationer of resources	Mediator/ facilitator
Function of SW agency	Change agent	Agent of normalisation	Policing agent
Agency culture	Networking and rights	Individualised reform	Rules and discipline
Anti-discriminatory issues	Equal opportunity policy	Equal opportunity policy	Equal opportunity policy

Table 2
Models of Groupwork (Broad, 1991, p.22)

Contextual Themes relating to Power	*Social Justice Model*	*Social Welfare Model*	*Social Control Model*
Language	Accessible/ anti-discriminatory	Expert/ compassionate	Authoritarian
Style of group	Participative/ directive	Participative/ directive	Directive
Members' rights	Written charter	Unclear/negotiated	Limited rights
Agency/groupworker responsibilities and powers	Made explicit preferably in writing	Implied/ touched on	Made explicit, probably in writing
Structure of group	Mixed/separatist	Semi-structured/ tokenism	Ignored – not prime concern
Broad function	To make links between personal and political/ to listen to group members. To help individuals in need	To counsel individuals in need	To emphasise individual discipline
Anti-discriminatory issues	Equal opportunity policy acknowledged/ addressed/monitored	Equal opportunity policy compromised/ invisible	Equal opportunity ignored/enforced

Trevithick (2005, p.93) has expressed clear concerns about the knowledge base for groupwork practice within social work, and the erosion of groupwork learning opportunities in the new qualifying degree for social work, and notes that competence in practice requires skills, understanding, knowledge and values in order to be effective. In my view these concerns should extend beyond social work to include other professions and this is where my current concern lies. Knowledge (from a variety of sources) can provide practitioners with a range of tools in a toolbox: the skill in social work and groupwork is knowing which 'tool' to use in which circumstances and why that tool might be effective. The value base helps us to know when a certain 'tool' is being used unethically (perhaps as a means to an end?) or that it is 'right' that we encourage service users or participants to make choices about 'tools' which might not produce the outcome that the organisation employing us might want. All of these issues need to be addressed from a particular worldview about the nature of intervention into people's lives and an awareness that any intervention has a potential for harm as well as benefit. This is particularly so in groups where the intense and multi-dimensional gaze of the group can magnify an individual's low self-esteem or alternatively allow it to flourish and grow.

> It is axiomatic that any activity or experience which has potential for beneficial change also has potential for unhelpful or even damaging change. (Brown, 1994, p.33)

Knowledge, values and effectiveness

Knowledge provides the language to mount a critique of services and practice, and a value base provides direction and guidance in a complex and dynamic environment. The value base also allows us to ask questions of knowledge – the 'so what' questions which pertain to sensitivity about the impact of our actions on others and the social construction of the actions and policies of public services. Groupworkers have for many years been examining various models of groupwork and searching for non-coercive, anti-oppressive methods. In the present climate the need for a value base is particularly urgent, in order to bring groupworkers together in unison, despite or perhaps because of, the diversity of occupational roles and

settings they may occupy. This is particularly pertinent in an age where there is intense pressure on practitioners to demonstrate effectiveness in order to access scarce resources. At these times, it is tempting to assess effectiveness at a superficial level and there is strong evidence to suggest that outcomes (changes in particular) are prioritised over means and process. Evidence Based Practice (EBP) and the 'what works' paradigm mentioned earlier have their roots in the United States in medicine and was developed as a way of both managing clinical/medical/surgical risk and reducing litigation costs in what is a predominantly private health system. In this country the evidence based movement has seen a number of repositories set up with government backing, such as the Campbell Collaboration and Cochrane Collaboration, and the emergence of a new research methodology (systematic review) aimed at producing robust recommendations, if not rules about 'what works' for practitioners.

> Like the Third Way, the evidence-based approach relies on top-down social engineering, the power of the expert over the lay person, and on the prestige of official science and programmes for social improvement in order to overcome the resistances of identity, locality, particularism, idiosyncrasy, or creativity. It insists that its methods are objective and scientific and that they work for progress and social welfare. It sets little store on democracy or service user involvement .... (Jordan and Jordan, 2000, p.76)

Evidence based practice has spread very quickly to social work and social care via probation and youth justice, and has impacted strongly on child protection and practice with children and young people who are looked after. In groupwork, this shift has led to the development of programmes for both adults and young offenders aimed solely at addressing behaviours which are perceived as anti-social or criminal.

> Groupwork is seen as an effective method of intervention and the prescribed groupwork programmes have been shown to reduce offending behaviour by between 10% and 20% (Lipton, 1998). Cognitive behavioural methods predominate as they score highly in meta-analyses of what worked. Consequently groupwork programmes are increasingly prescriptive in their attempt to replicate all the elements and principles of the What Works ideology. (Dixon, 2000, p.53)

What is absent here is the critique that knowledge and values could bring to the debate about the nature of measuring effectiveness in such short term, goal oriented ways. The development and growth of programmes (working in groups) with pragmatic and utilitarian priorities shows little evidence of critical analysis or recognition of the potential harm or discrimination of these group experiences. Furthermore, the groups are most likely to be run or managed by staff who have had little or no training in the groupwork which might equip them with the skills needed to mount this critique and evaluate their practice effectively. The requirements for running these groups suggest low expectations of leaders, since essentially, each session and its activities (and evaluation) is set out precisely, requiring workers to simply follow orders unquestioningly. They are neither required, nor encouraged to reflect on whether their work has a value base or is ethically sound. More disturbing, perhaps is the emerging idea that the search for evidence on which to base effective practice is beginning to narrow the range and scope of groupwork to those approaches which are easy to replicate in group after group, and easy to evaluate using positivist methodologies focus on outcomes rather than process.

Current trends

As Liz Dixon has pointed out (2000), cognitive behavioural methods are becoming the dominant method of intervention, simply because their effectiveness is easier to assess using methods which are recognised as 'gold standard' and where systematic review methodology ranks these methods as providing the best form of evidence. The current dominant models require critical appraisal, as well as evaluation from the perspective of effectiveness, to identify the underlying assumptions that are being made about methods, the nature of change and the responsibilities and rights of the individual. These methods include programmes based loosely on the 12 step programmes established by Alcoholics Anonymous which tackle addictions, group education programmes that focus for example, on changing parenting behaviour and groupwork programmes which have adopted a medical model using diagnosis and treatment orientations. All of these (and variations on these themes) are to be found in a variety of settings, voluntary and

statutory and are implemented by people from a range of occupations including nurses, therapists, child care workers, drug and substance abuse workers and social workers.

The emphasis on social control and social engineering, implicit in the programmes mentioned here and their application, is obvious, but so far has attracted little direct critical comment from academics or practitioners, although it is an area of practice which would readily benefit from ethical scrutiny. Dixon (2000, pp.46-48) lists growth in groups intervening to change behaviours in the following areas:

- Offending behaviours
- Drink driving
- Anger management
- Sex offenders
- Domestic violence perpetrators
- Prison inmates

Added to this list could be programmes addressing sex offending behaviour and child abuse, but the point is that it is behaviour rather than individuals which are being targeted here, and that often participants are compelled to take part. While the issue of working with involuntary participants is not new to groupwork (see for example, Behroozi, 1991 and Levin, 2006) there is a need to examine this as a concept in a new light in its present context. I shall return to this point later in this paper as one of the ethical issues about groupwork practice which requires further critical and reflective analysis.

Research evidence and groupwork practice

An even bigger problem in terms of challenging the inappropriate use of groups and group methods is the paucity of evaluative studies and research in groupwork practice. Michael Preston-Shoot conducted a literature search around the theme of evaluation in groupwork and found, for example, that out of five years' worth of activity in the journal Groupwork, only five articles had been published which focussed on research and evaluation. Preston-Shoot's amusing paper, using a Star Trek metaphor to explore the research and evaluation in groupwork

practice, makes some useful suggestions about where we might find both the evidence of effectiveness in groupwork and also the tools to provide this evidence in a rigorous way. He urges the groupworker community to strengthen the position of groupwork as a method of intervention 'within modernised services' and recommends a 'shift of mind' in relation to the place that evaluation occupies within groupwork practice.

> This shift of mind will require self-examination, as groupworkers reflect on their attitudes to travelling in this space, review groupwork's conceptual base against emerging evidence, and consider the standards for effective knowledge – informed practice by which they should be held accountable. It will also require participative openness with other travellers, debating what counts as evidence, as change, as approved practice, and as success. (Preston-Shoot, 2004, p.34)

My own interpretation of this paper is that evaluation is about more than outcomes and methods, and needs to be tempered by a sensitivity to reflective practice, to engagement with other stakeholders, including group participants, and to our conceptual framework. This must include an appreciation of the ethics of groupwork and a consideration of the value base upon which practice should be founded. His recommendation of a review of the conceptual framework which underpins groupwork should, of course, be taken up as a matter of urgency, for the benefit of both social work practitioners and numerous other professions who engage in groupwork currently. This should provide us with a framework for the development of methodologies which address our concerns abut equity and social justice in a robust and unifying manner.

Ethical Issues

Defining effectiveness: Who defines?

In groupwork, participants should be the primary source of information about effectiveness and traditionally have been seen as responsible for setting the goals and the tasks that a particular group engages in, to a large extent. In the current climate where goals may be set by those outside of participants and the group leaders (by the government, for

example, or a particular service) we need to consider the impact of this on group dynamics and on participants' perceptions of themselves as 'behavioural problems'. In addition, measuring effectiveness has taken on a formulaic structure in order to comply with the requirements of evidence – based practice and to provide guidance about 'what works' for particular social problems.

Ownership: Whose group is it?

Current and emerging practice in groupwork raises issues about who shapes the identity of groups and more importantly perhaps, who holds power in groups. This issue of power and ownership is also ripe for reappraisal from an ethical stance.

Consent/nature of participation

With so many groups taking place where there may be an element of coercion, some more direct than others, the question of participation in groups needs to be re-assessed as a measure of effectiveness as well as a question of good groupwork practice. This also relates to the issue of voluntary/involuntary participation and how this is defined by groupwork methods and activities. There is some evidence of real sensitivity to the needs of participants who are compelled to attend group activities, as seen in the thoughtful article by Levin (2006). However, one is struck more by the absence of a dialogue in the literature about the nature of participation and the accommodation of individual needs within prescribed programmes.

> It may be necessary to compel people to change: it may ultimately prove to have been for their benefit and they may come to see and accept this… acceptance based upon a true understanding of what is involved. (Douglas, 1995, p. 146)

There is an unspoken assumption that groupwork is a suitable method of intervention for everyone, throughout the lifespan, since the group's effectiveness is judged on the basis of an identified problem that groups can fix, rather than on a careful assessment of the needs and wishes of the individual which might be met through a range of means,

some of which are more suitable than others. Groupwork should not be seen as a panacea for all problems and because it is a powerful change agent, should be used with caution with those who are vulnerable. It should be remembered that groups are an essentially human experience. By this I mean that they are the milieu that we grow up in and often live in as adults, as well as the teams and organisations we choose to work in and also the groups to which we choose to belong for recreational and other reasons. They can provide us with both positive, growth enhancing experiences and negative and traumatic ones and therefore, the group may not be an appropriate or timely intervention for those whose past experiences of groups may have been poor. For as Brown notes: 'High quality groupwork involves taking an interest in both what people experience and what they achieve' (1994, p.28).

Measuring change: Short and longer term benefits, the individual versus group, and issues about 'added value'

The current trend outlined here has been around measuring the effectiveness around precisely defined outcomes (often defined outside the group) in the short term. This is a denial of the notion that small positive experiences in groups can have a cumulative effect in terms of enabling individuals to develop skills, confidence and self esteem within a safe environment and transfer these skills, experiences and feelings from one group to another. Viewing the individual as unique, with a history and a range of previous experiences is important, as is recognising that people have futures and are capable of change and transformation in the longer term. This requires groupworkers to canvass and accept the views and experiences of participants as a paramount source of evidence, where effectiveness is defined and measured by them, not others. A related issue worthy of consideration is the potential conflict between individual achievement and change in the group as a whole. Current evaluation focuses on group changes in specific behaviours but may take no account of other benefits and changes that individuals may identify for themselves. Preston-Shoot (1987) argues that the individual cannot be divorced from the social context within which they are placed, and that we should be wary of focussing on deficits and pathologies allegedly located within an individual. This value position is helpful in terms of conceptualising

effectiveness beyond the narrow confines of addressing behaviours and solving social problems through the individual in groups.

> Groupwork should not become a blanket focus on personal pathology or social action; rather it should address both each individual and the systems within which they function. In other words, individual difficulties or circumstances have a public, political context: economic circumstances have individual repercussions and interpersonal dynamics have private and structural components. Groupworkers need to consider each. (Preston-Shoot, 1987, p.28)

Conclusions

Readers will no doubt be able to identify further issues which would benefit from critical appraisal from an ethical/values stance, rather that a pragmatic focus on practice.. Further comments and dialogue on these issues are indeed welcomed because they can only advance the practice and the knowledge base for groupwork. I set out at the beginning to try to establish a number of ethical principles, which has proved difficult to achieve. What is needed is a conceptual framework which considers how groupwork is understood to create opportunities for change and growth, across a diverse and varied field. Given the growth in diversity, it now seems more realistic to bring people together to share ideas about the ethical stance/position of groupwork in the context of the demands and requirements that are placed on groupwork today. I am therefore proposing the development of a consensus view, a baseline for acceptable practice, based upon the values and ethics of a wide range of professions and settings. Groupwork and its participants has suffered because this dialogue has been absent in recent years and importantly, has not always informed the newer developments that have been described here.

I would like to conclude this discussion by summarising a number of points that have arisen here. Firstly, the term 'evidence' for groupwork cannot be defined in ways that are divorced from values and principles which emphasise respect for the individual and the context within which the group takes place. Secondly, the uniqueness of the individual and the potential for the replication of structural disadvantage and oppression

through group experience also seems to have become insignificant and we need to pay particular attention to issues of equity and social justice. Finally, I would like to give the last word to Oded Manor (2000), who reminded us some time ago that groupwork is a moral activity, which requires each of us to consider our relationships with participants, the agencies and organisations we work in and above all the societal context which frames our work and our relationships.

> … it is vital to remember that the groupwork we are talking about here is grounded in certain moral values. Honesty with group members, the dignity of the individual, meaningful working alliances, demystifying power and sharing it, promoting the value of diverse cultures, upholding the contributions made by minorities, - these are some of the moral values that have guided groupwork practice for decades. (Manor, 2000, p.xiii)

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