

Editorial

Taking stock

In taking stock of this journal for an entry in the forthcoming *International Encyclopaedia of Groupwork* (edited by Alex Gitterman and Bob Salmon) I decided to undertake an analysis of a sample of articles and authors appearing in the journal. I took the most recent period (2000-06) to consider who is writing for the journal and on what kinds of topic.

The journal's claim to be an international journal is supported by the breakdown of the origin of articles appearing in 2000-06 in which slightly more than half of all articles originated from outside the UK (Table 1). Not surprisingly, the English-speaking world dominates, though two of the five Canadian articles were written by French Canadian authors. Notably absent are articles from continental Europe (just two in this period) and the developing nations of Africa and Asia. It is perhaps an unexpected finding that, with eight different countries represented in the origins of articles, not one of these 71 articles had a cross-national authorship. Though many showed collaborations between academics and practitioners, between different professions and with researchers and students, there was no example of people collaborating together to write about groupwork across nations.

In addition to its international base, the journal is also keen to make strong links with groupwork practice across professions and disciplines. Our strapline reads 'An Interdisciplinary Journal for Working with Groups'. The breakdown of the 115 authors who have contributed the 71 articles between 2000-06 indicates that, whilst social work is the largest single professional grouping (58% of all authors), 42% were written by people whose background is not social work. The largest non-social work contributions come from psychologists, therapists and consultants, and health care professionals. The number of 'not knowns' is due to the fact that 'Notes on Contributors' stopped at Volume 10 (1998), so some of the details of authors' backgrounds are not known. We have reinstated 'Notes on Contributors' from this issue.

There has been a push to encourage practitioners to publish and Table 2 shows that 21% of the 115 authors who have appeared in the last five volumes of *Groupwork* are practitioners. It would be interesting to compare this with the figures for the first eleven volumes from 1988-99. Although the views of group members are often present in the text of the article, none of the articles in 2000-06 included a group member as a co-author. The peer-reviewed nature of the journal means that some leeway might be needed to encourage writing for publication by people who are likely not to be used to this process. Other journals, for example *Social Work Education*, have produced special issues guest-edited by service users.

The quantity and provenance of articles appearing in *Groupwork* are easily counted. What requires more interpretation is the kinds of topic these articles focus on. Clearly, they are all about groupwork; but beyond that, what are their main themes? Table 3 is an attempt to code the 71 articles appearing in 2000-06 using only one, and occasionally, two principal categories for each article. For example, many articles included an element of evaluation, but are only coded under 'research and evaluation' if this was the primary focus. There are 84 items coded, so just 13 of the articles were coded twice. Although the categories can be contested, I hope they paint a reasonably accurate picture of the range of topics that have appeared in *Groupwork* in recent years. Also included are the themed issues that have appeared since the journal began (Table 4).

Groupwork offers a commonality for people who, in all other respects, are separated by borders of all kinds - national, professional, specialism, setting, etc. Those who have practised groupwork or researched, taught and written about it, know that it has a special potential to transform the rhetoric of anti-oppressive practice and empowerment into reality. Groupwork is an eternal force, so it is with some interest that when we turn to the title of the very first article in Volume 1, Issue 1, 'Groupwork with Hard to Reach Clients', the only terminology that would not now be contested is 'groupwork'! The terms 'hard to reach' and 'client' are highly contested and only 'groupwork' endures.

In our first editorial Pam Trevithick and I noted that we

start from a position of wanting to publish your article and we give what help we can in respect of those articles which initially fall short of standards for publication' (Vol 14, 1, 2004, p7)

Journals often focus on the authors and contributors, yet the whole purpose of a journal is the *reader*. It is difficult to know who reads *Groupwork*; the list of subscriptions shows a mix of institutions and individuals around the world, but tells us nothing about how useful the journal is, nor the extent to which it is used. As more issues of the journal go on line we will get a better idea of its impact, at least through the numbers of citations. However, this tells us only about the academic referencing to the journal and little about how groupworkers make use of what they read.

It is common for the state of groupwork to be discussed rather like a tide that ebbs and flows, with something of a retreat over the last few decades and always the hope that the tide is currently turning. There is no doubt that the profile of groupwork does seem to fluctuate, yet groupworkers know that group processes are essential to almost every aspect of human endeavour. Groups are an inescapable part of our lives, personal and professional, and knowledge of group processes a key to harnessing collective energies and creativity. Whether 'social groupwork' is in or out of fashion, *groupwork* will never cease to fascinate and energise, and learning about groups and groupwork in the pages of *Groupwork* journal will continue to contribute to our growing knowledge and enthusiasm. Journals like *Groupwork* play an essential part in developing the evidence base for groupwork, building theory and publicising good practice.

Table 1
Articles in *Groupwork* (2000-06)

| Origin of article | number | % |
|-------------------|--------|----|
| UK | 35 | 49 |
| US | 20 | 28 |
| Canada | 5 | 7 |
| Australia | 4 | 6 |
| China | 4 | 6 |
| Ireland | 1 | |
| Finland | 1 | |
| Netherlands | 1 | |
| Total | 71 | |

Table 2
The profile of authors in *Groupwork* (2000-06)

| Category | Number | % |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----|
| Total | 115 ¹ | |
| Sole author articles: | 42 | 59 |
| Co-authored articles: | 19 | 27 |
| Articles by three or more: | 10 | 14 |
| Female: | 67 | 58 |
| Male: | 48 | 42 |
| Academics: | 78 | 68 |
| Practitioners: | 24 | 21 |
| Managers: | 8 | 7 |
| Students: | 2 | |
| Other: | 3 | |
| <i>Profession</i> ² | | |
| Social work: | 67 | 58 |
| Psychology (clinical/educational) | 10 | 9 |
| Therapy/consultancy | 9 | 8 |
| Nursing, health care, medicine | 8 | 7 |
| Youth, community, probation | 6 | 5 |
| School teaching, education | 5 | 4 |
| not known | 10 | 9 |

1. Of whom 16 appear more than once

2. Only one author's job was described specifically as 'Groupworker'

Table 3

Article topics in *Groupwork* (2000-06)

Group methods and approaches 21 (30%)
new technology 5; social action 5; art 2; culture 2; critical incident debriefing 1; evaluative method 1; lifegames 1; music 1; narrative therapy 1; pre-group methods 1; sculpts 1

Mental health 10

Children and families 9
parenting 5; play 2; ADHD 1; bereavement 1

Research and evaluation 8

Education and training 7

Adults 5
older people 3; learning disability 1; resiliency 1

Groupwork knowledge and theory 4
developmental stages 3; knowledge base 1

Youth work / criminal justice 4

Group leadership 3

Health 3
promotion 2; palliative care 1

Conference reports 2

Women's groups 2
domestic abuse 1; child abuse 1

Community of practice 1

Ethics 1

Group supervision 1

Involuntary group members 1

Men's groups 1

Self-help group 1

Table 4
Special issues

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 2.3 (1989) | Groupwork in Europe (Ken Heap) |
| 3.2 (1990) | Child Sexual Abuse (Allan Brown and Andrew Kerlake) |
| 4.1 (1991) | Groupwork with Offenders (Allan Brown and Brian Caddick) |
| 5.3 (1992) | Groupwork in Ireland (Robbie Gilligan and John Pinkerton) |
| 6.2 (1993) | Bereavement and Loss (Lynne Muir) |
| 7.2 (1994) | Groupwork with Women (Claire Wintram) |
| 8.2 (1995) | Groupwork in Education (Harold Marchant) |
| 9.2 (1996) | Groupwork and Research (Dave Ward) |
| 11.3 (1999) | Groupwork Across the Disciplines (Oded Manor) |
| 12.1 (2000) | Groupwork Across the Disciplines (Oded Manor) |
| 13.3 (2003) | Groupwork in Mental Health (Oded Manor and Jerome Carson) |
| 14.2 (2004) | Groupwork and Social Action (Dave Ward) |
| 17.1 (2007) | In-patient Groupwork (Jonathan Radcliffe, Katja Hajek and Jerome Carson) |

In this issue

We have four excellent articles in this issue of the journal which, between them, reflect the diversity demonstrated in the facts and figures in Tables 1-4. Maidment and Crisp, two Australian social work academics consider the group processes in an exciting educational use of the social phenomenon of speed dating. They present two different uses of this method, and demonstrate how factors which are usually considered to hinder group process (large groups and a sense of urgency) can be harnessed to positive use. Using a metaphor from 'romance' in a classroom setting unleashed students' energies and enthusiasm, and it also captured the imagination of the group facilitators. The authors encourage others to try this method in classroom settings so that we can develop a body of knowledge about its use.

Mary Larkin, writing from an English perspective, considers the role of carers groups in terms of the concept of social integration. Her article is based on her doctoral research into the group experiences of 37 former carers, twenty of whom had belonged to carers' groups during the period that they were caring. She considers the ways in which carers' groups offered four kinds of support - emotional, instrumental, appraisal and

informational. There are interesting lessons for those planning groups to consider, when offering the group to potential individual members, what *kind* of support they are looking for and whether the group is likely to meet their particular needs. The author also exhorts us, as groupworkers, to consider the benefits of groups for people *after* their caring role has finished.

Staying in England, but moving professions to Occupational Therapy, we have a fascinating account of community publishing with people with learning difficulties. In 'Voices Talk, Hands Write', Nick Pollard explains how the group supported people with learning difficulties not just to write, but also to publish. The article charts an activist group which lobbies for its membership and the development of a *group* narrative. The potential conflict between the research process and the main objectives of the group itself are common to all those engaged in groupwork research. The significance of community support and volunteers is highlighted by this account.

Finally, we have an article from the United States which first appeared in the journal *Social Work with Groups*. We have a reciprocal arrangement with this groupwork journal and occasionally articles that have appeared in the one are reproduced in the other. In 'The Art of Group Work Practice with Manualized Curricula' Maeda J. Galinsky, Mary A. Terzian and Mark W. Fraser confront a universal dilemma in groupwork practice and one that is growing as the use of structured groupwork programmes grows. The authors develop a carefully considered argument, in which the use of manuals is seen to be complementary to the use of spontaneous group processes. This attempt at a reconciliation is a welcome challenge to the prevailing polarised positions and the authors make a convincing case sensitively.

Future special issues

As Table 4 showed, there have been 13 special issues of the journal. We are planning two further special editions in coming volumes. Dave Ward, (Professor at De Montfort University) is guest editing an issue which will be themed on 'Groupwork in management and organisational change'. Jonathan Parker (Professor at Bournemouth University) is guest editing an issue on 'Groupwork and older people'. Both guest editors

have put out a call for proposals; please see the notices on the following pages, and the journal's website for details. These are important, but relatively neglected topics, and we look forward to a good response.

Mark Doel
Co-editor

Call for papers

Themed issue:

Groupwork in management and organisational change

Guest Editor: Professor Dave Ward

In the course of their careers, groupworkers frequently move into management or consultancy and development roles. How often do they, then, bemoan any management training they attend and the received literature on management and organisational change, for failing to take into account what they have learned and 'know' as groupworkers, about how groups work and how groups should be managed and led? Alternatively, they may feel that groupwork knowledge and skills are substantially replicated albeit within a different academic and professional context and discourse.

Does this ring bells with you?

The purpose of this special edition is to explore the significance of groupwork for processes and practices in management and organisational change. We would welcome theoretical papers, case studies and critical and reflective accounts of experiences in practice. Professor Dave Ward has agreed to coordinate and edit this special issue.

If you would like to contribute or to discuss an idea, please let Dave Ward know as soon as possible. He would be very happy to discuss ideas for contributions in advance. Submissions will go through the journal's normal refereeing process. *Please send proposals or contact Dave by 29 February 2008.*

Address and contact details for the Editor of this
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Call for papers

Themed issue: *Groupwork and older people*

Guest Editor: Professor Jonathan Parker

The world's population is ageing. This increases the need for opportunities to socialise, to develop a sense of community, continuity and enjoyment for many people. It also creates demands for older people to feel useful and to make a contribution to society. Importantly, our ageing societies result in greater numbers experiencing physical and mental health needs. Groupworkers have an especially valuable role in contributing to and enriching the lives of older people in a variety of settings and circumstances from providing support and information, facilitating member-led groups to therapeutic groups.

Are you a groupworker experienced in working with older people?

The purpose of this special edition is to explore the creativity, value and significance of groupwork in working with older people. We would welcome theoretical papers, case studies and critical and reflective accounts of experiences in practice. Papers that address issues of cultural competence in groupwork with older people will be especially welcome. Professor Jonathan Parker has agreed to coordinate and edit this special issue.

If you would like to contribute or to discuss an idea, please let Jonathan Parker know as soon as possible. He would be very happy to discuss ideas for contributions in advance. Submissions will go through the journal's normal refereeing process. ***Please send proposals or contact Jonathan by 29 February 2008.***

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