

Long Island Institute
for Group Work With
Children and Youth
North Shore Child & Family
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HUH ?!?



a newsletter about working
with children and youth in groups

Volume 3. Number 4.

★ Bonus Survey Supplement Issue ★

Fall - 1998

From the Editor

This Issue of HUH?!? contains a special feature. The Long Island Institute on Group Work with Children and Youth has followed up on its study, "A Sense of Isolation or Belonging: Building Bridges Through Group Involvement" (North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center, 1997) with a survey of local executive directors and program coordinators of agencies serving children and youth. Our purpose was to find out if these leaders value groups for young people and whether or not the job applicant pool appear to be competent group workers.

Our goal is to influence local colleges and universities. We want them to know that children and youth agency employers are looking for new hires with group work knowledge and skill. Prospective students, consumers of higher education, must be informed about which colleges and universities provide good group work education that includes a specific and in-depth focus on practice with children and youth. Students need to know that employers will be more likely to hire those with a solid background in group work. A solid background means informed course work and relevant field work, teachers who know and can teach group work, and field instructors who know and can supervise group work practice.

Students who plan to work with children and youth need know what is required to compete for jobs in the current market. The colleges and universities that offer group work education that includes more than a cursory focus on children and youth, will attract more of these students as they become aware of the realities of the job market.

The Long Island Institute on Group Work with Children and Youth invites you to participate in this action research process by extending this study across the US and Canada. Following are the survey introduction and questions. You can type this information onto your letterhead and encourage leaders in local agencies in your community to complete the survey.

This is a worthwhile, and do-able action research project that all subscribers and readers of HUH?!? can participate in. Even one response will help make the case. Won't you think about participating.

Please write to me and let me know if you'd like to participate. If you agree, I'd like your survey results by January 30, 1999. Of course, once collected, you are free (and encouraged) to use them for your own purposes in raising consciousness locally.

LET'S SHAKE THINGS UP.
IT'S FUN → → → → →

Andy

The Mission of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth is: To promote and enhance effective group work practice with children and youth through advocacy, education, and collegial support. **HUH?!?** is the Institute's quarterly newsletter dedicated to providing information, inspiration and support for anyone working with young people

☐ SURVEY INTRODUCTION AND QUESTIONS ☐

We are interested in advocating for better education and training for professionals who work with children and youth in groups. As a local leader, your input is essential in helping us to convince the colleges and universities of the importance of this course work. As an agency that offers group services to children and youth would you please answer these three questions and return this letter in the enclosed envelope:

1. In hiring do you look for group work training and/or experience?

Yes No

2. Are you satisfied with the applicant pool specifically as related to their competency in group work with children and adolescents?

Yes No

3. Your personal feelings on the importance of group work for children and youth will be most helpful when we make our case to the colleges and universities. Would you please make a short statement that we could use for this end:

Finally, ask for their name and title and agency affiliation. See the enclosed supplement for our results of a survey of 20 local leaders.



Looking Back...A Reminiscence From College, to Camp, to Life ... by Roselle Kurland, Ph.D.

*This is the eighth
feature in a
continuing series.*

I had no idea what group work was until the summer after I graduated from college and went to work at University Settlement Camp. I'd worked at camps before, during each of the summers of college. Although the camps I'd worked at were supposedly top-notch, with incredible physical facilities and equipment, I'd emerge each summer saying to myself, "Camp should be good. But if I had kids I'd never send them here." I could not have articulated at that point what I believed to be "wrong" with those camps - just a vague but strong sense that something was missing.

University Settlement Camp was a wonderful revelation. Its physical facilities, though certainly quite fine, did not compare to those at the other camps at which I'd worked. What was different was the philosophy, the values, and the approach to working with children, all of which were shaped by social work. Here was a place where the kids really mattered. Here, the expectation of staff was that they really TALKED with the kids. And here was group work at its very best - where issues were addressed and decisions were made by the bunk group, where

each group member was important, and where each was expected to be a part of and to contribute to a group that was larger than him/herself alone. Here was a place where groups and group work were central.

So much was new to me that first summer. I learned an extraordinary amount about how to work with children and with groups. The work was hard and I was totally involved in it. Happily, I discovered that the approach really fit with me, with who I was and what I believed (again, not very well articulated at that point in my life, but certainly very much "in my bones"). I emerged from that summer with two strong feelings: first, if I had kids I WOULD send them here! And second, I wanted more - I wanted to return.

And return I did. Even though a career in journalism was my goal at that time, I managed to manipulate events so that many of my summers were spent working at camp. Each summer was filled with new challenges as my understanding of group work's potential grew. For me, the excitement and meaningfulness of the work increased steadily and as a result I thought more and more about

social work as what I wanted to do. And when I did go to social work school, I found myself constantly "seeing" my camp experiences in the practice principles espoused in books and classes on work with groups, work with individuals, community building, and supervision. Eventually, as a professional social worker I became director of the Settlement Camp.

I continue to value my experiences at camp, even today. In the group work classes that I teach at Hunter, I often share camp "stories" when they are relevant, as they often are, to the group work concepts that we are addressing. Students groan - good naturedly - when I start a sentence with "one time at camp..." but I know they like the stories and that they do find them relevant. Those "stories" are all about mutual aid, building on strengths, the purposeful use of activity, stages of group development, the problem-solving process, dealing with conflict - the heart and soul of group work practice.

It amazes me today that the degree to which camp can reflect good social work practice goes unrecognized by most social workers. I have seen social work

faculty, for example, recommend rejection of an applicant for admission who has several summers of work at a camp because they see that applicant as having "no relevant social work experience." On the other hand, I find it painful to acknowledge that few camps exist today that embody the approach to work with children and with groups that I was fortunate to be a part of at University Settlement Camp. There is a vicious circle here - few social workers understand the values and potential of camp and, in turn, few camps understand the value and potential of social work and of social group work. How do we begin to turn that around?

Roselle Kurland, Ph.D., is Professor, Hunter College School of Social Work Co-Author of Teaching Methods A Method Course in Social Work With Groups (Council on Social Work Education) and Editor of Social Work With Groups.



BOOK BRIEFS

REVIVING OPHELIA: SAVING THE SELVES OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS by Mary Pipher, 1994, Ballantine Books, New York, 304 pages, \$12.95 paperback.

Reviving Ophelia is one of the most eloquent books written about adolescents. This classic work will be appreciated by parents, professionals and young people alike. Although the primary focus is on young adolescent girls, this book is equally valuable for those concerned with boys. Pipher's principle thesis is that American girls are losing their "true selves" as they move from pre-adolescence to young adolescence. Through compelling illustrations we are able to see how multi-dimensional androgynous nine and ten year old girls are transformed into one-dimensional adolescents consumed with physical appearance and vulnerable to the mine fields fueled by what Pipher refers to as the "junk values of our mass culture."

Clinical skill in dealing with the complex problems of drug abuse, eating disorders, self mutilation, sexuality, violence, family upheaval, and more are described in a down-to-earth style that belies the sophistication behind Pipher's interventions. Using her own memories, the author reveals herself to the reader. We learn about a country girl from Nebraska who was shielded from most of what she immerses herself in today, but not all. She describes aspects of her own difficult transition through adolescence, highlighting the universality of her argument that emphasizes the power of mass culture on children and families.

Reviving Ophelia is an inspiring and hopeful tome - one of a kind and a must read for anyone concerned with young people.

From the Steering Committee

Last October I was fortunate to become the Executive Director of the Coalition on Child Abuse and Neglect. However, in doing so I left a position as Executive Director of a small youth agency in the Town of Huntington which provided a significant level of group work for adolescents.

This move brought me to an agency that focussed on the needs of abused and neglected children but did not offer any groups for them. As a firm believer in the group work process and having spent eight years seeing it successfully implemented at my prior agency, I was determined to bring group work to CCAN.

As Executive Director I enjoy the luxury of being able to "make things happen" without having to go through a long chain of command. When our Child Victim Advocate presented me her concept for a new program that involved group work with children, I jumped at the opportunity and welcomed her enthusiasm. The Advocate's responsibilities include support for child victims of sexual abuse. She was eager to pull together a group of her child clients, tap into their strengths, give them an opportunity to share with other children their experiences, and ultimately develop a 'children helping children' project. One goal of the group would be to create a

document that describes the legal process and the experience of going through it, through the eyes of a child. We would then be able to share it with new children who come to our program so that they can learn about the process from a child's perspective and, hopefully, reduce the feelings of fear and isolation.

We were successful in securing a donation for this project from TARGET and will be implementing it shortly! I am pleased to have been able to start the process of establishing group work services at a new agency. It is my hope that this is just the beginning and I encourage all administrators who service youth to make a commitment to do the same!

Cynthia Cavallo

In the Trenches

I sit at my desk feeling defeated. Another session of a seventh grade boys group in a middle school has ended. Five boys brought together to help them make and keep friends. I sent out two boys today because they got into a fist fight. The rest of the group took it in stride; I'm the one who seemed most shaken up by the incident.

Before this group meets each week I notice a knot in the pit of my stomach. I secretly hope that maybe the boys will have a test during our group period, or an assembly. A few could be absent, or they may not have gotten their passes to come! Usually all

five members show up at my door. And the knot starts to grow.

I do try to plan something each week to add some structure to this often chaotic bunch. I bring in a video camera, we interview each other, sometimes plan a party. I wonder if my planning is to help the group achieve its goals or it's to bind my own anxiety. I think "What are we doing? Where are we going? What am I doing? Why do they like this group so much? I wish I liked it too..."

I am feeling guilty because I yelled at J. who sort of started the fight. At a meeting later that day I learn that J., a special education student due to a severe hearing impairment, wants desperately to fit in with his peers but just doesn't quite know how. He is often teased because of his inappropriate and infantile behavior. J. is also a talented artist and a conscientious student who works diligently in class and at home to overcome his disability. All I had seen was how annoying and provocative he constantly seemed to be. J.'s struggles, his pain, and his talent and strengths were now more apparent to me and I hoped that the group could witness these other parts of him.

The next week all five boys entered my office. The knot in my stomach was still there but I saw the group a little differently. I found out that the two boys who had fought with each other had made up that same day. J. had apologized on his own initiative. The group members were laughing, joking with one another, jockeying for attention and power and connecting in important and meaningful ways. It was still a bit loose and loud for my taste, but I could see how important these relationships were to the boys. I understood a little better what we were doing. I hoped that I could keep this perspective after the next group crisis!

Joanne Ditchik-Stutz

Decision Making

With teeth gritted, the group groped and grappled until they gradually discovered common ground.

To gain a grip on the grueling task ahead, they agreed to grind coffee to be served with granulated sugar in green cups.

by Andrew Malekoff

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Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children & Youth

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 Cynthia Cavallo (Suffolk County)

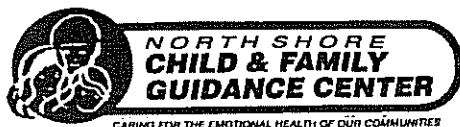
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TIPS for: RULE SETTING IN THE GROUP

People who work with kids in groups are often interested in the how, when, and what of limit setting. It is always important to be clear about agency policy and culture as it relates to what a group is and is not allowed to do (e.g. regarding the use of space and time). Once this is understood the group worker might assess whether there is room for flexibility or negotiation as needed. The group members themselves might become involved in advocating for a change of some kind. In addition it is a good idea to set minimal ground rules that include no physically destructive behavior towards others or property. Beyond these basics, group members should discuss and explore what they think should and shouldn't go in the group (e.g. establishing a guidelines for emotional safety and security).

TIP: Make sure that the group has a chance to get acquainted and oriented to each other, the setting, the worker and the purpose. Once a basic level of trust (*i.e.* "This place is not so bad after all, I think I'll hang in.") it is a good time to more formally explore norms and establish rules. This can be a formal (creating a list) or informal process of mutual understanding. Interestingly, kids are often more rigid when setting rules than adults. Our job is to help them to negotiate limits at the same time they are negotiating closeness. Be clear: a democratic process is not about letting group members do whatever they want. And remember: There is a difference between being authoritative and being authoritarian. Young people are more likely to respond to the former.

HUH?!? is the quarterly newsletter of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth, a program of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; 480 Old Westbury Road; Roslyn Hgts., NY 11577-2215; Phone: (516) 626-1971 • Fax: 626-8043. Executive Director: Marion Levine, ACSW; Director of Program Development and Newsletter Editor: Andrew Malekoff, ACSW. Newsletter Design and Layout: Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour. Participating Agencies: Coalition on Child Abuse & Neglect, Hempstead; Youth Directions and Alternatives, Huntington; Herricks School District; Sanctuary Project, Huntington; Plainedge School District; L.I. Chapter/Assoc. for Advancement of Social Work With Groups; L.I.Crisis Center, Bellmore. Copyright April 1, 1998/USA.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

20th Annual Symposium - Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups, October 15-18, 1998 at the Hotel Intercontinental, Miami, Florida. This year's theme is: "Strengthening Resiliency through Group Work." For more information call (305) 891-7518 or visit the home page on the world wide web: <http://dominic.barry.edu/~kelly/aaswg/symposia/miami.html>

Video Tape of the "A Sense of Alienation or Belonging: Building Bridges Through Group Involvement" conference is now available. The 23 minute video is available to HUH?!? subscribers for \$15 and \$25 for non-subscribers. This video is ideal for motivating the development of new groups in your agency and/or community. The video depicts an intergenerational, cross-cultural meeting using an integrated large- and small-group format to address the need for more and better groups for young people. Make checks payable and mail to North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; L.I. Institute for Group Work With Children & Youth; 480 Old Westbury Road; Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2215; Attn: Jane E. Yazdpour.

CONFERENCE FROM NSC&FGC: The Emotional Health of Young Children: *Old Ideas, New Research, Future Directions* - October 28, 1998 at the L.I. Marriott Hotel/Uniondale, NY. Keynoters: Michael Levine, Ph.D., Carnegie Corp. of N.Y.; Rebecca Shahmoon Shanok, Ph.D., Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services; Jane Knitzer, Ed.D., National Center for Children in Poverty. The cost is \$60 and this includes lunch and choice of workshop. Contact Jane Yazdpour at (516) 626-1971 for registration information.



L.I. INSTITUTE FOR GROUP WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH
Summary of Executive Directors and Program Coordinators
Impressions on Group Work Competence on Long Island: June 1998

→ **INTRODUCTION:**

The Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children and Youth distributed twenty questionnaires across Nassau and Suffolk County in the fall of 1997. Twenty responses were received between the months of December 1997 and March 1998.

The questionnaires were completed by program or executive directors of Nassau and Suffolk County social service agencies. This three-question survey is aimed to elicit feedback about the qualifications of applicants going into human services, specifically group work with children and adolescents.

Ninety-five percent of those who responded are looking to hire individuals who are trained and/or experienced in the field of group work. Ninety percent of the respondents are dissatisfied with the current application pool because those applicants are not experienced in group work with children and adolescents.

In their written responses, one hundred percent of those surveyed made reference to the importance of group work when dealing with children and youth. As stated by Maria Georgiou (Huntington Youth Bureau), "in my opinion, group work is one of the most effective tools for engaging and working on issues with children and youth in a group setting, children and youth can enhance their thinking and problem-solving skills, and have a safe place for sharing material that will be understood by others." Monica Harris (LIJ Family Consultation Center) responded that "Eighty percent of my agency's clients are in group treatment. I believe that for children and adolescents, group is the most effective means of reducing isolation, normalizing experiences, and developing a sense of trust and mutual sharing..."

Most of the respondents felt that more attention should be paid to this area of counseling at the university level. Joseph Smith (Long Beach Reach) states that "for the most part, graduates of social work and psychology programs have had little or no coursework and limited placement experience in group work, even when they have had experience working with children and youth. As a result, they are ill prepared to work effectively with a critical population in agencies and communities." Finally, Lori Ebbighausen (Nassau County Youth Board) responded that "the applicants that we see coming directly from college have limited to no actual group work experience. They do have exposure to theoretical concepts, but are challenged translating the theoretical to actual application."

The purpose of this data collection is to try to influence the universities to enhance their group work education, especially as it applies to children and youth.

→ **SURVEY RESULTS:**

Twenty responses were received between December 1997 and March 1998. Program or executive directors filled out the majority of the responses. Below is the data collected from this three-question survey.

1. In hiring do you look for group work training and/or experience?

Yes: 19/20 No: 1/20

Note: According to the above responses, the majority of the agencies who responded to the survey are looking to hire individuals who are trained and/or experienced in the field of group work.

2. Are you satisfied with the applicant pool specifically as related to their competency in group work with children and adolescents?

Yes: 1/20 No: 18/20 Somewhat: 1/20 (written in by respondent)

Note: The agencies that responded to this survey are not satisfied with the current application pool because those applicants are not experienced in group work with children and adolescents.

3. Your personal feelings on the importance of group work for children and youth will be most helpful when we make our case to colleges and universities. Would you please make a short statement that we could use for this end. Following are a sample of responses:

"Group work provides adolescents a place to be themselves and learn from each other, as well as, provide a 'safe haven' from the rest of the world."

Anthony Zenkus, Drug Worker; The Place in Northport

"Group leaders must be trained in order to facilitate this process properly. They must be attentive to the needs of individuals, as well as, the group as a whole. The leader must be familiar with the stages of the group process and be able to navigate the group through it." "Finding an applicant that is skilled in the other areas of social work and in group work should not be a happy accident. Too much takes place in the group environment to leave to chance."

Conrad Gardner, Project Director
Expressive Arts Project, HYBYDRI

"Group work is the most important vehicle for preventive work as well as treatment with children and adolescents. It is imperative that all professionals working with these populations be trained accordingly."

Susan Banco, CSW
Program Director - SID Jacobson JCC

"Not only is group work not taught on an academic level, but when it is taught, it is done so with a clinical focus. Group work with adolescents has proven to be the most effective in outreaching and engaging adolescents. Group work uses the power of peer influence to create change."

Karen Haber, Executive Director
Youth Directions & Alternatives

"Group work is an important treatment modality in working with child witnesses to domestic violence (age 6-teens). Its impact is powerful in numerous areas including: enhancing coping skills, reducing isolation, providing support, and relieving feelings of guilt and over-responsibility."

Alberta Rubin, ACSW
Nassau County Coalition Against Domestic Violence

"There seems to be a shortage of trained professionals in the area of children's clinical services and especially trained (and comfortable) in running groups."

Maria Cuadra, ACSW-R, CASAC
Executive Director, COPAY, Inc.

"Groups can have a powerful influence on the lives of isolated young people. The group provides a place where youth can overcome the sense of alienation and sometimes shame that comes from being 'different'. In the midst of an increasingly complicated environment. Youth needs safe places to work on problems, socialize with peers, or even just 'hang-out'."

Linda Leonard, Executive Director
Long Island Crisis Center

"As the executive director of a social work agency for the past twenty years, I have consistently observed the need for skilled group work practitioners. I support the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth in their effort to advocate for such training."

Barry Wilansky, Executive Director
Tempo Group, Inc.

→ **CONTACT PERSON:** Andrew Malekoff, ACSW (516) 626-1971

→ **AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY:** COPAY, Inc.; Expressive Arts Project, HYBYDRI; Family Service Association, Inc.; Five Towns Community Center, Inc.; Project PACE, Huntington Youth Bureau; Long Beach Reach, Inc.; Long Island Crisis Center; Long Island Jewish Family Consultation Center; Manhasset Community Day Center; Mineola Youth and Family Services; Nassau Counseling; Nassau County Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Nassau County Youth Board, Youth Adult Participation Project; North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center/The Place; Peninsula Counseling Center; The Place in Northport; SID Jacobson JCC; Tempo Group, Inc.; YES Community Counseling Center; Youth Directions and Alternatives.

→ **SURVEY DATA GATHERED AND COLLATED BY:** Aimee B. Colton, CSW, Steering Committee Member