

LONG ISLAND INSTITUTE FOR GROUP WORK WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH

HUH?!?

a newsletter about working with children and youth in groups

Volume 5. Number 2.

⊕ Fifth Year of Publication ⊕

Spring 2000

From the Editor

On October 29, 1999 the Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children and Youth held its first major conference. Entitled *The Power of Group Work with Kids: Across Settings and Disciplines*, the conference was held in Melville, NY. Attended by practitioners from throughout the New York metropolitan area, the conference was a great success. Roselle Kurland and Bernie Wohl framed the day with their opening and closing keynote addresses emphasizing social group work's dual focus of individual change and social reform. Kurland took a micro look at group work practice, differentiating group work from casework in a group. Wohl exhorted the audience of 150 to incorporate social goals into their group work with youth. Catherine Papell closed the day with remarks that reinforced the need to understand and address the context of our lives (see Papell's remarks on the subject later in this issue). Sandwiched between the keynoters were seven workshops on critical issues of the day including: bereavement,

gay and lesbian youth, race and ethnicity, chronic medical illness, street outreach, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse.

Among the post conference evaluations, the number one response to the question "How could the conference have been improved?" was "longer workshops and more workshops." And then there was the critique by one attendee who found a clever way to express his or her praise for the day, What I liked least about the conference was that "the parsley on the rice (served during lunch) was gritty."

I was particularly struck by two responses to the evaluation questions, "What did you like best about the conference?" and "What did you like least about the conference?" Here they are:

Liked best:

" Camaraderie about doing group work amongst colleagues and 'believers' of group work."

Liked least:

" Too much boosterism."

In my opening that day I told the story of my

first kids' group, six Mexican-American teenagers who called their group *Los Seis*, and used it to illustrate what I have learned over the past 25 years. Here's what I said,

"It has been 25 years since *Los Seis* and my belief in the value of good group experiences for kids has only grown, despite countless obstacles. In time I became a student and then a teacher of what was at first the product of an intuitive journey. As I continued the journey, later in graduate school and then in agency work I became disheartened to see so many talented people bailing out and abandoning group work with kids. But who could blame them. Higher education, with few notable exceptions, has failed. And there is little or no reliable support and supervision in most workplaces.

Too much of what passes as group work these

days is nothing more than curriculum-driven pseudo group work with little interaction amongst group members, no mutual aid, cookbook agendas, and canned exercises. The emphasis is on controlling kids, shoving education down their throats, and stamping out spontaneity and creativity. We must not stand by and let this happen.

Somewhere along the way I became a missionary of sorts, encouraging others to stay the course and attempting to demystify group work so that it could be more easily understood and purposefully practiced. And that is why I am here today. I hope that for many of us, today will be only the beginning of a long relationship."

"Boosterism?" I plead guilty, your honor.



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 in group settings.

Bravo! for *The Power of Group Work With Kids*

An All day Conference Held on October 29, 1999

*A Report from
a Member of the Steering and
Conference Committee and
Discussant on the Program - Dr.
Catherine P. Papell*

Friday, October 29, 1999 was a very special day on Long Island. An all-day Conference was attended by 250 people from Long Island who work with youth in groups, wherever kids come together -in schools, community programs and centers, social agencies, religious institutions, etc. . . . The Conference was prepared by the Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center. Andrew Malekoff, ACSW, CASAC is the coordinator of the Institute.

You who read this "newsletter about working with children and youth in groups", have seen the name of the Steering Committee of the Institute many times. They are a very wonderful group of professionals who, under the mentorship and tutelage of Andrew Malekoff, have become highly skilled and creative in the difficult, but so vital, work with boys and girls in their social life in groups. The Steering Committee members have gained a profound understanding of the importance of group life to children and youth and the knowledge and skills to bring kids together in groups or meet them in their natural settings. I am a member of the Steering Committee as a senior retired social work professional and co-chair of the Long Island Chapter

of the Association for the Advancement of Social Work in Groups (AASWG).

It was this Steering Committee that planned and presented the Conference on the *Power of Group Work with Kids Across Settings and Disciplines*. It must be noted that the full support of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center, Marion S. Levine, ACSW, its Executive Director/CEO, was available to make the Conference possible.

The Conference was opened with warm, sincere greetings by Marion Levine. Then followed Andrew Malekoff's Reminiscence about his wonderful experiences as a group worker with immigrant youth in Nebraska through which, in his inimitable way, he conveyed the importance and meaning of what this Conference was all about.

Professor Roselle Kurland from Hunter College School of Social Work was the morning Keynote Speaker, presenting a splendid overview of the professional knowledge, skills, and value base that is available to make group work with youth viable.

A choice of seven workshops followed, led by the members of the Steering Committee and guests, each focusing on the power of groups in working with children and adolescents around vital issues in their lives. The Workshops were as follows: "The Power of Group Work in Addressing the Needs of Children and

Adolescents with Chronic Medical Illness," led by Michelle Laser, ACSW; "Group Work with Children and Adolescents Who Have Experienced Loss," led by Joanne Ditchik-Stutz, CSW; "A Multiple-Family Group Work Approach to Confronting Adolescent Substance Abuse," led by Regina Barros, CSW and Christine Regan, CSW, CASAC; "Combating Adolescent Self-Hate and Bigotry Through Group Work," led by Irving M. Levine; "Working with Lesbian and Gay Youth in Groups," led by Andrew Peters, CSW; "Group Work Approach to Addressing Child Abuse and Neglect," led by Cynthia Cavallo, MS and Stephanie Nadvornik; and "Group Work in the Street: Outreach to Alienated Youth," led by Maureen O'Connor, MSW and Stacey Levin, CSW.

My focus in this column is on the afternoon presentations. The Luncheon Speaker was Bernie Wohl, retired Executive Director of Goddard-Riverside Community Center, who presented the Afternoon Keynote address with the theme that, in their group life, youth can experience being connected with their world with strength, responsibility, and hope. In presenting this theme, he related several exciting examples of youth taking action together about cruelty and injustice in their world as it had a direct effect on them.

One story was of the work of the youths of several Settlement houses who, with the help of their

group workers, organized three NIKE "sneaker give-back demonstrations" at NIKETOWN on 57th Street in New York City, protesting what they had learned about Nike's exploitation of children and adult workers in Asia and the high cost of Nike sneakers here. When a reporter said to a young girl demonstrator that Nike paid as much to their workers as other companies overseas, she replied that all those companies were bad but she didn't have their addresses or she would write and tell them so!

The group workers statement of principles of the NIKE Sneaker Give-back Project declared that "We strove to teach the youth about using a collective voice and community organizing as a way to gain power as an alternative to wearing expensive clothing."

In the words of Bernie Wohl: "We need to bring the power of group work to all of our kids ... to kids who live in a time and place where the

» » Continued on page 3.

Chaos Corner

*blood sucker in the corridor
get to class!
you've got no pass!
barks
mouthpiece
to
lifeorce,
waxing trans-parent
sleight-of-hand,
confounding
no one,
sucking
life
from
the corridor*

andy malekoff

» » Bravo! Continued from Page 2.
concept of mutual aid and common human needs is under attack, where individual responsibility has been besmirched to mean the death of concern for others, even the hatred of those who need the help of the caring world.

My part on the program was as a discussant to Bernie's inspiring address. I reflected on his statement that the workers "admitted it was hard-sledding to push outward from the personal to the social arena ... but they found that the kids grew in confidence and skill development in acting upon their grown-larger world."

Some of my Discussion follows: "Bernie has said that it is difficult to work with children and youth, to help them or guide them toward an enlarging relationship with self and their world. Why is the process of human grouping so difficult, so frustrating to members and leaders alike, so often a failure in achieving longed for goals and meeting unmet needs? Could it be because a group represents the very essence of our humanity, a societal form in which we humans, who need others as deeply as we need our very selves, are eternally striving for relationship - for filling our need not to be alone, for companionship, for caring for love. Whether it be a family, a gang, a club, a committee, a council - whether it be very large or very small - organized spontaneously or intentionally - whether it be successful, fulfilling or a failure - a group inherently represents some kind of human need that

one cannot achieve alone, and some kind of human search for safety, acceptance, and belonging."

"A group represents human togetherness. It is not that the togetherness is created for its members by the group, rather it is the other way around. Members must create the group, and if they are unable to do this, there is nothing but a collection of individuals striving helplessly for the unknown. Human relationship is group membership successfully created. When people - even just two - try to create a group and fail, the search for relationship - for togetherness - becomes tension, frustration, unfulfillment, anger, conflict, failure, and even violence."

"Fulfillment in relationship does not come easily or automatically to us humans. We each bring our very selves to the process, each of us with the complexity of our ever emerging needs. The human process of "grouping" constantly calls upon us to participate in meeting the needs of others in their yearning for connectedness. Of course grouping is difficult, and always will be, as it will always be a fundamental human process that can be misused and can fail."

"What is so important about this human process of togetherness for children and youth, those members of our human society that we are concerned about today? Children from uterine life and on, are continuously moving back and forth between awareness of self and relationship with others, in infinitely diverse and complex patterns - back

and forth, between self and others, struggling towards developing the ability and learning how to be a whole person in a social world that our humanity requires of us all. As children approach adolescence, hopeful they are ready for the intense involvement with peers. Developmentally, they should be ready to learn still again, in a new way, what it means to be human, alone with others. But it is never easy and the skilled help and commitment of the adult world continues to be of vital importance."

"The responsibility for helping children and youth in their life with others, in their efforts at human grouping, are in the hands of those of us here at this meeting and of our colleagues elsewhere. The skills appear in the knowledge that has been presented today by our Speakers and our Workshop Leaders, and in the experience of all of us to share and use as best we can."

"But the skills of leadership of young humans in their groups is not a technique alone, there is knowledge but it is not technology. It requires our own eternal efforts at togetherness as adults, our own awareness of engagement with humanness. We have all been saying today, each of us in our own special way, and in the learning by each of us in our own special way, and in the learning by each of us from the ways of others, that grouping is a process that embodies a full range of human emotions - fun, sadness, pain, joy, delight, anger, unrest, frustration, happiness, love, and on

and on."

"Yes group leadership of children and youth is a difficult role to carry. But I say for myself, and I risk assuming for all of us gathered here, that we understand and value working with children and youth in their efforts to create groups, precisely because we too are continually in search of our own humanness"

Marion Levine drew the Conference to a close. What a day it was for the *Power of Group Work with Kids Across Settings and Disciplines*. Let there be more such Conferences for persons who work with children and youth in groups.

Catherine P. Papell, DSW, is Professor Emerita, Adelphi University School of Social Work and Co-Chair of the Long Island Chapter of the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups.

SPECIAL NOTICE From the Steering Committee

The Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children and Youth in collaboration with Pride for Youth of Bellmore is developing an educational forum for school and agency staff working with gay student groups. We are currently looking for feedback from workers and teachers in the schools in order to plan this event. If you are interested in being a part of the project or if you have information that you wish to share please contact steering committee member Andrew Peters at (516-679-9000). Or write to: Andrew Peters, Director, Pride for Youth, 2050 Bellmore Avenue, Bellmore, NY 11710.

**Long Island Institute
for Group Work With
Children and Youth**
480 Old Westbury Rd.
Roslyn Hgts., NY 11577-2215

Non Profit Organization
US POSTAGE PAID
Permit # 271
Roslyn Hgts., N.Y. 11577



⊙ A Program of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center ⊙

Licensed and Supported by: Nassau County Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities; The New York State Office of Mental Health; Nassau County Department of Drug and Alcohol Addiction; New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. Supported by: State of New York Office of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities; The Nassau County Youth Board; New York State Department of Social Services; Long Island's United Way; Great Neck United Community Fund, Inc.; United Community Chest of Port Washington; Manhasset Community Fund.

TIPS: For Kids in Changing Families

This month's "TIPS For" column comes from a group of pre-adolescent members of the Changing Family Group, boys and girls who developed tips for kids living in families where there has been separation, dislocation, divorce, or death. This is another example of a group that extends its reach from mutual aid in the group to others beyond the group, increasing their social consciousness and ability to move from individual change to social impact. This is a distinguishing feature of social work with groups. Following are a few of their TIPS.

- Don't hide it all inside. Otherwise you will get very sad.
- Think about it or it will hit you all at once and when you least expect it.
- Don't feel like what happened is your fault.
- Just because your parents can't stand each other, doesn't mean they can't stand you.
- The only thing to fear is fear itself.

Special for HUH!!! subscribers: For five booklets of their complete TIPS which can be reproduced for children that you know living in changing families please send a self addressed, stamped 6X9 or larger manila envelope to Jane Yazdpour, L.I. Institute for Group Work with Children and Youth/NSCFGC, 480 Old Westbury Rd., Roslyn Hts., NY 11577-2215.

Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth Steering Committee

Chairpersons: Joanne Ditchik-Stutz
(Nassau); Cynthia Cavallo (Suffolk).
Coord. of Group Work Svcs.:
Michelle Laser.
Steering Committee: Aimee Colton;
Roseline Felix; Stacey Levin;
Maureen O'Connor; Catherine Papell;
Andrew Peters; Carol Sutker.
Project Coordinator: Andrew Malekoff.

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 Levino, 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, Garden City; Youth Directions and Alternatives, E.Northport; Harricks School District, Albertson; Sanctuary Project, Huntington; Plainedge School District; L.I. Chapter/Assoc. for Advancement of Social Work With Groups; L.I.Crisis Center, Bellmore; Schneider Children's Hospital, New Hyde Park; Temple Sinai of Roslyn. Copyright January 1, 2000/USA.

📖 Book Briefs 📖 *The Handbook of Group Play Therapy: How To Do It, How It Works, Whom It's Best For*; by Daniel S. Sweeney and Linda E. Homeyer; 1999; Jossey-Bass, Inc. Publishers; San Francisco; 410 pages; \$44.95/paperback; Reviewed by Alison Johnson, LCSW, LMFT.

Knowledgeably and clearly written, this is a usable text devoted to theoretical applications of the use of group work with children and preadolescents. Since children relate through play, it follows that group interventions would provide real social experiences for children to redefine themselves: to test their behaviors, learn new skills, help and share with each other, and live out their similarities and differences. This handbook provides practitioners with examples and ideas for group content, guidance in the "doing" of a group, as well as providing the rationale and caveats for its use as a primary medium of intervention for children. It will assist workers in relating to children through play, helping them to effectively relate to others. It emphasizes the worker's role in ensuring safety and fun, while identifying the purpose for a group. The book promotes the use of the group with "well" children in preventive ways as well as for remedial and therapeutic uses. The book integrates theory and practice in an immensely practical way. As a practitioner working with children in groups for over 20 years, I found the book useful for informing my practice and challenging new skills as a worker and supervisor. The content helps the worker understand implications for selecting activities and mediums with a sense of purpose. This book presents an intentional use of group approach with children and preadolescents that resonates with respect.

* Alison Johnson, LCSW, LMFT, is a private practitioner located in Louisville Kentucky. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups.

- A** Association for the Advancement of Social Work With Groups; *New Standards for Practice of Social Work With Groups; Booklet Briefs;* Fall-99 pg. 4.
- B** *Book Briefs*
Buzzed: The Straight Facts About the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy; Kuhn, Cynthia; Swartzwelder, Scott; Wilson, Wilkie; Winter-99 pg. 2.
Project Kidz Talk: We Want to Spread the Word Coalition on Child Abuse & Neglect; Summer-99 pg. 4.
Teaching a Methods Course in Social Work With Groups; Kurland, Roselle; Salmon, Robert Spring-99 pg. 6.
- Booklet Briefs*
New Standards for Practice of Social Work with Groups; Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups; Fall-99 pg. 4.
- Buzzed: The Straight Facts About the Most Used and Abused Drugs from Alcohol to Ecstasy - Book Briefs* Winter-99 pg. 2.
- C** Chaos Corner; From Mutual Aid to Social Action (Poetry); Malekoff, Andrew Fall-99 pg.3.
- Coalition on Child Abuse & Neglect; *Book Briefs;* Summer-99 pg.4.
- F** *From the Editor,* Malekoff, Andrew
Winter-99 pg. 1.
Spring-99 pg. 1.
Summer-99 pg. 1.
Fall-99 pg. 1.
- From the Inside Out*
Allured; Elizabeth Fall-99 pg.3.
Gilhooly, Chris Spring-99 pg.3.
- From the Steering Committee*
Laser, Michelle; Winter-99 pg.3.
Nadvornik; Stephanie; Summer-99 pg. 3.
Peters, Andrew; Spring-99 pg.3.
- G** Gilhooly, CSW; Chris; *From the Inside Out;* Spring-99 pg. 3.
- Goldstein, DSW; Howard; *Looking Back...A Reminiscence;* Summer-99 pg. 2.
- H** Hunter, DSW; Joyce; *Looking Back...A Reminiscence;* Spring-99 pg. 2.
- K** Kuhn; Cynthia; *Book Briefs;* Winter-99 pg. 2.
- Kurland; Roselle; *Book Briefs;* Spring-99 pg. 6.
- L** Laser, ACSW; Michelle; *From the Steering Committee;* Winter-99 pg. 3.
- Looking Back...A Reminiscence*
Advocating for Gay & Lesbian Youth: The Early Years; Hunter, Joyce; Spring-99 pg.2.
Howie, We Can't Remember that You Were Anything; Goldstein, Howard; Summer-99 pg. 2.
True Confessions: I Was A Teenage Group Worker; Pine, Bessie; Winter-99 pg. 2.
We Have Determined that You Should Be A Group Worker, Mr. Salmon; Salmon, Robert; Fall-99 pg. 2.
- M** Malekoff, ACSW, CASAC; Andrew
From the Editor; Winter-99 pg. 1.
From the Editor; Spring-99 pg. 1.
From the Editor; Summer-99 pg.1.
From the Editor; Fall-99 pg. 1.
From Mutual Aid to Social
- Action (Poetry) *Chaos Corner* Fall-99 pg. 3.
Newcomers on the Edge (Poetry) Spring-99 pg. 5.
Sore Thumb (Poetry) Winter-99 pg. 3.
- N** Nadvornik; Stephanie *From the Steering Committee* Summer-99 pg. 3.
- New Standards for Practice of Social Work with Groups;* Association for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups; *Booklet Briefs;* Fall-99 pg. 4.
- P** Peters; Andrew *From the Steering Committee* Sprg-99 pg.5.
- Pine; Bessie - *Looking Back...A Reminiscence* Winter-99 pg. 2.
- Project Kidz Talk: We Want to Spread the Word* Coalition on Child Abuse & Neglect Summer-99 pg. 4.
- S** Salmon; Robert
Book Briefs Spring-99 pg. 6.
Looking Back...A Reminiscence Fall-99 pg. 2.
- Staff, Report From - Winter-99 pg. 1.
- Swartzwelder; Scott *Book Briefs* Winter-99 pg. 2.
- T** *Tips For...*
• Addressing Agency Context in Group Work; Fall-99 pg. 4.
• Advocacy and Social Action Spring-99 pg. 3.
• Children's Court Testimony Summer-99 pg. 3.
• Problem Solving Winter-99 pg.4.
- Teaching a Methods Course in Social Work with Groups;* Kurland, Roselle; Salmon, Robert Spring-99 pg.6.
- W** Wilson; Wilkie *Book Briefs* Winter-99 pg. 2.