Origins of Social Group Work: Local Stories from Around the World

Sparc Project Final Report, July 22, 2023 (Awarded in June 2021)

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Origins of Social Group Work: Local Stories from Around the World was an international history project that was approved for SPARC funding and endorsement by IASWG in June 2021. The Origins project called for local case studies -- including those drawn from personal narratives, oral history interviews, and personal documents research -- that document the experiences and accomplishments of local group workers; examine group work practice in different historical, cultural, and geopolitical contexts; and draw implications for the future development of social work with groups.

Outcomes of the Origins project were the publication of a Special Issue of Social Work with Groups 46(4) with guest editor, Lorrie Greenhouse Gardella; presentations of two sessions at the 2023 IASWG Virtual Symposium, including the Sumner Gil Memorial Plenary; and plans for future collaborations among participating authors.

From the settlement house movements in Chicago and New York City at the turn of the 20th century, to the arrival of Syrian refugees in Cologne, Germany, during the 2015 Global Migration Crisis; to the enduring collectivist traditions of the Bakarwal pastoral nomads in today's Jammu and Kashmir, India; the Origins project revealed the threads that unify social group work through space and time: the values of democratic participation, self-determination,
and social justice; the challenges to understanding and realizing these values in changing social and cultural contexts; the possibilities for cultural safety, cultural negotiation, and reciprocal learning; and the promise of social work with groups as a means to individual and social fulfillment.

*Origins of Social Group Work: Local Stories from Around the World* was proposed and led by Lorrie Greenhouse Gardella and guided by the *Origins* advisory committee: Klaus-Martin Ellerbrock from Germany, Reineth Prinsloo from South Africa, and Stephen Monroe Tomczak from the U.S. We are grateful to the IASWG Sparc committee and to Andrew Malekoff, editor-in-chief of *Social Work with Groups*, for their steadfast interest and support. It is our hope that this project will encourage further international historical research on social group work, including publications in *Social Work with Groups* and *Groupwork* and presentations at the annual symposia of IASWG.