



International Association for Social Work with Groups

SPARC Program

November 2014 Report from the IASWG SPARC Committee
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Overview

The IASWG SPARC Program was developed by the IASWG Board and Commission from 2011-2012, and inaugurated in 2013. According to its framing protocol, the SPARC Committee members were appointed by IASWG President and were charged with reviewing SPARC protocols and launching the Project. The IASWG Board reviews and votes on the Committee's recommendations, within 30-60 days of the closing date for applications in each cycle. There are two review cycles each year, corresponding with bi-annual Board Meetings in June and November. The SPARC Committee has continued to update, expand and circulate Project documents through multiple strategies and venues. SPARC documents, Project reports, and outreach materials are available at <http://www.iaswg.org/sparc>

During Cycle One (ending June 2013), four Projects were endorsed, three with funding (\$2500.00 expended). During Cycle Two (ending in November 2013), five Projects were endorsed, two with funding (\$700 expended). In Cycle Three (ending in June 2014), two Projects were endorsed, one with funding (\$695.00 expended). In Cycle Four (ending in November 2014), three Projects are approved for endorsement, two with funding (\$2160.00 to be expended).

In Calgary, at the June 2014 IASWG Symposium, we inaugurated what is hoped to be a regular event. The SPARC Committee invited leaders of IASWG SPARC Projects to join as co-presenters to share their experiences related to the application and implementation of their Projects. Project leaders came from all three SPARC cycles, and along with the Committee members, provided a robust explanation and encouragement to others to apply. The PP from this event is uploaded at: <http://www.iaswg.org/docs/projects/2014SPARCPresentation.pdf>

This Report will continue with the update on all Board endorsed and funded Projects over the past two years of operation, in chronological order from the present cycle.

SPARC Project Updates

Cycle 4, November 2014

1. *Group Work Training & Supervision Study*, Lois A. Carey, Molloy College Department of Social Work in Rockville Centre, NY, US.
Summary: The proposed *Group Work Training & Supervision* study focuses on increasing professional group workers' competent utilization of group work knowledge and skills. Hypothesis: Social group workers participating in four monthly training sessions, and submitting weekly group process recordings for supervisory feedback will demonstrate increased utilization of group work knowledge and skills. Independent Variables: (1) four two-hour monthly training sessions and (2) Supervisory feedback on 16 weekly process recordings. Dependent Variables: (1) group work knowledge, and (2) group work skills.
Update: This Project was approved by the IASWG Board in November 2014 for Endorsement (Financial Support not Requested). Project reports will be posted at www.iaswg.org.
2. *The Campaign for Group Work*, Eileen Lyons & Dominique Moyses Steinberg, The PROJECT for Team Conferencing and Social Group Work, Inc, New York, NY, US.
Summary: This Project is to launch the 'Campaign for Group Work' -- a multi-media education and marketing strategy in order to raise wider awareness about and interest in social group work. IASWG funds will help to underwrite this effort; its endorsement will provide credibility to THE PROJECT's earliest efforts. THE PROJECT offers professional development to individual practitioners and organizations and is currently applying to the NY State Education

Department for approval to be a provider of continuing education units (CEU) for LMSW's and LCSW's.

Update: This Project was approved by the IASWG Board in November 2014 for Endorsement and Funding. Project reports will be posted at www.iaswg.org.

3. *The Story of Social Group Work and Residential Summer Camping*, Susan Scher, Ramapo College of New Jersey (emeritus) & Meryl Nadel, Iona College, New York, US. Summary: Although many social workers recognize the potential for growth through small group membership and the benefits of immersion in the natural environment, social work in the summer camp setting currently receives limited attention. We aim to publish a book that will be the first by social workers in many decades to explore the residential summer camp as an exciting field of practice for the profession, and for group work in particular. This book will offer a theoretical context by providing lenses through which to view the camp experience; the dual historical development of the social work profession, social group work, and the summer camp movement; the contributions social workers bring to this setting; and a description of current social work camp practice and of the exciting possibilities inherent in this vital field of practice today.

Update: This Project was approved by the IASWG Board in November 2014 for Endorsement and Funding. Project reports will be posted at www.iaswg.org.

Cycle 3, June 2014

1. *The Use of Literature in Group Work: Improving the Quality of Life for Individuals with Multiple Sclerosis*. Rebecca Halperin, New York, US. (Endorsement and Funding).
Summary: The purpose of this project is to implement and evaluate the impact of a time limited, close-ended group to improve the quality of life of the participants. This group will be open to individuals with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), as it is being run at an MS Care Center within New York University Hospital. It is anticipated that participants will experience an improvement in cognitive function, mood and self-awareness. The group will meet for ten sessions (1.5 hours in length each) over the span of five months. The following books will be read and discussed during the span of the group: *The Great Gatsby*, *The Giver*, *The House on Mango Street*, and *A Lesson before Dying*.
Update: As of October 2014, the planning stages are completed, and participants are currently being recruited. The Program is currently deciding on whether to begin the group in late November, or wait until after the winter season and begin in early spring.
2. *Exploring Online and Blended Course Delivery in Group Work*. Sumaiya Matin and Irene Carter, Windsor, Canada. (Endorsement).
Summary: The proposed research project aims to augment the current knowledge base on the use of technology in teaching groups in social work. In addition to exploring the benefits and challenges of integrating technology into teaching group work, the proposed project examines online group dynamics of students in small groups. The purpose of the project is to provide facilitators of online groups in social group work courses tools for creating environments conducive to communication and group work learning consistent with the Standards of Social Work with Groups (2006).
Update: As of the beginning of November 2014, the Project has received approval for research with human subjects. The Project has been modified to focus on responses of students and instructors in previously administered surveys, rather than surveying students or instructors in present or future online classes.

Cycle 2, November 2013

1. *A Study of Georgia Public School Social Workers Perception of Grief Counseling Groups as Interventions for Adolescents*. Kiana Battle, Atlanta, Georgia, US. (Endorsement)
Summary: This dissertation research, conducted through Clark Atlanta University, Whitney M. Young Jr. School of Social Work, explores Georgia public school social workers' perceptions of grief counseling groups as interventions for

adolescents. The purpose of this study was to understand the use of grief group counseling, group purposes, and assessment of their utilization.

Update: A study abstract is at: http://www.iaswg.org/docs/projects/Battle_June2014_SPARCprojectupdate.pdf, and additional information is expected soon. Please join us in congratulating Dr. Battle on a successful dissertation defense on September 19, 2014.

2. *Staff Training Program at the Jewish Community Services Group Work Programme, in Johannesburg, South Africa.* Glynne Zackon, Johannesburg, South Africa. (Endorsement).

Summary: This Project is based on the organization's belief in the value and power of group work, which they feel provides a unique intervention method to the community and fits with the social developmental paradigm shift of social work in South Africa. The Project involved training social workers currently employed at Jewish Community Services in advanced group work skills.

Update: This training is underway, and a report noting its scope and impact will be posted at iaswg.org.

3. *Researching Alternative Culturally Responsive Group Intervention for Latino Men Who Batter.* Mauricio Cifuentes, Minneapolis, Minnesota, US. (Endorsement and Approved for Funding).

Summary: This project was proposed to include research, evaluation and sharing of findings about the *El Hombre Noble Buscando Balance* intervention process. With the support of IASWG, two Project leaders planned to participate in training at the National Latino Fatherhood & Family Institute. The effectiveness of the intervention would then be evaluated for the feasibility of implementing a pilot of the *Hombre Noble* program with group of Latino men at Communicates Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) in Minneapolis, MN.

Update: Unfortunately, due to a shortfall in funding, the Project was not undertaken, and SPARC funds were not transferred to the Project.

4. *The in Search of Me Campaign - Community Program for Young Men of Color.* Zaneta J. Smith, Los Angeles, California, US. (Endorsement and Funding).

Summary: This group work intervention strives to hold a set of initiatives that will foster self-awareness in youth and young adults. The goal of this first initiative is to provide 2 hour group support sessions for young men to become more self-aware and build life skills. Topics include: cultural awareness, self-esteem, handling life's stressors, etc. The initiative recruits participants associated with an existing social service agency where collaboration with a case manager will potentially enhance outcomes, and culminates with a Rites of Passage ceremony.

Update: The Project has begun, and is taking place from October 2014 - November 2014. The recruitment flyer and report will appear at www.iaswg.org.

5. *Reconceptualizing the Role of Diversity in Group Development.* William Pelech, Calgary, Canada. (Endorsement)

Summary: This proposal for a large -scale research study received an expedited review. The goal of this project is to formulate a new model of practice that will enable group work practitioners to work more effectively with diversity in their groups. The overarching research question to be investigated will be: How can the practitioner work more effectively with diversity during each stage of group development? This project will employ an exploratory sequential mixed design including grounded theory and quantitative methods.

Update: The proposed project has received human subject research certification and is currently underway. It will involve five phases over five years, and periodic reports will be posted at www.iaswg.org.

Cycle 1, June 2013

1. *International Casebook for Teaching Social Work with Groups*. Alice Hanbidge and Ellen Sue Mesbur, Toronto, Canada. (Endorsement and Funding).
Summary: This Project addresses a gap in available materials for education and training, and has the potential for broad utilization. It will contribute to the group work literature, and involves the IASWG community in submitting group work cases with an international focus.
Update: The outreach phase of the Project was launched in spring 2014 through an Eblast to the IASWG membership - More information on the project and call for Case Studies is available at:
<http://www.iaswg.org/CallforGroupWorkCaseStudies/>

2. *Follow Up Research of Social Group Work Dissertations 1970-2012*. Shirley Simon and Teresa Kilbane, Chicago, US. (Endorsement and Funding).
Summary: The leaders proposed to do a follow up research study of dissertations to determine the post-dissertation career paths of the authors related to social group work, to determine their subsequent involvement with group work. Among the strengths of this proposal is its potential to yield information that will positively impact doctoral level group work education.
Update: The proposal has obtained Institutional Review Board Approval, has identified potential respondents and conducted qualitative interviews. The Project is currently in the analysis phase.

3. *Expanding Capacity for Group Work Training in Johannesburg*. Glynne Zackon, Johannesburg, South Africa. (Endorsement and Funding).
Summary: The purchase of a laptop and projector was proposed to support and expand an extensive program of groups and group work training as part of a recently developed program at the Jewish Community Services in Johannesburg. This Project helps promote social group work practice in a region where group work is expanding, and has the potential to enhance further practice and IASWG development.
Update: The Project leaders successfully completed this Project, and are moving ahead with their training projects (see November 2014, Cycle 2 Projects). Their Report is posted at www.iaswg.org/sparc.

4. *Factors Contribution to Group Workers' Commitment and Attitudes toward Group Work*. Sari Skolnick, Long Island, US (Endorsement).
Summary: This dissertation research will generate information on the factors involved in sustained commitment to social group work, and support the development of group work in education and practice settings. We recommended that IASWG endorse the research, and approve notification to the IASWG membership which describes the study, IASWG endorsement, and invites members to participate in the survey.
Update: The launch of the data collection phase of this study will be in spring 2015, at which time members will receive an IASWG Eblast with an invitation. Information will also be posted at iaswg.org, and highlighted in an upcoming issue of the Group News.